The earliest dating of William Rowley’s *All’s Lost by Lust* is approximate and comes from a list of dramatic works found on waste paper related to the Revels Office. The extrapolated date for the earliest performance of the plays from the waste paper and hence for the plays listed, including *All’s Lost*, is 1619 or 1620. *All’s Lost* was also performed by Lady Elizabeth’s Company at the Cockpit-in-Court theatre in 1622 and revived with success at Christopher Beeston’s private playhouse, The Phoenix, in 1633. Its popularity is affirmed by the printing of Thomas Harper’s 1633 quarto edition, and the reference to several performances on the title page, ‘A Tragedy called All’s Lost by Lvs’. Written by William Rowley. Divers times Acted by the Lady Elizabethhs Servants, And now lately by her Maiesties Servants, with great applause, at the Phoenix in Drury Lane.’ That it continued to be performed several years later is attested to by fact that the Lord Chamberlain renewed official protection of the play as part of the repertoire of the Beeston Boys on 10 August 1639.

The personal information we have on William Rowley is very limited. He was born around 1585 and died around 1626. What we know beyond that is through his connections with the theatre. He was an actor with Queen Anne’s Company, and later became a founding member of the Duke of York’s Men in 1610. When the latter company became Prince Charles’s Company, Rowley is listed as the leading comedian. It is generally assumed that he is the actor that played the Fat Bishop in the ‘notorious’ play by Thomas Middleton, *A Game at Chess* (1626), which satirises the colour-coding of good and evil along black and white lines with such razor-sharp wit.

Rowley is associated by name with fifty plays but, unfortunately, only sixteen have survived. The earliest play ascribed to Rowley is *The Travails of the Three English Brothers* (1607), a collaborative effort with John Day and George Wilkins. His work for Queen Anne’s Company included *The Birth of Merlin* (c. 1613), which is attributed jointly to Rowley and Shakespeare in its earliest extant edition, but belongs to the Shakespeare apocrypha. Throughout his career, he collaborated with several well-known dramatists, including Middleton, Philip Massinger, Thomas Dekker, John Ford, and John Webster. He is, however, most well-known for *The Changeling*, which he co-wrote with Middleton the same year that *All’s Lost* was staged at the Cockpit (1622). Like *All’s Lost, The Changeling* is a dark play about lust and revenge.

Though most of Rowley’s work was collaborative, *All’s Lost* is one of four plays that Rowley is generally assumed to have written alone, and it is the only tragedy. To give a brief synopsis of the main plot in the play, it opens as Through most of Rowley’s work was collaborative, *All’s Lost* is one of four plays that Rowley is generally assumed to have written alone, and it is the only tragedy. To give a brief synopsis of the main plot in the play, it opens as

3. Hunter’s comment on his own annotation, ‘1619X1620’, is that the play could not have been performed earlier than 1619 nor later than 1620 (p. 544).
5. Edgar C. Morris, however, notes Rowley’s time of death as both later and uncertain. He appears on record for the last time in 1625 on a patent for the King’s Men but again, according to Morris, on a document that records his marriage to one Isabella Tooley at Cripplegate in 1637: ‘The Spanish Gipsie’ and ‘All’s Lost by Lust’ (Boston and London: Heath, 1908), p. x.
10. The information regarding the Arab origin of part of the plot of *All’s Lost* can also be found in Anna Fahraeus ‘A Source for William Rowley’s *All’s Lost by Lust*,’ Notes & Queries 56 (2009), pp. 84–5; doi:10.1093/notes/gjn225.
22. Anthony Gerard Barthelemy, *Black Face, Malignant Race: The Representation of Blacks in English Drama from Shakespeare to Southerne (Baton*
Spain

historical source can, however, be found in the three-volume anthology of historical texts entitled

palace/room is breached.12

warning in the play), and the existence of a prophetic message of doom for the kingdom is revealed when the

Radericke

‘conception, development and characterisation’ is typical of Rowley’s style.8

in

contributions in collaborations were often comic sub-plots as well —

1617–1618);

A Shoemaker, A Gentleman

humour is jarring if the play is read as a

tradition of appreciation for the macabre black humour that is present in the play. From a modern perspective this

The play also has a dark romantic sub-plot. Antonio, a young nobleman, is infatuated with a young woman named

Margaretta. She is a commoner, and Antonio’s friend Lazarello warns him against the unsuitability of the match. Nor does

Margaretta’s father approve, but her brother Jaques, a clown, is at first eager to promote it. When Antonio is called to the

front, he impulsively marries Margaretta in secret. At the front, Antonio proves himself courageous in battle and is among

the guests at the castle of Don Alonzo, where he meets Alonzo’s beautiful daughter Dionysia, who flirts openly with him. Antonio

is convinced by his friend Lazarello to find a way out of his marriage with Margaretta, but Margaretta learns of his

betrayal through her brother. There are numerous twists and turns but eventually, with the aid of her maid Fydella,

Margaretta determines to kill Antonio. In a reversal of the standard bed trick, however, it is Lazarello who is killed in

Antonio’s bed, the mistaken victim of Margaretta’s vengeance. The women are unaware that they have killed the wrong

man until Margaretta sees Dionysia with Antonio, who has been wounded in battle. Antonio dies, and the two women stab

themselves over his dead body.

Edgar C. Morris argues that the text and style of All’s Lost suggests that it was written by Rowley without the aid of

Middleton.7 Charles W. Stork similarly maintains that Rowley wrote the play unassisted by anyone and that its

‘conception, development and characterisation’ is typical of Rowley’s style.8 Any strong evidence for a direct collaboration in the

writing of the play seems to remain undiscovered. The three other plays that Rowley wrote alone are all comedies: A Shoemaker, A Gentleman (c. 1617–1618); A Match at Midnight (1621), and A New Wonder, A Woman Never Vexed (1625). A reading of All’s Lost is enhanced by an awareness of Rowley’s marked preference for comedy — his contributions in collaborations were often comic sub-plots as well — because it supports the existence of a contemporary tradition of appreciation for the macabre black humour that is present in the play. From a modern perspective this humour is jarring if the play is read as a straight tragedy.

A source for part of the plot

The two modern editors of All’s Lost, Edgar C. Morris and Charles W. Stork, both worked in the early twentieth century. They identify a now lost play entitled The conquiste of spayne by John a gant by Richard Hathway and William Rankins from 1601 as a possible source for All’s Lost.9 Foakes’s edition of Henslowe’s Diary suggests another possibility, the play Radericke (Roderick) which is listed in 1600. Unfortunately, it too is lost so a comparison is not possible. A more certain historical source can, however, be found in the three-volume anthology of historical texts entitled Christians and Moors in Spain published by Aris and Phillips between 1988 and 1992.10

Colin Smith collected European texts for the first two volumes, and includes an extract from Roderigo Jiménez de Rada’s work on the history of Spain, De rebus Hispaniae (1243). De Rada writes:

At that time there was a palace in Toledo which had remained closed during the reigns of many monarchs, firmly

barred to all. This against the advice of everybody else, Roderick caused to be opened […] When this was opened, he

found a cloth on which was written, in Latin letters: ‘Should it happen that the bars are broken, and the palace and the

chest opened, and the contents of the latter revealed, it should be known that the people whose pictures are
drawn on the cloth will invade Spain and subject the country to their rule’. When the King saw this he was sorry he

had opened the palace, and he had the chest and the palace sealed again just as they had been before. What was

depicted on the cloth was the faces, persons, and dress of Arabs, with their heads covered in cloths, seated on

horses, wearing dress of varied colours, holding swords and bows and banners on high. The king and his chief nobles

were terrified by these pictures.11

De Rada’s account of Roderick bears a strong resemblance to the events in All’s Lost. Many of the same elements are

present in both: a locked palace becomes a room in the palace in the play, the king enters against advice (a more explicit

warning in the play), and the existence of a prophetic message of doom for the kingdom is revealed when the

palace/room is breached.12

The legend of the last Visigoth king of Spain, however, is not European in origin. It appears in the tenth century within

the chronicles of the medieval Arab historian Ibn al-Qutiyya (d. 366/977). He writes:

It is said that the Visigoth kings had a palace at Tulaitula (Toledo) […] The palace was greatly revered, and was
never opened. When a king died, his name was inscribed there. When Roderick came to the throne, he put the crown on his head himself, which gave great offence to the Christians; then he opened the palace and the sepulchre, despite the attempts of the Christians to prevent him. Inside they found effigies of the Arabs, bows slung over their shoulders and turbans on their heads. At the bottom of the plinths was written: 'When this palace is opened, these images are brought out, a people in their likeness will come to al-Andalus and conquer it'.

The story is fundamentally the same as in de Rada’s work and in Rowley’s drama. Rowley alters the legend only in so far as he exchanges the painted cloths in de Rada and the effigies in al-Qutiyya for a vision of the fall of Spain and makes the Spaniards explicitly complicit with the Moors. Roderick sees Mulyummen, the Moorish general, take his throne in an invasion of Seville, but with him are Antonio, Alonzo, and General Julianus and his daughter Jacinta. Together, the Muslim Moor and the Catholic Spaniards lead an ‘army of Moores, of Turks and infidels’ to overthrow Roderick.

The early Arab text and the story’s recurrence in De rebus Hispaniae and All’s Lost suggest that the later European versions were almost certainly based on an Arabic legend of the fall of Iberia to the Arabs, and that the Arab legend was either common knowledge in early seventeenth-century Europe or Rowley had access to it — even if we cannot identify either al-Qutiyya or de Rada as the exact source he used when he wrote his play.

All’s Lost as a history play

Like Dekker’s Lust’s Dominion (c. 1599), All’s Lost is loosely based on the Moorish conquest of Iberia but it also includes a rationale behind their final expulsion, a theme that Thomas Rawlins would make the sole historical focus of his drama The Rebellion (1640). The historical details for the conquest of Iberia are, briefly, that General Tarik ibn Zayid landed in Gibraltar with around 10,000 men in AD 711. After his initial success, he was joined by Musa ibn Nusayr, the governor of North Africa, and an additional army of 18,000. Together they subdued the southern European peninsula, where Islamic dominance would last until the Reconquista of the thirteenth century. They would continue to hold the geographically small but strategically important of Kingdom of Granada until 1492. As Trudy L. Darby points out, however, ‘Rowley does not pretend to historical accuracy in any of his plays; rather, he takes historical events merely to provide characters and plot, but re-orders them to create his own stories.’ In fact, ‘The Argument’, which precedes the play proper, highlights the role which the exaggeration and distortion of history play in the drama itself: General Tarik ibn Zayid’s name is changed to Mulyummen, he is made the king of Barbary, and the Moorish troops are swelled to 60,000 men. The story becomes, as the modern editor Stork observes, a ‘romantic tragedy’ rather than a history play.

Rowley uses historical events as a backdrop but also embellishes freely. He uses a story widely circulated during the Renaissance where Spain is lost through the lust of King Roderick, who is in love with Jacinta, the daughter of his General Julianus. She is not interested, but he resolves that if he cannot woo her he will rape her. His words ‘If Words will serve, if not, by rapines force’ are a white echo of Aaron’s promotion of the rape of Lavinia in Titus. Parallel to this violent action runs the story of Mulyummen’s anticipated invasion of Spain, which is described as a ‘hot invasion’ by the ‘barbarous and tawney Affricans’. King Roderick sends Jacinta’s father General Julianus out to meet the African army and employs Lothario and the bawd Malena to convince Jacinta to submit to his sexual advances. She refuses, is raped by the king and held prisoner in the castle. She escapes and flees to her father, who has by now won a substantial victory over the Africans. Julianus sets the captive Mulyummen free and solicits his help in driving ‘the tyrant’ King Roderick from the throne and avenging his daughter’s rape. Mulyummen agrees and proposes a marriage between himself and Jacinta but is rejected by the daughter and put off by the father. When King Roderick has fled to Biscany and Mulyummen takes the Spanish throne, Mulyummen renews his suit, and when he is again rejected, swears revenge.

As the title — All’s Lost by Lust — suggests, politics and history are both reductively eroticised and sensationalised in Rowley’s drama as the play highlights erotic metaphors for warfare, and warfare metaphors for love and lust. Actual history is seemingly relegated to vague outline. Yet, with regards to modern Western interpretations of the takeover, Rowley’s play is surprisingly in line with current theories — at least partly. Pilar Cuder Dominguez points out that modern historians are agreed that the swift takeover was more ‘the result of weakness of the gothic Christian kingdom than the strength of the invading North Africans’ and that the weakness was specifically related to the system of succession and a lack of acceptance for Roderick, the earl of Betica, as king in 710. Though Rowley’s play substitutes lasciviousness for political weakness, the idea that it was domestic weakness rather than the opposing superior military strength of the African Islamic forces that led to the fall of Spain thus remains consistent in European perceptions.

An important dramatic contextualisation

All’s Lost is one of the forty plus plays with blackface characters to be produced between the late 1580s and 1640. In his book, Black Face, Maligned Race, Anthony Gerard Barthelemy identified All’s Lost as one of the three plays which ‘kept alive on stage the villainous Moor and the allegory of blackness well into the eighteenth century’. The two others were Shakespeare’s Titus Andronicus and Dekker’s Lust’s Dominion: or the Lascivious Queen. All three of these plays were the subject of later Restoration adaptations. The two most well-known are Edward Ravenscroft’s Titus Andronicus: or the
Rape of Lavinia (1686) and Aphra Behn’s remake of Lust’s Dominion in Abdelazar: or the Moor’s Revenge in (1676) respectively, but in 1686, Mary Pix also took advantage of the interest in the popular Renaissance blackface plays and adapted All’s Lost by Lust as The Conquest of Spain.

In all four of the Renaissance plays, a white European society comes into conflict with a politically powerful North African black male in its midst. The four black men share the feature that they have been culturally displaced — either forcibly as a prisoner of war (Aaron in Titus and Eleazar in Lust’s Dominion) or voluntarily as an agent of war (Mulymumen in All’s Lost and Raymond in The Rebellion). The common backdrop is one of military aggression and domestic political instability or tyranny, i.e. settings that anticipate and generate the horror of social and political chaos. The racial encounter is narrated in masculine terms of rivalry, violence and sexual prowess. The white men are victorious except in All’s Lost. Rowley’s drama is unique in that it is the only play in which the black man has the ascendancy over the whites at the end of the play. Yet the play still bears the subtitle ‘A tragedy’, which highlights that its perspective is European and white.

On the other hand, in none of these three plays (or in Titus) is the racial dichotomy straightforward. The unflattering negative portrayals of the Spanish King and General Julianus mean that All’s Lost, like Lust’s Dominion and The Rebellion, can be connected to anti-Catholic sentiment. Historically, this should not be surprising as England was in the process of constructing its identity as a Protestant country throughout the late sixteenth and seventeenth century. England was at war with Catholic Spain from 1585 to 1604 and again from 1655 to 1660. Nor should it be surprising that Spaniards were aligned with Moors. Philip II used Barbary corsairs in his army and navy, and there are accounts that they were present onboard the ships of the Spanish Armada as it lay off the coast of England waiting to invade the country during the 1580s and 1590s.

The English defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 was spectacular but did not definitively end naval hostilities between the two nations. In 1595, for instance, the Spanish landed in Cornwall and managed to burn Penzance and Mousehole. The English knew of the use of North African warriors among the Spanish and viewed them as a serious potential threat if they landed on English soil.

There were also almost constant rumours of Catholic uprisings and conspiracies, which involved threats on Elizabeth’s life. Three consecutive Popes signed Papal Bulls freeing Catholics from allegiance to Elizabeth and supporting her political overthrow. The first was in 1570 and the last was as late as 1588. There was thus ample excuse both to vilify Catholics and Spaniards, and their alignment with North Africans in the Renaissance plays, including All’s Lost, should thus not be surprising as it served to indirectly promote the superiority of Protestant England.

Anna Fahraeus
Gothenburg University, Sweden