Before Shakespeare: The Drama of the 1580s
Andy Kesson (University of Roehampton)

Beioley
"Who is it that knowes me not by my partie coloured head?": Playing the Vice in the 1580s

Abstract: The 1580s is a significant decade for the Vice tradition, as it is conventionally regarded as the period in which allegorical drama declined, and therefore as heralding the decline of the "proper" Vice figure. As Alan Dessen has noted, "Most scholars accept Bernard Spivack's formulation that, except for an occasional throwback, the period after 1590 'marks the dead end and dissolution of the allegorical drama, at least on the popular stage'" (Allegorical Action and Elizabethan Staging 391). In the conception of those who follow Spivack's thinking, then, the 1580s can thus be seen as the crossroads between the more allegorical Vices of Tudor drama, and later characters like Richard of Gloucester who embody or evoke some of the Vice's characteristics, often while drawing attention to this influence as Richard himself does: "Thus, like the formal Vice, Iniquity, / I moralize two meanings in one word." Such borders, however, are never neat, and in this paper I will challenge this somewhat teleological portrayal of the Vice's development through an examination of the 1581 play The Three Ladies of London, and its 1588 "sequel" The Three Lords and Three Ladies of London, and consider the ways in which the 1580s affected the expression of the Vice figure as it continued to develop and change.

Dessen, Alan C. "Allegorical Action and Elizabethan Staging." Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900. 55.2 (2015): 391-402. Print.

Spivack, Bernard. Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil: The History of a Metaphor in Relation to His Major Villains. New York: Columbia University Press, 1958. Print.

White, Paul Whitfield. "Playing companies and the drama of the 1580s : a new direction for Elizabethan theatre history?" Shakespeare Studies: Volume 28. Eds. Barroll, J L, and Susan Zimmerman. Madison N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 2000. Print. 265-284

Michael J. Hirrel
The Wars of Cyrus: Date (and Authorship)

Everyone insists upon knowing more about *The Wars of Cyrus*, so this paper is intended to help slake that demand. I argue that *Cyrus* was written between 1577 and 1580, probably around 1578. The argument focuses on two pieces of evidence: 1) a song by Richard Farrant, who died in 1580, that apparently was intended to be sung in performances of the play, and 2) the play's prologue, which was spoken to an essentially public audience in London, and contains several indications of its date. The usual assumption that *Cyrus* followed *Tamburlaine* depends, on the other hand, upon a belief which finds no support in objective analysis.

Cyrus's early probable date suggests that popular drama in the late 1570s and early 1580s, almost all of which is lost, closely resembled later drama. Indeed, *Cyrus*'s resemblance to *Tamburlaine* underlies the belief that it must have followed Marlowe's play. All *Cyrus*'s characters are real people who engage in realistic actions. Except for the two battles, the action is represented, not reported. The dialogue resembles real speech, composed almost entirely in iambic pentameter blank verse. A largely comic parallel subplot is incorporated, involving a switch of identities between a mistress and her male

page.

       In an appendix to the paper, I argue that *Cyrus* was written by Thomas Watson. Both the main paper and the appendix build upon my prior paper, "Thomas Watson, Playwright: Origins of Modern English Drama."

Books and Articles

Michael J. Hirrel, "Thomas Watson, Playwright: Origins of Modern English Drama," in David McInnis and Matthew Steggle, *Lost Plays in Shakespeare's England* (Basingstoke, 2014)
Martin Wiggins, "When Did Marlowe Write *Dido, Queen of Carthage*?," *Review of English Studies*, 53 (2008): 521-41
Arthur Freeman, *Thomas Kyd, Facts and Problems* (Oxford, 1967)
Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge UK, 1998)
F. P. Wilson, *The English Drama, 1485-1585* (Oxford, 1969)

Helen Hull
Sovereign Properties in Thomas Lodge's *The Wounds of Civil War*

Thomas Lodge's *The Wounds of Civil War* provides an interesting nexus for the consideration of the establishment of legitimacy, authority, and sovereignty. Lodge's play is associated with the Admiral's Men and is generally dated in the late 1580s. In its consideration of ancient Roman history, the play stages competing concepts of sovereignty. The authority of the Roman Senate is subverted, and the contenders for sovereignty must establish their legitimacy. The play relies on the use of stage properties in dramatizing the battle between the forces of Marius and Scilla. Rods, axes, swords and severed heads are among the symbols of power paraded across the stage. These props highlight the dramatic themes—the play's exploration of the balance of legitimacy and power in the equation of sovereignty. In the context of the contested nature of the early modern theater, they also help to establish the theater's legitimacy as a medium for narrative (in contrast to reading print source materials/chronicles) by making a spectacle of displays of authority and by inviting the audience to find a way into the performance.

Among other sources, I am drawing on:

Bruster, Douglas. "The Dramatic Life of Objects in the Early Modern Theatre." *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama*. Eds. by Jonathan Gil Harris and Nathasha Korda. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. 67-96.

Hadfield, Andrew. "Thomas Lodge and Elizabethan Republicanism." *NJES: Nordic Journal of English Studies* 4.2 (2005): 89-105.

Tittler, Robert. *The Face of the City: Civic Portraiture and Civic Identity in Early Modern England*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2013.

Lloyd Edward Kermode (California State University, Long Beach)

I have long thought that the difference between the dramatic "product" of the 1580s and 1590s indicates a fundamental difference in the "consumers" during those two decades. It is a difference that has tended to be represented as a binary less/more; nascent/mature; bad/good. Thus the 1590s (and early 17th century) have come to "represent" "Elizabethan" and "Renaissance" (Golden Age) English

drama. But permanent theaters started appearing in London in the 1560s; even dating from The Theatre of 1576, a play from the mid 1580s is taking place in an established secular dramatic tradition. Maybe there's significant truth in those '80s/'90s contrasts. But such judgment seems at least partly based on anachronistic judgment of quality (and, as I will argue in the longer paper, also on our over-modernizing of Shakespeare and what I will discuss as a paradox in Bardolatry). Even the singular category of the 1580s is, of course, problematic, as the familiar date of 1587 (Kyd, Marlowe) is often co-opted by the later decade. During the 1580s, there were shifts in dramatic history, in generic activity, and in audience taste that need to be understood to grasp what was so interesting and different about the earlier decade from the more familiar 1590s. I do not want to use the 1580s as a stepping-stone to re-confirm the 1590s and beyond as our place of dramatic pleasure. Rather, I want to find the elements in drama of the 1580s that were the touchstones for audiences that did not know Shakespeare. By doing so, we will see how much of, and in what way, the "1580s" penetrate or haunt the so-called mature drama of the decades around 1600.

Three rather obvious sources (none of which really informs what I say in the abstract):
Jeremy Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge, 2007)
Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and Their Plays* (Cambridge, 1998)
Charles Whitney, *Early Responses to Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge, 2006)

Jillian Linster (University of Iowa)
The Dubious Doctor of *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune* (1582)

My paper will be a short critical essay on *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, a court entertainment performed before Elizabeth I in early 1582 and first printed in 1589. This play (by an unknown author) has been the subject of little developed criticism, but it represents an interesting example of transitional drama that incorporates elements of Senecan theater, medieval morality plays, and sixteenth-century ballads. *The Rare Triumphs* is also widely accepted as source material for several of Shakespeare's plays, most extensively *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest*.

My own work focuses on misbehaving doctors in early modern literature: physicians who, regardless of their motivations or the end result of their actions, cause strife in their communities. *The Rare Triumphs* is of particular interest to me for the character Bromelio, a banished duke who gets caught up in his son Hermione's love affair that comprises the main focus of the plot. Bromelio spends a considerable amount of time impersonating a foreign physician and, in that guise, manipulating various other characters through the use of magical powers that allow him to do things like remove a man's nose. Bromelio uses his trickery to reunite Hermione with his beloved, but as the young lovers embrace, Bromelio discovers his books of magic have been destroyed and has a phenomenal on-stage crisis. Through such complex entanglements of comedy and tragedy, *The Rare Triumphs* represents a significant move forward for the drama of the 1580s.

Bibliography:

Cook, Judith. *Roaring Boys: Playwrights and Players in Elizabethan and Jacobean England*. Stroud: Sutton, 2004. Print.
Ward, Allyna E. "*The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, 1582." *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*. Ed. Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012. Print.

Rory Loughnane
Shakespeare in the 1580s

Shakespeare's late plays, and more generally the idea of late authorship, have attracted much recent critical attention (Palfrey, McDonald, McMullan, et al.). Whether these plays are cast in the light of a type of epiphanic dénouement to his career, with the late romances, or a changing of the guard, with his co-authored works with Fletcher, the late works continue to fascinate. The early works have received less sustained treatment. One reason is that scholars feel on less sure ground discussing the early works as a subset, with much disagreement about which works are actually 'early' and the order of their composition. We can establish with some certainty that prior to the formation of the Chamberlain's Men in mid-1594, Shakespeare had already written, or contributed to, a tetralogy of histories (the three parts of *Henry the Sixth* and *Richard III*), a revenge tragedy or two (*Titus* and, possibly, an early *Hamlet*), two comedies (certainly *Shrew* and perhaps also *Two Gentlemen*) and two lengthy poems ('Venus and Adonis' and 'Lucrece'). But the early dating of some of these works remains in dispute. In the year and a half that follows (until January 1596), scholars do agree, however, that we can add *Errors*, *Love's Labours Lost*, (possibly also a lost *Love's Labour's Won*), *Richard II*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Dream* and possibly *King John* to the Shakespearean canon. To this list we can also add two other plays that are attributed wholly or in part to Shakespeare, *Edward III* and *Arden of Faversham*. And, in addition, it seems likely that Shakespeare was already composing sonnets before 1596. That Shakespeare writes so much in such a short space of time, immediately after the formation of the new company, seems improbable. The present essay considers the likelihood of Shakespeare first writing for the stage in 1588-9.

Short Bibliography:

Gary Taylor, 'The Canon and Chronology of Shakespeare's Plays', *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 69-144.
Douglas Bruster and Genievieve Smith, 'A new chronology for Shakespeare's plays', *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* (December, 2014), 1-20.
Martin Wiggins, *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue*, Vols. 2 & 3

Lucy Munro
Song and Female Impersonation in Elizabethan Children's Company Plays

This essay will focus on moments at which female characters are required to sing in plays performed by children's companies between the late 1570s and the early 1590s. In particular, I am interested in the ways in which the 'female' singer is deployed at moments of high dramatic, narrative or emotional tension, and in the implications that these representations might have for our understanding of the impact of female performance on the transvestite stage. I will focus on four plays: *The Wars of Cyrus*, which is extant in a heavily revised version printed in 1594 but was probably first composed by Richard Farrant in the late 1570s; George Peele's *The Arraignment of Paris* (c. 1581-4); and two plays of the late 1580s-early 1590s by John Lyly, *Love's Metamorphosis* and *The Woman in the Moon*. Children's company plays of the 1570s and 80s display an interest in female impersonation, and the representation and construction of female subjectivity, which is unlike anything to be found in adult company plays before those of Kyd and Marlowe in the late 1580s. Drawing on the common associations made between women and song, dramatists employ the boy singer as a key figure through which to explore female subjectivity and agency. Female characters are given songs at moments of

high dramatic, narrative and emotional tension, and the boy actor's unbroken singing voice has the capacity to create an illusion of femininity but also, potentially, to draw attention to the very artificiality and fragility of that illusion.

Useful Works:

W. Reavley Gair, *The Children of Paul's: The Story of a Theatre Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982)
H.N. Hillebrand, *The Child Actors: A Chapter in Elizabethan Stage History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1926)
Michael Shapiro, *Children of the Revels: The Boy Companies of Shakespeare's Time and Their Plays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977)

John V. Nance
Contesting Marlowe: Authorship, Prose Style, and the Comedy of Election in 1.4 of *Doctor Faustus* (1604)

Most scholars now agree that Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* was first performed at some point in 1587-89. However, a consensus regarding the relationship between the two primary witnesses of the play–and their respective connections to the early performance history of Marlowe's tragedy– has been more difficult to reach. Despite conflicting opinions about the provenance of *Faustus* A and B, the orthodox view from Bullen (1880) to Bevington and Rasmussen (1991) is that the comic-prose speeches in both texts are the likely work of someone other than Marlowe. The prose scenes in the play tend to mock the philosophical and phenomenological gravity of Faustus' agreement with Mephistophilis by vulgarizing and diminishing the 'high astounding' affectedness of Faustus's endeavors. As such, the comedy in the play is often seen as an essential counterpoint to the development of the tragic action. David Lake (1983) and Bevington and Rasmussen (1991) are currently the only scholars to engage with questions of authorship in the prose scenes in both texts of *Faustus*. Lake's colloquial contractions test identified the presence of a 17th-century hand in the A text and Bevington and Rasmussen suggested Henry Porter as the author of the comic material in the A-text. Yet both of these studies lack a reliable methodology that is currently accepted by modern attribution studies as a valid means to determine the authorship of a particular text. In turn, my contribution to this seminar will apply a range of established stylistic tests (with proven effectiveness in short samples of text) to 1.4 of *Faustus* A (a prose scene) to determine the most likely candidate for authorship. The results of this analysis will provide new ways of thinking about the dramatic prose styles of the 1580s and they have the potential to prioritize future lines of inquiry regarding the authorship of one of the most admired plays from the early modern stage.

Drama of the 1580s: Influential Texts

Terri Bourus, *Young Shakespeare's Young Hamlet* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

Laurie Maguire, *Shakespearean Suspect Texts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and their Plays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006)

Emily O'Brien
Arden of Faversham, True Crime, and the Drama of the 1580s

Arden of Faversham, probably composed after the 1587 edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles* and first printed in 1592, is nowadays most commonly described as a domestic tragedy, but this generic category is a retrospective invention which risks obscuring the play's historical and formal engagements. This paper explores what happens when one instead reads the play as a product of the theatrical and literary culture of the 1580s, reviewing its relationship to evolutions in dramatic genre during the period and to the contemporary print culture -- in particular at the cheaper end of the market, with a focus on the kind of pamphlets and ballads within which stories of real murder were also told. In the process of attempting to consider the antecedents to this earliest extant example of a staged true-crime murder narrative, the paper also reflects on how one goes about such a task when only a fraction of the period's plays and topical pamphlets have survived. To what extent is a study of the emergent and connected forms of true-crime murder pamphlet and play in this early period possible or valid under these conditions?

Helen Ostovich (McMaster University)
A Woman's Business in Love and War: *The Three Ladies of London* 1582-1602

This paper has two objectives: one, to establish the role of women symbolizing the limits of feminine influence and self-defence; and the other, to establish Wilson's impact on early theatre as an actor-playwright, on the Queen's Men, and on Shakespeare's repertory. I have written on gender games before as quasi-military tactics, especially in inciting or displacing violence, and in how such tactics may help women to survive in a corrupt city. I want to continue that revision of military tactics into female gamesmanship especially in Wilson's play, but also use that play to point to other plays of the 1580s and '90s (both from the Queen's Men repertory and from other companies) and to the development of plays about women who think in terms of military tactics as suitable for their own businesses, whatever their work and for their own protection.

The Shakespearean future for this play of the 1580s would logically be *The Merchant of Venice*, but I'm more interested in the relationships among the women in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, for which I am creating a digital edition online for *Internet Shakespeare Editions*, based on the quarto text (possibly written by 1599), which is more empowering for the purposes of this essay. My argument takes up Performance Studies (Performance as Research) to see why Wilson's play has as much appeal to audiences now – and seems as controversial now, though for different reasons – as it did when it sparked a furor in its first performance in 1581/2, leading to its publication in 1584 and its future with the Queen's Men (with sequel by 1590). Wilson was not alone in inspiring controversy (Lyly was doing the same thing in his questioning of values in his plays, written mainly for children's companies to play at court), but other children's plays were equally challenging, although tending to hide the belligerance and the anxiety behind romance and fantasy. Wilson's play remains one of the few truly gritty plays of the period, and this essay will attempt to offer a rationale for its popularity in its early days, and for its influence in later days. I will also consider again the place of Henry Porter's *Two Angry Women of Abingdon* (c. 1589?) as a kind of site of gestation between Wilson's 1581 conception and Shakespeare's 1602 published comedy.

Primary references
 http://threeladiesoflondon.mcmaster.ca/home/index.htm, edited by Helen Ostovich and Erin Julian, containing over 30 essays on the play and its historical context, 5 essays on Performance as Research, and 5 reviews of the June 2015 McMaster University performance (now posted on the website and on youtube).

Howard, Jean E. 'Sharp-tongued women and small-town social relations in Porter's *Two Angry Women of Abington* and Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*: *New Critical Essays*, edited by Evelyn Gajowski and Phyllis Rackin (Abingdon OXON and NY: Routledge, 2015), 74-83.

Porter
Spectators and Spectacle Before Shakespeare

What did it mean to watch drama in the 1580s? In many accounts of the early years of commercial theatre, spectatorship drives the theatrical market. For example, Andrew Gurr describes the 'evolution' of spectators' 'tastes' during 1567-87, a period in which 'the chief determinant' of 'change' in the repertory theatre 'had to be an intimate interaction between the settled appetites of the playgoers and the food they were given'.[12] Similarly, notions of commercialism and the 'market' shape Kent Cartwright's discussion of 1580s plays as products of the response to 'the public's appetite for the new'.[3] This paper will explore alternative narratives of 1580s playgoing. In particular, I will interrogate the critical dominance of commercialism as a framework for understanding spectatorship in this context. Playwrights including John Lyly and George Peele wrote for commercial and non-commercial contexts such as court and civic entertainments: what did the overlap between these contexts mean for spectatorship in this period? Is there tension between these contexts, or does the idea of commercialism set up binaries between paying and non-paying audiences that are unhelpful for the 1580s? What methodologies can we deploy in order to historicize 1580s playgoing? While raising these questions, the paper will focus on attitudes to spectatorship and especially visual spectacle in several dramas – Peele's *The Arraignment of Paris* and *The Battle of Alcazar*, and Lyly's *Sappho and Phao*. Through this analysis, I will argue that a shift away from questions of the 'evolution of taste' reveals a more complex, unstable picture of 1580s spectacle and spectatorship.

Bibliography:

Kent Cartwright, *Theatre and Humanism: English Drama in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)
Philip Edwards, '"Seeing is believing": action and narration in *The Old Wives Tale* and *The Winter's Tale*', in David Bergeron (ed.), *George Peele* (Ashgate, 2011), pp. 175-189.
Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)

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[1] Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 143.
[2] Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, p. 143.
[3] Kent Cartwright, *Theatre and Humanism: English Drama in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 223.

Aaron Pratt
Publishing the 1580s in the 1590s

With only a couple of exceptions, the plays that earned their first audiences in London's dedicated playhouses during the 1580s did not find their way into print readers' hands until the 1590s. And they did so almost uniquely during that decade. Marlowe's Jew of Malta, in fact, was the only play first performed by a professional company in the 80s to receive a first edition later, before the Restoration: it did not reach readers until 1633. This paper will examine the ways that stationers in the 1590s came to engage with the commercial theater, looking not so much at innovations, but at the specific techniques publishers used to integrate new works into an existing (and robust) market for printed drama. The story here is one of continuity, not disruption.

Elizabeth E. Tavares (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)
 "Super Troupers; or, Supplemented Playing before 1594"

Abstract: The work of Roslyn Knutson, Siobhan Keenan, S. P. Cerasano, and Tiffany Stern has done much to demonstrate that financial success in the Elizabethan theatre industry depended on collaborative strategies. At one time hotly debated was the prospect that whole companies may have combined or, as E. K. Chambers famously described, amalgamated for mega-productions at Court. Theatre historians and literary critics have gone back and forth on the issue, spurred by title pages and joint payment receipts indicating some form of collaboration in the performance event but deterred by a lack of other evidence and the complex re-distribution of company personnel and properties. Responding to the seminar question, how did these playhouses and the companies that toured them begin to work together in the 1580s, this paper returns to the problem of amalgamations. I will argue that supplemented playing was an irregular but recognizable feature of the pre-1594 marketplace, made available by the greater diversity of companies operating as well as an entertainment economy in which success was garnered more frequently through strategies of collaboration and duplication rather than competition and novelty. I will focus my energies on the record of the Lord Admiral's players career from 1582–1594, ignored in the criticism due to the juicy data available in Philip Henslowe's *Diary* after this point. Surveying the scholarship on the ways in which the company did and did not collaborate, I will then chart all of the records of definite and possible collaborative performances in order to posit which plays we know to have been in their repertory before 1594 could have been used for such performances. In so doing I hope to demonstrate that collaborative performance was a normal practice of the theatre industry in which William Shakespeare would come to train.

Keywords: sixteenth century; Renaissance theatre; playing companies; Lord Admiral's Men or Players; repertory studies; house style; theatre history; amalgamated playing, collaboration; Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Lodge, Philip Henslowe, Edward Alleyn.

Selected Bibliography:
Knutson, Roslyn. *Playing Companies and Commerce in Shakespeare's Time*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
Gurr, Andrew. *Shakespeare's Opposite's: The Admiral's Company, 1594-1625*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
Hirschfield, Heather Anne. *Joint Enterprises: Collaborative Drama and the Institutionalization of the English Renaissance Theatre*. Massachusetts Studies in Early Modern Culture. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004.