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Tudor Shakespeare: Taking the Long View

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Abstract

Tudor literature, especially texts written between 1530 and 1580, has been understudied by scholars. But Shakespeare was born and came of age in Tudor England, and his work is influenced by the drama and politics of this period. Reading Tudor drama alongside Shakespearean drama helps us better examine the way that various ideas and dramatic techniques developed across the 16th century. Attention to Tudor drama and its relationship to Shakespeare helps us rethink scholarly periodization and the social, religious, and theatrical changes and continuities of the long 16th century.

Shakespeare is a Tudor writer. Such a claim is most obviously supported by Shakespeare's birth in 1564, and the fact that he spent most of his life and half of his career writing under the patronage of Queen Elizabeth I, the last Tudor monarch. But the early output of Shakespeare and his contemporaries is much more likely to be called "Elizabethan" than "Tudor." To see Shakespeare as a *Tudor* playwright is to see him and his work as a product of the long history of the 16th century and not just the late Elizabethan years. This approach to Shakespearean and other early modern drama makes important contributions to several scholarly conversations. Studying across the 16th century creates a fuller social history of the period and better illuminates the traumas of England's religious reformations, a central concern of the "religious turn" in early modern studies. A longer view of dramatic development also nuances studies of genre, theater history, and performance conditions. And, seeing the political and intellectual aims of Shakespeare's immediate theatrical and humanist past helps us better explore the ways that the playwright takes up topics of power and tyranny, issues of renewed interest to scholars, students, and theater makers. After first defining the term "Tudor" for literary studies, this essay will catalogue some of the field's seminal and recent work in these areas of inquiry. It then describes the print and digital resources that can help scholars and students expand this burgeoning field of study and suggests directions for future research.

Defining "Tudor Shakespeare"

In their introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature*, Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank outline two ways of thinking about the term "Tudor" in literary studies. First, the term can describe the historical period from 1485–1603, and taking a long view of this period "allows us to look at English writing across the long 16th century rather than, as has generally been done, focusing in the later Elizabethan era – a period of literary largesse for sure, but one that should not obscure earlier reaches and which was, in any case, the product of what came before" (Pincombe and Shrank, "Prologue," 1). Much of the work described in this essay does just that: it reads across the long 16th century rather than skipping over a chasm in the middle of the century – a chasm widely emphasized by an arbitrary periodization of the "Middle Ages" and late Elizabethan era. But the scholarship synthesized below is also focused on a second aim, which is to reveal what is important in the oft-neglected drama and literature produced during

the sovereignties of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I, and the first two decades of Elizabeth's reign.

Pincombe and Shrank themselves have done much to demonstrate the vitality of literature that we might call "mid-Tudor" in their *Handbook* as well as in their survey of Tudor literature for *Literature Compass*. In particular, they offer a more focused definition of Tudor literature, and they command attention to work that focuses on the neglected gap of literature between roughly the 1530s, when Henry VIII broke with Rome, and the start of the so-called "golden age" of literature in the 1580s. C.S. Lewis's characterization of this period as "the drab age" didn't help (64), and Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, however field-changing in its introduction of New Historicism to early modern studies, plotted early modern literature and culture along a course that skipped from Wyatt's 1530s poetry to Spenser and Sidney's output in the 1580s. For the purposes of this essay's definition of Tudor Shakespeare, I want to emphasize the importance of that neglected period – the years between 1530 and 1580 – to Shakespeare's dramatic production and that of his contemporaries.

In calling for literary scholars to read across the medieval/early modern divide, Brian Cummings and James Simpson describe an increased interest in mid-Tudor literature

because of an interesting, we might say glacial, shift in the subject and its period boundaries. Medievalists have come forward into the Reformation just as early modernists have moved backwards from Shakespeare to mid-century. There has been an interesting renegotiation in the middle. ("Introduction," 5)

Indeed, conversations about the problems of periodization underwrite the growth of scholarship – Shakespearean or otherwise – that takes mid-Tudor literature seriously. The field is also expanding because of the work that the turn to religion in early modern studies has done to expose the importance of viewing the process of reformation in England as slow, iterative, and traumatic, and thus best studied by reading across the many vicissitudes of the Tudor period and beyond.

Viewing Shakespeare as a product of the mid-Tudor period – reared by parents who came of age during the chaos of Edward VI and Mary I, educated when humanism was hitting its stride, and inspired by Tudor source material – opens up a field far bigger than can be sketched out here. This essay will thus focus primarily on the relationship between Tudor and Shakespearean drama. To see Shakespeare as a Tudor dramatist is to focus on historical continuity rather than the ahistorical notion of exceptional (if undeniable) genius. As Greg Walker and Thomas Betteridge explain, the phrase "Tudor drama" "points towards continuities in dramatic form, function, and practice that tend to be elided by the more traditional taxonomies of dramatic history which are based on disjunctions" and shows how Shakespeare writes plays that are "not so different dramaturgically to a number of those produced and performed much earlier in the century" (16).

For the purposes of this essay, then, "Tudor Shakespeare" describes scholarship that includes mid-Tudor drama and Shakespeare in a *longue durée* study of a particular theme, issue, or practice, in addition to scholarship that uses Tudor drama to shed new light on the way a Shakespearean play treats a particular idea, character type, or theatrical practice. At its best, Tudor Shakespeare is far more than the source study that marked the first significant phase of Tudor Shakespeare scholarship in the early 20th century (Chambers, Tucker Brooke). However, this work as well as scholarship from the 1960s to '70s, a period which saw a revived interest in Tudor drama, merits revisiting (or visiting for the first time). This later 20th-century work shows "how much of Shakespeare's dramatic skill" he derived from earlier traditions (Wickham, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Heritage*, xvi) and describes Shakespeare's "emergence from

that mid-Tudor world” of humanist interludes, Protestant morality plays, and the final years of civic mystery drama (Jones, v). Emrys Jones’s description of Shakespeare as “A Tudor Genius,” the title of his book’s first chapter, satisfactorily points both to the way the playwright’s habits of mind are unmistakably shaped in the mid-Tudor period and also to his remarkability.

The essays and books described below don’t always concern themselves with what makes Shakespeare a hyper-canonical figure; many of them respond instead to more recent New Historicist and post-New Historicist criticism that contextualizes his work as a product of its time. When Pincombe describes Colin Burrow’s essay on *2 Henry IV*, he articulates what much of the best Tudor Shakespeare scholarship does, which is to make the reader

feel that Shakespeare has somehow been dissolved by immersion in his social and political context. Indeed, Shakespeare may have become so great a luminary that he no longer shines with a clearly definable beam, but rather suffuses the entire early modern literary scene as a sort of system of signification in its own right. (“Introduction,” 10)

Perhaps it can be electrifying to the scholar or student to take for granted the suffusion of Shakespearean light and to focus light into the darkened gaps of the 16th century to uncover its many treasures.

A Survey of Scholarship

With so many Tudor plays left understudied by scholars and a growing consensus on the importance of reading across the 16th century, the field of Tudor Shakespeare presents myriad opportunities for original research. A scholar or student wishing to write about Tudor drama and Shakespeare would do well to read both the 21st-century work that bridges the medieval-early modern divide and the solid – and often overlooked – twentieth-century scholarship on Tudor drama that informs this more recent work.

A number of books trace a particular issue across the long 16th century or in some cases across even larger swaths of history. This thematic approach to literary and social history often rejects the pervasive teleologies that describe drama’s steady march from the naïve and superstitious to the sophisticated and secular, and rather embraces the notion that, as Walker puts it, “the drama of the Tudor period is best studied as a single body of work, rather than divided into potentially misleading categories” like medieval and early modern, before and after Shakespeare (“Preface,” 5). This scholarship tends to see Shakespeare as one creative writer among many, embedding his works in a wider discourse on a particular social, religious, or theatrical issue. An early exemplum is Anne (Righter) Barton’s *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*, which argues that the impersonations and playfulness of the theater provided a symbol of reality, not illusion, for Shakespeare. She arrives at this claim by reading works like *Misogonus* (1560) to reveal the metatheatricity of Tudor drama, illuminating that “Shakespearean” techniques like indirect audience address in fact stem from an earlier tradition.

More recently, a *longue durée* approach to Tudor literature including Shakespeare has supported several social histories focused on drama. Robert Hornback’s *The English Clown Tradition from the Middle Ages to Shakespeare* traces the way racial, social, and religious boundaries are defined by fool characters in cycle plays, Tudor interludes, and professional drama. This approach also uncovers “the social and religious history of mumbling” and inarticulacy (Mazzio, 19), and the representation and religious politics of staging non-English languages (Dillon, *Language and Stage*). And the inclusion of Tudor drama alongside Shakespearean plays supports arguments on the relationship between developments in legal culture and drama

(Hutson, *Invention* and Reilly) and on the use of space and theatricality in the staging of both plays and political events in the court (Dillon, *Language of Space*).

The essays in *Cultural Reformations*, co-edited by Brian Cummings and James Simpson, are paradigmatic of the thematic, trans-Reformational approach to religion and culture in early modern England. That not all of the volume's essays discuss Shakespeare directly in their analyses of particular social or literary problems makes the collection no less useful to the Shakespearean wishing to widen her historical scope. When Shakespeare *is* mentioned, his plays may be used, for example, to demonstrate unfolding notions of conscience from Augustine to Chaucer to Henry VIII himself to Shakespeare and Fletcher's *All Is True* (Strohm). In another product of the religious turn, Sarah Beckwith, a medievalist, traces the revision of the sacramental language of penance and absolution in Shakespeare's late plays. Beckwith often uses the Tudor performance of mystery plays to bridge the historical gap between traditional Catholicism and Shakespeare. Lorna Hutson makes a similar move when she looks at Shakespeare and penitential culture via *Gammer Gurton's Needle* and other humanist plays ("Theatre"). Hutson thinks about penitence as a cultural phenomenon, and Timothy Rosendale's *Liturgy and Literature* explores the political and literary consequences of mid-Tudor liturgical reforms, particularly regarding the *Book of Common Prayer*, and the effects on Shakespeare and others.

More recent and forthcoming work by a younger generation of scholars testifies to continued critical enthusiasm for situating Shakespeare in a "trans-Reformational" context. New and emerging scholarship looks at the theatrical treatment of several topics of religious contention, from penance and satisfaction (Hirschfeld) to sacred music (Brokaw) to Eucharistic controversy (Zysk), from the way fools mark disability (Heetderks) to the sporadic persistence of the pre-Reformation idea of Mary as a Virgin whore (Solberg). These works, which, for example, place John Bale's *King Johan* (1538) and *Macbeth* in the same chapter (Zysk) or trace the discourse of folly from Erasmus to William Wager's *The Longer Thou Livest The More Fool Thou Art* (c. 1560) to *Twelfth Night* (Heetderks), demonstrate what is to be gained for the study of mid-Tudor and Shakespearean drama by putting plays from across the long 16th century back into conversation with one another, as indeed they would have been in the minds of many a contemporary spectator. *Longue durée* approaches to Tudor drama that scarcely mention Shakespeare – like David Coleman's *Drama and the Sacraments*, Alice Hunt's *Drama of Coronation*, Paul Whitfield White's *Drama and Religion in English Provincial Society*, and Alan Stewart's *Close Readers* – demonstrate the vitality of this approach equally well and are full of insights relevant to Shakespearean drama, too.

In addition to the aforementioned studies, there is a growing body of scholarship that is more specifically focused on the development of theatrical genres and techniques and on Shakespeare's inheritance of earlier forms and practices. While much of the work on morality plays and Biblical mystery plays has been classified as part of the growing subfield of "medieval Shakespeare," the persistent popularity of both forms through most of the 16th century marks much of this scholarship as "Tudor." As Kent Cartwright notes, between the Elizabethan years of 1558 and 1576, a quarter of new vernacular plays were moralities (Cartwright, "Humanist Reading," 9), and as many period-crossing scholars have noted, mystery plays were performed well into the reign of Elizabeth and thus throughout Shakespeare's childhood (White, "Performing Mysteries' End" and Happé). Despite being titled *Shakespeare's Medieval Craft*, Kurt Schreyer's recent book on the way the theatrical practices and physical materials of mystery plays survived into Shakespearean commercial theater is reliant on the temporal "Tudoriness" of the mystery plays. The continued power of the themes of mystery plays also underpins Beckwith's *Shakespeare and the Grammar of Forgiveness*, and earlier work on the way Shakespeare's late romances rework mysteries, too (Grantley, "The Winter's Tale").

Many 20th-century books and essays trace the development of morality drama from its “medieval” Catholic origins to Protestant revisions to appropriations of the Vice character in tragedies by Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Jonson (David Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe*; Dessen, *Shakespeare and the Late Moral Plays*; R. Potter; Spivak; Cox). More recently, Thomas Betteridge focuses on humanist morality drama and the way that *Titus* is “using up and transforming” the Vice and other “Tudor theatrical traditions and norms” (“Most Lamentable,” 653). The subtitle of his essay – “Shakespeare and Tudor Theatre” – points a way forward for thinking about a Tudor Shakespeare. And again, non-Shakespearean work on morality drama contains much to spark the thinking of Shakespeareans: David Bevington’s recent reading of the way both Nathaniel Woodes’s *Conflict of Conscience* (c. 1570) and Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* find the tragic potential of “the wrenching paradoxes of Calvinist theology” is a case in point (“Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*,” 716).

Several analyses of generic features of comedy in Shakespeare’s first plays acknowledge that they are perhaps better seen not as “early” works prefiguring later Shakespeare and writers like Jonson but rather as late Tudor experiments with the theatrical forms that emerged out of the 1570s and ‘80s. Readings of *Comedy of Errors* by Cartwright and Alison Findlay both think about the late Tudor-ness of this play and its spectators (Cartwright, “Language, Magic”). In her essay on the Tudor taste for inhumane laughter and sadistic delight, Pamela Allen Brown places everything from the dark tragedy *Cambises* (c. 1560) to *Titus* in the same mean-spirited boat; she also reveals the roots of *Lear* as a “fool king” in now-lost Tudor plays based on a 14th-century story (327). Andrew Hiscock’s explication of the way regional dialects and stereotypes create humor in plays like *Gammer Gurton’s Needle* (c. 1555) is another example of non-Shakespearean scholarship that should not be overlooked by someone working on, say, *1 Henry IV*’s Fluellen.

There is a large body of work that analyzes the way Tudor history plays, Tudor historiography (especially the chronicles that were Shakespeare’s source texts), and Tudor politics matter to Shakespeare’s history plays. Dermot Cavanagh’s *Language and Politics in the Sixteenth Century History Play* contextualizes Shakespeare’s plays as part of a longer Tudor tradition of the genre, arguing that uncivil language is crucial to the political debates presented in plays by Bale, Norton and Sackville, Greene, and Shakespeare. Tom McAlindon’s *Shakespeare’s Tudor History*, as its title implies, argues for the way the history plays were shaped by Tudor politics and historiography, and Anny Vanrigh uncovers the importance of Elizabeth I’s 1558 royal entry to the way *Henry V* self-consciously describes and stages pageants. Paul Dean discusses Shakespeare’s debt to *The Mirror for Magistrates* (begun 1554), the tragedy *Gorboduc* (c. 1562), and Roman plays of the 1560s. A compilation of verse tragedies about historical figures, *Mirror for Magistrates* has been receiving a fair amount of critical attention as of late, and several recent articles trace the impact of it on the dramaturgy of Shakespeare’s history plays (Cavanagh, “Sovereignty”; Lander; Lucas). Deanne Williams’ essay on “Tudor medievalism” also takes up the question of how the Tudors represented the past, arguing that Shakespeare’s first tetralogy recalls the structure of sin and redemption used in mystery plays; it also suggests that Shakespeare and Fletcher’s *Two Noble Kinsmen* represents the “apotheosis” of the Tudor image of Chaucer (218).

Williams’s argument that *Kinsmen* is a Janus-faced play that both incorporates the codified Tudor image of a fatherly Chaucer and contemporizes the old story by adding the emotional and mad Jailer’s Daughter resonates with many books and articles that explore how Tudor romances are and are not transformed in Shakespearean drama (219). Several studies of romance – in medieval and Tudor prose versions and early dramatic representations – show how Shakespeare’s use of plots and characters for plays like *As You Like It* and *Winter’s Tale* places him in a long tradition of adaptive creativity (Cooper, Boro, and Wilson). Several critics –

Barbara Mowat for one – have pointed out that *Pericles* and the late 15th century miracle play the Digby *Mary Magdalene* share plot elements because of their interconnected roots in romance and saints' lives; Joanne Rochester has recently shed light on the staging implications of this shared inheritance.

The ability of Tudor drama to illuminate Shakespearean performance practice has long been recognized by theater historians, from Richard Southern to Alan Dessen, whose *Recovering Shakespeare's Theatrical Vocabulary* attempts to uncover what Shakespeare's plays may have looked like in performance by using evidence from Tudor drama and theatrical documents. Indeed, theater historians often view Tudor plays more objectively, giving analyses that are unburdened of value judgments on aesthetics. The work of Scott McMillan and Sally-Beth McLean on the King's Men, and of Jeanne McCarthy and Michael Shapiro on boy companies, has much to tell the scholar of the Shakespearean stage about repertoire and performance.

This essay cannot fully address the way that Tudor literature and contexts matter to Shakespearean poetry, but it is worth mentioning that there is a body of important work on the way that George Gascoigne and other mid-Tudor writers of poetic treatises set up ideas about prosody that Shakespeare follows and modifies in his dramatic verse (Wright, Dolven). Margaret Tudeau-Clayton's exploration of the five Tudor translations of Virgil's *Aeneid* into English and their influence on other works offers a close analysis of the Player King speech in *Hamlet* that argues that the speech evokes Henry Howard's translation, which would have sounded as archaic as the earlier texts that critics usually suggest are the source. Her analysis shows how the speech's clumsy blank verse and archaic diction “[mark] the passage of time in language” and that the theme of dynastic endings is a hallmark of the way Howard reads Virgil and of how Hamlet reads history (402).

Tudeau-Clayton's careful source study does what much of the best Tudor Shakespeare scholarship does: it keeps modern scholars more historically honest. That is, it views Shakespeare as constructed by the Tudor world from which he emerges rather than reading his work retrospectively, as predicting trends and ideas to come. Gary Kuchar uses similar methods when he uncovers Shakespeare's self-consciousness about religious contention by reading ceremonial indecorum in *Titus* through the lens of Tudor liturgical politics. Demonstrating that *Titus* is itself a Tudor play that can be read politically, Kuchar's essay joins a long tradition of reading Tudor drama as political (Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics*; White, *Theatre and Reformation*; Walker, *The Politics of Performance*; Betteridge, *Literature and Politics*). Indeed, the political aims of Tudor drama have long been explored, as has its intellectual sophistication and its ability to produce epistemological crises (Altman). Viewing Tudor drama as politically engaged and intellectually sophisticated perhaps revises preconceived notions of its irrelevance and naiveté. This adjustment to our understanding of these plays also allows us to see when they produce effects – for example, self-conscious meta-theatricality and audience interaction, a hallmark of *Fulgens and Lucrece* (c. 1497) – that are often and incorrectly praised as innovative in the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. For another example, recent re-evaluations of the economic politics of mid-Tudor preacher-playwright William Wager show how he “negotiates internal and external censoring factors to write the state some 20 years earlier than is commonly imagined in popular drama” (Murakami, 306; see also Bevington, “Staging the Reformation”).

Much of Tudor drama's intellectual sophistication – including its ability to present problems from multiple angles and its generic inclusiveness – comes from its links to humanism and the fact that much Tudor drama is written by humanist educators and thinkers. Cartwright's *Theatre and Humanism* is the seminal work on the nuances of humanist dramaturgy, while Robert B. Bennett's *Romance and Reformation* offers a detailed analysis of *Measure for Measure* to argue that the play asks whether drama is truly able to serve the edifying humanistic aims set forth by Erasmus. Several other critics have argued for the importance of humanist thought to other

plays, exploring how Shakespeare was influenced by the tradition's approach to the study of human nature (Wells) or looking for specific instances of humanist influence in *Hamlet* and *Love's Labour's Lost* (U. Potter).

Shakespeare is not our contemporary but perhaps one of the ways he might speak most strongly to the late 2010s moment is as a political playwright who represents issues of civic unrest, tyranny, and the complexities of government in his plays. His model for doing so, as several scholars have shown, is Tudor. In looking at the Tudor translations of and experiments in Senecan tragedy and the political tracts and plays that Shakespeare was reading, we can see the roots of Shakespeare's depictions of political figures and situations. Tudor interludes address tyranny (as in *Cambises* or *Gorboduc*) and the dangers of commerce (as in several Wager plays) in unsettling ways. To think of Shakespeare as a Tudor playwright is to think of him as living in the time that produced Tudor absolutism and drama that challenged it and to think of him as part of – but not inventor of – a theatrical tradition that is anxious about such things as sovereign power, leadership, rebellion, and nascent capitalism. In this way, a Tudor Shakespeare is a Shakespeare for today.

Shakespeare's politics and their Tudor grounding is part of the subject of Catherine Belsey's foundational – and recently re-issued – *The Subject of Tragedy*, which puts Henry Medwall's *Nature* (c. 1496) cheek-by-jowl with *Hamlet*, and *Lusty Juventus* (c. 1550) next to *Coriolanus* to argue that the rise of a humanist self-determination in the 16th century was ultimately an experience for men and men only. Rebecca Bushnell's *Tragedies of Tyrants* offered an early critique (1990) of New Historicism and its anachronisms by arguing that the intellectual movement too narrowly defined what texts counted as political. Her book – which includes a chapter on humanist prose (ch. 2) and one on humanist morality plays (ch. 3) – looks at drama and tracts presenting tyranny to show how much Shakespeare owed to these Tudor playwrights in his portraits of “tormented tyrants” (115).

More recently, Jessica Winston writes of the profound impact of Jasper Heywood's 1560s translations of Seneca, the first in English, on Shakespeare as well as Kyd and Marlowe. She explores the way Seneca and Heywood both use ancient history to address present situations, a practice that is picked up by Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville in *Gorboduc*, by Shakespeare in *Richard II* and many other histories and tragedies, and indeed by many a modern stage or film interpreter of Shakespeare's plays. Work that uncovers the way that Tudor tragedy addresses monarchy and succession – from dramas like *Cambises* or *Gorboduc* (Cavanagh, “Political Tragedy”) to little discussed collections of *de casibus* tragedy like George Cavendish's *Metrical Visions* (Pincombe, “A Place”) – has much to offer scholars, students, and practitioners interested in the political Shakespeare.

Resources for Future Work

As I hope is conveyed by the above survey, Tudor Shakespeare offers several exciting possibilities for future research directions in social history, reformation studies, genre studies, theater history, and political interpretation. A number of recent print and digital resources will increase access to primary materials as well as cutting-edge thinking on these texts. Helpful special issues of *Studies in English Literature* (47.2 in 2007) and *The Yearbook of English Studies* (38.1–2 in 2008) on Tudor literature preceded the publication of three massive collections of essays, many cited above, that are invaluable to the field. The essays collected in editors Pincombe and Shrank's award-winning *Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature* introduces readers to several Tudor writers who had never before been treated in a major volume and provides essays that address the breadth of Tudor history while focusing on the neglected period of 1530–80. *The Blackwell Companion to Tudor Literature*, edited by Cartwright, offers several readings of Tudor texts and also provides a series of excellent and orienting contextual essays. And *The Oxford Companion to Tudor Drama*,

edited by Betteridge and Walker, begins with essays on mystery plays and ends with Betteridge's essay on *Titus*, covering every genre and period in between. It thus offers an implicit claim for Shakespeare's Tudor-ness while providing several important readings of Tudor plays. The less massive *Tudor Drama before Shakespeare*, edited by Lloyd Kermode, Jason Scott-Warren, and Martine van Elk, also contains illustrative readings of several 16th-century plays. The journals *Early Theatre* and *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* have both been leading the way in publishing work on Tudor drama and Shakespeare, generally outpacing Shakespeare-focused journals like *Shakespeare Quarterly* in giving the field attention.

A scholar or student wanting to know which Tudor play might be relevant to their work will find two reference guides useful. Darrell Grantley's *English Dramatic Interludes 1300–1580: A Reference Guide* is arranged alphabetically and gives plot summaries, character lists, probable performance and printing dates, and other performance details like prop lists and musical cues; it is a useful, and portable (it's in paperback) guide to extant Tudor drama. The first volume of Martin Wiggins and Catherine Richardson's *British Drama: 1533–1642: A Catalogue* includes precise bibliographic and performance information for both extant and lost plays as well as plot summaries and is arranged chronologically; it is an invaluable resource for the more advanced scholar. After identifying promising plays to read, one's next task is to get her hands on the scholarly editions of the plays themselves, and that is getting easier to do.

One of the issues that has long prevented Tudor drama from receiving the attention it deserves is the lack of affordable modern editions of the plays, an issue taken on by *The Oxford Anthology of Tudor Drama*, edited by Greg Walker and now available in paperback for \$50. The volume contains examples of every major Tudor genre: mystery plays (the York "Fall of the Angels"), morality plays (from the Catholic *Everyman* to the post-reformation political play *Respublica*), comedies (from *Gammer Gurton's Needle* to *Comedy of Errors*), and tragedies (from Jasper Heywood's Senecan *Thyestes* to *Cambises* to *Titus*). Blackwell's *Renaissance Drama: An Anthology of Plays and Entertainments*, edited by Arthur Kinney, and their *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, also edited by Walker, were noteworthy for featuring mid-Tudor plays, but *The Anthology of Tudor Drama* provides a unique sweep of drama across the Tudor period. It features lucid introductions to the drama as well as suggestions for further reading. It will be joined at some future date by *The Broadview Anthology of Tudor Drama*, currently under Alan Stewart's editorship, which will provide another valuable compendium to scholars and students.

In addition to these anthologies and a number of older, smaller, and often out-of-print editions of Tudor plays, one is increasingly able to access Tudor drama online. Several ongoing projects – most notably the Digital Renaissance Editions and Queen's Men Editions – are undertaking the task of providing scholarly, searchable digital editions of these plays to the masses. These projects are discussed and praised in essays by Trevor Hirsch in *Early Theatre* and *Literature Compass*, where Hirsch argues that digital editions are the best way to provide access to these less marketable texts. As Hirsch points out, databases like Early English Books Online (EEBO), the English Verse Drama Database, and the Database of Early English Playbooks are more limited in usefulness, as they provide raw texts and data rather than carefully edited and annotated editions of the plays. A new proliferation of edited Tudor plays in print anthologies and online will hopefully allow more scholars, students, and performers to access these plays, for indeed many Tudorists attest to the ways in which this drama's power often is found more on the stage than the page.

Future Directions: Pedlar's Prophecies and Pedagogical Reform

The aforementioned resources are making Tudor drama more easily accessible, but it remains the case that the scholar or student looking to produce original research is well served by doing

a little more digging for works that have not been recently, or ever, edited. Such efforts uncover plays like *Pedlar's Prophecies* (c. 1561, possibly by Robert Wilson), which has been almost entirely ignored in scholarly literature. This generically complex play uses a wily peddler of wares and ballads to discuss the social and economic ramifications of religious change, including the influx of religious refugees from Europe. At one point, the peddler chastises a Mariner for letting in foreigners, the “Ruffian, Moores, Turkes, and Tartians” who have been “mixed” with “Anabaptists, Lybertines, Epicurians, and Arians/Infinit of these, your country to infeeble” (14v). This play’s discussion of Xenophobia could be a part of a timely study that also included the speech from *Sir Thomas More* on migrants, a speech attributed to Shakespeare (2.4.55–70).

The peddler’s trickery and singing also make the play relevant to studies of *The Winter's Tale's* Autolycus. Of particular interest is the way in which the peddler shows off his “ballet [ballad] book” (17r). The reference is striking, since ballads were usually printed on individual broadside sheets, and book collections of music were far more likely to be psalm collections. This allusion to ballad books revises received notions of early modern ballad culture, an issue that could be of interest to scholars of Shakespeare and music and anyone interested in early modern musical practice and print culture more generally. *Pedlar's Prophecies* is but one example of a virtually unknown Tudor play that is ripe for exploration, full of information that is interesting not just because it may help us understand Shakespeare differently but also noteworthy on its own Tudor terms.

In order to ensure that Tudor plays like *Pedlar's Prophecies* attract critical interest, we need to revise the way we teach the 16th century and rewrite the way future generations of scholars understand literary periods. The myth of the mid-Tudor literary wasteland gets perpetuated when we skip from Malory to Marlowe in our survey courses, a problem several Tudorists have pointed out (Pincombe, “Introduction,” 4; Kermode et. al., 1). *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, which contains no drama between the mystery plays it puts in the medieval volume and *Doctor Faustus* (and very little poetry between Wyatt and Raleigh), makes this a difficult task. And yet, the popularity of TV shows like *The Tudors* and books like Hilary Mantel’s *Wolf Hall* means that students are more interested than ever in the historical drama of the mid-Tudor years: selling these contexts is easy, now we need to sell the period’s texts, too. Hopefully, Walker’s and Stewart’s anthologies will assist teachers in providing students access to mid-Tudor drama; Dillon’s thorough and accessible *Cambridge Introduction to Early English Theatre* is another crucial resource for introducing Tudor drama to students and indeed to Shakespearians.

In a recent interview, James Simpson discusses an exciting pedagogical approach to modeling trans-Reformation studies. He teaches seminars that have “a cultural theme, and for each theme [the students] examine at least one pre-Reformation and one post-Reformation text” (Cowdery, 148). This idea addresses what he calls the “huge gap” in scholarship of the mid-Tudor period, and Simpson describes the lack of work on those texts as a “strikingly lost opportunity” (Cowdery, 149). It is my hope that the promising momentum in Tudor Shakespeare studies continues to build, and that Shakespearians and other scholars and students of English drama are energized to discover and dust off what’s fallen into that gap.

Short Biography

Katherine Steele Brokaw’s research interests include Shakespearean drama in historical and modern performance, music, religion, and late medieval and Tudor drama. She is the author of *Staging Harmony: Music and Religious Change in Late Medieval and Early Modern Drama* (Cornell, 2016) and articles for *Comparative Drama*, *Shakespeare Bulletin*, and the volume *Beyond Boundaries: Rethinking Music Circulation in Early Modern England*. Her forthcoming work includes a co-edited (with Jay Zysk) collection of essays entitled *Re-Thinking the Secular in the Age of*

Shakespeare, an essay on dice games in early Elizabethan Protestant morality plays for the volume *Games and Theatre in Early Modern England*, and an essay on contemporary amateur Shakespeare performances for *Shakespeare Bulletin*. She is currently working on a monograph about amateur Shakespeare, as well as editing an Arden performance edition of *Macbeth*. She teaches English literature at the University of California–Merced, where she serves as chair of undergraduate English. She holds a BA from Illinois Wesleyan University, an MA from Cambridge, and a PhD from the University of Michigan.

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