The Ignorant Elizabethan Author and Massinger's *Believe as You List**

My purpose is to explore the evidence of the management of the acting cast offered by one of the surviving manuscript plays of the Caroline theatre and to defend its author against the charge of theatrical ineptitude. The manuscript is that of Massinger's *Believe as You List* (MS Egerton 2,828)[1] prepared for performance in 1631. It is in Massinger's hand, but has been heavily annotated by a reviser whom I propose to call by his old theatrical title of Plotter. I am aware that this is to beg a question at the outset, for we really do not know how many functionaries were involved in the preparation of a seventeenth-century play or on what order they worked upon the dramatist's script.

Our common picture of the Elizabethan theatre is almost all built from inference, and despite the wealth of information we appear to possess in the play-texts, theatre Plots, manuscripts, and even the builders' contracts for the Fortune and Hope theatres, almost every detail of our reconstructions of the playhouses and the methods of production and performance within them is the subject of scholarly dispute.

The result is that we have no clear picture of the dramatist's *craft* as Shakespeare and his contemporaries practised it, or of the understood conditions that governed the production and performance of their plays. That there were well-understood methods is apparent from the remarkable uniformity of the stage directions in printed texts and manuscripts throughout the whole period from the building of the Theatre in 1576 to the end of regular playing in 1642. I must, incidentally, invoke the same evidence for the reader's allowance in making the assumption from the outset that all Elizabethan public theatres were very similar in their basic structure.

The earliest texts of the printed plays are themselves often notoriously imperfect, and scholars who reconstruct them and consider the methods of their transmission have naturally pursued their investigations in the printing-house rather than in the unreliable theatre, and have established, again by inference, a picture

*Developed from a public lecture at the University of Sydney in 1970 in the Kathleen Robinson Lectures on Drama and the Theatre.

1 I have worked from a facsimile of the Egerton manuscript kindly donated by Sir Brian Hone to the Monash University Library.

of theatrical practices from the evidence of compositors' habits and the assumed production methods of Elizabethan printers.

This kind of evidence is now open to challenge in its own terms, but it has long seemed improbable to theatre producers and to some literary scholars. It has led us to believe in a race of otherwise incomparable playwrights who were ignorant of the very basic mechanics of their stage and of the requirements of the companies of actors they worked with; who were liable to make absurd demands in the heat of composition, well-aware in their sober fit that the company's resources would fail miserably to support them; who commonly composed up to twice as many blank-verse lines as could be spoken in the time available and then indifferently left to the company the task of discarding the poetic flesh and discovering the dramatic bones beneath.

The printed and written texts, however, are the only certain evidence we have, and any theatrical hypothesis must be consistent with them. Moreover, any argument from the textual evidence must be exceedingly stringent in method if it is to be as convincing as the bibliographical arguments that confront it, and will be satisfied with nothing less than the discovery of some limiting condition which can be shown to operate consistently for all texts.

In the absence of any known limiting condition, some scholars have cautiously accepted the assumption that, whatever may be said of others, Shakespeare was a skilled professional craftsman who could fit the needs of his theatre and his company so well that his comrades scarcely remembered having seen a line scored out in his papers. Professor Baldwin, for example, concluded from a study of the personnel of the King's Men after Shakespeare's death, that in that company at least "the play was regularly fitted to the company not the company to the play".[2]

If we knew the numerical composition of any one of the London companies for a period of some duration, such a conclusion would indeed serve as a limiting condition for further deductions. Baldwin unfortunately did not pursue the question rigorously enough, but followed more engaging speculations about the actual casting of Shakespeare's plays as they were performed during his lifetime. Thus his work did little to refute the general suspicion of authorial ignorance or of a theatrical situation more akin to our modern practice where actors are hired in greater or lesser numbers for particular productions.

2 T. W. Baldwin, *The Organization and Personnel of Shakespeare's Company* (Cambridge, 1927), p. 197.

The theory of the ignorant author may be illustrated from Sir Walter Greg's influential analysis of the allegedly reduced text of *The Battle of Alcazar*: "the author . . . will call for supers, attendants, courtiers, a whole army perhaps, while the Plotter, bound by material considerations, allots what minor actors he can afford, but no one bothers to alter the prompt-copy, especially as the provision will vary from time to time according to the number of hired men and boys which the state of the company finances allow".[3]

In the manuscript plays there are, indeed, passages which appear to be marked for deletion but are not struck out, and there are alterations noted by the Plotter to the cast apparently demanded by the dramatist, but they are often made in a way which renders possible the restoration of the original text and appear to concern only the minor members of the company.

If the Plotter's activities in the manuscripts and in the printed texts which plainly derive from prompt-books, were as random as they seemed to Greg, we would have no hope at all of discovering a limiting principle of theatrical craftsmanship at work in any of them.[4]

In the manuscript of *BAYL* there are few excised passages, but the Plotter's alterations have the appearance of correcting Massinger and it is hardly surprising that C. J. Sisson, the editor for the Malone Society, found the play to reveal "literary and unpractical . . . directions", and an author "inexperienced in the technicalities of the stage".

There are general grounds for scepticism here. Though Massinger was not, as Sisson reminds us, a member of the King's company, and had possibly never been an actor, he was, at forty-eight years of age, a practised playwright who had written frequently for various companies and had presented a play at court ten years previously and possibly earlier. Moreover there is clear evidence in the text of *BAYL* itself that the play was completely re-written, no doubt as a result of Sir Henry Herbert's refusal to license the

3 W. W. Greg, *Two Elizabethan Stage Abridgements: Orlando and Alcazar* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1923).

4 Cf. G. F. Reynolds, *The Staging of Elizabethan Plays at the Red Bull Theatre* (New York, 1940), p. 48: "If prevailing theories of text transmission are correct, the same play may contain directions written some of them by the author, some by the prompter, and some by the "editor" with readers in mind; some of them must be taken literally and some more or less imaginatively".

original version.[5] The presence of partly obliterated names in the text shows that Massinger had changed a political play supporting the claims of a noted pretender to the Portuguese throne into an ostensibly parallel story from Roman history. The motive of Herbert's censorship was certainly political, and the strong anti-Spanish flavour of the original is unmistakable beneath the revised text. How much of the play Massinger actually re-wrote is difficult to say, but it might be supposed that he had close enough contact with the King's Men during the time of revision to have performed an operation as simple as counting the cast available to him.

My contention is, very simply, that he did. Indeed, it seems on the face of it that one might credit Massinger with at least the expertise of Clavell, a highwayman recently turned playwright, who, in the same year, wrote in the manuscript of *The Soddered Citizen* the uncommonly precise *Enter 7 Maskers & tread a solemn measure.*[6] It can be shown, on the limiting principles I shall later advance, that Clavell was here performing correctly a simple arithmetical feat such as any Elizabethan dramatist must have been expected to perform. The Plotter does, however, sometimes change the number of actors called for in Massinger's directions. Sisson assumed (just as Greg did in *Orlando and Alcazar*) that the Plotter was always right and the dramatist wrong. This turns out not to be a necessary conclusion. I believe the different answers arrived at by Plotter and dramatist result from the operation of the same principles, and for the most part, both are right. But the Plotter's adjustments of detail produce the *appearance* of diverging very widely from the dramatist's intention, if the reasons behind them are not understood. In the case of *The Battle of Alcazar,* for which an actual stage Plot is extant, it can be shown that the Plotter's tinkering with the dramatist's quite explicit directions in early scenes leads him later into difficulties and absurdities, which eventually force him to abandon a whole scene. This led Greg to the conclusion that he was working from another text. In fact, the Plotter in both cases makes rather more mistakes than the dramatist, but since such errors do not always matter for any practical purpose, they are not always corrected, and thus appear to be right, while the playwright's text is often changed, and thus appears to have been "corrected" even when it was not wrong.

5 The play is disallowed in Herbert's Office Book on 11 January 1631. The extant MS. was licensed 6 May 1631.

6 J. H. Pafford (ed.), *The Soddered Citizen,* Malone Society Reprint, p. 78.

The principles which govern the parallel behaviour of playwright and Plotter in the disposition of the finite number of available actors will be very much easier to perceive if we first attempt to reconstruct the various documents that were involved in a performance. The most important document was, of course, a complete text of the play called the Book, used during performance by the Prompter. The manuscript of *BAYL* is such a Book, in which the Plotter's concern is with the allotting of actors to various rôles, looking after necessary bits of business, seeing that properties are ready, music and machinery prepared and actors called up in advance when necessary. His noting of actors' movements, however, often appears random and even accidental. As in other manuscript plays, and in the occasional notes of actors' names in printed texts, the minor members of the cast are fairly fully noted, but the principals rarely appear. Thus, it was not the function of the Book to furnish a complete record of the stage action and who performed it. By good fortune, however, we can work out the principal actors' rôles in *BAYL* from the Properties List attached to the manuscript. Such a list was, perhaps, a needful document in the preparation of any play, but no other has survived and we need not suppose that it was invariably provided.

It has long been understood that the appearance of actors' names in the texts has something to do with the practice of doubling rôles and that the Plotter's annotations might appear far from haphazard if we possessed his Cast List of the major characters. This third document must always have been prepared in the playhouse, and would, where necessary, have listed the doubling rôles of some of the major actors. Lists of something of this kind do exist, such as that prefacing the manuscript of *The Soddered Citizen* in which the rôles and also the disguise-rôles for all the major actors are listed, but no extant list actually shows doubling. Even in the case of *BAYL,* we can construct the list of doubled rôles only by inference.

The fourth document of great interest was the Plot itself, of which some seven examples survive, mostly in very imperfect condition. This was a large sheet on which were listed all the characters as they appear. The most developed Plots, such as that of *Alcazar,* regularly list the names of actors together with their rôles, though with the common omission of two or three or more of the most prominent. The points at which the stage is clear are also marked by lines drawn across the page. This division sometimes occurs more frequently in crowded scenes, but never less fre-

quently. We can therefore say that the Plots list all the actors who are on stage at any given moment (though even they are sometimes vague about attendants and the like) and mark all the points at which the stage is clear—that is to say, all the points at which a scene comes to an end.

A puzzling feature, however, is that while all Plots mark entrances, not all mark exits, either medially or at the end of a scene, and thus they give the impression (which I believe to be illusory) that their function is to mark entrances *in particular*, and it has generally been held that they served as call-sheets. With varying degrees of completeness Plots certainly served as properties lists and as memorials for sound effects. They also regulated minor bits of business and appointed actors to do it. But if Plots did indeed serve as call-sheets in performance, the omissions and inconsistencies in several would be puzzling and one at least which designates a super as "the red fast fellow" could hardly have been so used.

We are left with the curious impression that, while the Plots and the annotated manuscripts duplicate certain kinds of information, they do not suggest preparation for use in conjunction with each other. They both show concern, however, for two things that are in fact intimately connected with the logic of actors' movements. First, they both show divisions of the action into *scenes*. The major action of an Elizabethan play *consists* of entrances and exits. The filling and emptying of the stage is the great structural heartbeat of the drama, which also allows its non-scenic manipulation of place and time. In the manuscript plays, even those divided formally into Acts, the scene divisions are the obvious structural units. The scene is itself the logical result of a platform stage that is entered from two doors or two sides. The third, central opening (it now seems to be generally agreed) was not used as a *normal* mode of entry on to the stage, and but for the ingenuity of the practised dramatist, the actors must have circulated between the two doors of Elizabethan theatre like the figures on a German town hall clock.

It is also the logic of the two doors or sides which forces on to Elizabethan drama a multiple plot structure. The alternation of groups of actors (which may be understood at a glance from the plan) is physically necessary on this stage, for actors who have just left the stage cannot re-enter immediately and must be replaced by a new group. No great sophistication of this technique was achieved, until well into the third decade of the seventeenth

century. It is, finally, the two-door structure that makes it possible for us to turn Plotters and to follow this antique theatrical logic through the texts themselves.

The other concern of both Plots and manuscripts is the noting of doubled rôles, though they are unequally thorough in this. The doubling of parts itself implies that companies did not vary greatly in size and is thus of primary importance for our purposes in estimating the number of actors in any company. Nevertheless actors did not double in every play. The Elizabethan love of disguise plots cuts against doubling, and one finds that no play in which the plot turns heavily on disguise will ask any but the smallest degree of doubling from its actors, and that only from the junior ranks. Otherwise we would have to cope with an unthinkable illusion, viz.: given that the actors in front of us have all changed costume but are *in fact* recognizable, then some will be offering themselves for our recognition and others begging to escape it.

The important corollary of this observation is that when actors doubled in the Elizabethan theatre their original identity must have been concealed as far as possible from the audience.

BAYL and several manuscripts show the use of readying notes (i.e. notes for calling actors in advance of the playwright's notation of their entrance). But no Plot would be of use for readying, even in conjunction with the Book. It would thus appear that the Book, not the Plot, acted as call-sheet during performance. The Bookholder is also charged with readying properties whereas the Plotter appears interested only in listing them and nominating someone to carry them on stage. The Plotter is sometimes concerned with the location and manner of entrances and even with some descriptive notes about the proposed action of the scene,[7] but none of the Plots has a direction like "Gascoine and Hubert below: ready to open the Trap doore for Mr. Taylor" (*BAYL,* iv. i). A Plot itself can give no indication of time sequence. Such a direction makes sense only as a marginal note in a text. The natural, and I believe the correct, assumption from this is that, while the Book directed the actual performance, and was the authority in the hands of the

7 Examples from various Plots:
"Enter Achilles in his tent" . . . *Troilus and Cressida*
"Enter in a Chariott Muly Mahamet and Calipolis" . . . *Alcazar*
"Enter a banquett brought in by . . . " *Alcazar*
"Enter by Torchlight to counsaile . . . " *Alcazar*
"Enter 3 antique faires dancynge on after a nother . . . and as they entred so they departe . . . " *Dead Man's Fortune*

Prompter, the Plot was used to direct rehearsals. It was clearly a kind of shorthand for the action, as is shown by the doodled Plot of *2 Henry Richmond* on the back of the order for payment from Admiral's Men to Henslowe in 1598.[8] In that case, while listening to a reading of the play, the Company's representative (it is in Robert Shaa's hand) had in fact sketched out the action of the first five scenes. I believe, though I cannot prove, that the purpose of the scribbler was to make a count of the cast. When he arrived at scene v he was assured the writers knew their business, for by that point they had provided for, and had not exceeded, a cast of sixteen men and some boys. He could no doubt also tell something more about the arrangement of parts for these actors that we will never know.

The Plot, then, though of very uncertain use in itself, and of no particular use in conjunction with the Book, would spring to life as a theatre document when joined with the actors' parts: those records together would be sufficient to direct an acted run-through. The Plot's function then, or one of its functions, was to serve as a skeleton or ground-plan of the action in the absence of the Book—and there are obvious reasons for its employment. Though it is sometimes necessary in textual criticism to duplicate manuscripts whenever theories run into difficulties, all other evidence suggests that companies treasured their prompt-books and duplicated them as little as possible. The safest course for any company was to possess only a single copy of any play. The only evidence we need cite here is the testimony of the licenser's signature on several manuscripts which have been used as prompt copies, and the well-known deposition of the scribe of *Bonduca,* when preparing a copy for a private patron some years after the performance, that the King's Men had lost the prompt-book and had no other record of it than the author's foul papers, for which a search had to be made.[9]

If we piece together these suggestions with the evidence of Robert Daborne's letters to Henslowe and a small allowance of fancy, we may picture the ordinary practice of the Admiral's Men in preparing a play as follows.[10] First of all, the company (or Henslowe) would commission a single dramatist, or a group. After a time, the author would have sketched out a plan. It may have

8 W. W. Greg (ed.), *Henslowe Papers* (London, 1907), p. 49.
9 E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare* (Oxford, Clarendon Press), i.125.
10 *Henslowe Papers,* pp. 65-85.

consisted of a mere brief scenario, such as Ben Jonson is known to have made. If the dramatist were trusted, this might be deemed sufficient for part-payment to be made and a go-ahead given for further work. But Henslowe was sometimes disappointed of a completed play and the scenario might have to be passed on to other writers before any further progress was made. So we have a record of Chapman being paid for finishing a play according to Benjamin's Plot.[11]

If the writer were more fluent than the laborious Jonson, he might produce a full version of the play at one hit. That is the way Shakespeare is said by his loyal colleagues to have worked. Or he might produce a fairly full version of his play with some descriptive notes for acting and even some suggestions for casting. But there would be scenes unfinished and second thoughts sometimes not fully integrated. Versions such as these we may possess in *Timon of Athens* and *All's Well* (which possibly show more accurately how Shakespeare did work) to say nothing of other texts like Q2 of *Romeo and Juliet,* the versions of *Much Ado* and *Love's Labour's Lost,* and Daborne's own *The Poor Man's Comfort,* which all show signs of revision in the process of composition or copying.

After the composition of the primary material, the play was heard by the company or by some of its members appointed for the purpose. The price of £8 paid for *2 Henry Richmond* indicates that it was a complete play when Shaa heard it and scribbled the sketch of a Plot. But normally only a part-payment would be made at this hearing, and the author would then return home to complete his final, perfected version while the company set about purchasing costumes and collecting properties. Bit by bit, the perfected fair copy would arrive from the author, and as it did so, some functionary in the theatre would begin making up the actors' parts—the long scrolls of every man's part "according to the scrip" from which the play was rehearsed. From Daborne's letter to Henslowe of 25 June 1613, we learn that the actors' parts for *Machiavel* had already been written out as far as Act III while he was still engaged on writing Act V fair. He has made alterations in Act V and there will have to be (consequential?) alterations in the actors' scrolls for Act III.[12] Over another play, Henslowe is pressing him, and he offers as proof of his good faith the testimony of Henslowe's messenger that the play is actually complete, and

11 W. W. Greg (ed.), *Henslowe's Diary* (London, 1904), p. 98.
12 *Henslowe Papers,* p. 73, Art 81 (Machiavell).

that he found him *copying* merely, not composing.[13] He even offers to send the copy and the sheet he was copying from. If Henslowe expected fair copy from Daborne, who was a Cambridge graduate, he must surely have expected the same from most of his writers. Thus I take it that it was commonly the responsibility of the author to provide the playhouse with fair copy whether he presented it in his own hand or not. He may of course have adopted the solution of dictating to a scribe. The logic of the situation is, therefore, that in the ordinary way, three versions only of any play existed in manuscript, the last version being the one that reached the playhouse: i.e. (i) the first sketch of the play read to the company (ii) the filled-out version of this in rough, and (iii) the fair copy of the filled-out version which was sent to the playhouse and became the prompt-book.

The corollary is that the Plot of a play must commonly have been made at the first stage, not at the last. Before the actors' parts could be made out in proper order by the Bookholder, the doubling pattern must have been known and recorded, for the second major function of the Plot was to serve as a plan for the writing out of the actors' parts while the play was being perfected and copied. As soon as the parts were made, the Plot could be used for directing rehearsals. The one fair copy of the play would have to be sent off to be licensed as soon as complete and there is supporting evidence in Sir Henry Herbert's office book, though it is a single instance, that the actors' parts were indeed made up before the play went to the licenser.[14] There are also some grounds for guessing that it was occasionally inconvenient to have the Book absent from the theatre and that the author's complete foul draft was sent instead.[15]

The annotations on the manuscript of *BAYL* itself were made before its visit to Herbert,[16] and since the Plot (if any) for this performance must have been made at the same time, we may say that *BAYL* illustrates what I suppose to be the normal processes of Elizabethan play production, with the great exception that the "foul" version was a fair, but cancelled, copy of a finished play, and thus no Plot of the revised *BAYL* itself is likely to have been in existence before the actual extant manuscript was complete. The process of its composition otherwise appears to support the above hypothesis of Daborne's relationship with Henslowe's company

13 *Henslowe Papers,* p. 78, Art 89.
14 E. K. Chambers, *op. cit.*, i.105.
15 *Ibid.,* note 1.
16 C. J. Sisson (ed.), *Believe As You List,* Malone Society Reprint, p.xxi.

fifteen years earlier. The markings of actors' names on *this* manuscript can have no other intention than to record the doubling of parts in order to facilitate the making-out of the actors' scrolls. That is to say, it usurps one of the normal functions of the Plot.

The Plotter has, indeed, noted a small amount of information about the actors' movements beyond what is required for writing out the parts in correct order, possibly as a result of the Plot having been prepared at the same time. Arguing in the opposite direction, Greg supposed the Plots which contain information exceeding the bare requirements of performance to have acquired it incidentally from the Book.[17]

It is possible, then, to reconstruct a fairly accurate Plot of *BAYL* from the prompt-copy. We discover that the cast available to the Plotter consisted of sixteen men and three or four boys, and I believe evidence generated from other play-texts shows this to have been the normal composition of the King's Men at this time.

If the extant Plots and manuscripts alone were taken as evidence, however, we would be on very shaky ground in assuming that the composition of the London companies was finite or constant. The Plot of *Tamar Cam* (1601) calls on nine extras who may (or may not) be stage attendants and gatherers. Certainly some of them are not well-known to the Plotter (e.g. the aforementioned "red fast fellow") but there is little other internal evidence to suggest they are not regular actors. Some plots call in tyremen and gatherers, and manuscript plays call for minor appearances by the stage-keepers in moments of stress.

Moreover, there are indications, from both the early and late periods, that companies may have been far larger than any recorded in the Plots. George Stutvile, for example, with a company of twenty-six or twenty-seven, is recorded at Norwich on 10 March 1635.[18] As early as 1592, Strange's company is petitioning the Privy Council for leave to play in London, on the grounds of its great size (though this has curiously been taken as evidence that travelling companies were commonly small[19]) and in 1624 a letter of protection was given to twenty-one hired men and necessary attendants of the King's Men.[20]

17 W. W. Greg, *Dramatic Documents from the Elizabethan Playhouses* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1931).
18 J. T. Murray, *English Dramatic Companies 1558-1642* (New York, 1963), p. 356.
19 E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (London, 1923), iv. 311-12.
20 G. E. Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage* (London, 1941), i.15.

The difficulty for my purposes about these records is that they suggest the existence of a large number of theatre attendants and musicians, *some* of whom may have been, and were, called on as actors, when a particular need arose. I believe, however, that the acting cast was *normally* regarded as quite separate from the extras, and that the employment of tyremen and gatherers was the exception and not the rule.

There are two or three small indications that supers were not lightly employed. For instance, when the Plot of *Alcazar* is compared with the extant text, we can see that the Plotter has created absurdities quite inexplicable on the assumption that he was free to call an indefinite cast even of mute players on-stage. The actors who leave the stage as Portuguese Lords in II. iv, on their way to fetch the Spanish Ambassadors, reappear in III. i, not accompanying them but *as* the Ambassadors. Even on the internal evidence of the Plot itself there can be no doubt about this. Yet it appears at the same time that extras might have been used, for in the Portuguese scene the Lords in question are mute, and despite Greg's uneasiness at this point, there is no likelihood that they ever had anything to say.

Some kind of numerical restriction is at work in all the Plots, and it is known from Thomas Platter's account that in 1599 "approximately fifteen men" played *Julius Caesar* which has a much larger total cast.[21] The play texts, imperfect as they are, also exhibit minimum casts (i.e., the greatest number of people on stage at any one moment) and if one tests Dr Platter's testimony simply by plotting, it will be found that the minimum cast for *Julius Caesar* is indeed fifteen men, unless it was possible for an actor to be in two places at once.

This tells us very little by itself for, as Professor Ringler has shown, the *total* needed for *Julius Caesar* is sixteen persons. Ringler takes as his working principles only the two propositions

(i) that plural calls in the stage-directions may be satisfied with the appearance of two people,

(ii) that an actor cannot enter and exit at one and the same time,

and thus arrives at a figure for the minimum cast that is one degree more sophisticated than a minimum cast: namely at a larger total derived from two or three scenes together where actors are

21 E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* ii.364 (Platter writes "mitt ohngefahr 15 personen").

clearly blocked from re-entering or doubling.[22] This principle was understood by Greg, but in the absence of a known and finite numerical limitation, he could not have used it to explain the casting evidence of the Plots or the manuscript plays.

Ringler followed Greg in assuming that boys doubled with men, and found support for Platter's figure in a number of Shakespeare's middle-period plays. But his theory of doubling will not work for Shakespeare's plays outside this period, or for plays by other dramatists, or other companies, except sporadically, and by accident.

The alternative assumption, which in my view is the only one in accordance with the evidence of the Plots and common theatrical sense, is that boys did not normally double as men except in situations of extreme stress. One such situation occurs in the case of Dick Jubie who doubles as a Queen and a Portuguese nobleman in *Alcazar*. But it can be shown that this is a result of the muddle about the Portuguese nobles in II. iv and III. i, and is the creation of the Plotter, not of the author. However, any too hard and fast rule here may be out of place. We know that boys bred up as apprentices with the King's Men did stay with the company as men, and that there may have been a period for each when the sex of the rôles assigned to them was uncertain. In the Admiral's Plot of *Tamar Cam* (1601) for example, Thomas Parsons, who had played only a Fury in *Alcazar* two or three years earlier and was then almost certainly a little boy, now plays an attendant, a guard and a spirit in the early scenes, but may double as a nurse, and certainly appears as an Hermaphrodite in the procession of peoples which ends the play.

The cast-lists of the King's Men in later years do not reveal such intermediate stages, but it must be admitted that the accepted dating of these has been partly arrived at by observing the points where boys begin to play adult rôles.

It may be seen from the accompanying Plot-diagram, and in particular, from III. iii and IV. i, that, according to Professor Ringler's argument, *BAYL* itself *could* have been played by exactly sixteen actors, counting men and boys together. If that were so, however, the notations of the Plotter on the manuscript would be completely random and unintelligible—as, indeed, they have always been taken to be.

22 W. Ringler, "The Number of Actors in Shakespeare's Early Plays", in G. E. Bentley, *The Seventeenth Century Stage* (Chicago, 1968).

I have, however, plotted through some hundreds of the earliest texts on the assumption that boys do not double with men and have arrived at numerical constants which are, I believe, statistically meaningful. The overwhelmingly larger group of texts shows that the figure of sixteen men represents the most usual composition of the London companies from 1590-1609 and for some time beyond, the Admiral's/Prince Henry's Men showing a greater consistency, though over a smaller number of available plays, than the Chamberlain's/King's.

A number of texts show exactly twelve men and these sometimes even for Shakespeare's company in both good texts and so-called bad Quartos, and in both early and late plays. It is interesting that not all the "bad" Quartos show casts of the smaller kind. The number of boys in both groups varies and is not easy to assess.

There is a large group of plays which yield an answer between twelve and sixteen men, as one would expect, for in our ignorance of the exact management of stage business, the undoubted vagueness about attendants, guards and lords in many texts and the Elizabethan verbal habit of avoiding precise numbers, we are often in doubt. Sometimes a difficulty arises when we find that three or four attendants have left the stage, and yet an actor will later use a plural address. We cannot always be sure whether the attendants have remained on stage or have reappeared without notice. In *BAYL,* for example, the dramatist plausibly envisaged a sufficient guard remaining on stage in Act V after the arrest of the villain Flaminius. For the king is also to be carried to prison and the Sicilian proconsul says to him:

> You are confined unto the Gyarae
> With a stronge garde upon you.

Now an Elizabethan play cannot end with a tableau, and a guard cannot at this point merely be suggested, it must actually be on stage or it must enter. The Plotter could, it seems have allotted actors to guard Sebastian, but he chooses otherwise and notes: "Ent: Garde (agen)". Since it is not always possible to tell from a dramatist's text whether or not he envisaged that sort of re-entrance, our count is necessarily imperfect for such plays. Indeed, even in the case of *BAYL,* did we not possess the Plotter's annotations, we would conclude on strictly logical grounds (though with some sense of improbability) that the text can be played by twelve men and two boys.[23]

23 Other classes of texts which at first sight present anomalies, suggest, on reflection, that our analysis may be singularly informative. There

In this play, the precise count of sixteen virtually proves itself by the internal logic of the plotter's behaviour, which leaves little doubt that his primary intention was the making out the actors' scrolls for the speaking parts.

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are, for example, two small groups in which the cast is clearly greater or less than 12-16. A cast of eight men is shown by *Fidelio and Fortunio, Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes, Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Mucedorus,* which all have similar romantic plots, are close together in length and may have other connections as well.

Another group shows casts running well over twenty-four men. It includes a number of late plays, including Heywood's *Ages* which are known to have been played by two companies acting together, and the MS. of *Dick of Devonshire,* which editors have thought not prepared for playing because of its obviously large cast—another application of the ignorant author theory, but a striking one when the play is attributed to Heywood! This class also comprises a number of early plays, including *Henry VI* plays, and also the "bad" Contention Quartos which, uncomfortably for the textual critics, show, on the principles proposed, a *greater* cast than the *Henry VI* plays and therefore cannot be thought of as reduced for country touring. The Contention Quartos (c. 2,200 lines) are accompanied by other contemporary large-cast plays of similar length like *The Wounds of Civil War* (2673), *King David and the Fair Bethsabe* (2062), and *Edward III* (2654) which may give us some insight into the repertory of the large company playing at the Theatre after 1589. It is worth noting that the *Henry VI* plays are each 1000 lines longer than the longest of these, that is to say, more than an hour longer in playing time.

It would also seem that the King's Men went into a twelve cast phase shortly after 1603, corresponding aptly with the prevalent plague of the first years of James's reign. Another, more certainly verifiable, occurs early in 1633, coinciding with a warrant of the 6 May of that year for the King's Men to "choose, receive and take into [their] Company any such Actor or Actors belonging to any of the lycensed Companies within and about the City of London as [they] shall thinke fitt and able to doe his Majesty service in that kinde". The reason given for this privilege, unique in theatrical records of the time, is "the late decease, infirmity and sickness of diverse principal Actors of his Majesty's Company of Players" which "hath much decayed and weakened them".

We thus have some indication these results will receive some negative support from external records. When a fuller analysis is possible, they may help to explain the otherwise anomalous appearance of varying sizes of cast in the play-texts of the period which, up to the present, have seemed to bolster the irresponsible author theory. The document just cited will persuade us that an acting company greater than sixteen is very unlikely to have been available to the King's Men in 1631 when the manuscript of *BAYL* was licensed, while the manuscript itself is proof that a cast of *no fewer than* sixteen was actually employed.

Certainly there are some cases when non-speaking actors are named, but these may be simply explained as noting some necessary business. Alleyn's surviving "part" for Orlando notes stage business ("Enters with a mans legg")[24] and it may well be that in *BAYL* the entrances of Baxter and Rowland with sheaves of swords in Act V, and of Rowland as the gaoler (who is probably silent, but must help to carry out Antiochus) in IV. iii would need to have been entered in the actors' scrolls in the same way, for Baxter and Rowland have speaking parts elsewhere. Silent guards and attendants whose functions are directed in the dialogue are commonly not named, except in the case of Balls and Nick in III. ii whose appearance may be explained as a note, more properly belonging to the Plot, which keeps the team alignment clear. Other examples are to be found in V. i (Rowland, Balls and Nick). A curious case is that of Balls who is entered in the right margin of the manuscript in II. ii as a mute attendant on Flaminius, but not transferred with the other names in the entrance to the left margin, while Hobbs, his companion, is noted in both places even though he too does not speak. Thus the Plotter leaves us in doubt whether Balls appeared in II. ii or not. He probably could have done so, but he may have been blocked by playing Geta, or he may simply be reserved to play a Bithynian attendant in III. ii. In either case the matter is not important enough for the Plotter to have bothered to put it beyond doubt in the Prompt-book, for neither speaking nor business is involved. Ball's speaking rôle (if any) disappears after the opening scene. Hobbs may be more carefully noted because he will be a henchman of Flaminius for two scenes and will speak as Calistus in III. i. Moreover, he appears to have had duties elsewhere in the playhouse and has to be "calld up" during II. i.

Two other difficulties about the available acting cast, both given some weight by Sisson, must be briefly considered. The first concerns the splitting of the rôles of Calistus, Demetrius and Titus, which, at first sight, suggests a high degree of insouciance on the Plotter's part, and little care for consistency or individuality of character on the part of the dramatist and his audience. The division of rôles turns out to be entirely fortuitous: it simply

24 W. W. Greg, *Two Elizabethan Stage Abridgements,* p. 152. The direction in Q reads "Enter Orlando with a leg". Alleyn's part also lists mnemonic directions such as "Enter", "he beates A.", "here he harkens", "currunt", "decumbit", "Oliver Victus", etc.

happens that these characters are so slightly differentiated that they can quite easily be split up. They are not addressed or mentioned by name in the spoken text, except for Titus and Calistus. Calistus happens to be Mr Hobbs at the moment when he is named (III. i) and Baxter's identification as Titus does no violence to his anonymous appearances as Calistus and Demetrius. This situation is more fully explored under *BAXTER,* below.

The second problem concerns Sisson's supposition that at least five more known actors were available to the King's Men than appear in the annotations, and this of course, gives him confidence in assuming that the record is very incomplete. However, of those five, four (Sharpe, Vernon, Smith and Horne) do not appear in any record later than the cast of *The Swisser* (1631) and must have left the company before the production of *BAYL.* Shank, the fifth, does not appear in *The Swisser* or *BAYL,* but is mentioned both in *The Soddered Citizen* (1630) and again in the revival of *The Wild Goose Chase* (1632). However, he had no speaking part in the latter and may largely have given up acting by 1631.

My remaining task is to attempt to demonstrate the Plotter's logic from the record of his operations upon the text. My hypothesis that sixteen *adult* actors were available to him (and that this must also have been known to Massinger) receives support from the lucky chance that the Properties List raises the total of actors mentioned to precisely that number. Although a full demonstration would have to show not only that this hypothesis is tenable but that it is the only one in accord with the facts, I trust the reader will forgive me for avoiding, at present, the wearisome detail of the latter task. My justification must be that the following explanation is the only one that has ever been advanced. While the reader can ultimately test it only by referring to the manuscript itself or to Sisson's reprint, the reasoning about the actors' parts which ensues may be followed conveniently by reference to the accompanying skeleton Plot.

THE ACTORS' PARTS

1 *JOSEPH TAYLOR*

Taylor plays King Antiochus throughout. There is no possibility of his doubling. The Properties List records: "Act 2 : A writing for Mr. Taylor". This is the scroll "writ with my royal hand", a memorial of correspondence with the Carthaginian senate.

2 *THOMAS POLLARD*

Pollard plays Berecinthius throughout, a comic rôle. Since he is by no means comic in the sources,[25] the part is very obviously designed for a particular actor. Much play is made of his stoutness but this is clearly false padding, for he afterwards grows very thin. The Properties List records ".3. notes for Mr. Pollard", and in I. ii the Plotter records Berecinthius's entrance "wth.3. papers". The papers contain a list of the merchants' griefs and losses. There is no possibility of doubling him before IV. iii (where his execution is foreshadowed) and it is rather unlikely that he doubles later, since the re-entrance of the guard in V. ii points to a shortage of cast there.

3 *JOHN HONYMAN*

Honyman plays a Merchant throughout, and is led off to execution with Berecinthius in IV. iii. He is listed in that scene as "I: Hony" and called "the first marchant". This need not mean that he spoke the lines allotted to 1 Merchant throughout. Indeed the reason that his name appears here is very probably that he did *not*. The Plotter has chosen to double one of the Merchants, William Penn (probably the first), as the Gaoler, who appears in IV. ii at the beginning and the end. Since he cannot re-enter immediately in IV. iii in his former rôle, his lines have to be re-allotted. (See below.) The Merchants' rôles are not strongly differentiated.

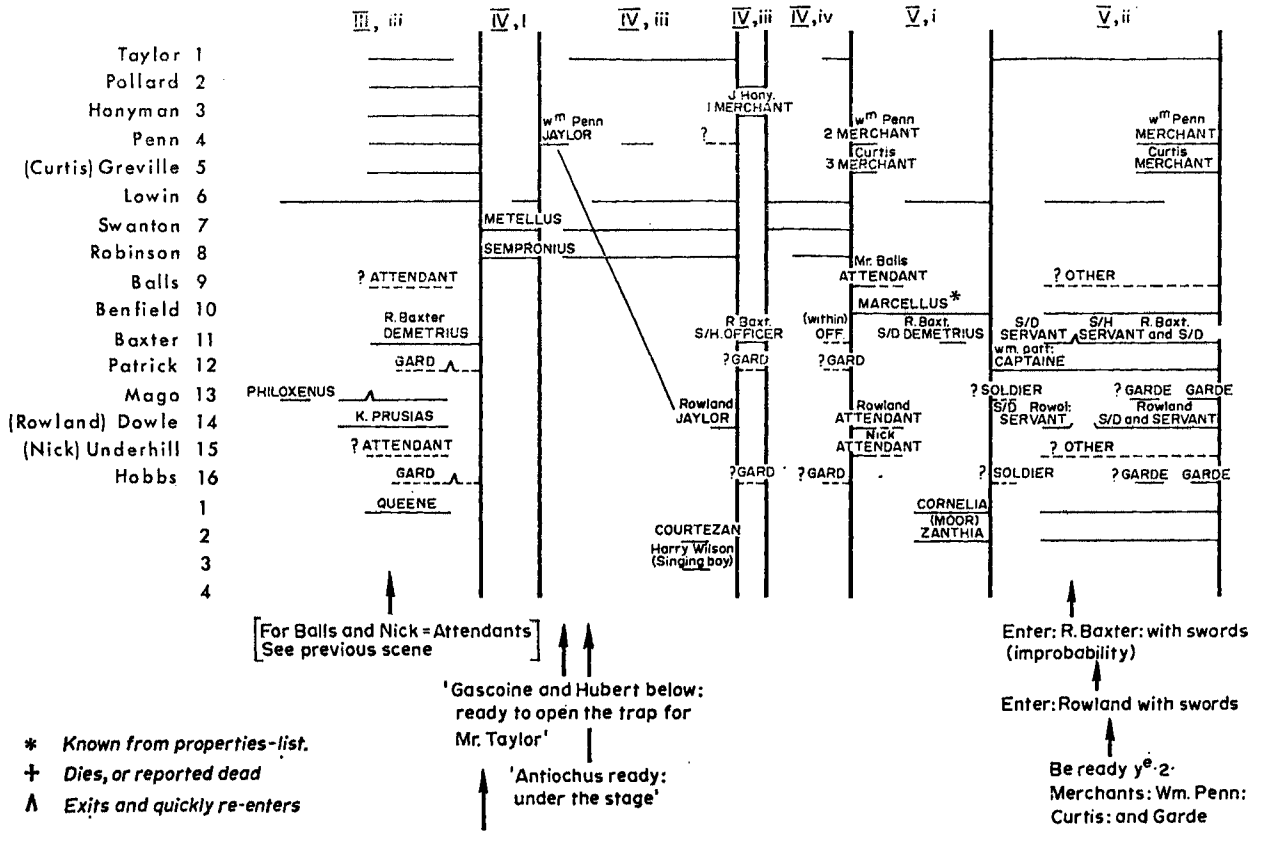
4 *WILLIAM PENN*

Penn plays a Merchant throughout, doubling the rôle with the Gaoler in IV. ii. For the reasons given above, it is most probable that he spoke the lines of 1 Merchant until his appearance as the Gaoler, after which Honyman takes over that rôle. It is a matter of indifference which Merchant appears in IV. iii, since it has no importance in the Plot, but in order to keep the actors' scrolls in true sequence, the Plotter must remember (as he does) to note that the 2 and 3 Merchants who appear in V. i are in fact Penn and "Curtis" (Greville).

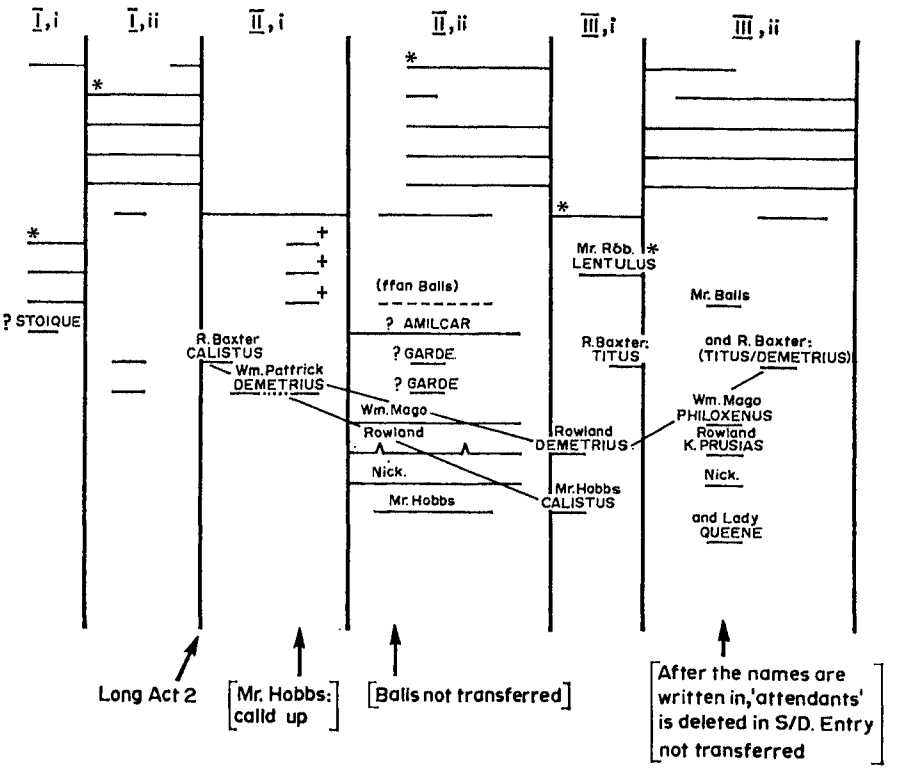
5 *CURTIS GREVILLE*

Greville is noted only as "Curtis", one of the Merchants, in V. i. The Merchants cannot double except with the Gaoler and

25 Sisson suggests that Massinger used Cayet's *Chronologie Septénaire* (1605) and Munday's pamphlets concerning the pretender Don Sebastian. The conflation of these acounts was, however, ready to hand in Edward Grimestone's *The Generall Historie of Spaine* (1612) from which Massinger took over, almost *verbatim*, passages that occur in neither Cayet nor Munday.


III, iii
IV, i
IV, iii
IV, iii
IV, iv
V, i
V, ii
Taylor 1
Pollard 2
Honyman 3
Penn 4
(Curtis) Greville 5
Lowin 6
Swanton 7
Robinson 8
Balls 9
Benfield 10
Baxter 11
Patrick 12
Mago 13
(Rowland) Dowle 14
(Nick) Underhill 15
Hobbs 16
1
2
3
4
METELLUS
SEMPRONIUS
? ATTENDANT
R. Baxter DEMETRIUS
GARD
PHILOXENUS
K. PRUSIAS
? ATTENDANT
GARD
QUEENE
wm Penn JAYLOR
J Hony. I MERCHANT
R Baxt. S/H. OFFICER
? GARD
Rowland JAYLOR
? GARD
COURTEZAN
Harry Wilson (Singing boy)
wm Penn 2 MERCHANT
Curtis 3 MERCHANT
Mr. Balls ATTENDANT
MARCELLUS*
(within) OFF
R. Baxt. S/D DEMETRIUS
? GARD
Rowland ATTENDANT
Nick ATTENDANT
? GARD
CORNELIA (MOOR) ZANTHIA
wm Penn MERCHANT
Curtis MERCHANT
? OTHER
S/D SERVANT
S/H SERVANT
R. Baxt. and S/D
wm. part: CAPTAINE
? SOLDIER
? GARDE
GARDE
S/D Rowl: SERVANT
Rowland S/D and SERVANT
? OTHER
? SOLDIER
? GARDE
GARDE
[For Balls and Nick = Attendants See previous scene]
'Gascoine and Hubert below: ready to open the trap for Mr. Taylor'
'Antiochus ready: under the stage'
Enter: R. Baxter: with swords (improbability)
Enter: Rowland with swords
Be ready y^e 2 Merchants: Wm. Penn: Curtis: and Garde
* Known from properties-list.
+ Dies, or reported dead
∧ Exits and quickly re-enters

Taylor	1	Antiochus
Pollard	2	Berecinthius
Honyman	3	Merchant (?2)
Penn	4	Merchant (?1)
(Curtis) Greville	5	Merchant
Lowin	6	T. Flaminius
Swanton	7	Chrysalus
Robinson	8	? Syrus
Balls	9	? Geta
Benfield	10	? Stoique
Baxter	11	(Calistus)
Patrick	12	(Demetrius)
Mago	13	Asdrubal
(Rowland) Dowle	14	Hanno.
(Nick) Underhill	15	Carthalo
Hobbs	16	
	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	



* *Known from properties-list.*

\+ *Dies, or reported dead*

∧ *Exits and quickly re-enters*

that rôle is allotted to Penn. It is certain therefore that Greville played a Merchant throughout, probably the third. On the analogy of our argument about Honyman and Penn it might seem safer to argue that he was in fact the second Merchant in the first four Acts, but that is to consider too curiously. It may well be that he is mentioned unnecessarily in V. i as a consequence of the Plotter having re-assigned the rôle of his companion Merchant Penn in this scene, or in order to remove the slight possibility of error that would still remain if his rôle were not assigned. The mention of Curtis and Penn a second time in V. ii is in a readying note anticipating their entrance. "Be ready ye.2. Marchantes" might seem to have been sufficient without the actors' names, since they are to appear with a guard and the guard is unassigned. I think we must assume that the Plotter is still concerned with the possible confusion about Merchants both as bodily presences and as rôles for which parts have to be made out, arising from Penn's change with Honyman in previous scenes. It is worth observing that the puzzle is probably not Massinger's. Other texts sometimes list speakers within a scene sequentially (or confusedly) in disregard of the identity established in the dialogue. Massinger keeps the Merchants' identity clear in V. i. Whether or not he did so in V. ii we cannot tell, for the beginnings of their lines are torn away.

6 *JOHN LOWIN*

Lowin plays T. Flaminius throughout and cannot double. The actor is known only from the Properties List: "Act :3: 2 letters for Mr. Lowin". The Plotter records Flaminius's entry in III. i: "wth.2.letters".

7 *EYLLAERDT SWANSTON*

Swanston plays Chrysalus in I. i. The Properties List gives: "writing out of the booke wth a small peece of siluer for Mr. Swantton", and after the note of Chrysalus's entry in the first scene, the Plotter has interlined "wth a writing <&> pen<y". He must certainly have doubled in one of the unassigned rôles in IV. i, either as Metellus or Sempronius. The question of whether he could have doubled as a Carthaginian in II. ii depends on whether the thirteen lines of Flaminius's soliloquy which end II. i allow sufficient time. Chrysalus and his companions Syrus and Geta are led off to be murdered just before that scene ends, and the three actors are thus free to double, but the time is unusually short. Even in late Morality Plays an actor very rarely if ever changes identity under twenty-seven lines of dialogue, and the plots

and texts of the Elizabethan theatre show that a whole scene or more is the usual allowance. Even from the Plot of *Alcazar* it may be seen that the twelve lines of Stukeley's speech to the Duke of Avero at the end of III. i are not sufficient to allow Charles Massey to dodge between the rôles of Spanish Ambassador and Zareo, and the Plotter has been obliged in consequence to omit a whole scene (III. ii of the text). Even then he was not out of difficulties, for being still unable to use his European lords in the text's III. iii, he adopted the only other possible solution (even though a most improbable one) of doubling Muly Xeque, the heir to the Moroccan throne, as a Portuguese Captain. Thus, I believe none of our trio in *BAYL* could have doubled as Carthaginians, and our conclusion must be that the actors named in the Carthaginian scene were indeed the senators themselves and not, as Sisson supposed, merely their attendants. If this is so, Swanston *must* have played either Metellus or Sempronius, for all other possible doubling patterns are mutually exclusive. Swanston was an important member of the company at this time, and since he must have doubled without assignment of his second rôle, it follows that a document existed setting out the pre-assigned rôles of importance. Our interpretation of the Plot may be seen in one way as a reconstruction of that document. Another way of regarding this is that the author must have been fairly sure when writing a speech of any importance that he had an actor of appropriate status to speak it.

8 *RICHARD ROBINSON*

Robinson is named as playing Lentulus in III. i. It is a brief rôle extending over part of one scene only, but Lentulus is a person of dignity and requires an actor of some importance. There is clearly some restriction at work in the dramatist's mind here for Lentulus enters unattended and comments on the fact. Almost all the available actors are changing from their Carthaginian costumes into Bithynian attire during this intervening scene, and Hobbs and Rowland Dowle have to make hasty appearances as Calistus and Demetrius. Only Mr Swanston remains aloof from the general activity. At first sight it might seem that *he* could have been called on to play Prusias, King of Bithynia, but whoever played that rôle cannot have played either Metellus or Sempronius and whoever played those rôles cannot have played Marcellus. Whoever played Marcellus *could* have doubled with Prusias, but Marcellus is clearly Mr Benfield and not Swanston or Robinson. Thus, if Swanston did not play Metellus or Sempronius, we must assume that the cast is larger than sixteen. In fact we would have

to account for a theoretical cast of twenty, for the same applies to Robinson, except that, having played Lentulus, he could hardly have appeared in the Bithynian scene. Swanston and Robinson would then both be idle in scenes which involve the presence of at least sixteen actors—unless we imagine them to have doubled as guards or minor attendants.

The logic of the situation is that each of the latter pair was originally designated to play only two (pre-assigned) rôles and must have appeared as Metellus and Sempronius in Act IV. When it was seen in rehearsal that the only other actors not positively excluded from the rôle of Lentulus were Balls and Patrick, who were clearly the second and third-last in importance in the company (the former probably playing no speaking rôle at all), the part fell to one of the two senior members available (Robinson and Swanston), and in fact, to Robinson. Support for this view is also offered by Rowland Dowle's rushed appearance as Demetrius in II. i for neither of these characters can double with the *dramatist's* Demetrius in the fourth act.

9 *FRANCIS BALLS*

Balls, as I have said, plays no speaking part and was clearly a minor actor in the company, unless he appeared as Geta or the Stoic. It is difficult to assign these latter rôles, and though I have shown them on the plan as played by Balls and Benfield it would be a neater supposition to allot them to Mago and Rowland Dowle, thus supporting a theoretically convenient pattern by which the Plotter might have named no character until he doubled in a rôle. This is a human document, however, and the Plotter seems to be concerned with a variety of considerations other than consistency. There is, for example, no compulsion to suppose that Baxter and Patrick are mentioned as Calistus and Demetrius in II. i for the reason that they are doubling (if that is the reason, some of the Carthaginians must then be named at their first entry) but only because they *speak*. If the Plotter appears to be concerned with recording the behaviour of the less important members of the company and mentions more dignified members only when a crisis of casting arises, it is because the minor members are all required to double in *BAYL* with considerable rapidity and it is convenient to keep a record of who is in and who out of play for possible casting in the minor rôles, even when speaking parts are not involved.

It is, I believe, for this reason that Balls is mentioned three times by the Plotter, although he does not appear to have spoken.

In II. ii he may not even have appeared.

10 *ROBERT BENFIELD*

Benfield plays Marcellus in V. i. The Properties List notes: "Act:5: a letter for Mr. Benfield" and the Plotter interlines "wth a letter" in the direction to V. i. He therefore most probably played Amilcar in II. ii. If the argument above concerning Swanston and Robinson is accepted, we can be confident of this, for with the exception of Baxter and Balls, all other named actors are occupied in that scene. Balls is ruled out by the fact that he is entered as a possibility for an attendant *after* Amilcar has been on stage for some time. Baxter has a largish speaking part, and might carry a rôle of this dignity, but it would be odd for him to appear in this scene for reasons of plot. He was sent offstage in the last scene to suborn Amilcar to the Roman cause, though, admittedly, he seems never to have achieved his object. Baxter would almost certainly do duty for the guard in the Carthaginian scene unless Swanston and Robinson stood in for that purpose, which is unlikely.

11 *RICHARD BAXTER*

Baxter's rôle is the most interesting of all. He not only doubles rôles but appears to split them with other actors, and his history in *BAYL* has been taken as evidence of the formality of Elizabethan playing and the frail sense of individuality with which the minor actors were endowed.

This I believe to be a total misconception and has stood more than anything in the way of our understanding of the craft of the dramatist, for in plotting through the texts, one becomes aware of the constant concern of the playwright to satisfy the claims of his story, to exploit to the full the novelty possible within the rather narrow limits of his stage, and at the same time to keep as clear a distinction as possible between the characters he presents, even though the many must be represented by the few.[26]

In the case of Baxter there is no sense of discontinuous personality. The Plotter has exploited a peculiarity of Massinger's play which was probably not intended by the dramatist. Massinger

26 In the last act of *Othello,* there arrives in Cyprus a character named Gratiano. For all the function he has in the plot he might be called I Gent. But he is recognized by Iago, called Uncle by Othello and given the somwhat superfluous task of announcing Brabantio's death. Nothing could be more likely than he *is* Brabantio doubling as his own brother. There is a delightful theatrical logic in the frequent obligation upon doubling characters to announce their demise in a former rôle.

seems to have imagined Flaminius constantly accompanied by two servants (Calistus and Demetrius) of more or less villainous disposition, later assisted by a third (Titus) who appears only in III. i. Calistus disappears from the script after III. i, but Demetrius remains to the end of the play. There is no reason why such an arrangement cannot be made with a cast of sixteen. Indeed it could be found within a cast of fifteen, and if we allow the dubious possibility of the Asian bondmen doubling as Carthaginian attendants, Massinger's demands can be satisfied within a cast of twelve. We have no reason for supposing a lavish and ignorant author who has landed his stage Plotter in a predicament and forced him to economize. What the Plotter has done here he appears to have done of his own free will, and he must have looked very carefully at Massinger's script to see that it was possible. In fact some of the graphic evidence suggests that he may have had Massinger's collaboration.[27]

Baxter is named as Callistus on that character's second entrance, the first having been silent. Both he and Demetrius speak in I. ii, but they still appear anonymously in the text as servants of Flaminius, though described somewhat unnecessarily in the stage directions as freedmen, an appellation that is used only once in the spoken text and then so vaguely that it may well apply to Titus rather than to either of these two. It is even possible that Massinger took little care to distinguish them, for the Plotter has altered Calistus's second entrance in II. i to Demetrius (which is rather more logical, but not compelling) and has also re-assigned to him Calistus's two short speeches at the end of the scene. On the other hand it seems more probable that Massinger originally intended them both to be on stage. Either way it is of no great importance. The life-lines of these two are strangely discontinuous. They never report on any of the tasks they have been sent to do, and when they do report an accomplished mission it is not concerned with anything that has been seen to happen before. Thus they might well be new individuals in each scene, and the Plotter is free to re-assign the parts scene by scene if he needs to, and as it happens he does need to. For as he plots forward he has altered Massinger's meagre spectacle very slightly.

The author calls for officers to attend the Carthaginian senate in II. ii. He may well have envisaged the Asian bondmen doubling, for if they do not, only one officer can be found in a sixteen cast. Perhaps, when the rôles were sorted through, it was found that

27 C. J. Sisson (ed.), *Believe As You List,* Malone Society Reprint, p.xxi.

they could not and the Plotter therefore abandoned Massinger's "officers", writing the names of the three lesser Carthaginian senators over the word in the script and obliterating it. Massinger at any rate clearly knew that, if he could bring them on at all, his officers had exhausted the cast, and that later in the scene, he would be forced to allow Flaminius to enter alone. When, for similar reasons, he is forced to bring Lentulus unattended on to the stage in III. i, he allows him a few words explanation of such a striking breach of protocol. The Plotter, however, by choosing to leave the Senate unattended, is able to bring on Mr Hobbs, and perhaps Francis Balls, with Flaminius. Even then Flaminius may have been poorly served, for as we have seen, Balls was not transferred to the left margin. Rowland, who enters *with* Flaminius and his party, is quite clearly the senator Hanno conducting Flaminius in. Despite the absence of a direction for his previous exit, that sort of thing is not left to underlings on the Elizabethan stage. Nor can Rowland conceivably be an underling, for he undoubtedly plays King Prusias of Bithynia.

The guard in II. ii is unassigned and we do not know if Baxter appeared there. It may be that Balls was reserved to enter with Patrick, for we see that whoever appears as Titus in III. i is *disguised* as a Carthaginian, and it may be confusing for the audience if he has recently *been* one. Only Swanston, Balls and Baxter are possible for the rôle of Titus and the Plotter chooses Baxter because he can see that Flaminius needs a constant attendant from now on. No character-name is mentioned thereafter in the text, but the recognizable association of Baxter and Lowin is clearly reckoned desirable, even though it involves an improbability in Act V where, according to the Plotter, Baxter enters with Flaminius but performs the tasks feasibly allotted by the playwright to a servant of Marcellus's.

So Hobbs is given the rôle of Calistus in III. i. He is addressed by that name, speaks, and promptly passes into obscurity, while Rowland's assumption of Demetrius shows that he must have been senior in the company to Mago, the only other appropriate actor who is certainly available for that rôle. We may therefore conclude that the Plotter's order of names in III. ii is correct, and that Rowland did indeed play Prusias and Mago Philoxenus.

We need pursue the minor characters no further. They rarely speak and the Plotter keeps little track of them after III. iii when they must all play a variety of guards and attendants. Nevertheless their activities are not completely lost, for the Roman guard in

IV. iii and thereafter has a consistent history, and by the directions to Act V naming the *Sicilian* attendants as Balls, Rowland and Nick, we can, by a process of elimination, discover the Roman guard to have been Baxter (who is named) and any two or all of Patrick, Hobbs and Mago. When Baxter is extracted from the command of the company to become a servant, entering in V. ii with Flaminius (although seemingly in the household of Marcellus), Patrick is promoted Captain, and it is then clear that if either Mago or Hobbs had not joined the colours before this, the remaining man would now have to be enlisted.

The conclusion is then, that the differences between the Plotter and dramatist are very much less startling than they have been taken to be, and are matters rather of convenience than of effective changes of action or actors. Certainly there is some additional fitting of the play to the cast available, but in a way suggestive of choice or interpretation rather than necessity. The Plotter does perhaps know more about the capacity of his players than the playwright, but sometimes, in other matters, he merely thinks he knows better, or makes emphases or economies that please *his* sense of fitness. When he does so, however, he is sure to have to pay some penalty which indicates that the dramatist's understanding of the casting situation is precisely the same as his own.

The extent to which the differences have misled modern critics may be illustrated from the notation of the Bithynian entrance in III. ii. Here the dramatist wrote: "Enter Prusias. Queene. Philoxenus./attendants."—a perfectly feasible direction. The Plotter writes: *"Ent: Prusias : Queen/Philoxenes : Rowl : Wm Mago/Mr Balls : Nick : & Lady"*. At the beginning of the entry he is merely following the dramatist's order, as he usually does. But when he comes to write in the actors' names, he observes a curious bit of protocol, viz. he does not name the boy who plays the Queen. Perhaps he does not even know his name, just as he does not know the name of the boy who sings at the Arras in IV. ii. The Plots all bear testimony to the same forgetful habit of mind about the boys' parts.

Sisson deduced from these entries that all the named actors are attendants, since, if the Queen were not assigned, it appeared to him that none of the other characters could have been assigned either. He was strengthened in this opinion by the illusory appearance of another Lady in the text. King Prusias says to Antiochus:

> this ladye sr your servant
> presents her dutye to you

after which the Queen kisses him. Prusias is, of course, referring to his wife, and is using the common terms of princely courtesy, but Sisson took the "lady" to be a real presence and introduced her into his cast. The Plotter had merely named the male rôles in order of listing—i.e. Rowland for Prusias, Mago for Philoxenus —and then added the two attendants (Balls and Nick) before returning to note that the principal boy (whichever one is to play the Queen) is also on stage and is to speak. No boys in *BAYL* are named, even when they do speak: the logical inference being that boys did not double: a conclusion which, were it not for the notable exceptions of Dick Jubie in *The Battle of Alcazar,* and Parsons in *Tamar Cam,* might also have been deduced from the Plots. It is possible even to prove that Jubie's ambivalent roles in *Alcazar* are creations of the Plotter's producing hand and not of the playwright's ignorance, but that must be for another time and place.

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