

Staging Scandal: Early Modern Drama, Criminology And The Dynamics Of Labelling

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Abstract

This thesis will contribute to the innovative and exciting field of literature and criminology by addressing the intricate interplay between early modern drama and criminologist discourse with a particular focus on labelling theory and interactionism. The convergence of these two seemingly separate realms can show how early modern theatre was an arena for vibrant proto-criminologist discussions. The early modern period witnessed a wave of drama on crime that both entertained its audience and reflected and shaped societal perceptions of crime, justice and rehabilitation. By scrutinising the dramaturgical analogies inherent in labelling theory and interactionism, this study aims to reveal how early modern drama can function as a critical tool for challenging and deconstructing negative labels associated with deviant behaviour. Early Modern drama allowed labelling theory to come to life through the tales of complex characters who were trying to navigate social exclusion and stigma, while the rich and nuanced exploration of human interactions through symbolic communication and performative identity on the stage set the perfect scene for an interactionist approach to crime and justice. Delving into a variety of forms of drama, this essay argues that the stage provided a unique space to question the legitimacy of labels, encouraging a better understanding of criminal acts which were divorced from enduring identities. In light of contemporary challenges related to social stigma and criminal justice, this investigation offers an insight into how early modern drama can inform and reshape perspectives on crime, justice, and labelling in our present societal context while also providing a new and exciting way of reading much-loved drama from this era.

Introduction

‘All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts’.

(Shakespeare, 1623/2021: 2.7, 140-144)

This thesis will contribute to the innovative and exciting field of literature and criminology by addressing the intricate interplay between early modern drama and criminologist discourse with a particular focus on labelling theory and interactionism.

Criminology has always been a mosaic-like discipline, with its foundations composed of shards from various fields including but not limited to Sociology, Anthropology, Biology, and Psychology, which converge to explore the social phenomenon of crime and deviance. However, this quote from Shakespeare's play *As You Like It* (1623) has prompted scholars to consider the extent to which early modern drama also has a place within this field of study. Literature and Criminology is a new approach that ‘blends the artistic, imaginative expression of literature with the social scientific study of crime, criminals, criminal law, and criminal justice (Wilson, 2021: p.4) in order to explore the vital contributions that the literary sphere has made towards our understanding of criminal behaviour. Victoria Time notes that before the emergence of Criminology as its own unique discipline, fictional works provided ‘significant theoretical discussions of crime and justice issues’ (Time, 1999: p.3) engaging in an embryonic version of what would now be perceived as Criminology. The valuable contributions literature can have to the study of crime has been acknowledged as ‘recent moves have been made towards a ‘narrative criminology’ that engages literary theory and the tools of literary criticism such as analysis of plot and structure and attention to linguistic devices such as metaphor, direct speech and

repetition, in order to interrogate and do justice to the complexity of the narratives of offenders' (Colvin, 2015: p.212). This study, however, is particularly interested in bringing together the two seemingly separate realms of early modern drama and criminology in order to show how Renaissance crime drama can be used as a potent lens through which criminological phenomena can be scrutinized, particularly labelling theory and interactionism.

In recent decades prison populations in both the United States and England have been slowly and steadily on the rise. As of 2021, there were 'over two million people serving time in the US, and close to another five million under correctional supervision' (Drier, 2021: p.480) and more worryingly still, of these people serving prison sentences a large majority seem to be from some of the most marginalized groups within society. A study into the UK prison populations noted that '70 percent of prisoners had literacy and numeracy problems; 66 percent were substance abusers; 40 percent suffered from mental illness; and 34 percent were in foster care as children' (Ward & Connolly, 2020 p.10). The real crisis is arguably not prison overcrowding, but rather the process of detainment, segregation and alienation from the wider community and generalized identities like 'criminal' or 'offender' merely echo a lifetime of social exclusion that prisoners have already come from.

Due to most offenders being socially excluded, some scholars are apprehensive about incorporating a literary approach to the study of crime. This is because literature has a history of being inherently hegemonic, subscribing to commonly held societal norms and values and reproducing political authority that prisoners clearly find themselves on the wrong side of (Colvin, 2015: p.211). Jeffrey Wilson, who has undertaken much research on the subject of Literature and Criminology, identifies that the field remains largely under the spell of late Victorian detective fiction with authors such as Arthur Conna Doyle. He traces how stories like The Sherlock Holmes series, epitomized 'the facile and formulaic genre of detective fiction' (Wilson, 2014: p.99) which promoted very binary attitudes towards good and bad. Within these specific narratives, law enforcement is labelled as heroic and is always responsible for restoring society to normality through its deduction, reason and intelligence which promotes what Wilson deems a 'simplistic Holmesian model of criminology' (Wilson, 2014: p.99) that reproduces harmful labels that can amplify deviant behaviour.

The power labels have in determining criminality is something that labelling theorists have been particularly interested in exploring. The Labeling theory of crime stems from the

sociological perspective of interactionism which uses social symbols to explain human behaviour. The theory ‘emerged as a popular perspective in the late 1960s and then became the dominant criminological paradigm in the early 1970s’ (Cullen & Johnson, 2017: p.1). Arguably it proves to be more relevant than ever in light of today's climate crisis. The Question of why only some acts are labelled as deviant while some others are not is crucial considering that only certain specific members of the population tend to end up in prison. According to Howard Becker, who is an American sociologist and central figure within this field of study, ‘deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an “offender” [...] deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label’ (Becker, 1997: p.9). He is under the assumption that the powerful majority collectively agrees on what is deemed as deviant and this is then applied to more often than not smaller minorities who become unfairly marginalized. In many cases, the stigma and discrimination that is created by this labelling process will lead to these minority groups internalizing the idea that they are inherently bad and that they cannot be redeemed which ultimately amplifies the deviant behaviour society is seeking to prevent. This, in the context of the incarceration crisis that has just been outlined, explains why most people within prisons seem to be those from ostracized groups.

In order to explain this labelling process criminologists have often resorted to using theatrical metaphors such as actor, audience and roles to explain social interactions (Newburn, 2017: p.212). For instance, Tannenbaum explains the process of labelling as ‘the dramatization of evil’ in his book *Crime and the Community* (1938). Furthermore, Ervime Goffman, in his book *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*, uses analogies of ‘theatrical performance’ and ‘dramaturgy’ to explain human interaction. In the preface to his book, he summarizes his views by saying, ‘In real life [...] the part one individual plays is tailored to the parts played by others present, and yet these others also constitute the audience’ (Goffman, 2021: p.8). Not only this but it has been revealed that Goffman was actually influenced by Kenneth Burke, who was a Shakespearean scholar (Wilson, 2014: p.104). Drama clearly pervades the work of interactionists and labelling theorists yet there is little research that explores how early modern drama can be used as a tool for challenging and deconstructing negative labels.

The primary purpose of crime drama during the early modern period was like the primary purpose of any form of literature which was to entertain. However, it also played a much more

important role in reflecting and shaping societal perceptions of crime, justice and rehabilitation. Much like in recent decades, there was 'an unprecedented concern about crime at an institutional level' and people believed themselves to be 'living in times of exceptional wickedness (Clark, 2019: p.1)'. As a result, Olson notes that there became 'a need to demarcate a group of undesirables as inherently different' (Olson, 2013: p.3). Lots of literary representations of crime tended to use stigmatizing labels, presenting criminals as 'so extraordinarily and inexplicably wicked that he or she can only be described as a monster, taken over by diabolic forces'. In many ways, this is still echoed in the way that journalists today tend to cover crime. For instance, The Daily Mail has previously used headlines such as, 'Born a misfit, he became a monster' and 'Beastiality beyond imagination' (Newburn, 2017: p.89) to describe criminals in their newspapers. Early modern drama, however, was one of the few literary attempts that tried to challenge these labels. At the core of early modern theatre was the notion of *theatrum mundi* which translates to the theatre of the world. This idea is most famously depicted in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (1623) when the bard describes how;

'All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts.

(Shakespeare, 1623/2021: 2.7, 140-144)

Theatrum Mundi provided early modern playwrights with a thought-provoking framework for understanding the social phenomenon of criminal labelling both on stage and within the broader theatre of society. Allowing for people to be seen as hugely complex individuals who cannot easily fall into fixed categories. This is what makes it such a powerful tool in light of today's incarceration crisis. Where those in prison are more often than not from some of the most alienated groups within society it has become clear that criminality is no longer associated with acts, it has instead become a type of identity and one that is unfairly forced on already socially excluded members of society. By using early modern, which has *theatrum mundi* at its core, to

explore crime and deviance, criminologists can take the field of literature and criminology in a new direction which doesn't rely on harmful labels and social stigma.

Chapter One will start with a detailed exploration of the domestic tragedy which is often overlooked by scholars who turn their attention towards the canonical Shakespearean tragedy. The domestic tragedy, which focuses on the breakdown of familial and social structures, can provide a rich backdrop for exploring stigma, labelling and the social construction of crime. The genre focuses on the stories of real-life convicted criminals and explores the social interactions that led them to be perceived as deviant in order to disprove the notion that there was such a thing as an inherently spoiled identity. Bringing labelling theory to life in a way that is yet to be truly explored and puts theoretical concepts such as stigma, labelling and self-fulfilling prophecy into action. It also reflected on legal attitudes towards 'witchcraft' and 'petty treason' which were crimes unfairly and more harshly applied to women in order to show how laws are often socially constructed to fit the agendas of those in positions of power.

Chapter Two will then proceed to examine how in the same way that criminals don't deserve to be labeled as 'bad people', it can be particularly problematic to label all law enforcement agents as 'good people'. Although there was no organized police force during the early modern period, constables are still mentioned in a variety of Shakespeare's plays such as *Measure for Measure* (1604) and *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598). Throughout these plays the law enforcement figure is often comically inept and it can be argued that this is to demonstrate the theatricality of policing and how law enforcement is merely a mask and underneath this mask are people who are at times no different to the individuals they are prosecuting. This remains an important discussion to have today as demonstrated by the murder of George Floyd by American police officer Derek Chauvin in 2020 and the publication of the Baroness Casey Review in 2022. Following the murder of Sarah Everard by a serving member of the metropolitan police force, the review exposed how other employees in the force were using the mask of 'law enforcement' to get away with horrific crimes such as murder, abduction and sexual abuse.

Finally, Chapter Three will explore attitudes toward prison and rehabilitation in early modern drama. The early modern period was considered to be a time that 'aimed for deterrence and retribution, for social control, not for reformation' (Clark, 2019: p.2). This chapter is interested in re-evaluating this claim and demonstrating how despite the penal system only being in its infancy, institutions that existed to try and rehabilitate and reform were definitely there and

invited some interesting discussions about the aims and objectives of penitentiaries. Furthermore, the close proximity of theatres to London prisons and the fact that many playwrights served short sentences themselves meant that rehabilitation was a central discussion in many plays. Playwrights seemed to suggest that prisons could not adequately provide the correct atmosphere for rehabilitation and instead only amplified deviance. Using the case study of Mary Frith and a close reading of *The Roaring Girl* 1611, this final chapter will demonstrate how London Banksides Theatre District offered the opportunity for criminals to reform their public image in a way that prisons could not, opening up new discussions surrounding prison theatre and rehabilitation.

Ultimately, the main aim of this research is to show how early modern drama can be used as an innovative tool for criminologists in its own right. A gap in scholarship that could prove to be a really interesting and exciting way of reading some much-read and loved drama from this era. Dramaturgical analogies already pervade the work of labelling theorists and interactionists yet there is little research out there that treats early modern drama as an example of proto-criminologist discourse. While playwrights didn't use language and theories that exist now, early modern drama can be considered as part of the intellectual and cultural milieu that influenced today's current discourse surrounding crime and justice, specifically labelling theory and interactionism. By examining these plays through a criminologist lens, one can discern how these playwrights were attempting to deal with complex questions surrounding human behaviour, morality and the societal reaction to deviance which remain useful today. Most importantly, early drama holds such a special place within the field of Literature and Criminology as it draws parallels between historical representations and contemporary challenges. The themes of systematic injustice, social inequality and the criminalization of marginalized individuals found in these plays contribute to a broader understanding of the complex relationship between crime, justice and individuals at the margins—an understanding crucial for addressing the disproportionate representation of marginalized people in the criminal justice system today. This study is merely scraping the surface of the enormous amount of potential for this way of studying early modern drama, it really has the potential to go in so many different directions. Hopefully, this is the start to a very long and beneficial discussion surrounding the early modern theatre and criminology.

Chapter 1

The Domestic Tragedy and the Social Construction of Crime

‘Measure me what I am, not what I was’.

(Anonymous, 1592/2021: 1.1, 323)

Much like in recent decades, the early modern public had a growing appetite for true crime stories. This sudden flourish in literature commenced in the late sixteenth century and truly began to proliferate throughout the seventeenth century (Dolan, 1994: p.2). This crime literature entertained its audience however, it also played an interesting role in both reflecting and shaping attitudes towards crime. Particularly, the domestic tragedy, which transformed infamous true crime stories that circulated in ballads, chronicles and pamphlets to the stage, can provide a rich backdrop for exploring the social construction of crime. The genre explored the social interactions that led individuals to be perceived as deviant in order to disprove the notion that there was such a thing as an inherently spoiled identity.

David Downes and Paul Rock argue that ‘the early modern period saw a variety of proto-sociological texts about crime’, what they term a ‘shadow criminology’ (Garrett, 2007: p.329). These texts range in a variety of forms such as pamphlets, chronicles and ballads and a range of authors such as prison chaplains, policemen and magistrates. Downes and Rock argue that these texts laid the foundations for later discourse that would now fall under the field of ‘criminology’ through their vibrant discussions of criminal behaviour. A genre that remains largely outside of this discussion, yet could really benefit from this proto-criminologist reading, is the domestic tragedy. Unlike classical tragedy, which focused on the stories of noblemen and aristocracy, a hallmark of domestic tragedy was the bourgeois or “middling sort” aspects of character, setting, and plot (Christensen, 2021: p.20). It brought real-life true crime stories that circulated at the time and produced them on stage, particularly stories that focused on domestic conflict. Aristotelian metaphors have already been used to bring together theatre and the criminal

justice process. For example, the trial has been seen to mirror classical dramatic structure. It ‘sets up the defendant as the protagonist in the criminal trial process [...] with its focus on didacticism, catharsis and its emphasis on the education of the audience’ (Leader, 2020: p.4). The domestic tragedy, however, shows how tragedy doesn’t just mirror today’s legal processes but it was part of its own trial culture of sorts during the early modern period. As has been mentioned it took real-life crime cases to the theatre, staging the crime as a plot, its offenders as characters all in order to explore motivations behind deviance and instead of ensuring ‘catharsis’ like Aristotelean tragedy it produced a more complicated and unsettling view that ‘all people are unknowingly a mix of good and bad’ (Bevington, Maus, Engle, & Rasmussen, 2021: p.424). Francis Dolan says that often the crime stories that were most popular would surround ‘an insider who threatens order as a woman or a servant, although legal records suggest that women and servants were more often the victims than the perpetrators of domestic violence’ (Dolan, 1994: p5). She seems to conclude that the disparity between literary representations of domestic crime and the actual documented cases serves to create what she calls ‘dangerous familiars’ which present certain marginalized groups as ‘violent transgressors whose interiorities and voices are disruptive and destructive’ (Dolan, 1994:p.6). It can be argued that Dolan’s reading of this type of crime draws many parallels with Howard Becker’s notion of ‘the outsider’. Becker, who is central to the field of labelling theory looks at the complex notion of ‘outsiders’. He believes that deviant outsiders are outsiders that people label (Becker, 1997: p.9), he sees the whole creation of this type of individual as not inherently real but socially constructed. With this in mind, it can be argued that in many ways is there really such a thing as an outsider that is inherently deviant, transgressive and threatening or more a ‘dangerous familiar’ that is the product of society. This study will show how the domestic tragedy was an attempt by dramatists to steer theatre away from aiding social control and turn criminals ‘into embodied characters with passionate voices and motives that provided alternate perspectives on the ‘true understanding’ of their crimes’ (Rhore, 2019: p.1). Belsey discusses in her book *The Subject of Tragedy* (1985) that Tudor monarchs took drama under increasingly central control by creating an elaborate system of licensing plays and players (Belsey, 1985: p.6) which mirrored government concern with the political implication of the theatre. She notes that ‘by the seventeenth century, the Master of Revels was responsible for ensuring that no seditious matter was presented on the stage [...] he was empowered to require the alteration of single words, passages or whole scenes, or to suppress plays in their entirety’

(Belsey, 1985: p.7) often resulting in texts being censored and playwrights imprisoned. The theatre was extremely powerful as its audience spanned from royalty to the dispossessed, including the entirety of the social spectrum in order to transform the public stage into a site of convergence and important social discussion. Unlike other forms of drama such as comedy, Belsey argues that tragedy isn't required to reach a final reconciliation (Belsey, 1985: p.10). As a genre, it is messy, incoherent, unpredictable and chaotic as is life. Dolan also acknowledges this expressing how the very nature of drama is to be able to 'present multiple subjectivities and voices' (Dolan, 1994: p.51), which was significant for combating stigma, allowing the murderous stock character to be transformed back into a human being with complex motivations, making it succinctly different to other literary representations of crime. Using the turbulent social backdrop of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century as a framework for showing how deviance was socially constructed, this genre laid the foundations for a proto-criminologist way of perceiving crime and deviance, specifically a labelling theorist approach.

In order to draw parallels between the domestic tragedy and labeling theory it is important to understand what the key beliefs of this approach to crime are. Howard Becker, who has already briefly been mentioned, proposed that 'deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an "offender" [...] deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label' (Becker, 1997: p.9). They argue that the powerful majority collectively agrees on what is deemed as deviant and this is then applied to more often than not smaller minorities who become unfairly marginalized.

As a result of this labelling process stigma and discrimination often arise. This is something that is explored by Ervime Goffman in his book *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (1963). Although Goffman was not exclusively a labelling theorist, his ideas surrounding stigma have been influential to labelling theory. In his book, he describes how the term 'stigma' originated from the Greeks who used it to refer to bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier' (Goffman, 2009: p9). However, in more recent times Goffman argues that stigma is not inherent, it is constructed by society. He argues that stigma occurs when there is 'an undesired differentness from what [was] anticipated (Goffman, 2009: p.11) and most importantly 'an attribute that stigmatizes one type of possessor can confirm the usefulness of another' (Goffman, 2009: p.10). The effects of stigmatizing groups

can be particularly dangerous in amplifying criminal behaviour as it can lead to a ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’ and perhaps a ‘deviant career’.

Robert. K. Merton first introduced the idea of the ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’ in his article of the same name. He describes the self-fulfilling prophecy as, ‘in the beginning, a false definition of the situation, evoking a new behaviour which makes the originally false conception come true’ (Merton, 2016: p.506). Once, the self-fulfilling prophecy is in action and the individual has accepted the new identity that has been created for them they can sometimes embark on what is known as a ‘deviant career’. This metaphor for deviance becoming a central aspect of an individual's personality is a notion that can be traced back to Becker again in his book *Outsiders*. He dedicates a section to the ‘career criminal’ which is where those who experience a ‘self-fulfilling’ are forced into illegitimate kinds of activity due to the image people have of them (Becker, 2008: p. 34). It can be argued that all of these concepts can be found throughout the domestic tragedy demonstrating how the social construction of crime was an idea that was first expressed on the early modern stage.

The domestic tragedy was bred off the back of a sudden surge in crime literature as a result of a moral panic where people believed that they were living in a time of ‘exceptional wickedness (Clark, 2019: p.1)’. Many people saw this crime literature as a way of providing moral instruction. Ascari and Golinelli how ‘the ideological import of crime narratives was intended as a preventive of crime’ (Ascari & Golinelli, 2021: p.16). The domestic tragedy was apprehensive about this, highlighting how crime was often the result of a complex labelling process in which this crime literature could be complicit in. This is encapsulated in *Two Lamentable Tragedies* by John Day and William Haughton (1601) as they recount the murder of Robert Beech by his neighbour Thomas Merry. This particular tragedy exposes how crime literature and its attempt to ‘police crime’ and maintain order was in fact a practice that was in itself amplifying criminality and part of a process of creating deviant characters. Thomas Merry kills Beech in his own home and after a bloody rampage where he kills Beech’s apprentice, he proceeds to dismember Robert Beech’s body and scatter it all over London. The play moves towards its final resolution as a group of Londoners find these various body parts and assemble them together in what Coursey describes as ‘Frankensteinian fashion’ (Coursey, 2019: p.) and both Merry and his accomplice Rachel are arrested and hanged. Coursey notes the communal effort to piece Beech’s body back together is rather symbolic as it represents the idea of ‘communal restoration’. Not only is the

community restoring Beech's physical body but Coursey argues that it mirrors public engagement with crime literature at the time. Coursey says that during the first meeting of this group of neighbours, one notes that the news of the apprentice's murder and Beech's disappearance is;

"Bruted all about the towne". This verb "bruted," from the Middle English "britten," can mean "to distribute, dispense" [...] this use of "bruted" briefly unites the epistemological and corporal spread of Merry's victim, and unites the work of the onstage and offstage London citizens. Re-assembling Beech's corpse thus becomes a metaphor for the creation of the play itself: a process of gathering back together fragments of a body that relies heavily on the knowledge and complicity of the diverse local residents.'

(Coursey, 2019: p.)

However, in this process of 'communal restoration' the playwrights depict how the community was part of producing deviance. Before his death Merry says;

'Cease publishing that I have been a man
Train'd up in murther, or in crueltie
For fore this times—this time is all too sooned-
I never slue or did consent to kill".

The idea of him being 'published' acknowledges how crime literature, which had the intention of maintaining social order, was in fact part of a labelling process that 'produced' these criminals to their 'wicked deed'. The domestic tragedy aimed to steer away from perpetuating harmful labels, instead, it was interested in showing how criminals were often carefully socially constructed. One example that this study will delve further into is *The Arden of Faversham*. This story was based on the murder of Thomas Arden of Faversham by his wife Alice Arden. Recently there has been growing support for the view that the middle scenes, 4–9, of *The Arden of Faversham*, were largely, if not wholly, Shakespeare's (Jackson, 2016: p.65) and that this play has pioneered the way for the genre of 'true crime' (O'Brien, 2017: p.113), which has very recently started to gain

a lot of traction. This true crime case was particularly infamous during the sixteenth century being ‘told and retold, recycled by pamphleteers, revived on the stage, reprinted in playtext form by publishers, and sung by balladeers for over eighty years’ (Rohre, 2019: p.4). This true crime play from the Elizabethan era still, however, remains such a timeless tale as beneath the entangled web of deceit, murder and betrayal is an astute analysis of how crime is socially constructed. The Arden of Faversham’s plot is centred around the crime of ‘petty treason’ which was a crime that mirrored all of Becker’s ideas about the social construction of crime. Dolan notes in her book *Dangerous Familiars* 1994, that instances of wives killing their husbands seemed to gain a substantial amount of attention despite the actuality of this crime ever occurring being relatively small. She notes that according to official statistics ‘husbands murdered their wives at least twice as often as wives murdered their husbands’ (Dolan, 1994: p.25) yet this crime gained attention because the act of a woman killing her husband was not only an act that disrupted the domestic sphere, plunging the family into chaos and disorder but an act that was a direct threat against the wider social hierarchy. Order and regime were intrinsic to the early modern way of life as demonstrated by the below image. The image is of ‘the great chain of being’ which was one of the cornerstones of early modern society. It demonstrated a linear structure, of which the order is fixed and any disruption to it was believed to have dire consequences.



Figure 1: The Creation of the World by Didacus Valade (Olson, 2013: p.14)

The act of killing a husband was considered to be so heinous that the crime received a unique legal status that was distinct from other forms of murder, labeled ‘petty treason’. Dolan notes that this is specifically due to this type of crime being perceived as ‘a particularly egregious assault on social and political order’ (Dolan, 1994: p.22) and the chain of being. For example, when Holinshed documented the murder of the Arden of Faversham it published it alongside stories of ‘the defeat of the Spanish Armada and the assassination of an anointed king’ (Neill, 1998: p.2), a stark reminder to its early modern readership of the severity of this type of crime. In *The Arden of Faversham*, a more complex view of this crime is put forward. The play seems to suggest less that this type of crime was an assault on social order and more that social order was an assault on these characters. An assault which forced them to believe that murder was their only way of refusing subsumption.

In Act Three of *The Arden of Faversham*, it states that Alice is,

‘Rooted in her wickedness,
Perverse and stubborn, not to be reclaimed’

(Anonymous, 1592/2021: 1.4, 9-10)

She is described as guilty, ‘wicked’ and ultimately unable to be rehabilitated. While on the surface this seems to be quite a fatalistic view of Alice’s circumstances and future, the play later goes on to explore how this isn’t a personal failing of Alice. Instead, the play proposes that she cannot be ‘reclaimed’ because she was never ‘claimed’ by society in the first instance. Alice claims that her motivations for murdering her husband were as follows,

‘Why should he thrust his sickle in our corn,
Or what hath he to do with thee, my love,
Or govern me that am to rule myself?
Forsooth, for credit sake, I must leave thee!
Nay, he must leave to live that we may love.’

(Anonymous, 1592/2021: 1.10, 86-90)

The political language that pervades her motivations for wanting to kill her husband such as ‘govern’ and ‘rule’ highlights the influence that law, order and control have had on her behaviour. *The Arden of Faversham* frees Alice from the murderous stock character stereotype and explores how her actions are not an example of her being ‘a monster, taken over by diabolic forces’ (Clark, 2019: p.3), which was the common perception of criminals at this time, rather she was a monster that was created. The anonymous author of *The Arden of Faversham* makes a radical social statement that ‘petty treason’ is an ‘act’ that is created by society. An act that Alice ‘cunningly performed’ (Anonymous, 1592/2021: 1.1, 420) as a result of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

However, this social commentary does not stop with Alice. The author goes on to explore how many characters within the play are performing an act that is forced on them by society. Comensoli notes how the domestic tragedy became a ‘mouthpiece for a largely ‘middle class’ audience, whose ‘growing class consciousness’ inspired the creation of new drama’ (Comensoli, 1999: p.5). The social backdrop of this play was particularly turbulent with a recent transition

from a feudal to a proto-capitalist economy. The medieval ideal of the village was that it would serve as a mini commonwealth where neighbours would offer mutual support and protection; however, the 'slow disintegration of a rural economy and its values before the new agrarianism of middle-class entrepreneurs' (Wine p.1xii) caused rampant individualism. The opportunity for social mobility that stemmed from this feudal to proto-capitalist economy caused a heightened awareness of class conscience which created an extremely competitive atmosphere where ambition led to chaos and violence. Mosby in many ways encapsulates this shift in class. At the beginning of the play, Arden describes how he,

'A botcher and no better at first,
Who, by base brokerage getting some small stock,
Crept into the service of a nobleman,
And by his flattery and fawning
Is now become the steward of his house,
And bravely jets it in his silken gown'.

(Anonymous, 1592/2021: 1.1, 25-30)

This first introduction we have to Mosby echoes back to his past as a poor tailor despite the fact that he ascended the social scale to become something more. This is a common theme throughout the play, Mosby is constantly in the shadow of his past and labelled by what he was. In an interaction he has with Thomas Arden, Arden says,

'Use your bodkin,
Your Spanish needle, and your pressing iron,
For this shall go with me. And mark my words -
You, goodman botcher, 'tis to you I speak-
The next time that I take thee near my house,
Instead of legs I'll make thee crawl on stumps'.

(Anonymous, 1592/2021: 1.1, 313-319)

Again, Arden addresses him as a 'bodkin' (meaning tailor) showing how he remains labelled by his past instead of what he is now. This is something that deeply troubles Mosby who in a desperate plea says, 'Measure me what I am, not what I was' (Anonymous, 1592/2021: 1.1, 323). As mentioned earlier this is a provocative line which demonstrates how the early modern theatre was an arena where proto-criminologist discourse surrounding stigma and labeling was actively discussed. It can be argued that this stigmatization and labeling that Mosby receives throughout the play is ultimately what drives him to commit his final act of murder. As he delivers a blow to Thomas Arden's head he says 'There's for the pressing iron you told me of' (Anonymous, 1592: 1.14, 217). This demonstrates a cyclical moment in the play as the line echoes back to how Thomas would persistently label him as 'a bodkin'. By continuously labelling Mosby, Thomas Arden ultimately produces the brute that the audience sees by the end.

Finally, another way that this play shows how crime is socially constructed is through the characters Blackwill and Shakebag. The two assassins are employed by Alice to kill Thomas Arden. The rogue was an interesting and multifaceted figure during the early modern period and can be an interesting way of exploring criminal labelling. Liapi argues that rogues were 'produced by and within the affirmations of order' (Liapi, 2019: p.4). The labelling of some characters as rogues meant that playwrights were able to explore what led to the creation of social stereotypes and also comment on social issues of the time by highlighting what were considered to be 'flaws' within these characters.

Blackwill and Shakebag are considered to be 'the two most socially degraded characters in the play' (Neill, 1998 p.84) they represent another example of societies' failed attempts to support the lower classes. The names themselves are particularly stigmatizing and seem to label both characters with negative connotations before they even get the opportunity to speak. The term 'Shakebag' comes from an archaic term for rogue which was used as 'a catchall term for a variety of social deviants and outcasts, from rural migrants to urban con artists' (Neill, 1998: p.84). Also, the name 'Blackwill' seems to be particularly stigmatizing as it seems to suggest something morally corrupt about his character before he is even given the opportunity to convey his character to the audience himself. As a result of the labels they have been assigned, they are forced to use unlawful means to achieve the same goal as everyone else in society, as Becker

argues in his book *Outsiders* when he says those who experience a 'self-fulfilling' are forced into illegitimate kinds of activity due to the image people have of them (Becker, 2008: p. 34) in his section on career criminals. Blackwill describes how,

'My fingers itch to be at the peasant. Ah, that I might be set a-work thus through the year, and that murder would grow to an occupation, that a man might without danger of law'.

(Anonymous, 1592/2021: 1.3, 108-111)

Referring to murder as 'work' and an 'occupation' highlights Blackwill and Shakebag's commencement into a deviant 'career' that Goffman and Becker discuss in their exploration of the impact of labelling. When talking to Greene Shakebag says 'I have cracked as many blades as thou art has done nuts' (Anonymous, 1592/2021: 1.14,9-10). Demonstrating how his role as an assassin is no different to Greene's career. Another interesting point that is mentioned here is the oxymoron of the 'danger of the law'. Law is meant to be unbiased and used to maintain order and equality. However, Blackwill and Shakebag argue that the law is the opposite of this. It is biased, prejudicial and as a result 'dangerous'. Becker argues that 'rules tend to be applied more to some persons than others' (Becker, 1963: p.12) and this is a notion that the two rogues seem to be foreshadowing. They seem to suggest that it is not they who are inherently deviant, rather it is the law that has taught them that it is essential to be that way. This is what makes rogues such a powerful and unsettling figure in early modern literature as they represented 'in a powerful sense, us, the prototypes of the citizens of modern urban capitalism, in part because they provide a potent image of the social adeptness required in a society premised on mobility and the endlessly changing conditions of exchange that constitutes modern capitalism' (Dionne, Mentz, & Michigan, 2004: p.9), they are not afraid to 'to wear disguises and assume aliases in the gamble of life, to deceive and to be deceived in the race for success' (Dionne, Mentz, & Michigan, 2004: p.9).

The Arden of Faversham on a superficial level seems to be another tragedy that profits from the tale of a murderous wife; however, the way it explores the social construction of crime is what makes it such a timeless text for modern criminologists. All of the violence, deceit and betrayal

in the play stems from a society that is keen to label and stigmatize and in doing so breeds crime and deviance as those being labelled begin to believe these labels that have been applied to them.

Another well-known domestic tragedy that draws a lot on symbolic interactionism and labelling theory is *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621). Julia Garret has noted how labelling theory and interactionism have already been applied to the witch trials during the early modern period including work by Erikson, Lerner, Thomas, and Macfarlane (Garret, 2007: p.9) but she also suggests that this conversation can be broadened to include literature on the phenomenon, especially the domestic tragedy. Garret argues that a similar interactionist reading can be made of *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621) by Ford, Dekker and Rowley, which she argues is an example of how 'the seventeenth-century play might serve as an early manifestation of sociological discourse' (Garret, 2007: p.3). Sigma, moral panics, the role of authorities and self-fulfilling prophecies are all key concepts that can be used to explore the persecution of individuals accused of witchcraft.

The tragedy uses two subplots to document the crimes of Frankey Thorney and Elizabeth Sawyer; however, it is best known for its documentation of Sawyers's conviction of witchcraft during the reign of King James the First. Elizabeth Sawyer was an elderly woman who had been entirely ostracized by her neighbours who believed that she was a witch. Instead of denying the false claims that circulated in the village of Edmonton, Sawyer allows them to shape her identity and she becomes the witch the community has essentially made her by selling her soul to the devil dog and putting into motion a chain of violence and destruction. While the play was obviously part of a wave of literature that capitalized on stories like Sawyers and the phenomenon of the witch trials, it equally demonstrated an advanced level of proto-criminologist thinking that provided a more sympathetic view of witches. Ford, Dekker and Rowley explore how witchcraft was often rooted in stigma and discrimination and that this type of crime was not an inherent act, but rather an act that was produced by the community and the labels it applied to those who were perceived to be outsiders.

Stigma is a concept that is central to symbolic interactionism and their explanation of crime and also central to the plot of *The Witch of Edmonton*. In his book *Stigma* (2009) Ervina Goffman defines stigma as 'spoiled identity' and it is used to describe 'an attribute that is deeply discrediting' (Goffman, 2009: p.10). As part of his study on stigma Goffman traces back the

word to the Greeks who used it as a term to ‘refer to bodily signs designed to expose something unusual or bad about the moral status of the signifier’ (Goffman, 2009: p.9). He states that the Greeks loved visual aids and they used the term stigma to refer ‘to bodily signs designed to expose something unusual or bad about a person’ (Goffman, 2009: p.9). This led to practices such as ‘physiognomy’ being used to explore human behaviour. This practice derived from the Greek words ‘physis’ meaning nature and ‘gnomon’ meaning to judge and promote the idea that criminality could be read through certain physical traits. Below is an example from Giambattista Della Porta, a well-known physiognomist whose *De Humane Physiognomy* (1586) is seminal to the field. This illustration from his book demonstrates his example of ‘the hooked nose’. This theory implied that those with ‘hooked noses’ resembled ravens and other such birds that demonstrated thievish behaviour therefore they were likely to become thieves and robbers (Olson, 2013: p.8).

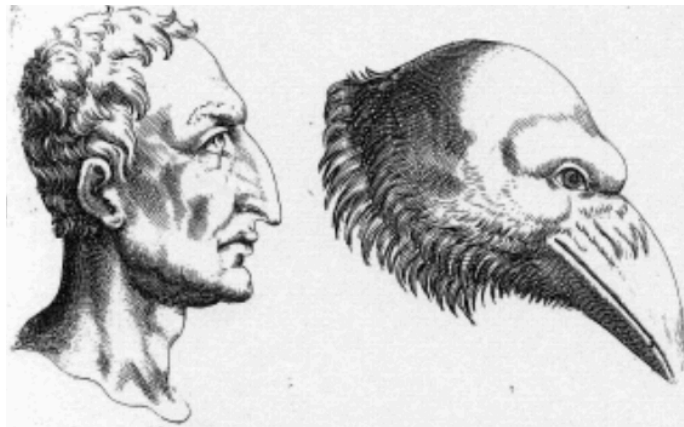


Figure 2: The Hooked Nose by Giambattista Della Porta (Olson, 2013: p.8)

Finding a mark on the body ‘was a highly favored way of procuring a conviction in English trials; if discovered, a witch's mark alone was generally sufficient evidence to send a woman to the scaffold’ (Garrat, 2007: p.331). Henry Goodcole, who was Elizabeth Sawyer's prison chaplain at Newgate while she was awaiting execution, wrote a pamphlet called *The Wonderful Discovery of Elizabeth Sawyer, Witch* (1621) that was based on his conversations with her and the confession she made before she was ordered to be killed in 1621. Goodcole uses phrases like her face was ‘most pale & ghoast-like’, her body was ‘crooked and deformed’, and her tongue was ‘cursing, swearing, blaspheming, and imprecating’ to describe Sawyer. The stigmatizing

physical features that Goodcole describes were a common way of profiling witches during this period. Often physical differences indicated the potential for further deviance which suggested that women who were seen as witches were irrevocably evil. Despite physiognomy and other practices that draw on ideas of innate criminality such as Lombroso's *Criminal Man* (1876) being discredited for being pseudo-scientific it still influences perceptions of criminality to a certain extent. Modern newspapers have continued to incorporate animalistic imagery in their reporting of crime that mirrors the way that Goodcole described Sawyer in physically different and monstrous terms. For instance, the *Daily Mail* has used the headline 'Bestiality Beyond Imagination' and 'Born a Misfit He Became a Monster' while *The Daily Mirror* has used the headline 'Cage Him Before He Kills Again' (Newburn, 2007: p.89). This approach to deviance is echoed in the play's opening as Sawyer delivers a short soliloquy where she describes herself as 'poor, deform'd and ignorant, And like a bow buckl'd and bent together' (Rowley, Dekker, & Ford, 1658: 2.1, p.9). She is immediately portrayed as physically different from the rest of the community, a nod to Goodcole's account and a portrayal of witchcraft that would have met the audience's expectations. However, the play soon takes a didactic turn that scrutinizes this explanation of crime and suggests that Sawyer's differences are the result of how she has been treated by the community. She says,

'Some call me Witch;
And being ignorant of myself, they go
About to teach me how to be one: urging, That my bad tongue (by their bad usage made so)
Forespeaks their Cattle, doth bewitch their Corn,
Themselves, their Servants, and their Babes at nurse'.

(Rowley, Dekker, & Ford, 1658: 2.1, p.9)

This idea that deviance is something that can be 'taught' is similar to the idea of the self-fulfilling prophecy which Merton describes as 'a false definition of a situation, evoking a new behaviour which makes the originally false conception come true' (Merton, 2016: p.506). Sawyer is not innately evil; she just transgresses the parameters set by society for her as a

woman therefore she becomes labeled as a witch as a way of society attempting to control her. Dolan notes how;

‘In the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the law attempted to make just such distinctions. Like petty treason and infanticide, witchcraft generated new legislation in Tudor and early Stuart England, which was influenced by and contributed to other legal and social efforts to criminalize poverty and women.’

(Dolan, 1994: p.178)

People were beginning to question whether witches even existed and to what extent it was just a way for the community to control unruly people who were deemed as a threat. In the same way, Goffman describes that ‘the normal and the stigmatized are not persons but rather perspectives’ (Goffman, 2009: p.109) the play explores how Sawyer's role of the witch is just a perspective that her community has built of her. This can be seen in Sawyer's symbolic interaction with her neighbour Old Banks. As she is collecting firewood in Act Two, Scene One her neighbour begins to insist she leaves his ground and begins to assault her, “cursing, thou Hag! Take that, and that” (Rowley, Dekker, & Ford, 1658: 2.1, p.10). It can be argued that Sawyer transgressing the boundary between her land and her neighbours is an extended metaphor for the anxiety surrounding unruly women transgressing the boundaries that society has set for them. In response to Old Banks’ beatings, Sawyer says, ‘Dost strike me slave? curmudgeon now thy bones aches, thy joynts cramps, and convulsions stretch and crack thy sinews’ (Rowley, Dekker, & Ford, 1658: 2.1, p.10). Before she entered the property she was an ordinary woman but upon exiting the property it is then she becomes ‘deformed, buckled and bent’ like she describes herself being in the beginning. Her exterior ‘stigmas’ that would have deemed her a witch at this time were not things she was born with, rather they were injuries projected onto her by society. Continuing on with this idea Sawyer says,

‘Must I for that be made a common sink,
For all the filth and rubbish of Men’s tongues
To fall and run into?

The metaphor of a sink shows how Sawyer is not inherently different or deviant, instead, she is the product of society's ills. Goffman argues that 'prejudice against a stigmatized group can be a form of sickness' (Goffman, 2009: p.103). This can be demonstrated in the symbol of the 'common sink'. In many ways, the community's decision to label Sawyer as a witch is a reflection of their own sickness. What is seen as a 'flaw' within her can be used to dissect the flaws of society too at the time.

Sawyer also makes similar arguments to Shakebag and Blackwill in *The Arden of Faversham*. In the same way that the two rogues emphasize how the law is often prejudicial and biased, Sawyer says,

'The Man of Law,
Whose honeyed hopes the credulous Client draws,
(As bees by tinkling Basons) to swarn to him,
From his own Hive, to work the wax in his;
He is no Witch, not he.'

Sawyer dramatically asks why the label of a witch is only applied to her, a question about why only some are seen as inherently evil and others are not, which remains timeless today. The play is full of different types of crime including adultery, bigamy, assault, slander and theft yet Sawyer's crime remains at the centre of the plot. This can be extended to today's circumstances where criminal justice seems to only focus on the crimes of the few. She described the 'man of law' in terms of 'bees' which is a particularly radical statement. Mainly because at this time animal metaphors were often used to stigmatize criminals and present them as different. Olson notes how historically animal metaphors often pervaded crime reporting. One particular example she uses is from the fifteenth-century surgeon Willaim Clowes who said that 'filthy creatures [...] daily increase to the great danger of the commonwealth' (Olson, 2013: p.3). Criminals were often referred to in this subhuman way, it soon bled into the sixteenth century when

‘cony-caching’ literature began to gain traction. The word ‘cony’ comes from the word for wild rabbit showing how criminals were almost seen as vermin that needed to be caught. Sawyer reverses this common trop and places it on ‘the man of law’. Lemert says that ‘reform movements often create more problems than they solve and that in such cases the “problem” turns out to be the reform action itself’ (Lemert, 1951: p.4). By describing the lawyers as ‘bees’ Sawyer suggests how their attempts to control deviance can be what facilitates it so in a way they are just as poisonous and toxic as the criminals they condemn they are just not labeled as such.

Another character that contributes to the vibrant discussion in the play about stigma and labelling is the character of Dog. Dog is often seen as a minor character in the play; however, the key role he plays in continuing discussions surrounding the complexity of labels is often overlooked. Dog has been seen as a character who represents evil however he shows how the real evil in society is ‘the inability to change one's roles’ (Pearson, 2008: p.2). It can be argued that Dog is perhaps a metaphorical symbol of a self-fulfilling prophecy. He first appears as she is cursing her community for treating her like a witch. She says ‘Revenge upon this Miser, this black Cur, / that barks, and bites, and sucks the very blood/ Of me, and of my credit.’ (Rowley, Dekker, & Ford, 1658: 2.1, p.15). The idea that Dog ‘sucks’ her ‘credit’ seems to cement the idea that he is responsible for the harm to her social standing; however, is it ‘Dog’ that does this or is ‘Dog’ simply a manifestation of Sawyer’s own self-destruction. After all, Sawyer is described as a ‘selfe-strangeled wretch’ (Rowley, Dekker, & Ford, 1658: 2.1, p.15) alluding to the fact that she herself is responsible for what happens to her. There are many ways that the boundaries between Sawyer and Dog are blurred and they appear as one for instance, Sawyer describes how ‘I’ll muzzle up my Tongue’ (Rowley, Dekker, & Ford, 1658: 2.1, p.54). The metaphor of the ‘muzzle’ not only shows how she feels silenced but draws a parallel between her and Dog a parallel that is continued when Dog says,

'Come, do not fear, I love thee much too well
To hurt or fright thee. If I seem terrible,
It is to such as hate me'

(Rowley, Dekker, & Ford, 1658: 2.1, p.15).

The way that Dog's 'love' is hidden by his 'fearful' exterior shows how he mirrors Sawyer's experience of being labelled something other than what he is. The two characters seem to foil each other and at times become hard to separate. Dog is known for its ability to take 'any shape' (Rowley, Dekker, & Ford, 1658: 2.1, p.40) which seems to suggest how he is less of a physical character and more of a symbol that is used to destabilize social identities.

Ultimately, *The Witch of Edmonton* is another example of how the domestic tragedy engaged with ideas surrounding the social construction of crime using witchcraft as a framework for this analysis. There has already been interest surrounding how the witch trials can be used to reflect and build upon criminologist theory yet there remains little research that shows how early modern drama can enter into this discussion as well. The ideas that the play explores remain as powerful as ever today as it demonstrates a link between crime and those who are from marginalized groups within society and how society's attempts to stigmatize groups only highlight flaws within themselves. *The Witch of Edmonton* offers a powerful foundation for which labels can be explored and contested which is an invaluable addition to the study of Literature and Criminology.

The domestic tragedy was certainly a genre that took a radical new approach to the study of crime. In the opening to *A Warning for Fair Women* (1599) the character 'Tragedy', who is the personification of the genre, takes to the stage with a knife in one hand and a whip in the other and states, 'Here are the launces that have sluic'd forth sinne, / And ript the venomd ulcer of foule lust' (Heywood, Hopkinson, & Kyd, 2021: epilogue, 4-7). This juxtaposition between the authoritative imagery of the 'whip' and the invasive imagery of the 'lunce' is a powerful image that demonstrates how the domestic tragedy was a radical genre that used an invasive approach to grapple with important topics surrounding crime and authority in a way that demonstrated a 'shadow criminology' (Garrett, 2007: p.4) that was beginning to develop in the sixteenth century. While the theatre has been known for being 'an institution for the inculcation of moral or social codes and precepts' (Comensoli, 1999: p.9), the domestic tragedy uses its lunce to cut open the societal body and diagnose its ills. Just as Goffman says that 'prejudice against a stigmatized group can be a form of sickness' (Goffman, 2009: p.103) this type of genre suggests that it is not criminals who are monstrous and sick, rather it is the society that shapes them that needs curing. The play presents society in terms of a sick patient and the domestic tragedy is the surgical

procedure of which it desperately needs. It was a genre that was excitingly aware of the impact that theatre could have in helping to shed new light on the social construction of crime.

Labelling, stigma, moral panics, self-fulfilling prophecy and the social construction of crime were all concepts that were arguably first expressed on the early modern stage by tragedians. This radical new genre challenged why some people are perceived as inherently more criminal than others, standing out from other literature of the time and showing how the early modern stage was an arena for creating lively proto-criminologist debates, particularly debates that can be used to aid our understanding of labelling theory. At a time now when a disproportionate number of people from marginalized groups remain the majority of those who are incarcerated and trapped in a cyclical process of re-offending, an approach to crime that these tragedians were putting forward is essential to incorporate into the field of literature and criminology. Unlike other types of fiction which perpetuate the harmful narrative that criminals are inherently bad, this genre showed how those who are deemed deviant are often a reflection of societal flaws that are rooted in social exclusion and prejudice. In society, people don't often have control over their narrative script. Theatre allows those who have been pushed to the sidelines of society to harness their voice and reshape their image outside of the monstrous criminal caricature that has been created for them. The intersection of domestic tragedy and labelling theory unveils a new understanding of how criminals are socially constructed, stigmatized, and products of their surroundings as opposed to inherently evil. Not only this but theatre points towards a much larger question that needs to be asked by criminologists. How can we rehabilitate those who have never been habilitated in the first instance?

Chapter 2:

Theatrics of Authority And Deceit in Shakespearean Drama

"O, it is excellent

To have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous

To use it like a giant."

(Shakespeare, 1604/2021: 2.3, 110-112)

This chapter will use Goffman's 'dramaturgy' as a framework for analyzing Shakespeare's corrupt constables in *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598) and *Measure for Measure* (1604). The quote "O, it is excellent/ To have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous/ To use it like a giant" serves as a thematic touchstone, inviting scholars to scrutinize the fine line between the legitimate exercise of authority and its potential for abuse - a dynamic which can be further illuminated using Goffman's dramaturgy and analysis of social performance as a framework. Shakespeare has often been referred to as 'the grandfather of dramaturgical theories of crime' (Wilson, 2014: p.104) although the theory is attributed to Ervime Goffman in *The Presentation of The Self in Everyday Life*. Goffman's theory has been widely regarded as influenced by Kenneth Burke, who was a Shakespearean scholar yet despite dramaturgy being rooted in Shakespearean theatre there is very little work that brings the two into conversation with each other. This is a gap that this chapter aims to fill. Shakespeare demonstrated how in the same way that it is too simplistic to label criminals as inherently 'bad people', it can be particularly problematic to label all law enforcement agents as inherently 'good people' who can always be trusted to enforce order and provide justice. Although the criminal justice system as we know it was still in its infancy during the early modern period and there was yet to be the creation of an organized police force, constables and justices of the peace were still mentioned in a variety of Shakespeare's plays. Throughout these plays law enforcement figures are often comically inept and it can be argued that this is to demonstrate the theatricality of policing and how law enforcement is often entirely performative. They also often operate on the fringes of the law

themselves, exposing how the face of authority is often just a ‘front stage’ presence that hides more sinister corrupt intentions ‘backstage’. Shakespeare proposes how underneath the title of constable are people who are at times no different to the individuals they are condemning. This remains an important discussion to have today. Unfortunately, those who are entrusted with our protection and care have been shown to be alarmingly dishonest and corrupt, often abusing their position of power. According to one particular study, it has been said that there are ‘142 known cases of an officer being arrested for criminal misuse of a law enforcement database’ (Stinson, 2020: p.1) in the US alone. Furthermore, the publication of the Baroness Casey Review in 2022 following the tragic abduction and murder of Sarah Everard by a serving member of the metropolitan police force, exposed how other employees in the force were using the mask of ‘law enforcement’ to get away with horrific crimes such as murder, abduction and sexual abuse. It is clear that the abuse of power within policing systems needs to be addressed with transparency and accountability. The early modern stage was a place where interesting connections could be drawn between theatricality and policing which can contribute towards some innovative and exciting theoretical discussions within the field of literature and criminology.

Louise Casey, both a former government advisor and civil servant, published the Baroness Casey Review in 2022. It followed the tragic abduction and murder of Sarah Everard in 2021 by London police officer Wayne Couzens and the subsequent discovery and conviction of another officer who exploited his authority and became one of the country's most prolific sex offenders. The report brought a number of glaring faults within the metropolitan police force into sharp focus including, inequality, discrimination and misconduct all of which need to be challenged. As mentioned previously, scholars have pointed to how literature tends to reproduce the idea that law enforcement agents are inherently good people. Wilson argues that this history started with Victorian detective fiction, like the Sherlock Holmes stories. Sherlock Holmes is a stereotypical investigator and upstanding member of society who represents intelligence, morality and strength. He demonstrates how ‘all criminals are evil, all justice is quick, and all crimes are solved thanks to the scientific methods and logical brilliance of our wise, strong, and virtuous agents of criminal justice’ (Wilson, 2014: p.99). Following this a proliferation of crime shows has followed in Conan Doyle's footsteps, shows that Wilson calls ‘descendants of the Sherlock Holmes stories’ (Wilson, 2014: p.99). Police procedurals, legal dramas and crime thrillers extend

on this idea and continue to reinforce a very straightforward perception of criminal justice. By showing how ‘every crime is solved in 42 minutes plus commercial breaks—repeat week after week, season after season, and show after show the idea that justice is always served to criminals thanks to the brilliance, courage, and fortitude of some heroic law enforcement agent(s)’ (Wilson, 2014: p.99). This perception of justice is untrue and puts police officers and law enforcement officials on a pedestal which in some cases allows them to think that they themselves are above the law. The Baroness Casey review demonstrates how this view is an unfortunate reality as in many ways today's police force is an inadequate system that is failing the general public and compromising their safety. In the review, Baroness Casey notes that ‘significant societal shifts are rightly making us less tolerant of crimes such as domestic abuse, rape and child abuse as well as discrimination’ (Casey, 2023: p.9) which has resulted in the British public expectations of the police force being greater. However, despite greater expectations ‘recruitment and vetting systems are poor and fail to guard against those who seek power in order to abuse it’ (Casey, 2023: p.11) which has led to a police force comprised of figures who do not reflect those they represent, typically being ‘82% White and 71% male’ (Casey, 2023: p.9) and often discriminatory in their views which risks impacting the delivery of justice. In a powerful victim statement to the court Susan Everard, Sarah’s mother, said,

“There is no comfort to be had, there is no consoling thought in the way Sarah died. In her last hours, she was faced with brutality and terror, alone with someone intent on doing her harm. The thought of it is unbearable. I am haunted by the horror of it...I am repulsed by the thought of what he did to Sarah. I am outraged that he masqueraded as a policeman in order to get what he wanted.”

(Casey, 2023: p.6)

A word that Susan Everard used that has definitely influenced this study was the word ‘masqueraded’. A masquerade has connotations of a show which draws an interesting parallel between policing and drama that should be explored further. There is growing concern surrounding the theatricality of criminal justice, law enforcement and policing, with scholars believing that as the trial becomes more theatrical the less it is able to complete its primary function as enforcing justice. ‘The trial is no longer *like* a theatre, but rather *is* a theatre’ (Leader,

2020: p.4) and those in charge of enforcing the law are merely actors who symbolise protection and trust but behind the scenes engage in unlawful behaviours, abuses of power and corruption.

This chapter argues that criminal justice, law enforcement and policing can be viewed through a theatrical lens using Ervime Goffman's 'dramaturgical analysis'. Although Goffman is not a labelling theorist in a strict sense like the previous theorists in this study, his work comes from the field of symbolic interactionism which tends to overlap a lot with the core concepts of labelling theory. Goffman explores his notion of dramaturgy most famously in his seminal work *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*. This book uses a dramaturgical perspective as a framework in order to view the ways in which social interactions can be depicted in terms of a theatrical performance. In the preface, he states how in life 'the part one individual plays is tailored to the parts played by the others presents, and yet these others also constitute the audience' (Goffman, 2021: p.8). In a similar way, it has been argued that the police exercise 'a symbolic power to an audience' (Loader, 1997: p.10). Patrick Anderson, in his article *Dramaturgies of Policing (2021)* recalls how the 'methodological preparation I had received in performance studies classes had prepared me well for the work of civilian oversight' (Anderson, 2021: p.536). He details how body-worn camera footage and police interviews are all theatrical and could benefit from theatrical analysis. This approach that Goffman uses to explain human interaction could prove to be a particularly interesting lens through which to explore policing. This study argues that applying Goffman's concepts to policing can allow for a critical analysis of the performative nature of law enforcement and promote positive changes that encourage accountability and transparency within the police. It can be argued that Shakespeare's plays elucidate this idea through his comically inept and inherently theatrical agents of law enforcement.

The theatricality of justice and law enforcement would have been something that was obvious to Shakespeare and his contemporaries for many reasons. Firstly, punishment of the time was also seen to be inherently theatrical. 'The same word 'scaffold'—in French 'échauffaud'—meant a scenographic system built to be easily seen' (Biet, 2016: p.7), underlining the theatrical element of punishment of the time. Criminals were placed in the pillory or the stocks to be humiliated in front of an audience or executed by being burned at the stake or hung, drawn and quartered for public entertainment. Public hangings at 'The Tyburn Tree' were widely attended, a popular pastime for many city-dwellers in Elizabethan and Stuart England. Seats were available

for a small fee and pamphlets could also be bought which detailed the crimes the accused was being punished for.

Secondly, the formal criminal justice system as we now know it was not properly established until the mid-eighteenth and mid-twentieth centuries (Newburn, 2017: p.23) and surveillance systems were in their infancy and quite poor. Justice was enforced, albeit biasedly, by unpaid parish constables or justices of the peace who belonged to the local community which often impaired their impartiality (Ascari & Golinelli, 2021: p.17). As a result, the theatre became responsible for bridging this gap and played a huge part in the criminal justice system at the time. It was involved in what has been termed ‘psychological policing’ (Ascari & Golinelli, 2021: p.16) through the ““lessons” it taught [and] the social consequences it effected (Comensoli, 1999: p.9). Thomas Heywood, who was a playwright, actor and author, wrote an *Apology for Actors* (1612) in response to the criticism that theatre was receiving at the time from the Puritans. In his book, he explored the role that the theatre played in ‘teaching lessons’ and stressed how the playhouse was a place that upheld social norms and values. Heywood uses public confessions at the theatre as an example of this. He recalls one particular instance where a lady attended a performance in Norfolk. In this performance, a man was killed by having a nail driven through his skull and the lady, who had also happened to have murdered her husband in a similar way, stood up and confessed her crime. Following this, she was apprehended, judged, condemned and ultimately put to death (Heywood, 1612: p.30).

Theatre and justice were constantly overlapping during the early modern period in numerous ways and perhaps this crossover between the two spheres also allowed for the theatre to become a place where interesting conversations could be had surrounding crime, justice and morality. Playwrights started to consider that things like what if law enforcement is merely just a performance and those in charge of protecting the community are only acting with no real intention of making a positive difference. Playhouses seated an audience that mirrored the entire social spectrum, from royalty to petty criminals and vagrants (Comensoli, 1999: p.5) however, upon entry to the theatre all these labels vanished. The stage allowed playwrights to show how people were performers and their lives were simply scripts which allowed for a different perspective on authority and those that imposed the law. Ironically, through theatre, their performance was dissolved and they were allowed to be seen in a unique but truthful way, as just humans. Humans who were also capable of making mistakes and needed to be held accountable.

In Shakespeare's plays particularly, 'the police are beset by ineptitude, recklessness, and error' (Wilson, 2014: p.100). He does not shy away from exploring how 'policing' and authority is merely a label that is acted out and does not necessarily mean that the person underneath is good or trustworthy. He often presents these characters as comically inept, driven by their own dark desires and corruption, all of which are flaws that still remain evident in the Baroness Casey review today.

Much Ado About Nothing is a play where deceit is at its epicentre. Containing staged shows and actors the play has been deemed by critics as a play about 'truth, illusion, and how to live in a world of deceptive appearances' (Howard, 2013: p.163). Despite the metatheatrical aspect of the play and the parallels it draws between drama and human interaction, there is yet to be much scholarship that brings this text into conversation with Goffman's dramaturgy. It can be argued that in *Much Ado About Nothing* Shakespeare uses theatre to explore how authority and justice are inherently dramaturgical, foreshadowing Goffman's theory and how it can be used to explain and enhance our understanding of law enforcement. The play forces its audience to consider if it is ever possible to judge a person based on their external appearance as its tale of confusion and mistaken identity calls into question the nature of identity and to what extent identity is merely a social performance.

Dogberry, who is the constable of the night's watchmen, is arguably one of Shakespeare's most comical constables who serves as a satirical symbol of Elizabethan law enforcement that can also be used to critique today's police force. He constantly tries to reinforce his role as an authority figure however, Shakespeare presents him as ultimately bumbling and useless. One of the audience's first interactions with him is when he is with his deputy Verges and he is explaining the watch's duties for the night. However, as Dogberry is giving his order to his men it becomes apparent 'the watch' is definitely more of just a symbol of order and does little to actually deter crime and disorder:

'Dogberry: This is your charge:
you shall comprehend all vagrom men; you are to
bid any man stand, in the Prince's name.

Seacole: How if he will not stand?

Dogberry: Why, then, take no note of him, but let him go, and presently call the rest of the watch together and thank God you are rid of a knave.'

(Shakespeare, 1598/2021: 3.3)

This comedic interaction between Dogberry and Seacole illustrates how Elizabethan watchmen were seen as purely symbolic of order with actually little difference in actually keeping it a portrayal of law enforcement that can be used to explore people's concerns with policing today. It has been said that evidence suggests 'increasing the numbers of officers deployed makes little difference to crime rates' (Loader, 1997: p.2), instead having police patrol the streets is more of a symbolic action that puts the public at ease. Goffman uses the idea of 'impression management' which was part of his greater 'dramaturgical theory' explored in *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*. Goffman describes impression management as 'the attributes that are required of a performer for the work of successful staging of a character' (Goffman, 2021: p.185). Seeing police uniforms scatter the streets, hearing the sirens of patrol cars and scripted stop and searches are all ways of performing the law and comforting the public that the police are present and as a result they are safe. Shakespeare particularly explores impression management and how it can be applied to policing through language, specifically malapropisms. Malapropism is defined as the mistaken use of a word in place of a word that sounds similar but doesn't mean the same thing. Shakespeare has his constables make these comedic linguistic errors and it shows how these scripts are often used by the police as a way of manipulating the impression the public has of them and creating this facade of authority is often entirely theatrical.

In Act 5, as Dogberry's authority appears to be questioned when Conrade calls him an 'ass' (Shakespeare, 1598/2021: 4.2, 74) he replies with,

'Dost thou not suspect my place? Dost thou not suspect my years? O that he were here to write me down an ass! But masters, remember that I am an ass. Though it be not written down, yet

forget not that I am an ass. No, thou villain, thou art full of piety, as shall be proved upon thee by good witness. I am a wise fellow, and which is more, an officer, and which is more, a householder, and which is more, as pretty a piece of flesh as any is in Messina, and one that knows the law, go to . . . and one that hath two gowns, and everything handsome about him. Bring him away. O that I had been writ down an ass!’

(Shakespeare, 1598/2021:4.2, 75-88)

Goffman used the term ‘dramatic realization’ to describe how a person tries to construct a particular image of themselves to others. He says that ‘if the individual's activity is to become significant to others, he must mobilize his activity so that it will express *during the interaction* what he wishes to convey’ (Goffman, 2021: p.34). Dogberry clearly wants to convey himself as a constable, a figure of authority. However, in the process of attempting to come across as better than those around him and ‘impress’ Conrade, he makes an even bigger fool of himself by using a plethora of nonsensical linguistic mistakes. Shakespeare’s other comic constable Dull uses similar linguistic mistakes in *Love Labours Lost* (1598), it seems to be a common pattern Shakespeare employs across his various plays. Dogberry’s malapropisms, however, such as using the word ‘suspect’ instead of ‘respect’ and ‘piety’ instead of ‘impiety’ highlights how his role as constable is inherently theatrical. This makes his mention of the misdeeds of Borachio later in the play even more ironic. Dogberry says,

‘They have committed false
report; moreover, they have spoken untruths;
secondarily, they are slanders; sixth and lastly, they
have belied a lady; thirdly, they have verified unjust
things; and, to conclude, they are lying knaves.’

(Shakespeare, 1598/2021: 5, 210-215).

Dogberry talks about the ‘untruths’, ‘false reports’ and ‘lying’ that Borachio has done but in reality, Dogberry is no different, even though he is an authority figure. Even his name Dogberry, which was the Elizabethan name for the fruit from the common dogwood tree believed to be inferior to other berries, pokes fun at Dogberry's amateurishness. In a play full of deceitful characters who conceal their real identities Dogberry is no different. Shakespeare doesn't let his authority suggest that he is any better than other tricksters and fraudsters throughout the play.

Another important interaction in the play that emphasizes the importance of linguistic mistakes in highlighting the performative nature of policing comes from Act 3, Scene 3 between Conrade, Borachio and the Watchmen:

‘Conrade: Yes, the fashion is the fashion.

Borachio: Tush, I may as well say the fool's the fool. But seest thou not what a deformed thief this fashion is?

Watchman [aside]: I know that Deformed. ‘A has been a vile thief this seven year;’ a goes up and down like a gentleman’ I remember his name.’

(Shakespeare, 1598/2021: 3.3, 120-127)

Borachio makes a point to Conrade about how appearances can be ‘deformed’ or deceiving; however, this comment is completely misinterpreted by the Watchmen who mistakenly believe that the two are discussing a thief named ‘Deformed’. While on the surface this interaction appears to be a comical misunderstanding that results in the unfair arrest of Conrade and Borachio, it can be used to create an interesting and more sinister dialogue about how law enforcement often constructs their own criminal characters that perhaps do not actually exist in attempts to make the character that they are acting out appear more believable. The malapropisms go from being something that is unique to Dogberry as a foolish constable with no real repercussions or long-term damage to a wider more institutional failing of law enforcement that becomes not so comedic and actually quite concerning. Shakespeare suggests through this interaction that law enforcement is an inherently theatrical process that lacks basis in reality and

that in this process ‘false reports’, ‘untruths’ and ‘lies’ are fabricated that can have harmful effects such as the arrest of the innocent in this case. When Borachio makes the statement that appearances can be deceiving, Shakespeare makes it clear that the plays ‘authority figures are not excluded from this idea.

Goffman argues that ‘we can profitably study performances that are quite false in order to learn about ones that are quite honest’ (Goffman, 2021: p.61) He believes that studying ‘deceptive fashions’, as Borachio puts it, is a crucial way of being able to better navigate social interactions and interpret the authenticity of others. This seems to be an idea that underpins Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing* as all of the characters in one way or another put on a false performance and it is precisely these false performances that help the audience to better understand the society in which they live and the law enforcement figures that govern them.

Measure for Measure continues to build on the foundations that Shakespeare laid down in *Much Ado About Nothing*. This play is centred around themes of justice, morality and the abuse of power. Shakespeare takes a deep dive into the way that the law is enforced in the city of Vienna and exposes how those responsible for maintaining peace and order are often just as corrupt as those that they are responsible for sanctioning. The play was first performed before King James I and his court on 26th December 1604 and has long been referred to as ‘a law play’ (Orth, 2010: p.127). This chapter will take the play in a new direction, away from its roots in law and literature and towards the field of criminology and literature.

It is fitting that the play was first performed before a court as this Shakespearean play seamlessly blends together drama and criminal justice in a way that explores the inherent theatricality of law enforcement. It can be argued that Shakespeare uses a framework similar to Goffman’s ‘dramaturgy’ in order to explore police corruption and the abuse of power. In *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* Goffman uses the analogy of ‘front stage’ and ‘backstage’ personas as part of his dramaturgical approach to social interaction. The ‘front stage’ refers to the performance that a person gives during public social interactions. This performance ‘maintains and embodies certain standards’ (Goffman, 2021: p.99), it is a carefully constructed identity which aims to project a specific image. The ‘backstage’ on the other hand, is a more unfiltered and authentic projection of character. Goffman describes it as a place where ‘the performer can relax; he can drop his front, he can forgo speaking his lines, and step out of character’ (Goffman, 2021: p.104). *Measure for Measure* applies a similar concept to authority

figures in the play in order to understand and explore the corrupt dynamics of law enforcement. The line that Escalus delivers 'some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall,' (Shakespeare, 1604/2021: 2.1, 37-38) resonates throughout the play, providing a poignant reflection on the core theme of moral ambiguity and the complex interplay between virtue and vice. Applying Erving Goffman's dramaturgical framework to this play unveils the performative nature of individuals in their pursuit of power, justice, and societal roles and the constant grapple between 'front stage' and 'backstage' realities.

The contrast between 'front stage' and 'backstage' is immediately revealed in the first act as Duke Vincentio decides to temporarily abdicate his position and leave Angelo in charge of Vienna. The Duke's retreat into the shadows lays the foundations for Goffman's notion of the 'backstage' and suggests that this is where the true mechanics of power unfold. As he resigns to the 'backstage' under the guise of the Friar the Duke says, 'Hence shall we see, / If power changes purpose, what our seemers be' (Shakespeare, 1604/2021: 1.3, 53-54). In this statement, the Duke acknowledges the transformative nature of authority and hints at the performative aspect of leadership. The Duke's conscious decision to observe the unfolding drama from behind the scenes shows the complexity of social performance and highlights the tensions between authenticity and social expectations. Goffman states that 'All the world is not, of course, a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn't are not easy to specify.' This take on Shakespeare's line from *As You Like It* demonstrates Goffman's view that while life is not wholly theatre the ways in which it is and isn't can at times be hard to differentiate. The Duke, who disguises himself as a friar, manipulates events from behind the scenes, and orchestrates various situations to achieve his goals, highlights the difficulty in specifying the boundaries between one's genuine self and one's performed character. This aligns with Goffman's idea that not all of life is a stage, but the distinctions are challenging to pinpoint, a theme that carries itself throughout the rest of the play.

Arguably the notion of 'front stage' and 'back stage' is most pronounced through the character of Angelo, who on the surface appears to be the epitome of virtue. Angelo, whose name seems to reinforce the idea that he is inherently good and 'angelic', is brought in by the Duke to act as the deputy ruler of Vienna while he decides to temporarily leave the city. At the start of the play Angelo and the other constables underneath him appear genuine and seem to take their role very seriously. Modern criminologists have described the role of the police as like 'that of a scarecrow with the primary purpose being to provide a visible presence that deters threats from a defined

geographical location' (Paterson & Pollock, 2022: p.6). Angelo shares a similar view using the same metaphorical language of a 'scarecrow' to insist that the law should not be a symbolic facade, it should be a genuine deterrent. He fears that if the law is not upheld or applied regularly and effectively then it may become more symbolic and less effective. His approach while the Duke is away is to implement a zero-tolerance attitude and enforce 'strict statutes and the most biting laws' (Shakespeare, 1604/2021: 1.3, 19) showing a particular moral distaste for sexual activities such as fornication and prostitution. In Act 1, Scene 2 Claudio is taken into custody by Angelo who arrests him and sentences him to death for getting his fiancée Juliet pregnant before marriage. Claudio was perceived to have violated the city's very strict moral code and his public trial and punishment showcased the front-stage illusion of justice in Vienna where law and order seem to be being maintained. However, the metaphor of the 'scarecrow' also foreshadows the darker 'backstage' nature of the law. The idea is that it can become a 'perch' for birds of prey who manipulate it for their own gain. Birds of prey like himself.

Shakespeare demonstrates how contrary to his 'front stage' persona as an authoritarian and moral policeman, Angelo grapples with secret 'backstage' desires, the consequences of which are shown to spill into the public realm throughout the play. Just like 'Dogberry's' name was a way for Shakespeare to be able to poke fun at the amateur police force of his day, the name 'Angelo' is also purposefully symbolic. The name Angelo has obvious connotations of the word 'angel' which depicts him as an innately good and pure character however, as the play develops it becomes quite clear that this name is purely ironic as revealed by his 'devilish mercy' (Shakespeare, 1604/2021: 3.1, 65). The description of his judgment as 'devilish' is an oxymoron that draws a clear divide between his 'front' and 'back' stage persona. Isabella, who is about to enter a convent, desperately pleads with Angelo to try and save her brother's life. In response, Angelo makes a proposition that temporarily lifts the 'angelic' mask from his face and unveils his true 'backstage' desires. He proposes that he will spare Claudio's life in return for Isabella agreeing to sleep with him. This horrific moment in the play where Angelo abuses his position of power is unfortunately a sad reality that has been exposed within the police force today. In his study of police violence Stinson discusses how sexual predators within the police force 'believe they can get away with their crimes because they are police officers' [and they] carefully select their victims based on a calculation that the victim will not be believed if she or he files a complaint' (Stinson, 2020: p.9). A similar calculation is made by Angelo who says,

‘Who will believe thee, Isabel?
My unsoil'd name, th'austereness of my life,
My vouch against you, and my place i'th'state,
Will so your accusation overweigh,
That you shall stifle in your own report
And smell of calumny.’

(Shakespeare, 1604/2021:2.4, 154-159)

He believes that his ‘unsoil’d’ name along with his ‘austerity’ and powerful position in society means that he can ‘overweigh’ any claims that she makes against him. He sees her as a weak victim, whom he can overpower and manipulate and that this behaviour is somehow sanctioned by the authority that he has. There is lots to be said about the brave exposé of authority that Shakespeare has created here, but it is also deeply disheartening that it still remains relevant today. Shakespeare highlights the unfortunate reality that,

‘I not deny
The jury passing on the prisoner’s life
May in the sworn twelve have a thief or two
Guiltier than him they try: what’s open made to justice,
That justice seizes.’

(Shakespeare, 1604/2021: 2.1, 18-23)

Shakespeare forces his audience to consider that questionable moral characters can be found anywhere, even within those who represent power and authority in the criminal justice system. He draws attention to selective justice as he says ‘What’s open made to justice, that justice seizes’. He seems to suggest that there is a focus on the more visible and easily prosecutable crimes, demonstrating a call for accountability. This call for accountability remains present today as according to ‘Transparency International’s 2017 Global Corruption Barometer, which is based on surveys of 162,136 adults in 119 countries, the police are the sector perceived by the public as

the most corrupt, with 36% of the respondents around the globe believing that most or all police officers are corrupt' (Abbink, Ryvkin, & Serra, 2020: p.1). Shakespeare highlights this distrust for the police that can be traced all the way back to the time that he was writing and argues that in order for justice to function effectively transparency and accountability are vital.

Furthermore, Shakespeare builds on the themes of selective justice and corruption when Angelo also says to Isabella,

'Condemn the fault, and not the actor of it?
Why, every fault's condemned ere it be done.
Mine were the very cipher of a function,
To fine the faults whose fine stands in record,
And let go by the actor.'

(Shakespeare, 1604/2021: 2.2, 39-43)

These lines that Angelo delivers alongside the dramaturgical analogies that are present showcase a scripted attitude towards enforcing the law. Angelo argues that faults are condemned even before they occur, suggesting a preconceived judgment that aligns with Goffman's concept that individuals are judged based on societal roles and expectations. In the context of police corruption, Angelo's words reflect a rigid interpretation of the law, detached from individual circumstances. Deciding to focus on "fine the faults" as opposed to addressing the root causes or motivations behind deviant actions underscores a lack of nuance in his understanding of justice. Angelo's approach is entirely staged and his script takes precedence over a more empathetic consideration of the actors involved, emphasizing how dramaturgy can manifest in legal systems and contribute to the perpetuation of corruption. This remains a point of discussion today in terms of 'stop and search'. In the Baroness Casey Review it has been noted that black Londoners remain over-policed, 'they are more likely to be stopped and searched, handcuffed, batoned and Tasered, are overrepresented in many serious crimes' (Casey, 2023: p.17). Both police today and Angelo in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* demonstrate how justice is entirely a performance that can easily be skewed by 'backstage' biases and prejudice.

Shakespeare through his play of multiple disguises and deceit shows how manipulation and the abuse of power are inherent within the police force. Exploring the notion of 'frontstage' and 'backstage' personas in a way that foreshadows Goffman's dramaturgy Shakespeare scripts a nuanced performance of police corruption. As the characters in *Measure for Measure* grapple with power, morality, and the consequences of rigidly prescribed roles, Goffman's dramaturgical perspective offers an interesting insight into the dynamics of authority and corruption. The play serves as a compelling exploration of the potential pitfalls when justice becomes a mere performance, emphasizing the importance of considering the actor behind the fault for a more equitable and humane legal system.

In conclusion, the exploration of police corruption, dramaturgy and social roles within *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Measure for Measure* reveals an intriguing and relevant topic for discussion. Police corruption is a deeply disturbing and complex societal issue that can have profound implications for trust, justice, and the integrity of law enforcement institutions. Most importantly tackling it is a collective responsibility that requires the collaboration of various people who share the common goal of making criminal justice 'just' again. One unlikely but extremely powerful contributor is Shakespeare and his drama that focused on comically corrupt constables. Examining police corruption using Goffman's dramaturgy as a framework in Shakespeares' plays is not by any means a direct endorsement of deviant behavior but rather a criminological exploration that recognizes the performative dimensions at play. This analytical perspective encourages a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between the public-facing 'front stage' role of law enforcement officers and the darker, concealed, backstage activities that may compromise the integrity of the institution. Instead of perpetuating the narrative that those in power are inherently good Shakespeare opened up avenues for constructive dialogue and reform. Both plays invite their audiences to reflect on the intricacies of power, justice, and morality, using Goffman's dramaturgy to emphasize the performative aspects of human behaviour, particularly the illicit behaviour of law enforcement. Corruption within the law enforcement services often involves a carefully orchestrated theatrical production which includes a front stage, backstage and careful impression management. The potential for justice to become a mere 'mask' is a concept that is central to Shakespeares' works and also off-stage. Ultimately, in order to address police corruption and the abuse of power properly there must be commitment to change which calls for organizational reforms, more enhanced oversight of

police officers and a culture of accountability, things that Shakespeare's play encourages. In light of the various critiques of the police force that have come to light since the publication of the Baroness Casey Review and the murder of George Floyd, Shakespeare's drama could prove to be one way that law enforcement figures are challenged making the bard a valuable addition to the field of Literature and Criminology.

Chapter 3

‘Let not my name condemn me’: Moll Cutpurse, Self-negating Prophecy and Rehabilitation Through Drama.

‘Let not my name condemn me to you or to your world’

(Dekker & Middleton, 1611/2011: 5.2, 336-337)

Deconstructing labels particularly through the performing arts has been a popular conversation in recent decades. With a growing number of carceral settings choosing to incorporate prison Shakespeare programmes within their facilities, lots of research has begun to blossom surrounding the extent to which theatre can be harnessed for its rehabilitative purposes and improve the current penal system. This chapter will cast a light on an area that has been pushed to the margins of these recent discussions and that is the ways in which early modern playwrights were grappling with similar issues surrounding prison, labelling and the possibilities for rehabilitation through their drama. This chapter will start by surveying the landscape of the early modern penal system, exploring what institutions and punishments existed in order to tackle crime in London and what impacts they had on the criminals they dealt with. Contrary to a lot of belief, sixteenth-century London was starting to sow the seeds for later more intricate and complex justice systems and although the prisons that existed at this time were very much still in their infancy, they still allowed for some interesting conversations to be had about the nature of incarceration and the potential impacts that it can have on those inside. Conversations which remain as relevant as ever in light of today's incarceration crisis and poorly managed prison systems. It became clear that putting criminals, who were often those from the very margins of society, into an establishment that was severed off from the rest of the world created fear and stigma surrounding those inside which not only exacerbated social exclusion but also amplified

deviance and made criminality feel like an inextricable aspect of a person's identity. With this in mind, this study will expose how in place of a faulty penal system the theatre became an alternative way of giving criminals the opportunity to properly rehabilitate the public perception of them and re-imagine the labels that society had set for them. With a particular focus on Mary Frith, also known by her criminal alias Moll Cutpurse. Frith was an infamous petty criminal during the sixteenth century, constantly in and out of different penitentiaries she lived a life on the edge of the law and transgressed social norms which was only fuelled by the social stigma that surrounded her. Turning to *The Roaring Girl (1611)*, this chapter will explore how Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton were able to give Frith a new avenue away from her life of crime through the theatre. The play examined societal attitudes towards punishment, rehabilitation, and the transformative potential of the theatre to aid a self-negating prophecy and deconstruct labels. While the same terminology and conceptual frameworks were not used as they are today it is not to say that these playwrights were not actively discussing what prison theatre experts are now. At a time when scholars remain unsure as to whether using theatre to help improve the lives of criminals is beneficial or just a 'modern-day version of the stocks' (Balfour, 2004: p.57), Mary's journey serves as a testament to the potential of creative expression in reshaping individual identities and transcending the constraints of societal judgment. The union of Mary Frith, prison theatre, and the process of deconstructing labels highlights the transformative power of the arts in the realm of rehabilitation. It can also contribute a new angle on the current discussions surrounding the transformative power of the stage as much of it still remains rooted in the modern day.

In recent years it is clear that there is a serious incarceration crisis that needs addressing. In 2009 it was documented that 'there were more than 9.8 million individuals incarcerated worldwide' (Levan, 2016: p.1), while this number has continued to grow in recent decades reoffending rates have also reached an all-time high with a study suggesting that the national recidivism rate in America is now 'over sixty percent' (Herold, 2014: p.18). One of the central aims of prison is criminal rehabilitation however, it has proven to be a completely antithetical practice. The word 'rehabilitation' means to restore something to its former condition; however, the label 'criminal' prevents this from ever truly being attainable. This was an issue that was recognised by labelling theorists who suggested that 'the very efforts made to stop crime and deviance exacerbated the conduct' (Cullen, 2017: p.64). For instance, Robert Merton used the

term ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’ to describe how ‘a false definition of a situation can evoke a new behaviour which makes the originally false conception come true’ (Merton, 2016: p.506). This can be applied to criminal justice and rehabilitation as in a particular study that in the UK ‘15% of newly sentenced prisoners reported being homeless before entering prison and a third of rough sleepers in London had served time in prison’. This makes the situation surrounding criminal rehabilitation even more complex as these statistics seem to suggest that of those who are trapped within the revolving door of the justice system, most are from disadvantaged backgrounds, feeling excluded, silenced and disillusioned. This creates another major barrier towards effective rehabilitation as for most of these people they have never been rehabilitated in the first instance and the label of ‘criminal’ merely echoes a lifetime of social exclusion and alienation. Nina Billone Prieur refers to this deprivation of rights as a ‘civil death’ which is ‘effected through the disenfranchisement of criminalized populations both within and beyond the walls of prisons and jails’ (Drier, 2021: p.488).

In order to combat the issue of stigma, labelling and self-fulfilling prophecy that lie at the heart of the penal system prison Shakespeare programmes have started to gain a lot of popularity as a way of providing offenders with a means to challenge, redefine, and transcend the societal labels associated with their status as prisoners. One particular participant said that ‘the arts make us feel connected to one another and less isolated’ (McKean, & Massey-Chase, 2019: p.5), demonstrating how drama is able to counteract feelings of stigma and isolation which pervade the criminal justice system. A seminal example of this type of work is Shakespeare Behind Bars. This documentary took place in Luther Lockett correctional complex in Kentucky and followed a group of inmates who put together their own production of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Since then bringing Shakespeare and Drama to prisons has begun to gain traction with other notable examples such as the award-winning film *Mickey B* and the winner of the Berlin Golden Bear *Caesar Must Die* (Davey, Day, & Balfour, (2015: p.799). The overwhelmingly positive impacts that projects like these have had in terms of challenging labels and reducing recidivism rates is indisputable. It has been said that ‘of the 71 members of the Shakespeare Behind Bars Project to be released over the 19-year operating history only 4 have re-offended’ (Herold, 2014: p.18), providing a strong case for the rehabilitative power of theatre where prisons often fail.

Despite the positive impacts of these programmes, there remains some scepticism and apprehension in regard to welcoming Shakespeare and early modern drama into carceral

settings. Firstly, some see engaging with these texts as an uncomfortable experience due to the fact that ‘people could be sent to jail or to the psychiatric hospital because they were pronounced latter-day Lady Macbeths or ‘just like Iago’ (Stelzer, 2021: p.15). Not only this, but the early modern history of performative punishment such as the guillotine, burning of witches at the stake and public hangings has led to theatre in prison being perceived as ‘a modern-day version of the stocks’ (Balfour, 2004: p.57)’ that puts those most vulnerable and socially excluded on show. While these are valid concerns it is important to note the positive effects that the arts can have on those who have been criminalized by society. The stage plays a crucial role in rehabilitation and reintegration back into society, both within the modern penal system and the early modern one. Turning our attention to the ways in which early modern playwrights were examining societal attitudes towards punishment, rehabilitation, and the transformative potential of drama, scholars can be reminded of the theatre's essential place within the criminal justice system. These reservations around its past can be addressed and its fate saved.

It has been argued that the early modern period was a time that ‘aimed for deterrence and retribution, for social control, not for reformation’ (Clark, 2019: p.2) and that criminals were ‘so extraordinarily and inexplicably wicked that he or she can only be described as a monster’ (Clark, 2019: p.3). The idea that the early modern period was a time when attempts at rehabilitation were yet to exist is a view that in many ways is nearly entirely false. While the penal system was definitely in its infancy and prisons were only a very basic prototype of what we have today, it wasn’t to say that early modern playwrights were not asking any questions about criminal reform and rehabilitation. It is thought that this misinformation has in part stemmed from Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977). This book remains one of the most informative texts about the history of the modern western penal system and is influential in fields such as sociology, criminology, and cultural studies. Within it, Foucault analyzes punishment within its specific social context and examines how power relations affected this. He starts with the idea of the public spectacle of torture and execution during the early modern period and slowly works his way towards the modern prison that we are more familiar with today. While Foucault's study of the prison has been extremely influential and provided lots of thought-provoking discussions surrounding the nature of power, authority and punishment it has been argued that perhaps his analysis of the prison within the early modern period needs some revisions. Ruth Ahnert argues that Foucault's picture of the early modern

penal system was reductive and as a result diverted a lot of attention away from the pre-modern prison. She states that ‘the popularity of his work explains why the study of prison literature is only now emerging, while interest in the tortured body in Renaissance literary culture has already attracted a number of studies’ (Ahnert, 2013: p10). Although prisons were in their infancy, largely disorganized and surveillance systems and mainly used for detainment or ‘holding’ before execution like Newgate, it wasn’t to say that there weren’t any attempts to try and correct certain people and their behaviours.

The ideology of imprisonment was just starting to emerge in the sixteenth century. ‘By 1520 there were at least 180 imprisonable offences at common law’ (Potter, 2019: p.45), religious offenders went to the Clink or Marshalsea and debtors went to the King’s Bench or the Counters, while Newgate was often a holding place for more serious offenders awaiting execution. The conditions within these early modern prisons were truly harrowing. The little food and pleasantries that were provided mainly came from charitable organizations and companies and treatment was based on a level system. These establishments had different levels based on how much money the prisoner was able to pay the people there; however, once they could no longer pay to be kept in a comfortable manner they became subject to stay with the rest of the poor population at the lowest level. The lowest level of the Counters was referred to as ‘the hole’ (Drouillard, 2022: n.p.) where prisoners were cramped, kept in unsanitary conditions and often were left to rot and die away from public gaze. Sentencing was also equally as disorganized as there was no set limit on the amount of time that a person remained in these prisons. One of the most common reasons that people were detained during the early modern period was for debt and their prison term was based on when they were able to pay this off (Drouillard, 2022: n.p.) However, not a lot were able to do so. Ironically, being admitted into a London prison for debt at this time ‘only exacerbated prisoners’ problems as they racked up new bills and fell even further into debt, now to their gaollers [...] driving many prisoners further into destitution’ (Bell, 2022: p.3).

Instead of merely holding prisoners and amplifying crime and deviance the radical rehabilitation establishment of Bridewell was introduced. It took a new direction, steering prisons away from being places of simply holding social undesirables to a place that actively attempted to reform them. Formally known as Bridewell palace and the residence of King Henry VIII, it was repurposed with the blessing of Edward VI as a prison in the sixteenth century. It

was known as a 'house of correction' and as the name suggests it served to 'correct' and in loose terms 'rehabilitate' those who were admitted to its grounds. However, those people tended to be 'people from the lowest echelons of society and it employed hard labour, rigorous discipline, and beatings to correct them' (Ahnert, 2013: p.12). Despite Bridewell seemingly being overpopulated with those of the socially excluded lower classes it was 'idleness, gaming, swearing, drinking and fornicating were perceived to be the causes of crime – not poverty or destitution which were considered merely to be by-products of the same vices (Potter, 2019: p.46) and this meant that people were starting to question whether Bridewell and the prison institution as a whole concept was a place of correcting or corrupting people. One particularly powerful statement was made in 1602 by the alderman of London about Bridewell prison. He 'complained that this institution no longer was able to fulfil its chartered purpose of providing for the City's poor because it had become a prison and as such a great cost' (Shaw, 1947: p.369). The notion that Bridewell's initial mission to help and rehabilitate had been supplanted simply because it 'became a prison' is a profound critique. It seems to suggest that even during the early modern period people were already starting to notice the prisons inability to address the root cause of crime and deviance and how in many ways it stands in the way of what it wants to achieve.

Early modern dramatists, who were known for exploring the complexities of their evolving world, soon found themselves scrutinizing these institutions and highlighting the flaws and injustices inherent within them. It has been said that 'of the 300 extant plays performed in London between 1578 and 1616, fewer than 20 make no definite reference to prisons' (Ahnert, 2012: p.34). The prison was certainly hard to escape throughout early modern theatre, appearing repeatedly as a metaphor and often used as a setting for a variety of comedies. This could be because various prisons littered the city of London while also casting a shadow over many playhouses. For instance, 'The Clink was situated near a number of playhouses in Southwark, including the Rose, the Fortune and the Globe; Newgate, Ludgate and the Bridewell prison were situated close to Blackfriars Theatre; and the Fleet was not far from Middle Temple and Whitefriars theaters (Ahnert, 2012: p.36). Not only this, but many playwrights themselves spent time within these institutions including 'Thomas Dekker, Ben Jonson, George Chapman, John Marston, John Lyly, Cyril Tourneur, Henry Chettle, Robert Daborne, William Haughton, Thomas Middleton and Philip Massinger' (Ahnert, 2012: p.36) which no doubt would have exposed them to these institutions and make them want to question them.

Theatrical depictions often referred to prison as a form of ‘hell’. A good example of this was Luke Hutton's *The Black Dog of Newgate* (1596). Historically believed to be a moralistic tale about the dark practices of the prisoners within Newgate, the story follows a mythical dog who haunts the prison and brings death and destruction within him. It can be argued, however, that it was not the people inside of Newgate that the tale presented as hellish, rather it was the institution itself. Below is an image taken from the front page of the play.



Figure 3: The Black Dog of Newgate by Eld, G. (Hutton & Rowland, 1612: p.1)

The terrifying black dog presented in the title page of the book stands tall with chains wrapped around its neck and snakes protruding from its skull, guarding the entrance to Newgate prison. It has been likened by some to ‘the dragon-tailed and multi-headed Cerberus in Greek and Roman mythology’ (Quaille, 2013: p.8). By comparing it to the mythological God that guards Hell it can be argued that Hutton was trying to depict Newgate and perhaps other prison institutions as hells

that breed and perpetuate criminality. Hutton himself was a prolific criminal and assuming he was the one who wrote this play it would make sense why he would have wanted to divert blame for evil onto institutions as opposed to suggesting that criminals like himself were innately evil.

This is further explored in scene ten of Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1607), Sir Charles enters prison in chains and says,

‘Of all on the earth’s face most miserable,
Breathe in the hellish dungeon thy laments:
Thus like a slave ragged, like a felon gyved,
That hurls thee headlong to this base estate.
O unkind uncle, O my friends ingrate,
Unthankful kinsmen – Mountfords all too base
To let thy name lie fettered in disgrace.
A thousand deaths here in this grave I die:
Fear, hunger, sorrow, cold, all threat my death
And join together to deprive my breath.
But that which most torments me, my dear sister
Hath left to visit me and from my friends
Hath brought no hopeful answer, therefore I
Divine they will not help my misery.
If it be so, shame, scandal, and contempt
Attend their covetous thoughts, need make their graves.’

(Heywood & Kidnie, 2017: s.10, p.41)

Sir Charles expresses deep misery and distress at being confined in prison. He uses a semantic field of words such as, ‘hellish, death, grave and cold’ making prison seem like a grave and his legacy a rotted corpse, alluding to the ‘civil death’ associated with prison mentioned earlier. He is no longer the same person as he was before entry as he describes how his name ‘lie fettered in disgrace’. This line draws parallels with labelling theory as it explores how his social identity has been tarnished, expressing the emotional and social repercussions of being negatively labelled. Not only this but playwrights explored how the dangerous concoction of a self-fulfilling

prophecy and being given a space in close proximity to other criminals allowed for prisons to become a place where inmates could strengthen their criminal capital and learn how to become even more deviant. The prison was almost viewed as a school for corruption. This is perhaps because prisons during the early modern period were often open-plan allowing for criminals to mingle and negatively influence each other. This is demonstrated in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* when Angelo is reflecting on the irony of the justice system. Instead of eliminating deviant behaviour, Angelo says, 'What knows the laws / That thieves do pass on thieves?' (Shakespeare, 1604/2021: 2.1, 22-23) This is similar to discussions that are taking place between criminologists about prisons now. Some believe that 'having individuals who've been convicted of different crimes stay together in crowded wards is a risk factor' (Efe, 2022: p.460). The close physical proximity to other deviants and the existence of a prison subculture with its own bespoke norms and values means that prisoners can confer and perhaps learn how to become even more deviant through each other. This can lead to a cycle of criminality which could also be responsible for the climbing recidivism rates in both the United Kingdom and America.

Lastly, in Act 3, Scene 3 of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*. Aviragus, along with his older brother Guiderius and the banished nobleman Belarius have been exiled and are currently living in a secluded cave. Although not directly about imprisonment in the traditional sense Aviragus draws on the effects of being separated from the rest of society which remains relevant in discussions about the effects of prison on mental health today. Aviragus says,

'What should we speak of
When we are old as you? When we shall hear
The rain and wind beat dark December, how
In this our pinching cave shall we discourse
The freezing hours away? We have seen nothing.
We are beastly: subtle as the fox for prey.'

(Shakespeare, 1623/2021: 3.3, 35-40)

Aviragus describes the mentally stifling effects of being detained from the rest of society. The lack of interaction with other people to break the monotony of everyday life has caused the men

to feel ‘beastly’ almost suggesting an element of de-evolution. In addition, Aviragus also says later on that he and the men ‘make a choir, as do the prisoned bird, / And sing our bondage freely’ (Shakespeare, 1623/2021: 3.3. 43-44). This metaphor of the ‘prisoned bird’ is a complex one that suggests how prison institutions have the perfect opportunity to give prisoners the tools to reshape their life while they are inside in order for them to fly free upon release yet due to institutional failings these birds have their wings clipped and are forced to consider how even upon release they are ultimately ‘prisoned’ for life due to the opportunities that have been taken away from them. According to a study looking at the correlation between the penal system and mental health, it was shown that there are ‘presently about 10 times more identified mentally ill persons in prisons and jails in the United States than in mental hospitals’ (Haney, 2017 p.311) while studies also show that in prisons ‘the leading cause of morbidity are mental health problems’ (Goomany & Dickinson, 2015: p.414). Mental illness was certainly something that early modern prisons were known for profiting on. The general public often came to prisons like Bridewell and Bedlam in order to visit these mad inmates, which led to these establishments being called ‘the longest-running show in London’ (Folger Theatre, 2018: n.p) with ‘its mad folks considered one of the chief amusements of Tudor and Stuart London’ (Neely, 2004: p.167). With the theatrical nature of Bridewell and Bedlam (its sister institution), it is no wonder that playwrights started to branch out and consider other ways that drama could be used within the criminal justice system.

Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton experimented with drama as a form of criminal rehabilitation, specifically with their play *The Roaring Girl* which remains as interesting and relevant today as it was when it was first written. This play is one that keeps continuing to gain more and more scholarly attention, making it ‘one of the most frequently evaluated non-Shakespearean plays’ (Stage, 2009: p.417). Dekker himself has been known to have spent time in prison and made lots of contributions to the area of ‘prison literature’ in the seventeenth century. With a vast array of different literary works focused on the prison, Dekker has been said to be ‘one of the earliest English dramatists to portray prison as not merely a topographical circumstance but a building with customs and inmates’ (Shaw, 1947: p.368) and use his literary influence in order to really start some important conversation surrounding crime, justice and rehabilitation both by himself and collaboratively with Thomas Middleton. *The Roaring Girl* was one such example of this. The play was a fictional dramatization of Mary Frith's life, an

infamous petty criminal during the seventeenth century. She was first arrested in 1600 along with two other women for stealing a purse (Liebe, 2021: p.235) which commenced a life of grappling with the law as a thief. Also known for her outlandish masculine behaviour, smoking, drinking and swearing she not only operated on the boundaries between law and lawlessness but also transgressed the parameters set for her as a woman in early modern Britain. One character describes how ‘the sun givers her two shadows to one shape’ (Dekker & Middleton, 1611/2011: 1.2, 133). She was doubly deviant, a figure that seemed to personify everything about the dynamics of labelling and the social construction of identity. Interestingly Mary Frith, like many prisoners engaging in prison theatre programmes today, found purpose and a way to reform and reshape her life through the stage. Frith has been recorded to have resided in the Bankside theatre district of Southwark where she remained throughout her life. It has even been speculated that Frith herself may have even made a cameo appearance in *The Roaring Girl* (Wilcox, 2014: p.135). It is definitely plausible as at the end of the play Moll says, ‘If what both have done / Cannot full pay your expectation, / The Roaring Girl herself, some few days hence, / Shall on this stage give larger recompense’ (Dekker & Middleton, 1611/2011: epilogue, 33-36). She became a local celebrity and used her criminal past to attract an audience and build her own brand and legacy. She even gets an honorary mention in *The Witch of Edmonton*, one of the plays discussed in an earlier chapter when Clown says, ‘I think I could prefer you to Mal-Cutpurse’ (Dekker & Rowley, 1658: 5.1, p.31). She really was a name that was widely recognised and a figure that was central to the early modern crime scene.

It can be argued that Dekker and Middleton definitely tried to profit off of the notoriety of Moll Cutpurse like many other plays did at the time however, the two playwrights arguably contributed to Frith's road to redemption and helped to reform her public image in a profoundly positive way they surely could have never anticipated. The prologue that opens the play reveals a lot of the key themes that will continue to run constantly throughout the rest of the play and sheds some light on Dekker and Middleton's attitudes to crime and deviance which aligns with what would now be deemed to be labelling theory. The playwrights nod to Mary Frith's criminal celebrity and long literary history by listing,

‘To know what Girl, this Roaring Girl should be.
(There are many of that Tribe are many.) One is she

That roars at midnight in deep Tavern bowls,
That beats the watch, and Constables controls;
Another roars i' th' day time, swears, stabs, gives braves,
Yet sells her soul to the lust of fools and slaves.

(Dekker & Middleton, 1611/2011: prologue, 15-20)

Dekker and Middleton list the various ways that the character of Moll Cutpurse has been depicted in an attempt to pacify the audience's expectations of what 'this Roaring Girl should be'. However, at the end they drastically defy these expectations by saying 'None of these Roaring Girls is ours: she flies / With wings more lofty' (Dekker & Middleton, 1611/2021: prologue, 25-26). They reveal how their depiction of Moll will be radical in the sense that for the first time, Frith will not be sentenced to a singular label. This play consistently engages with issues of stigma and self-fulfilling prophecy, suggesting that Dekker and Middleton saw it as a prevalent issue in society at the time they were writing. A Lot of the characters don't have names, they have aliases and labels. The most obvious of which being Moll 'Cutpurse' and 'The Roaring Girl' but also others including characters like 'Trapdoor', 'Jack Dapper' and 'Openwork'. The play was very much a social commentary that grappled with society's natural propensity to want to label and categorize and people's desire to only please themselves and 'care not who loves me' (Dekker & Middleton, 1611/2011: 5.2, 331-332). Through this play Dekker and Middleton allow her to change like a chameleon, adapt and take control of her reputation in a way that she had historically been denied. Moll had been caught in the cyclical loop of criminal justice for the majority of her life, with records of her 'punishment in Bridewell for a lengthy list of misbehavior' (Liebe, 2021: p.240). People and prisons had tried to shape her, contain her, and make her an 'imprisoned bird' like the one spoken of in *Cymbeline*, yet drama proved to be an avenue in which she could find her wings and fly above the predetermined life people had curated for her.

There is also an extremely powerful meta theatrical moment in the play that defends dramas fate as a tool for justice when Sir Alexander says,

'Nay, when you look into my galleries,
How bravely they are trimm'd up, you all shall swear

Y'are highly pleas'd to see what's set down there:
Stories of men and women mix'd together,
Fair ones with foul, like sunshine in wet weather;
Within one square a thousand heads are laid
So close that all of heads the room seems made.
As many faces there fill'd with blithe looks
Show like the promising titles of new books.'

(Dekker & Middleton, 1611/2011:1.2, 14-22)

The word 'galleries' opens up the possibility that this statement could be a possible reflection on the nature of the theatre. If this is true and this moment is a reflective statement about the stage then Sir Alexander definitely sees it as a place where people can be 'mix'd together', stories can be shared both 'fair' and 'foul' and at times the distinction between which is which can become blurred and overlap 'like sunshine in wet weather'. The simile of heads appearing 'like promising title of new books' also seems to echo the proverb 'can you really judge a book by its cover?' A question that the theatre is constantly trying to address and why it is such a powerful tool for deconstructing labels, scrutinizing stigma and self-negating prophecies.

However, some critics still believe that no matter how hard *The Roaring Girl* tried to rehabilitate Firth's image it was still to an extent implicated in the labelling process. For instance, it has been said that 'Frith's movement to the stage was in part the play's self-fulfilling prophecy, a conjuring act that produced the (un)desired cutpurse for public consumption' (Hutchings, 2007: p.94). It is easy to see why this could be an argument people have. The Fortune was known for being a place where Cutpurses lurked in the audience, stealing from theatregoers who were unknowingly being preyed upon. It is something that Moll herself even references in the play saying,

'I haue sat amongst such adders; seene their stings,
As any here might, and in full playhouses
Watcht their quickediuing hands, to bring to shame
Such rogues.'

She recalls how she has memories of seeing thieves operate in theatres that she had been at so her journey from a similar cutpurse in the audience to it becoming her master status on the stage does in some ways suggest a self-fulfilling prophecy. However, it is important to note that Moll follows on from this memory by saying to the audience ‘in that stream met an ill name’ (Dekker & Middleton, 1611/2011: 5.1, 303). This alludes to the possibility that she may have never even been a thief at all and that the ‘Cutpurse’ facade was merely a label projected onto her by society. She had the knowledge of a thief through observation and not from practice. Furthermore, her name ‘Moll Cutpurse’ arguably demonstrated an attempt at positive social mobility. Her loud presence, iconic name and outlandish costumes would have made for the perfect character that could help to maintain the audience’s attention. If Moll was still interested in criminality and thievery then this would have been a hindrance as criminals want to lay low, not stand out.

Meanwhile, another angle that scholars have taken is that Moll Frith was rehabilitated and allowed to blend back into society again however this society was not necessarily any different or more tolerant. Begging the question; does theatre diminish the responsibility of social structures in shaping deviant behaviour by suggesting it was Mary Frith that had to change? Baston suggests that ‘her stage representation, which on the surface seems empowering, is in fact conforming [...] The play fashions Moll into an eccentric pantomime character spirited principal boy-rather than a spokeswoman for a new world order, transforming her into a matchmaker, mediator, and conciliator, all in the service of vengery, not radical feminist’ (Baston, 1997: p.323). While this is an extremely valid argument and it is understandable why some critics feel this way, it underestimates the power of early modern theatre as a vehicle for social change. Catherine Belsey notes in her exploration of Renaissance drama how the playhouse constantly engaged with radical material. She states how ‘despotic regimes have always recognised, though in rather different terms, the close relationship between fiction and politics, and have subjected works of art to detailed censorship’ (Belsey, 198: p.6). Early modern theatre was no exception and was feared to be revolutionary and seditious. The Master of the Revels was responsible for ensuring that drama didn’t incite any rebellion and they had the power to have parts of plays re-written or totally suppressed. Moreover, playwrights could actually be imprisoned if they were

believed to have been contributing towards discussions in their drama that weren't in the interest of the state. With this in mind, to say that the theatre wasn't trying to challenge society beyond the stage is hugely simplistic and overstates 'the elaborate system developed in the period of licensing plays and players [...] indicative of the government's concern with the political implications of drama' (Belsey, 1985: p.6).

To conclude it is clear that the idea that the early modern period was void of any form of attempts at reform and rehabilitation is far too sweeping and deterministic. Although the penal system at that time was definitely in its infancy it still existed nonetheless and not only that but some interesting conversations were to be had about the existence of penitentiary systems and the extent to which they could be corrective or if they were inevitably doomed to be corruptive. They suggested how prison is a hellish place that often perpetuates deviant behaviour, solidifies stigma and has a profoundly negative impact on inmate's mental health. In many ways, playwrights were sparking many discussions that were extremely ahead of their time and ones that remain as relevant as ever in light of today's incarceration crisis and poorly organized and managed prison institutions. Proving that we could actually have a lot to learn from looking back at these examples, after all, they are arguably the blueprint that prisons we have today are built upon. If these comments weren't radical enough playwrights were even starting to theorize ways in which corrective institutions could be improved and one of which was the incorporation of drama as a way of deconstructing labels, an idea so great that modern carceral settings have decided to adopt it and with great outcomes. Infamous criminals of the time demonstrated how the stage was a place where they could step out from their criminal label and reshape the way in which society perceived them. Even, Moll Frith, whose criminal label was so deeply entrenched in her identity, was able to show how there was more to her than her past by embracing life as a performer in the Bankside theatre district of Southwark. By broadening the scope for discussion surrounding prison theatre programmes to include its place within early modern London, it becomes visible just how widespread the impact of prison theatre was as current discourse is still deeply rooted in solely the modern day.

Conclusion

Ultimately, in examining the intricate interplay between early modern drama, criminology, and labelling, it becomes clear that these three domains converge to offer a profound understanding of how society perceived, constructed, and reacted to crime during this historical period. The representation of crime in early modern drama serves as a fascinating cultural archive, unveiling the prevailing anxieties, moral dilemmas, and power dynamics of the era. Characters entangled in criminality embody the broader societal concerns, making the stage a mirror reflecting the complexities of early modern life. The plays also provide a unique lens through which to analyze not only the acts of crime but also the societal responses, moral judgments, and the various underlying structures that contributed to the shaping of those deemed as deviant. Not only this but it shows how drama can provide a unique way of analyzing not only the acts of crime but also the societal responses, moral judgments, and the underlying structures that contributed to the shaping of perceptions both then and within the context of today.

A thespian approach to criminology has always been something that has pervaded the work of labelling theories and interactionism. Subtly informing the way that these theorists perceived the world around them through the dramaturgical analysis that they would often use. Yet, with this considered drama as an actual resource has yet to be fully welcomed into the discourse surrounding crime and deviance in the same way that other literature has. Early modern theatre particularly has proven to be an extremely versatile tool for criminologists as it can be used to build theoretical explanations of crime and justice while also offering itself as a practical resource for better aiding criminal rehabilitation both within an early modern context and now. Theatre enables individuals on stage to rewrite their 'scripts' and reshape the public perception of them. By engaging in storytelling and performance, criminals can become actors who can highlight aspects of their lives that go beyond the labels associated with their past actions. However, most importantly in light of today's incarceration crisis where those inside prison are most likely to be from marginalized groups theatre can deconstruct harmful labels, scrutinize stigma and prevent self-fulfilling prophecies that hinder rehabilitation and result in the high recidivism rates of which can be seen all too well today. While early modern drama and criminology seem to be two totally separate spheres with the former being built upon the foundations of subjectivity and the latter a scientific approach based on objectivity, both have the

ability to intersect and when they do they have so much they can learn from one another. Ultimately, this study has proven to be a really innovative and exciting one. As we delve into the intricate narratives of these plays, we can unearth a treasure trove of cultural insights that continue to resonate, reminding us of the enduring dialogue between art and the complexity of human behaviour. Not only does it offer a refreshing perspective on plays that have been much read and much loved by a variety of scholars but it can do so while making a real difference to people's lives. Not just any people's lives though, but people from some of the most alienated groups within society that perhaps feel like they have lost all hope, those trapped within the criminal justice system. It also has the potential to go even further and in a plethora of different directions as literature and criminology as the field is still only in its infancy and waiting to be explored further. By scratching the surface of this area of study, this project implores more researchers to dive even further and see what other new explorations can take place when drama and criminology are given the opportunity to blend together.

Further Research

This specific study has so far wholly focused on early modern Western theatre however, what could make for a really interesting development to this field is seeing how these ideas apply globally, beyond the British stage and to countries across the world. There is lots of research to suggest that drama plays an important part in ideas surrounding crime and justice in a variety of different countries yet this fails to receive any recognition in the field of literature and criminology which remains still very much under the influence of an extensive western cultural hegemony. One area that could perhaps be explored and expanded upon further is Chinese theatre and its relationship with criminological discourse. The concept of 'Confucianism' in China is the idea that all people are inherently good and can be positively moulded and taught, which could prove to be a particularly positive framework for discussions surrounding restorative justice in criminology. In many ways, it would lead on nicely from this topic. It has been noted that 'there is a breadth and tolerance about much of Confucianism that has kept moralistic fire and brimstone at bay over the centuries, so it is surprising to discover how much puritanical condemnation occurred of a type akin to Jeremy Collier's, Thomas Dekker's, John Stowe's, or John Northbrooke's flames of wrath directed against the English stage' (Dolby, 1994: p.64). In this study, Dolby draws a parallel between the condemnation that Chinese theatre has undergone and the way in which it was similar to what was happening to early modern theatre in England at the time. Where research has been done in this study to highlight the relevance of early modern British theatre within criminological discourse despite its turbulent history it can be argued that the same can perhaps be done in terms of Chinese drama. Both theatrical realms have encountered relentless attempts at condemnation, criticism and censure; however, they can both be incorporated into the field of literature and criminology in order to be seen in a more positive light through their ability to provoke positive conversations surrounding crime and justice. However, this is merely one potential avenue that could provoke some interesting discussion and many many more remain out there to be discovered and discussed.

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