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Paul Budra

“I am a poor fellow that would live”: Resilience and the Shakespearean Underclass

Recently literary critics have been using the idea of resilience, which has a long history in engineering and ecology, to describe the actions and reactions of characters in Shakespeare’s plays, characters who are confronting some form of crisis. This sort of resilience — both in besieged individuals such as Hermione, Imogen, and Edgar, or in communities such as *A Midsummer Night’s Dream’s* mechanicals and *Julius Caesar’s* Roman citizens — is often viewed as a form of heroism, a noble persistence or ingenious adaptation in the face of a threatening challenge. But what if the individuals in question are less than heroic and their persistence means adhering to behaviors that are unsavory or illegal? What if the resilience of a small group works against the broader common good? I would like to look at the resilience of Shakespeare’s underclass characters, focusing primarily on *Measure for Measure*. In that play the livelihood of Mistress Overdone and her bawd Pompey Bum is threatened by new laws that will tear down their brothel, an institution responsible for the spread of venereal diseases and, perhaps, moral laxity in Vienna. Pompey proves especially resilient in the face of this crisis, baffling Escalus during interrogation and later adapting to confinement by becoming an executioner’s apprentice. The murderer Barnardine manages to resist execution itself. The successful resilience of these characters, and others like them, undermines the strategies of the ruling classes to impose order and laws on their communities while at the same time suggesting that those communities themselves need to be resilient to internal, and sometimes inextinguishable, threats.

Lorna Giltrow-Shaw

**‘Why here’s a change indeed in the commonwealth’: Jacobean plague policy and Shakespeare’s
*Measure for Measure***

The urban community represented in William Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* is clearly in the midst of a severe public health crisis. The play’s prevalent anxieties surrounding moral and physical infection proliferate within a society blighted by poverty, overcrowding, and unregulated behaviour. Moreover, the sickly and unsystematic urban environment that Shakespeare constructs irresistibly intersects with the recognisable urban formula for endemic early modern plague. That *Measure* should emerge in 1604 from the shadows of a devastating plague outbreak renders the prophylactic attempts made to contain the health crisis within the play all the more urgent. The widespread outbreak of 1603-04 devastated England’s metropolis, with over twenty percent of Londoners perishing in 1603 alone. Its speed and scale also prompted alterations to plague-prevention policy that conferred statutory status onto national and metropolitan plague orders, and outlined stricter punishments for those who contravened them. My paper will examine the 1604 Plague Act and plague-related royal proclamations from 1603-04 as significant civic documents which were passed directly from England’s new monarch, James I, to his people during this crisis period. As *Measure* is particularly attentive to the mechanisms of spatial reorganization and the punishment of transgressing bodies set against a backdrop of communicable urban disease, a comparative reading of Angelo’s ‘pretty orders’ and Jacobean plague orders might provide further insight into the socio-spatial reordering of the community in response to plague (2.1.226). Seeking to find parallels between the city-wide moral clean-up that occurs in *Measure* and the strategies implemented to cleanse the erring community of depravity and disease beyond the playhouse, my paper argues that *Measure* is not simply framed by the fraught cultural moment from which it emerges, as previous scholarship has suggested, but actively responds to it via its potent interactions with plague policy reform and restrained urban bodies, behaviour, and space.

Mia Escott

“So I might have your company in hell”:* Racialized Responses to Calamity in *Titus Andronicus

Race in *Titus Andronicus* (1593-94) illustrates the importance of understanding the value of marginalized individuals in predominantly white spaces. There is an identity crisis occurring in this Shakespearean play that the racial inequalities present makes visible via Tamora’s Gothic presence and Aaron’s Moorish identity. Though Aaron and Tamora are both minorities in this Roman environment they respond differently to the racial warfare transpiring. Tamora, once a Gothic leader turned Roman queen, adapts to the majority for survival. While Aaron, the play’s prominent Moor, resists conforming and disrupts the Roman’s socially constructed identity. Emily Bartels writes about the Romans attempt to correct the racial chaos that is brewing via Aaron’s death, “Part of Lucius’s efforts to rebuild the walls of Rome and Romanness, to ‘heal Rome’s harms and wipe away her woe’ (5.3.148), this radical sentence serves to distance Aaron from both the Romans and the Goths, to codify him ineradicably as a ‘barbarous Moor,’ a ‘ravenous tiger,’ an ‘accursed devil,’ an ‘inhuman dog,’ and an ‘unhallowed slave’ (5.3.4-5,14)” (Bartels 66). Even in their death, all the races are treated differently and the play closes like it opens, with minorities being denied equal treatment even as it relates to punishment. The play’s Roman setting is imperative to the way these characters assess their worth and respond to being marked as outsiders. For instance, Aaron strengthens his identity by standing alone as a Moor and verbally expressing his ethnicity’s quality; Tamora, on the other hand, uses her hyperwhite^[i] body to assimilate into the community that has enslaved her. As an alienated community, the Moors and Goths find themselves in a fight or flight predicament, and I argue

their proximity to whiteness allows them to respond dissimilarly to the same plight.

[i] Royster, 432.

When Does Resistance Become a Strategy of Nonviolent Action?

Defiance in *Measure for Measure*

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Despite scholars' recent focus on resistance in *Measure for Measure*, none has yet examined whether the play's depictions of refusal rise to the level of nonviolent action. While it seems unlikely that early modern plays would feature political activity associated with the contemporary world, the burgeoning field of Resistance Theory has demonstrated that people have taken nonviolent measures to overcome oppression in every era of history. Thus, depictions of defiance in *Measure for Measure* might reflect forms of publicly based resistance. Barnadine's refusal to be executed and Isabella's opposition to Angelo's sexual harassment align with forms of nonviolent resistance that Gene Sharp accumulated in his historical survey, and all examples of defiance in the play reflect de la Boétie's 16th century observation that rulers are fragile because they depend upon obedience. However, unless refusal has a nonviolent intention, it could signal mere resistance on the individual level, simple conflict, which every drama demands. Judith Butler posits that the ground of nonviolent action is recognition of another's grievability as well as imagining the substitution of oneself in another's place. *Measure for Measure* depicts both: the duke's recognition of the formerly unacknowledged characters of

Bernadine, Mariana, and Kate Keepdown acknowledges their dignity. And, characters practice substitution in every act in the play, including the bed trick and Isabella's multiple transpositions of Claudio and Angelo. Since Butler's notions concerning substitutability echo John Donne's meditation, and no historical analysis for evidence of nonviolent activity has yet been performed for early modern England, these points of contact suggest that such a study could bear fruit. For now, I propose that acts of refusal become strategies of nonviolent action when characters refuse to consent to oppression, refrain from the use of violence, and imagine substituting one character for another that is being harmed.

Resilient Girls: Girlhood Authorship during the English Civil War

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Many young women turned to writing in moments of crisis in early modern England. Writing diverse genres, including autobiographies, poems and plays, these youthful authors used creative 'inventing' as a way of mediating the challenges and suffering caused by personal loss, local and national upheaval, and political and religious persecution. This paper focuses on the writing produced collaboratively by two well-known siblings during the English Civil War to explore the ways in which literary production, and particularly the writing of drama, was itself an adaptation strategy and potentially enabled resilience. It analyses the drama of Lady Jane Cavendish (1621-1669) and Lady Elizabeth Brackley (1626-1663) - *A Pastorall* and *The Concealed Fancies* - in the context of their corpus of girlhood writing, produced in the 1640s when their father and brothers were absent as a result of the Civil War. The Cavendish sisters' writing takes the absence, grief and challenges caused by war as both its subject and its stimulus. This paper considers how their highly self-conscious plays present characters who adapt to the challenges of war in a range of ways and demonstrates that they depict girlhood creativity as one of the most effective strategies. It will argue that the Cavendish sisters put this concept into practice as their acts of authorship are simultaneously acts of grief management and resilience, for themselves and for their wider familial

community. Girlhood imagination is presented in their plays and by their literary production as potentially transformative in times of crisis.

Privacy and Pedagogy: Analyzing Acts of Resistance Within and Without *Romeo and Juliet*

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Within Shakespeare's prolific catalogue of works, *Romeo and Juliet* is oftentimes the introductory text for younger readers and perhaps their singular exposure and defining moment of early modern plays. Although the titular characters' defiance of their families ends tragically, this paper argues that Shakespeare attributes an agency to the "star-crossed lovers" which reflected developing early modern trends regarding love and marriage, as well as an ongoing sense of friction between children and adults. Of particular importance is the notion of privacy, which *Romeo and Juliet* both use extensively throughout the play as they court each other and eventually consummate their marriage, an act which is itself unseen. While children disappearing offstage is often dangerous in Shakespeare's works, such as the case of the young princes in *Richard III*, these protagonists use it as a means of responding to the crisis resulting from their parents' feud. This paper considers how both action and language are used to defend moments of privacy in the play, using Rachel Prusko's 2016 article "Youth and Privacy in *Romeo and Juliet*" as a point of dialogue. Furthermore, it posits that the presence of a boy actor playing Juliet resists the categorization of *Romeo and Juliet* as a staple of heteronormative romance and is another reason why the consummation would not have appeared on Shakespeare's stage. Lastly, this paper acknowledges the challenge faced by teachers of Shakespeare when they experience moments of meta-resistance from young readers who either do not relate with or outright denounce and criticize their early modern stand-ins. While we should be careful about treating Shakespeare as a universal author whose every work speaks to every person and circumstance, this paper nevertheless considers ways to help students find allies instead of demeaning caricatures of the struggles of growing up and finding one's own independence.

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Madness as Resilience in *The Tragedy of Hoffman*

Paul Outka describes resilience as something which “eschews teleology, progress, plot in favor of continuation, adaptation, muddling along.” Resilience is here both liminal and final, resistant to resolution, even recovery, but allied with survival. He describes it as “post-despair” (“Environmentalism after Despair,” *Resilience* 1.1 [2013]). In this paper, I examine madness in Henry Chettle’s *The Tragedy of Hoffman* as a type of resilience. In my reading, revenge tragedy’s obsession with onset madness as a reaction to crises positions “madwomen” and “madmen” as survivors. Indeed, in the genre, madness often features as a state brought about by tragedy and crisis, and characters exhibiting madness are positioned as persistent truth-tellers, however misunderstood by those around them. Madness often occupies, I argue, an adaptive, “post-despair” space. In *Hoffman*, Lucibella, the play’s counterpart to Ophelia, appears onstage “mad” after surviving an attempt on her life and that of her lover, who dies in her arms. Unlike Ophelia, though, she becomes a participant in the play’s final scheme which brings the play’s titular revenger to a kind of “wild justice”, as Francis Bacon describes revenge. The final act brings together the play’s survivors as a community of conspirators working together to annihilate their threat. Lucibella’s madness allows her to fully participate in the plot, and order is ultimately restored through violent community action. Although she arguably regains her “wits” by the end, the play positions her madness as a plot device to further the final act’s killing of Hoffman. In Lucibella’s case, madness is a resilient response to a community in crisis.