Réme Bohlin, University of Connecticut

Dangerous Nostalgia:
Uses of History in *2 Henry VI*

In her recent article, "Talbot Remains: Historical Drama and the Performative Archive," Alice Dailey challenges the critical orthodoxy regarding Shakespeare's history plays, namely that they are necessarily nostalgic, an imperfect recovery of a golden past. She reminds us that historical records, whether chronicles or history plays, were always "aimed towards the future reader" (381). In addition to undermining the assumption that the performance of history is always derivative of the "real" thing, Dailey's argument invites us to consider other reasons for staging history beyond glorifying the past. Shakespeare's *2 Henry VI* is an apt example of a play that resists this kind of "frustrated nostalgia" (376). This is accomplished partly by the many characters competing for the English throne. With no clear center around which to rally, the audience is left to marvel at the machinations, deceit, and greed. One is left wondering, why this history? Critics often point to the uncertainty surrounding Elizabeth I's successor as the impetus for staging volatile English history; however, in this paper I argue that *2 Henry VI* is not (or is not only) a warning to secure the succession, but also an illustration of the dangers of nostalgia. The play begins with the looming loss of France thanks to Henry VI's marriage to Margaret. Gloucester laments England's former honor, "And shall these labors and these honors die? Shall...Your deeds of war, and all our counsel die" (1.1.92-94)? York is motivated to oppose Henry VI for personal gain but also in the name of recovering England's former glory which has been marred by Henry VI's "bookish rule" (1.1.256). Nostalgia in *2 Henry VI* dangerously propels England towards civil war.

Andrew R. Bretz, Queen's University

'I am ashamed…'
Subversion and Submission in Canadian Performance History of *Taming of the Shrew*

My paper will explore Canadian performances of T*aming of the Shrew* in the wake of second-wave feminism (ca. ~1970-1990), with particular attention paid to the ways in which the final speech both enacts and contains possible subversion or resistance to a national narrative of oppressive and misogynist violence. Prior to 1950, the version of *Taming of the Shrew* that dominated the Canadian stage was David Garrick's *Catharine and Petruchio*, which presented a truncated and interrupted final speech that eliminated much of the ambivalence of the original Shakespearean text. Garrick's version was almost wholly and unapologetically misogynist. Throughout the 1800s, Garrick's play was more popular on the Canadian stage even than such traditional powerhouses as *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. This popularity on stage came at a time when English Canada was famously anti-theatrical in orientation, suggesting that the misogynist reading of the play overcame moralizing resistance to theatrical production. While the early twentieth century saw a return to the Elizabethan text(s) and the final vestiges of anti-theatrical culture in Canada dying away, the late twentieth century saw Canadians struggling with the history of this play's national popularity. Directors mapped Canadian geography onto Shakespeare's Italy (Guthrie, Stratford 1954; Gallant, Victoria, 1968; Coffey, Halifax, 1979; Ouzounian, Winnipeg, 1982), emphasizing the collocation of Shrew with Canadian identity. This

identification of Canada with *Shrew* began to change around 1980, when directors such as Keith Digby and John Hirsch created productions (Edmonton 1980; Victoria 1987; Stratford 1981) that unflinchingly investigated the gender-based violence inherent in the play's second half. By looking at the ways in which the final speech of Katherine was performed in various productions in the 1970s and 80s, I hope to explore how individual productions resisted the identification of Canada with the misogynist reading of the speech and opened up the possibility for critique of Canadian participation in oppressive violence.

Julie Crawford, Columbia University

Domestic Conduct, Resistance Theory and Shakespeare's *Othello*

This paper will look at the ways in which Othello exploits the analogy between legitimate resistance to political authority and the wife's traditional right to disobey the unrighteous orders of her husband. Othello examines what happens when the ruler of a domestic kingdom does not act justly–according to passion, for example, rather than reason; the intimate relationship between such behavior and bad, even disastrous, political governance; and the role that wives play in limiting the abuses of both patriarchal and political power. In particular, I will argue that Desdemona and Emilia present different responses to the question William Whately asks in his domestic conduct manual, A bride bush: "Not whether [the wife] must obey, but how farre." While Desdemona obeys her husband, and, crucially, the terms of her vow, until death, Emilia sets limits on obedience. "Tis proper I obey him" she says of Iago towards the end of the play, "but not now. Perhaps I will never go home again."

Tracy Cummings, San Diego State University

Dogberry's Deception

Scholars agree that *Much Ado about Nothing*'s Dogberry is no force to be reckoned with, despite the fact that he and his constabulary rescue Hero from false accusations made against her. These interpretations are possible due to two omissions in the scholarly literature: the paucity of investigation into Dogberry's specific language choices and a lack of recognition that he inhabits an untenable political situation. What is a poor fellow like Constable Dogberry who "hath had losses" (4.2.86) to do when his Prince ruins the reputation of his Governor's daughter? According to James C. Scott in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, he will do what people who lack social power have done since the early modern era: Deploy language tactics that allow a person to achieve his own ends while preserving the apparent system of authority. The tactics include deflection, cliché, postponement, and feigned ignorance. Dogberry uses each of these ploys. I argue that he wields them knowingly by re-contextualizing them as the language choices of the disenfranchised and showing how the Constable, Shakespeare's original contribution to the often-told story of Hero and Claudio, works amidst overlapping jurisdictions that place his character in a politically fraught situation. In this dramatically rich zone, Dogberry succeeds and overthrows the existing order in a bloodless coup. Sometimes, Dogberry does err in his choices of words, but sometimes he chooses to because he opts to play the clown.

Samantha Dressel, Chapman University

Angry Mobs and 'Happy Vengeance'

In many ways John Marston's play, *Antonio's Revenge*, is utterly conventional in its use of revenge tropes: it has a ghost, an evil father-in-law, a disguise plot, and a whole lot of blood. However, there is one major way in which it sticks out from its fellows: the titular Antonio lives at the end of the play, and is unanimously praised by the other survivors. He and his co-conspirators leave society for a monastic life, but the revenge situation is never punished. This lack of legal justice has left critics baffled, with major interpretations often seeing aesthetic concerns rather than moral coherence driving this endpoint.

I propose another solution to interpreting this strange ending; one that acknowledges the aesthetic demands of a revenge play while also maintaining a sense of moral coherence. Jonathan Dollimore suggests that the play displays a "subculture dedicated to revenge", ultimately enabling the social and mental reintegration of the revenger (Radical Tragedy 29). I would take this a step further, however, and posit that rather than creating a subculture, Antonio is able to recenter hegemonic power around himself such that his community of revenge and resistance becomes the dominant power, able to control what is considered acceptable state-sanctioned violence. While many revenge plays involve a small community of revengers, Antonio's plot spreads throughout the staged aristocracy, and is also sanctioned by both higher authority figures and the populace. This sort of widespread acceptance of the revenge plot allows its perpetrators legal sanction of the sort generally only granted to those carrying out government violence. Most intriguingly, Antonio builds his coalition with very little staged communication, violating another norm of the revenge genre, and making the formation of his revenge community harder to pinpoint.

Kimberly Huth, California State University, Dominguez Hills

Discharging Pistols at the Sky:
Violence and its Failures in *Arden of Faversham*

The anonymous tragedy *Arden of Faversham* has long been recognized as a play that explores the intersection of the public and private spheres of early modern English life, an intersection articulated through the use of violence as a means of political dissent against oppressive patriarchal and class structures. The murder of Arden is thus interpreted as a form of revolutionary violence, intended to disrupt the current status quo through the alliance forged between Alice, Arden's wife, and the lower-class characters, such as Black Will and Shakebag, who help her to carry out the assassination. However, even if the murder plot is successful, this essay asks to what extent the action is truly revolutionary, arguing that the play's violence fails to produce coherent dissent and instead replicates the preexisting systems of relational violence in early modern culture. Close inspection of violent events and characters reveals that the various early modern groups represented in the conspiracy—women and lower-class individuals—are not as effectively aligned as they seem, and violent behavior rarely alters their status. Moreover, even the counterviolence of state authorities is tainted by equivocality and instability, as the

punishments doled out to the conspirators fail to reflect accurately the difference between guilt and innocence. The plot against Arden points toward the potential for violence to serve as a means of social and economic revolution. Yet in this play, violence ultimately fails either to carve out a space for empowerment for the conspirators or to consolidate completely the power of the state to exercise legitimate violence. In revealing the equivocality of violence, *Arden of Faversham* illustrates the significance of semiotic clarity and coherence in this form of political dissent.

Dorothea Kehler, San Diego State University

Pawnbrokers, Social Climbers, and Jews in *She Ventures and He Wins* (1695) by 'Ariadne, a Young Lady,' and *The Gamester* (1705) by Susanna Centlivre

Whereas typically we think of resistance as a reaction to power by the less powerful, the late Restoration comedies I discuss challenge this notion. Established societal hierarchies were increasingly under stress in early modern England, especially after the Civil Wars shifted considerable wealth from landowning upper classes to cash-rich professionals and businesspeople. Particularly loathsome to the former were moneylenders who, even at the dawn of the eighteenth century, were more commonly viewed as usurers than bankers. The very nadir of these detested but necessary moneylenders were pawnbrokers. They are represented in Ariadne's *She Ventures and He Wins* (1695) by Mrs. Beldam and in Centlivre's *The Gamester* (1705) by Mrs. Security, whose deceased husband's name, Zekiel, suggests Jewish origins. Although both widows are satirized as kissing cousins to Mistress Quickly, they are successful businesswomen, the one marrying her daughter into the gentry, the other selling to the aristocracy. The subplots in which the pawnbrokers feature complement main plots whose heroines are heiresses. Fearing to be married off as commodities, they give their hearts to young men of slight or uncertain means. So solidly situated in a financial universe are these plays that they are perhaps better described as pecuniary rather than romantic comedies. While neither playwright seems fully aware of how economic concerns and bigotry tend to vitiate romance, both recoil at the crassness and growing social importance of the newly monied strata, inadvertently revealing that in this fallen age not only were "the Quality" debtors dependent on their low-born creditors but that the aristocracy and gentry were being infiltrated, their manners aped, and their status ambiguated.

Julia Mix Barrington, Boston University

Rogue Waves:
Self-Determination and Resistance on Shakespeare's Pirate Ships

In the past decade, scholarship on early modern pirates has expanded dramatically. Many scholars interpret Shakespearean pirates as plot devices, set-pieces that could easily be replaced by shipwreck, tempest, or other romantic convention. However, dramatic pirates are frequently as polysemous as their maritime environment. In Shakespeare's plays, pirates exist in tension: they are used as a plot device while simultaneously upheld as a symbol of freedom, barging in of their own accord to do the actions the dramatist requires. This essay argues that these pirates exist onstage as visible representations of the ocean's risk and possibility. Placing them in the

representational context of the sea, I argue that in Shakespearean drama, maritime pirate experiences exist within a spectrum of contagious piracy. In *Henry VI Part Two, Hamlet*, and *Pericles*, pirates' connection to the sea, and their self-interest both enable them to resist land-based authority and to transfer some of their qualities to the non-outlaw characters they encounter.

In the context of maritime space, the death of Suffolk in *2H6* and the kidnappings of Hamlet and Marina are compelling examples of how the sea enables political and dramatic resistance that is severely curtailed on land. The pinnace of *2H6* is a site of social reversal, resistance, and personal decision-making. The pirate attacks of Hamlet and Pericles similarly demonstrate that pirates make choices unconstrained by larger forces; furthermore, they imbue their captives with an almost piratical self-determination. These pirate episodes infuse the rest of the story, galvanizing both Hamlet and Marina to action and resistance once they return to shore. Attending to pirates' maritime environment helps explain how they transmit piratical self-determination to other Shakespearean characters, and the conventions of writing the early modern sea make pirates a productive test case for investigating a larger politics of space.

Christina Romanelli, Meredith College

Faustus and an Early Modern Ethics off Social Action

According to the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus and its literary descendants, Jesus, the apotheosis of advocacy, descended into hell to break the primordial covenant between God and Satan over the rights to the souls of fallen man between the crucifixion and the resurrection. In this forgotten moment of Christian theology, Jesus is the epitome of the ethical subject of God. He embodies the subjugation of man, speaks truth to the supreme evil power, and enacts the salvation of those souls doomed to hell. My book project, *Harrowing Hell: Resistance and Advocacy in Early Modern English Literature*, offers a theory of the harrowing of hell that features a social justice Jesus at the height of his power taking on both God and Satan as advocates for mortal sinners. As a declining mythos, the story of this social justice Jesus appears both as an object of worship and as a model for emulation throughout the Renaissance despite the religious and political reformations. This section of the introduction defines an early modern ethics of social action and reads Faustus's final moments as a failure of self-advocacy. Using the pre-Christian logic of the Devil's Rights, Faustus negotiates with Mephistopheles and Lucifer, using his soul and the promise of its eventual salvation as a bargaining chip. Faustus's final moments reimagine the sinners in hell prior to the crucifixion, resisting the laws that mandate their eternal torment. The moment of Faustus's damnation is an edifying moment for his Christian humanist audience members because his failed advocacy is self-directed and lacks the sacrificial qualities that would reintegrate him into a community of sinners, a necessary component in an ethics of social action.

Sarah K. Scott, Mount St. Mary's University

Medieval Roots of City Comedy

Detailed discussions of city comedy's forebears as they inform the genre are few, even though many scholars know that the genre did not emerge out of thin air. In his study that outlines the contours of city comedy, for instance, Brian Gibbons (1968) recognizes that playwrights drew upon the materials of their predecessors, namely those of Elizabethan drama who were heirs to medieval "didactic drama" (especially the estates moralities and interludes), given the concern for questions of morality and faith (19). Of further influence is the medieval Church's "traditional invective" that includes "such general and unchanging evils as the depravity of women and the corrupt state of worldly ambitions and appetites" (25). Wendy Griswold's study of city comedy over eighty years later does not make any headway about the matter, although she observes that the "tradition of entertaining an audience with vice, tricks, and temptation" was "well established in the late mystery and morality plays," and that the new genre elaborated upon the work of its antecedents by adding "local color" through settings "squarely within the streets, taverns, and houses of Renaissance London" (16). Like the work of Gibbons, a study of precedents was not her intent. I wish to examine a little-discussed ligature in the history of city comedy's development, namely the genesis of the genre in the native English dramatic tradition. It begins in the oldest surviving drama written in English, the Corpus Christy pageant. These scripture-based civic enactments encouraged devotion and moral rectitude, and they incorporated many of the vices, virtues, and characters frequenting city comedy. As such, their affinity to the development of the genre is deserving of study. For this seminar I plan to examine the cycle plays' female types and their male counterparts that are analogous to those of the later genre. I will begin with a study of the first portrayal of marriage in dramatic form—that which is between a harsh-tempered, shrewish wife and her much older husband whom she considers a fool, until she learns otherwise.

Will Steffen, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

'I sell thee poison':
Romeo and Juliet Weathering Resistance in Cape Town

In *This Contentious Storm* (2017), Jennifer Mae Hamilton speculates that "when actual weather intervened poorly or well with the action" of a performance in the open-roofed public theaters of Shakespeare's London, "players likely capitalized on their literal circumstances either for humour or enhanced dramatic effect" (Hamilton 117). While the poorly documented theater history of Shakespeare's Globe provides no concrete examples of this kind of ecological theater, the capacity for non-human and environmental players to make meaning in Shakespearean performance has taken on a new significance in our age of anthropogenic climate change. In this paper, I show how a play's dramatic frame—in both the early seventeenth and the late nineteenth century--can position the weather in terms relatable to our predicament in the Anthropocene, where the weather is understood to be neither wholly human-generated, nor an entirely natural phenomenon. I argue that the weather's agency on stage has the potential to overturn the human intention behind a Shakespearean performance. In the case of an outdoor performance of *Romeo and Juliet* in Cape Town during an 1895 gold rush, the weather may even transform an

intentional demonstration of British cultural superiority before the Dutch-speaking population into a dubious spectacle of anti-colonial resistance. The spectacle of a damp Romeo conflating his gold with the apothecary's drugs also may have issued a warning about the environmental cost of mining for gold with poison, which remains relevant to mining projects in the developing world today. I show how the weather in performance can evacuate Shakespeare of his cultural sovereignty by creating space on stage for a non-human, unintentional player, which not only allows a non-human actor to contribute to the play's act of making meaning, but which can also excavate the ecological ethos of early modern theater practices from an otherwise anthropocentric history of Shakespearean performance.

Olga L. Valbuena, Wake Forest University

'Purchased by the weight,' or *The Merchant of Venice*'s Suits and the 16th Century Trade in Mexican Cochineal

Shakespeare mentions Mexico twice in the canon, both times in relation to Antonio's ventures in *The Merchant of Venice.* The play's topical allusion to a galleon originally called the San Andrés, later rechristened the Andrew, and laden with Mexican and Indies treasure, has helped Shakespeareans date the play. But no literary critic has connected the Andrew to the massive seizure of cochineal that took place in 1597 when the Earl of Essex led one thousand Englishmen in an almost failed attack on the Spanish in the Azores. Originally an Aztec dyestuff, cochineal red has been recognized by historians and economists as second only to silver as Spain's most lucrative commodity, and of foremost importance in the Venetian dye and textile trades. Keenly aware of dyes and color as indices of deception, Shakespeare draws widely across all genres on the language of textiles, garments, and color to expose or offset the spectrum of his characters' interiority. In *Merchant of Venice*, the polysemic suit commingles lawsuits, civic or personal appeals, marital ventures, and garments in a network of pursuits tainted by deceit and ambivalence. In this paper, I bring the original ceremonial significance of cochineal as a "vibrant material" and "fugitive element" to bear on The *Merchant of Venice*'s ubiquitous suits, arguing that cochineal's material and symbolic trace infuses the play's ostensibly disconnected suits with the recursive taint of blood, flesh, and colonial expropriation troubling its legal, civil, and romantic outcomes.

Charisse Willis, University of Michigan

Rethinking Sexual Violence in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*

This paper explores narratives of consent in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. Through a close analysis of the poem's language, I will investigate the relationships between cultural conceptions of gendered violence and which sexual desires are appropriate for women. I will argue that despite the limits early moderns placed on women's ability to perform violence and to exercise their sexual will, Venus should be read as a sexual aggressor. While existing scholarship only highlights the reversal of gender roles in Venus's "seduction" of Adonis, I assert that, in pursuing Adonis, Venus mirrors the actions of her male counterparts—Zeus, Apollo, etc.—who frequently take unwilling humans for sexual partners. Though she is unsuccessful, by attempting to exact a power similar to the male gods and exert sexual power over a human lover, Venus

performs an act of resistance. Her attempt at sexual violence, then, more than just detestable, becomes an act of resistance and one inextricably linked to her gender. In other words, Venus's perpetuation of sexual violence is an act of resistance only because she is a woman. My paper will also explore the important fact that Venus's act of resistance relies, itself, on resistance; the restriction of Adonis's consent is a key component to the Venus's success. To grapple with such complexities, my paper will ask: what are the complications involved with reading an act of sexual violence as an act of resistance? Can resistance be gendered and, if so, how? What can be learned from examining an act of resistance alongside the harm that act does to the victim? Finally, my paper will build on the discussion of consent, resistance, and sexual assault in Venus and Adonis by asking how we can use the text to address these challenging, but important topics in our classrooms today.

Stephen Wittek, Carnegie Mellon University

Conversion and Resistance in Marlowe's The Jew of Malta

This paper considers representations of conversion on the early modern English stage and the capacity of theatre to model, interrogate, inspire, condition, or constitute conversional experience, with particular focus on dramatic representation of resistance to conversion and conversion as a form of resistance. In examples drawn from Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, the analysis considers how theatrical practitioners engaged urgent questions surrounding the intense growth of conversional activity in the period and helped to conceptualize a model of conversion that would have long lasting political implications. Resistance is an important aspect of this analysis, not only because it is conducive to the conflict that makes conversion narratives dramatically compelling, but also because it repeatedly factors into a great variety conversional representations, including examples where conversion functions as an instrument of authoritarian control and examples where conversion functions as a form of social creativity, a means by which subjects can work around structures of control by re-organizing markers of identity and allegiances.