

MACBETH AND CRIMINOLOGY

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This article—really a series of three essays—addresses the dynamic and mutually beneficial relationship between Shakespeare studies and criminology. In the scant scholarship considering this connection, the play *Macbeth* has emerged—with its murders and madneses and crises of masculinity—as a source of fascination for criminologists (as well as criminals themselves).¹ Building out from this historical curiosity, my take is both more textual and more theoretical. I use the example of *Macbeth* to illustrate, first, how criminological theories can help us improve our understanding of Shakespeare's plays and, second, how Shakespeare's plays can help us improve our criminological theories. I contend that Shakespeare was doing an early version of what we now call “criminology”—understood as the formal study of crime, criminals, criminal law, criminal justice, and social ills that could or should be criminalized—when he wrote tragedies such as *Macbeth*.² Understanding criminology as such, I have avoided saying that it is a “modern” and “scientific” discipline, which might ruffle some criminologists' feathers, but I have done so because criminologists have at times acknowledged conceptual precedents for their theories in Shakespeare's plays and used his plays as evidence for their ideas, calling into question the notion that criminology is a purely scientific enterprise associated with the modern age.³

Shakespeare's humanistic and early-modern criminology in *Macbeth*, conducted through the resources of dramatic expression provided by the genre of tragedy, taps into the question that really drives all criminology: *Who is to blame, the individual or the society?* Like modern criminology, *Macbeth's* multiple responses to this question are circumstantial, complex, and qualified. The first section below, "Gender and Crime in *Macbeth*," shows how Shakespeare has surfaced in works of criminology and how his works can be used to test existing criminological theories and generate new ones. The second section, "The American Dream and the Scottish Play," shows how criminological theories can aid a literary analysis of Shakespeare's drama. And the third section, "Madness, Murder, and Medicine in *Macbeth*," shows how criminological theories can influence modern Shakespearean performance and also how modern performances influenced by criminological theories can open up new insights on Shakespeare's original text.

The suggestion that there exists some more than casual affinity between Shakespeare's art and criminology has implications for the way we tell the story of criminology.⁴ This story is usually told as a tale of progress through four successive schools of thought distinguished by time period, method, and argument. First came the classical school—founded by Cesare Beccaria and associated with Enlightenment rationalism—which produced philosophical essays on the causes and prevention of crime and which saw crime as a rational choice made after weighing the risks and rewards of breaking the law (what Jeremy Bentham called a "utilitarian calculus"). The classical school was displaced late in the nineteenth century by the positive school, also called the biological school, founded by Cesare Lombroso, who sought to study the criminal and not the crime because he was convinced that criminality was a biological phenomenon to be addressed using the nascent methodologies of the natural sciences. When the positive school's theory of the "born criminal" was falsified and exposed as bigotry masquerading as science early in the twentieth century, two new schools emerged to fill the void, each retaining a scientific pretense, but each operating more as a social science than a natural one. First came a psychological school of criminology, associated with Sigmund Freud and his followers, which treated crime as the result of wayward mental processes (or sometimes entirely normal mental processes). Then came a sociological school which saw culture, rather than nature or mind, as the root cause of crime. Criminologists today usually bypass these

totalizing methodological disputes in an effort to develop integrated theories that address the causation and prevention of specific crimes and kinds of crime. Recent criminology has also been keen to qualify the determinism of the biological, psychological, and sociological schools—which each treat crime as the product of some force beyond that of individual choice, whether that force is nature, mind, or culture—resulting in the emergence of a neoclassical school which sees crime as the outcome of free will exercised in the context of often imposing conditions.

The possibility of a Shakespearean criminology complicates this story, not only because Shakespeare pre-dated the purported beginnings of criminology by nearly two centuries, but also because much recent criminology is remarkably Shakespearean in its sensibilities. Criminology remains deeply committed to the quantitative methodology of the sciences, but there has been a (re)turn to qualitative, philosophical, rational analysis in the neoclassical school, in the calls for theoretical integration, and in the emergence of unorthodox (non-scientific, non-academic, non-argumentative) approaches to criminology such as “cultural criminology,” “popular criminology,” and “public criminology.” The notion of linear progress in criminology thus becomes suspect, and the *ipso facto* privileging of scientific argument over humanistic art falls away. If ideas depicted in and implied by Shakespeare’s drama anticipated those later argued in the discourse of criminology, and recent advances in criminology attest to the value of artistic treatments of crime and justice such as those in Shakespeare’s plays, then Shakespeare has a significant, surprising, and unacknowledged role in both the history and the future of criminology.

Thus, for Shakespeareans, this article is an invitation to extend the practice of reading Shakespeare beyond literary and cultural theory and into the theoretical discourse most pertinent to tragedy, namely criminology. For criminologists, this piece points forward to a new frontier of integration: joining with the humanities to ask how the resources of humanistic thought, both classical art and contemporary scholarship, can help us better understand and prevent crime. Pushed to its utmost limit, the argument developed in this article starts to theorize the notion that Shakespearean tragedy and modern criminology exhibit a historical and conceptual affinity because the two discourses are different responses from two very different historical settings to the same question: *Why do some people cause harm to others?*

I. "ALL THAT MAY BECOME A MAN": GENDER AND CRIME IN *MACBETH*

In *Criminal Man* (1876), which many criminologists regard as the foundational work of their field, Caesar Lombroso—famous for his theory of the “born criminal” whose biological propensity for crime can be detected through phrenology—cited Shakespeare’s play *Macbeth* as evidence of a criminality that is specific to women:

Everyone agrees that the few violent women far exceed men in their ferocity and cruelty. The brigand women of southern Italy and the female revolutionaries of Paris invented unspeakable tortures. It was women who sold the flesh of policemen; who forced a man to eat his own penis; and who threaded human bodies on a pike. Thus Shakespeare depicts Lady Macbeth as more cruel and cold than her male accomplice. (Lombroso 1876, 67)

It is shocking to see one of Shakespeare’s characters cited just after a series of historical examples in a work of social science. The foundation of the social sciences is the notion that rational, philosophical, humanistic, and artistic thought on culture and society—the kind of thing Shakespeare did in his plays—is inferior to conclusions drawn from hard empirical data of the sort that fills Lombroso’s book. In this line of thought, the musings of someone like Shakespeare, without quantifiable support, are purely speculative. But Lombroso’s citation of Shakespeare represents a slippage in the lines drawn between humanistic and scientific thought on crime. In this moment, Shakespeare was not an aery artist but an intellectual authority whose writings were cited for support. Thus, even the founder of the “positive” school of criminology, which insisted that ideas and policies on crime should only be drawn from scientifically verified data, had recourse to methods and ideas from the “classical” school that he was arguing against. Lombroso’s citation of Shakespeare can stand for the fact that, while it presents itself as a “scientific” discipline, criminology always has and always will draw from and contribute to “humanistic” thought on crime.

Indeed, Shakespeare anticipated by almost three centuries the “masculinity hypothesis” presented in Lombroso’s follow-up book, *Criminal Woman* (1893), which argued that the few crimes committed by women are committed by women who have biological and psychological traits similar to those of men. The Shakespearean version of this idea came in the soliloquy from Lady Macbeth which describes criminality as a gendered phenomenon:

Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe topful
Of direst cruelty!⁶

Before getting into this famous passage, I want to note that Lombroso absolutely loved Shakespeare. In addition to *Lady Macbeth*, Lombroso gave *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Ophelia*, *Othello*, and *King Lear* as examples of his criminological ideas.⁷ One of his many writings on genius (the flipside to his science of the criminal) begins with a glowing quotation from the Austrian physicist and philosopher Ernst Mach: “The intellectual operations of scientists are not substantially different from those of artists. . . . If a scientist, like Lagrange, is somehow an artist when he sets out the results obtained, in turn a poet, like Shakespeare, is a scientist in the intellectual vision that presides over his work.”⁸ Shakespeare lived in an age of ignorance, Lombroso thought, but “genius comes before centuries of future work,”⁹ and Shakespeare was one of Lombroso’s men of genius, with the emphasis on men: “There is no lack of names of illustrious women . . . yet it is clear that we are far from the greatness of male geniuses such as Shakespeare. . . . With respect to the frequency of geniuses in the two sexes, the man’s superiority is widely recognized as immense” (Lombroso and Ferrero 1893, 83). Lombroso was proud that his biological criminology had inspired modern (male) authors like Zola and Dostoyevsky, and that it had been anticipated by great (male) artists such as Euripides, Dante, and Shakespeare, concluding his book *Old Crime and New* with a review of some of their fictional criminals and a question: “Why is the real accepted by novelists and not by scientists?”¹⁰

It’s probably because Lombroso’s criminology was just as fanciful as Shakespeare’s drama but, as the field became more reliable over the next century, criminology did not forget about Shakespeare. As Jeanne Gaakeer has discussed, Lombroso’s disciple, Enrico Ferri, analyzed *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello* in *Criminals in Art* (1898), and Shakespeare became a platform for early twentieth-century Dutch criminologists to debate theories from the classical, biological, psychological, and sociological schools.¹¹ As Lombroso and others’ references to Shakespeare suggest, Shakespeare dramatized issues of criminology long before there was an academic field called “criminology.”

As a work of dramatic art, however, Shakespeare’s criminology must always be interpreted, so we must say of a play like *Macbeth*

what Banquo says of one of the murders in *Macbeth*: “Let us meet / And question this most bloody piece of work, / To know it further” (2.3.127–29). When we do so, it becomes clear that Shakespeare and Lombroso were not kindred spirits in their representations of “the female criminal.” Instead, Lombroso was precisely the kind of cultural critic whose retrograde ideas resulted in the patriarchal culture of male violence and crime that Shakespeare depicted in *Macbeth*. But can *Macbeth* reveal to us anything about the relationship between gender and crime that modern criminological studies haven’t?

We don’t need Shakespeare to tell us that Lombroso’s “masculinity hypothesis” is wrong—empirical studies that did not replicate his results (e.g., Goring 1913) have illustrated that for more than a century—but Shakespeare’s representation of Lady Macbeth might help us understand how women experience and express criminality. We might replace Lombroso’s “masculinity hypothesis” with a “Lady Macbeth syndrome” positing that women experience in their minds and express in their words the decision to commit crime as a distancing of themselves from femininity as traditionally defined. In her “unsex me here” soliloquy, Lady Macbeth does not ask to become more masculine as much as she asks to become less feminine. She asks to be “unsex[ed].”¹² Here crime is not an inversion of gender attributes as much as it is an unanchoring from the very notion of gender. Crime de-genders women, and women de-gender themselves to commit crime. Stated as such, this idea would obviously need to be tested empirically. Do female criminals express less affinity for femininity than female non-criminals? Do female criminals consciously think about crime as a distancing of themselves from femininity? Is this distancing from femininity a precondition or a consequence of crime (or both)? It would not be hard for a social scientist to design and conduct a survey in which self-reported answers to these questions were collected in a controlled fashion (though it would be beyond my range as a Shakespearean scholar). Whatever the data might reveal, Shakespeare’s play suggests that Lombroso confused correlation for causation. Lombroso thought that many females committed crime *because* they were manly. A good reading of Lady Macbeth suggests, in contrast, that females might *make* themselves less traditionally feminine in order to commit crime.

Elsewhere in *Macbeth*, Shakespeare showed not how female criminals are masculine, but how the codification of gender roles such as this can have tragic consequences. When Lady Macbeth mocks her husband for saying he “dare not” kill his king (1.7.44), he responds

with an attempt to gender morality as masculine: “I dare do all that may become a man; / Who dares do more is none” (1.7.46–47). What Macbeth cares about is being a man—that will be his downfall. He is willing to do *everything*, “all,” that is manly. Those who deceive and murder, he thinks, are not immoral as much as they are unmanly, but then his wife radically reconfigures his understanding of the relationship between morality and masculinity: “When you durst do it,” she says, “then you were a man; / And to be more than what you were, you would / Be so much more the man” (1.7.49–51). For Lady Macbeth, murder is manlier than honor and, for reasons that are not immediately clear, Macbeth accepts this redefinition of masculinity after Lady Macbeth lays out the details of the assassination plot: “Bring forth men-children only!” he croons, “For thy undaunted mettle should compose / Nothing but males” (1.7.72–74). Why does Macbeth abandon and transform his understanding of masculinity in the space of only thirty lines?

Nothing in the scene at hand will answer that question, but turning back to the very beginning of the play might provide a way forward. After the short prologue with the three witches, the first line of the second scene of the play is “What bloody man is that?” (1.2.1). Here King Duncan is asking who the person in front of him is, but Shakespeare is also establishing the connection between bloodiness and manliness at the outset of the play. Indeed, after that “bloody man” tells the harrowing story of how Macbeth “with his brandish’d steel / Which smok’d with bloody execution” met an enemy on the battlefield and brutally “unseam’d him from the nave to th’ chops, / And fix’d his head upon our battlements” (1.2.17–23), King Duncan responds with a commendation of Macbeth’s nobility and masculinity: “O valiant cousin, worthy gentleman!” (1.2.24). It is not only manly to fight brutally in war; it is *gentlemanly*.¹³

These are only the earliest hints of the connection between violence and masculinity in Shakespeare’s post-war Scotland. After killing the guards he frames for the assassination of the king, Macbeth explains (persuasively, it seems) that he did so in a fit of rage because “no man” can be “wise, amaz’d, temp’rate, and furious, / Loyal, and neutral” (2.3.108–09). He does not mean that no *person* can restrain him- or herself from violence when outraged; he means that no *man* can. *Man* isn’t a gender-neutral pronoun in *Macbeth* (in the way that we sometimes say “mankind” to refer to “humankind”). After the murder, Macbeth and his associates agree that they will go to their own quarters to cry for their loss in private, then put on “manly

readiness” to combat all traitors (2.3.133). Macbeth then asks two servants if they are prepared to murder on his behalf, and the way they say *yes* is by saying, “We are men” (3.1.190). Macbeth responds that he is himself much higher in “rank of manhood” (3.1.102). Later, when Macbeth is shaken by the vision of Banquo’s ghost, his wife tells him to toughen up by asking, “Are you a man?” (3.4.57); he indicates a return to stability by saying, “I am a man again” (3.4.107). After Macbeth’s cronies slaughter Macduff’s family, Malcolm tells Macduff to “Dispute it like a man” (4.3.220); Macduff, the hero of the play, whispers feebly, “I must also feel it as a man” (4.3.221). And during the battle between Macduff’s army and Macbeth’s, the English general Siward’s son dies, and he is eulogized with a testament to his masculinity in war: “He only liv’d but till he was a man . . . But like a man he died” (5.9.6–9).

Shakespeare’s point was not simply that Macbeth’s Scotland is a patriarchal society that characterizes masculinity as brave, violent, cold, hard, and strong and femininity as gentle, fearful, soft, warm, and weak. Shakespeare’s more subtle point, symbolized by the statements about masculinity during the wars bookending the main action of the play, was that the patriarchal culture of masculine violence is a social dynamic that emerges through war. The Shakespearean scholar Robert Kimbrough went as far as to argue that “Macbeth’s death, first psychic then physical, stems from his failure to allow the tender aspects of his character to check those tough characteristics which are celebrated by the chauvinistic war ethic of his culture” (1983, 177). A culture associating violence with masculinity is liable to inversely associate masculinity with crime: the easiest way to be a man, given this cultural construction, is to be a violent criminal. The quest for masculinity can thus surface in the commission of crime and can end, as it does for Macbeth, in tragedy.

But *Macbeth* does not support the notion that the connection between masculinity and criminality is merely a “social construct,” as the criminologist Helen McFarlane (2013) has depicted it. If anything, *Macbeth* illustrates a “biosocial” attitude which sees the relationship between men and crime as real but indirect, not as a natural phenomenon but as a social phenomenon stemming from biological realities. Specifically, a woman’s capacity to bear children and the tendency for men to have more muscular bodies (these are not social constructs) have resulted in a cultural convention for men to do the physical fighting in war and for women to tend to domestic matters (not a rule, but a tradition, one admittedly loosened in the modern

age, especially recently). Here, male aggressivity, bravery, and brutality is a social construct born of social convention, but the social convention is born of natural qualities. In this line of thought, nothing about men biologically disposes them to heightened criminality, but something biological about men disposes them to certain social situations which in turn exert a pull upon the sense of what it means to be a man.

Likewise, nothing in Shakespeare's play suggests that Lady Macbeth exploits some *natural* desire to be a man in her husband. Everything suggests that Macbeth learned what it means to be a man while brutally fighting in war and that, upon his demilitarization, Lady Macbeth was able to manipulate him into killing a king by exploiting the definition of masculinity Macbeth learned and his insecurities about how he would retain that gender identity after returning to a domestic setting. *Macbeth's* criminology of gender is biosocial insofar as it acknowledges the natural phenomena that spark social constructions, and the ways that those social constructions can influence behavior.

This is roughly the position that the criminologist Tim Owen (2012) landed upon recently when he argued for a "genetic-social framework" in response to "oversocialized" statements of the relationship between masculinity and crime. But what both McFarlane and Owen left out of their accounts of the social construction of masculinity is what Shakespeare's *Macbeth* begins with: war. *Macbeth* suggests that one possible pathway from biology to crime is the movement from men to war to warriorized masculinity to masculinized criminality. This notion that the connection between men and crime is *indirect* is significant because, while men are inevitable, war is not. If the biological theory were right and there were a direct connection between men and crime, then prevention and control would be a lost cause: as long as men were around, there would be crime. But the notion that male criminality comes from social activities in which men are likely to engage opens the door to hope. Suddenly, improved military policy might mean less violent crime at home.

II. "VAULTING AMBITION": THE AMERICAN DREAM AND THE SCOTTISH PLAY

Macbeth is about ambition. It was, as William Casey King wrote in *Ambition, A History* (2013), "written and first performed at a time when ambition was being realized to a greater extent than in any

other time in English history.”¹⁴ On the most basic level, *Macbeth* is a cautionary tale about the evil that ensues from trying to get ahead by any means necessary. On a slightly deeper level, it is an early-modern secularization of one of the central tropes in ancient Greek tragedy—that of the person who tries to exceed the natural limits of his or her station in life and is violently rebuffed by the gods who show that person who really holds the power in our universe (the classic example is Icarus, but this theme also appears in the Hebrew Bible with the fall of Adam and Eve, and in the Christian Bible with the fall of Lucifer; the most obvious early-modern example is Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*).¹⁵ Like Shakespeare’s treatment of Claudius in *Hamlet*, his treatment of Macbeth suggests that political ambition in the modern world follows a course similar to that of metaphysical ambition in the ancient worlds, but—wait a second—when did ambition become such a bad thing? I can understand the edict about not trying to be a god, and I get that we shouldn’t kill people to get ahead in life, but is ambition, in and of itself, necessarily evil? Growing up in the United States, I was always told to aim high and that, in this country, there would be no limits on my success in life if I were willing to work hard enough to achieve my goals. My destiny was in my own hands. It’s the American dream.

In 1938, the sociologist Robert Merton wrote a damning critique of the American dream that, if brought into conversation with Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, can illuminate how ambition works in this play even better than the literary heritage just described.¹⁶ Merton positioned his theory as a corrective to the biological school of criminology. According to this school of thought, human nature in its purest form is Neanderthal: our basic instincts for survival and dominion result in aggression and violence and, if left unchecked, are what result in crime. Society establishes laws and morals to control those instincts, meaning that (in this formulation) biology is the source of crime while society is the source of justice.

Merton flipped this scheme on its head. He theorized that society itself can be the source of crime, at least in a certain kind of society. He was thinking specifically of an America which promises that anyone can succeed in this country if he or she is willing to put in the hard work. Because we have an open-class social system, one’s life is not dictated by the circumstances of one’s birth. Upward social mobility is not only possible but celebrated. Anyone can become the President of the United States, or at least wealthy and powerful, but Merton identified a fissure between the ideology and the reality of

America. He drew an important distinction between the “culturally defined goals, purposes, and interests” (Merton 1938, 672) of an open class system—namely wealth and power—and the “acceptable modes of achieving these goals” (673)—usually education and employment. Ideally, Americans would pursue culturally approved goals through institutionally established means but, in reality, those means are not equally accessible to all citizens. In the United States, access to education and employment are limited by, most obviously, the reality of poverty into which many citizens are born; Merton’s commentators (e.g., Agnew 1992) have also pointed to the reality of social inequality stemming from systematic discrimination for reasons other than class, such as race and gender. Realities such as these make upward mobility less likely, sometimes impossible, for many members of society. Merton argued that frustration in those affected by structural social inequality leads to one of several kinds of “adaptation” in which those without access to institutionally established means to pursue culturally approved goals reject either the means or the goals or both. The most important form of adaptation for Merton (and for a reading of *Macbeth*) is “innovation,” in which an individual without access to institutionally established means pursues culturally approved goals, such as wealth and power, through illegitimate means such as force, fraud, and crime—which Merton calls “anomie,” a term meaning “lawlessness” he borrowed from the sociologist Emile Durkheim. Thus, Merton concluded that “certain phases of social structure generate the circumstances in which infringement of social codes constitutes a ‘normal’ response” (672). In other words, society rather than the individual can be the origin of the criminal event.

In a similar vein, Scottish society rather than Macbeth’s ambition is the origin of the tragedy that occurs in Shakespeare’s play. More specifically, the aspirational aristocracy in the Scottish society depicted by Shakespeare is the origin of Macbeth’s ambition, understood as his pursuit of culturally approved goals through illegitimate means, such that Macbeth’s ambition looks exactly like Merton’s “innovation.” In developing this thesis, I am indebted to Harry Berger, Jr.’s powerful reading of *Macbeth*, which claimed “there is something rotten in Scotland” because “something intrinsic to the structure of Scottish society, something deeper than the melodramatic wickedness of one or two individuals, generates these tendencies toward instability, conflict, sedition, and murder” (1980, 5). But my point is not simply that the social structure of

Shakespeare's Scotland is doomed to crime, per Merton; it's that the social structure is doomed to a certain literary structure, namely tragedy. Merton's sociological theory of criminology can help us see how Shakespearean tragedy works on the social level in addition to the individual level emphasized in Aristotle's theory of tragedy, as discussed at the end of this section.

There are obvious differences between Merton's theory and Shakespeare's play that should not be breezily brushed aside. Shakespeare was a sixteenth-century provincial playwright living under the English monarchy and expressing his ideas (with a penchant for ambiguity) in the fictional form of drama; Merton was a twentieth-century American academic living in a capitalist democracy and writing argumentative essays in the discipline of sociology. It may therefore seem as though Merton's theory of anomie would not apply to Shakespeare's play. Both historically and dramatically, however, Macbeth's Scotland is surprisingly similar to Merton's America.

Historically speaking, Scotland in the eleventh century was an elective as opposed to a hereditary monarchy, meaning that succession was passed selectively from uncle to nephew, cousin to cousin, ally to ally, not necessarily from eldest son to eldest son (see Norbrook 1987). Thus, before his death in 1034, King Malcolm II of Scotland named his grandson Duncan, King of the southern region of Strathclyde, to the Scottish throne.¹⁷ Macbeth, King of the region of Moray and possibly another grandson, was passed over.¹⁸ Inverting Malcolms and Duncans, Shakespeare dramatized this moment when his King Duncan names his son Malcolm the Prince of Cumberland, making him next in line for the crown:

Sons, kinsmen, thanes,
And you whose places are the nearest, know
We will establish our estate upon
Our eldest, Malcolm, whom we name hereafter
The Prince of Cumberland. (1.4.35–39)

In Shakespeare's play, Malcolm's election clearly upsets Macbeth, indicating that he thought it was possible and perhaps even likely that he would himself be named successor. I discuss Macbeth's response to Malcolm's election more fully below; for now, I simply want to point out that Macbeth's response is surprisingly similar to that of the modern American corporate climber who "didn't get the job." For Macbeth, defeated expectations and aspirations become

indignation and resentment toward the guy who got the promotion—and then he has to go home to tell his wife!

No one thinks a medieval Scottish peasant was ever going to work his way up the social ladder to become king but, at least at the level of the nobility that is the focus of Shakespeare's play, Scotland is precisely the kind of aspirational society described by Merton in which upward mobility is possible and even cherished. The first few scenes of Shakespeare's play are all about nobles scrambling to climb the social ladder of Scotland. First, Macdonwald rebels against King Duncan from the west. The rationale provided by the sergeant who narrates the rebellion—that the “villainies of nature” prompted Macdonwald's rebellion (1.2.11)—suggests a biological theory of criminology, but a sociological perspective here seems more apt. It is fairly clear that Macdonwald is rebelling against Duncan in an effort to enhance his own power and station in life by asserting his political independence from Duncan's Scotland. Duncan's loyal captain Macbeth cuts Macdonwald down and squashes the rebellion but, with Scotland's military might occupied in the west, there immediately arises a new threat from the east. Sweno, King of Norway, attacks Duncan's Scotland for the very same reason as Macdonwald: desire for greater power, resources, influence, honor, glory, and comfort in this world. But Sweno has some help in eastern Scotland from the traitorous Thane of Cawdor. Why does Cawdor rebel against his king? For the same reason as Macdonwald and Sweno. Cawdor's support for Sweno means that, if Sweno is victorious, Cawdor's station will increase perhaps even to the point of becoming sovereign power of the Scottish territory in an expanded Norwegian kingdom. Macdonwald, Cawdor, and Sweno are all defeated by Macbeth, who is fighting for what's right, but who is also fighting for the very same reason as his enemies. Everyone in this world has a little bit of wealth and power but wants a little bit more and—like the image of corporate American presented in, say, a bad soap opera on TV—they are willing to lie, cheat, steal, and deal to achieve their goals. Macbeth simply sees “company loyalty” as a better way to secure his advancement, better ethically but also better strategically, given what happens to traitors in Duncan's Scotland.

In the context of these upstart uprisings, the three witches and their prophecies (that Macbeth will become the new Thane of Cawdor, and then King of Scotland) represent Macbeth's aspirations.¹⁹ In terms of Shakespeare's narrative, the prophecies prompt Macbeth's ambition but, dramatically, coming directly on the heels of

Macbeth's positive performance review (1.2.16–24 and 54–67) in the face of his colleagues' underhanded attempts to steal their boss's job out from under him, the witches symbolize what Macbeth was already thinking. Through loyalty and bravery on the battlefield, Macbeth might succeed in ascending the Scottish ranks, even to the point of sovereignty, where the traitorous rebels failed. Significantly, Macbeth experiences his aspiration uneasily: "This supernatural soliciting / Cannot be ill; cannot be good," he says (1.3.130–31), noting that the thought of becoming king "doth unfix [his] hair / And make a seated knock at [his] ribs, / Against the use of nature" (1.3.135–37). The imagery of a body doing things it doesn't naturally do suggests that the desire to become king isn't native to Macbeth. Ambition goes against Macbeth's "nature," as his wife later complains (1.5.16–18), but more generally ambition is not natural because it is a social phenomenon, as Merton argued when he opposed his theory to the biological school of criminology that locates the origin of crime in human nature. The effect of attributing the first inklings of Macbeth's ambition to other characters, the witches, who seem to emerge from and vanish into the primordial ooze of Scotland, is to locate the origin of that ambition somewhere outside of the person who expresses it. As Shakespeare dramatized it, Macbeth's ambition comes from without, not from within, just as Merton argued that crime can be traced back to society, not the individual. Or, better yet, Macbeth's "within" comes from "without."²⁰

In the subsequent scene, Macbeth's election actually starts to feel imminent, despite his misgivings, as King Duncan effusively commends Macbeth's valor and accomplishments. By way of contrast, the king's son Malcolm was not a great soldier: he had to be rescued from captivity by some random sergeant (1.2.3–5). Calling Macbeth his "worthiest cousin" (1.4.14), Duncan alludes to the aspirational quality of the Scottish aristocracy, and Macbeth's prominent future in it, when he beams, "I have begun to plant thee, and will labor / To make thee full of growing" (1.4.28–29). Macbeth's future couldn't be brighter, but then Duncan swerves and names his son Malcolm heir to the throne. Here Duncan is informing his other "sons, kinsmen, thanes, / And [those] whose places are the nearest" that he is naming Malcolm as his successor, but Duncan is also and perhaps principally informing the Scottish lords that he is *not* naming any of *them*. Anyone harboring hopes of the ultimate advancement can lay those hopes to rest. For Macbeth, Malcolm's ascendancy reveals that there is a hidden hereditary element behind the purported elective

system of succession in Scotland, just as, for Merton, there is the reality of structural social inequality behind the open-class ideology of America.

Somewhat surprisingly, however, Macbeth's dreams are *not* dashed even if the path to achieving them has been impeded, as figured in two different images of falling down and jumping over: "The Prince of Cumberland! that is a step / On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap, / For in my way it lies" (1.4.48–50). Here, as in Macbeth's later description (interrupted by the appearance of Lady Macbeth) of his "vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself, / And falls on th' other—" (1.7.27–28), Shakespeare was probably thinking about the etymology of the word *ambition*, from the Latin *ambire*, "to go around." Figured as a broken "step" on the stairs to success, the election of Malcolm represents for Macbeth something he must go around or, as he puts it, go over. As such, Malcolm's election also represents the moment at which, in Merton's theory, someone realizes that the institutionally established means of pursuing upward mobility are inaccessible. Macbeth still plans to climb the stairs, but his journey will require, in Merton's terms, "innovation."

In Merton's theory, inaccessibility to institutionally established means stems from economic inequality. That is not the case in *Macbeth*, and Macbeth's frustration grows, not just because he has no access to the institutional means of pursuing upward mobility, but also because he once did have those means and he lost out to Malcolm on a "level playing field"—at least as level as a game in which the opposing player's dad is also the umpire can be. If Malcolm's election can be read symbolically as a transition from elective to hereditary monarchy, it can also be read as Macbeth's realization that he was born into a situation in which the culturally approved means of becoming king are inaccessible to him. The same could be said of those in Merton's argument who are born into economic inequality and, as surprising as the analogy between a Scottish noble and the American poor is, the next few scenes of Shakespeare's play map onto Mertonian "innovation" pretty tightly.

Where the witches symbolized Macbeth's aspirations, Lady Macbeth stands for innovation. Shakespeare depicted Macbeth's path to crime as a tension between the pursuit of power associated with the witches and a conscience associated—significantly—with Macbeth's "nature," the same "compunctious visitings of nature" that Lady Macbeth disavows (1.5.45). After reading her husband's letter about the witches' prophecies, she remarks:

Yet I do fear thy nature,
 It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness
 To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great,
 Art not without ambition, but without
 The illness should attend it. What thou wouldst highly,
 That wouldst thou holily. (1.5.16–21)

This soliloquy is all about the tension between culturally approved goals, such as power and glory, and culturally disapproved means. Macbeth desires those goals, represented by the word “highly,” but his wife says he is only willing to pursue them through culturally approved means, represented by “holily.” In contrast, she pits means such as loyalty and bravery, figured as “human kindness,” against “the nearest way.” Thus, Lady Macbeth dismisses “all that impedes [Macbeth] from the golden round” (1.5.28), Shakespeare returning to the imagery of pathways to present the “imped[iments]” to Macbeth’s ambition. The language of both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth is all about the *means* of getting to where they want to go and the innovative moves they will have to make to get around (or over) obstacles.

It is not true that ambition blinds Lady Macbeth and later Lord Macbeth to morality; they know it is wrong to kill a king, but they are undergoing, in Merton’s terms, “a literal demoralization, that is, a deinstitutionalization” (1938, 675). With innovation, Merton said, “differential emphases on goals and regulations” can result in a situation where regulations “may be so vitiated by the goal-emphasis that the range of behavior is limited only by considerations of technical expediency” (674). In this reading, the value placed on upward mobility in Macbeth’s Scotland has come to eclipse the value placed on morality. Not everyone in such a society will become a criminal, of course. Some, like Banquo, will continue to conform, and Merton has additional terms for additional types of “adaptation,” such as “ritualism” for those who retain culturally valued means but not culturally valued goals (think of an elderly person who keeps working, not because she needs the money, but simply because she likes to get out of the house), “retreatism” for those who abandon both means and goals (think of hippies), and “rebellion” for those who assert new goals and new means (think of revolutionaries). The Macbeths are not Mertonian “rebels” because they are pursuing the same thing they and everyone else in their society have always pursued, power and honor, but they are pursuing it in a new way as they turn to deception and murder.

While Lady Macbeth immediately becomes an “innovator,” Lord Macbeth remains a “conformer” a little longer because, for him, the desire to remain within the bounds of culturally approved means exerts a greater pull than the desire to achieve culturally approved goals. Macbeth tells his wife they “will proceed no further in this business” (1.7.31) because the means they would have to employ in order to do so—assassination—would create consequences so unpleasant—guilty consciences and eternal damnation—that those consequences would outweigh the benefits of successful upward mobility. For Lady Macbeth, however, the total devotion to becoming king and queen has nullified questions of morality: “Art thou afeard,” she asks her husband, “To be the same in thine own act and valor / As thou in desire?” (1.7.39–41). Are you prepared, she is asking, to violate normal means in order to achieve normal goals? “Screw your courage to the sticking-place,” she scolds him (1.7.60); think only of the end goal. At that point, Shakespeare shifted the conversation from questions of ethical action to matters of technical expediency (planning in which Macbeth partakes): when King Duncan is asleep, Lady Macbeth will get his guards drunk, and Macbeth will kill Duncan with their daggers, which the Macbeths will then plant on the guards, making those guards look guilty. “I am settled,” says Macbeth (1.7.79), marking his transformation from conformer to innovator with a statement that he will force himself to do something his “corporeal” body doesn’t want to do (1.7.80). Here, as throughout the first act of *Macbeth*—in stark contrast to the biological school of criminology—biological impulses, figured in nature and the body, are the source of restraint and virtue, while society is the source of crime.

Given the terms of Lady Macbeth’s persuasion, it is probably fair to say (as discussed in the previous section) that Macbeth doesn’t want to be king; he wants to be a man. Here we can identify one of the shortcomings of Merton’s theory of “innovation” in its initial articulation: it focuses purely on culturally approved goals in an economic sense without attending to the psychological drama behind the material paper chase. Rather than goals in and of themselves, wealth and power can be the means of securing desires prompted by psychological rather than financial aspirations. In the main, however, the analogy between what Shakespeare represented dramatically in 1606 and what Merton argued theoretically in 1938 is compelling, so what does it mean for Shakespeare studies and for criminology?

For Shakespeareans, it provides an opportunity to consider how Shakespeare transformed a central element of tragedy, *hamartia*, from an individual into a social phenomenon. Going back to Aristotle's theory of tragedy, *hamartia* has been understood as an error, mistake, miscalculation, weakness, flaw, or a missing of the mark in a character's actions that then leads to his or her tragic downfall.²¹ Shakespeare's Macbeth certainly has personality flaws and makes mistakes that bring his world crashing down, but our Mertonian reading of *Macbeth*, in the context of Merton's opposition to the biological school of criminology, suggests that tragedy in this play, like crime in Merton's theory, originates in the structure of a society rather than in the qualities of an individual. Macbeth's *hamartia* is not an isolated element of his character; it is something that was created and maintained through social forces. Individual *hamartia* must be considered in light of social *hamartia* in *Macbeth* and indeed in all Shakespearean tragedy—*Romeo and Juliet* is only the most obvious additional example.

For criminologists, what's needed right now is a serious consideration of the possibility that tragedy was criminology for pre-modern cultures. This is not to say, of course, that tragedy and criminology are the same thing: if they were, then the terms and execution would be the same. But it seems likely that pre-modern cultures turned to tragedy for the same reasons that modern cultures turn to criminology, and that these two discourses perform a similar social function. At their cores, both tragedy and criminology are about why bad things happen. Aristotle thought the best tragedies involved a catastrophe coming about "according to probability or necessity" (1987, 1451a). There is a logic at work in tragedy, a consequentiality. That logic is not explicit. It must be discovered and debated by audiences. Criminologists also unearth and argue about hidden consequentiality in crimes, though they are real, not imagined, crimes. Interpretations of tragedy in art and of crime in life aim to identify patterns and to extrapolate into abstract theories, whether on the individual level of ethics or the social level of public policy. Ethics has been around since before Aristotle, but it doesn't satisfy the yearning that sends us to tragedy: that yearning is to understand what has happened in the past, not what we should do in the future: *Why do some people cause harm to others?* In an early-modern age not yet equipped with science, this question was asked by Shakespeare in an artistic venue in the form of tragedy. The rise of science in the modern age radically reformulated the way the question was posed—in

the language and logic of criminology—but the question remained the same: *Why do some people cause harm to others?*

III. "A DAGGER OF THE MIND": MADNESS, MURDER, AND MEDICINE IN *MACBETH*

Up to this point, only one other scholar, Victoria Time, has seriously brought the theoretical resources of criminology to bear on *Macbeth*. Unfortunately, when she did so, Time argued that *Macbeth* validates the “rational choice theories” of crime put forward by classical criminologists such as Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham: “Shakespeare, writing centuries earlier, held the perspective that humans have free will to make rational choices and sometimes exercise this choice to do things that are socially inappropriate” (Time 1999, 64). Macbeth and Lady Macbeth weigh the dangers of committing crime against the benefits, and then decide that killing King Duncan is a risk worth taking. By treating Macbeth’s crimes as rational choices, however, Time failed to appreciate the emphasis Shakespeare placed on the compromised mental states of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. As a corrective to Time’s reading, this section draws upon modern psychological concepts in an attempt to show how the relationship between the mind and crime in *Macbeth* resonates with the same relationship as it exists in society today. Reading Shakespeare’s play with the help of modern psychology, and with the help of some modern performances influenced by psychology, complicates the argument that aligns *Macbeth* with the classical school of criminology that sees crime as a rational choice arrived at through a utilitarian calculus. *Macbeth* problematizes this position because it suggests that the minds deciding to commit crime are diseased, are not fully functional, are not “rational.” If anything, *Macbeth* illustrates the need for an “irrational choice theory” of criminology, a theory that attends to the ways in which mental illness can contaminate the utilitarian calculus.

Macbeth, like Shakespeare’s earlier play *Hamlet*, is brimming with madness. Both *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* have two mad characters: one the male protagonist (Hamlet, Macbeth) who struggles with madness but whose fortitude allows him to retain some grip on reality, and the other the female love interest (Ophelia, Lady Macbeth) who is instantly decimated by madness due, it would seem, to her womanly weakness. Both *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* use physical actors to embody what are clearly hallucinations in Act III—Hamlet’s hallucination

of his father's ghost in his mother's bedchamber, and Macbeth's hallucination of Banquo's ghost in the banquet scene. Yet both texts do so having already represented the supernatural as real in Act I: both King Hamlet's ghost and the Weird Sisters are seen by multiple characters, although those who see them question their own mental states. When Macbeth and Banquo first see the Weird Sisters, for example, the latter worries that they have "eaten on the insane root / That takes the reason prisoner" (1.3.84–85). Later Macbeth hallucinates a dagger in the scene just before he murders King Duncan (2.1.33–61). Then Macbeth hallucinates someone moaning "Sleep!" in the scene just after he kills Duncan (2.2.32–43). In this play, madness is both prelude and postscript to crime.

This theme is punctuated near the end of the play as Lady Macbeth, her "mind diseas'd" (5.3.40), furiously and fruitlessly washes the imagined blood off her hands, famously wailing, "Out, damn'd spot" (5.1.35), a moment which marks an important difference between the treatment of madness in *Hamlet* and that in *Macbeth*. Literally, the *treatment* of madness. Ophelia never sees a doctor, whereas *Macbeth* acknowledged the medicalization of madness that was in its infancy during Shakespeare's time (see Kerwin 2005 and Pettigrew 2007). Up to that point in English history, Christianity's religious model of madness, which saw it as a sign and symptom of sin, had largely dominated—certainly among lay people—the humoral model of Hippocrates and Galen, which addressed madness as an imbalance of bodily fluids. With the disenchantment of the world that ramped up in the autumn of the Middle Ages, madness started to be seen as a problem associated with the brain and its mental processes, as well as a problem that required an institutional solution beyond that of the church. By the fifteenth century, the property just outside London known as Bethlem (whence we take our term "bedlam") had transformed from a hostel for pilgrims and the poor into a hospital for the insane, a precursor to what Michel Foucault called "the great confinement" of the insane in European facilities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (see Foucault 1967).

In 1606, *Macbeth* acknowledged—twice actually—the medicalization of madness that was underway in the seventeenth century, but Shakespeare's play also resisted this trend. First, an English doctor tells Malcolm and Macduff that a crowd of diseased people whose "malady convinces / The great assay of art"—whose disease cannot be cured by medical means—is being "amend[ed]" by the king (4.3.142–45). Malcolm then explains the mythology of "the king's evil," the

name given to scrofula, a disease that could only be cured (it was said) by the royal touch, blessed as it was with the power of divinity and holiness. In the doctor's narrative of defeat, the religious model of disease trumps the medical model, a dynamic that also applies in the very next scene when a Scottish doctor visits Lady Macbeth. The doctor is asked to observe Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking but, after doing so, he confesses, like the earlier English doctor, "This disease is beyond my practice. . . . More needs she the divine than the physician" (5.1.59, 74). Thus, during a time when the province of madness was under dispute, *Macbeth* signaled an affiliation with the older, religious model of madness by dramatizing the ineffectiveness of the newer, medical model.

The medicalization of madness in *Macbeth* surfaced in a fascinating way in Alan Cumming's one-man performance of the play in 2012.²² This performance began with a doctor and an orderly leading the dazed and disoriented patient played by Cumming into a sterile hospital room with pale green tiled walls, a cot, and a bathtub. They treat a wound that runs diagonally down the patient's chest, undress him, take some DNA samples for the lab, place his bloody clothes in a brown paper bag labeled "Evidence," and offer him a state-issued hospital gown. As the medics exit up a staircase to an observation window where they stand in watch, locking the door from the outside, the patient asks, disoriented, "When shall we three meet again?" With that, the one-man performance of *Macbeth* is off and the patient proceeds to act out every part in the (heavily edited) play either, it seems, in a fit of delirium or as a means of coping with whatever landed him here in the hospital. With a change in mannerism or pitch, he switches from one character to another, often creating considerable, even slapstick, comedy. King Duncan is an infantile fool, his throne a desk chair that was left in the room; when the patient needs something to stand for Duncan's son, Malcolm, he scans the room until he settles, hilariously, on a baby doll he finds in the corner. At other times, however, the performance is more hauntingly serious, and we're reminded that we've been laughing at someone's psychotic break with reality. Cumming occasionally filled the space between Shakespeare's lines with moments of lucidity; the patient is clearly aware of and agonized by his schizophrenic play-acting. Sometimes he winces in pain, as when he first says the word "murder." Sometimes he curls up in a fetal position on his bed. Sometimes, at the heights of his fits of rage, the medics come in to tend on him. In one scene, they

give him water and wash his hands. In another, they must sedate him to calm his violent outbursts. At the end of the play, the patient tries to drown himself in a bathtub, but he fails, and the medics calm him, dress him, and leave him again. “When shall we three meet again,” the patient asks as the lights go down, suggesting that the exhausting cycle of pain and suffering we have just witnessed is about to begin again, and also suggesting a much more tragic failure of the medicalization of madness than the one which occurs in Shakespeare’s original text.

Toward the end of Cumming’s performance, the reason that the patient has been committed to a psychiatric hospital is revealed. The brown “Evidence” bag that the patient has clung to throughout the play is finally opened in Act IV, revealing a child’s sweater inside. It soon becomes clear that the patient’s wound, which he often explores with confusion and angst, was incurred while drowning a child in a bathtub. Then, surprisingly, during one of the few scenes in which someone other than the patient speaks—the scene in which the Scottish doctor examines Lady Macbeth—the medics in Cumming’s production retain the pronoun “she” from Shakespeare’s text (5.1.2). Apparently, this patient is a woman, one being played by a male actor, and one experiencing fits of postpartum psychosis, which explains much of the haunting baby imagery in this production. When the patient, playing the part of Macbeth, violently punched the baby doll standing in for Malcolm, it initially read as an expression of Macbeth’s anger upon Malcolm’s ascension; once we learn of the patient’s tragic backstory, that moment also expresses her aggression and violence toward her child. We also now understand why, when Macbeth vowed to murder Banquo’s son, Fleance, the patient checked her wound. And the murder of Macduff’s family is enacted by “drowning” the child’s sweater, a reenactment of the patient’s own crime. In one of those moments of clarity, the patient clearly identifies with Macduff as the character laments his slaughtered family.

With its deeply unsettling imagery of infanticide, the Cumming production seemed to be alluding to the case of Andrea Yates, the Texas mother who drowned her five children in a bathtub in 2001.²³ At the trial in 2002, Yates was convicted of capital murder. Her lawyers attempted an insanity defense, and both the defense and the prosecution agreed that she was mentally ill. The prosecution argued that, while she may have been hallucinating some demonic

command, she still knew she was doing something wrong, and Yates herself said that there was nothing wrong with her mind, and that she deserved to die. In the appeal in 2006, however, she was found not guilty by reason of insanity and committed to a mental hospital. The US justice system allows this verdict, “not guilty by reason of insanity,” and the jury reached it in the Yates case because the utilitarian calculus of classical criminology, which makes individuals wholly morally responsible for their criminal acts, must be qualified when working with diseased minds.

By alluding to the Yates case, the Cumming performance of *Macbeth* asked audiences to think about Shakespeare’s early-modern play from the perspective of modern psychiatry. The mild form of the “baby blues” that begins three to five days after birth is extremely common, between 40 to 80 percent of new mothers experiencing some form of sadness, exhaustion, and/or an unstable mood (O’Hara and McCabe 2013, 381). The more severe form of postpartum depression, a major depressive disorder according to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5), is estimated to occur in 13 to 19 percent of new mothers. The most severe form of postpartum psychosis involving paranoia, grandiose or bizarre delusions, or infanticidal thoughts and actions occurs in about .1 percent of childbearing women (1–2 in 1000) within the first month after delivery (Sit, Rothschild, and Wisener 2006, 353). By bringing postpartum psychosis into the story of *Macbeth*, the Cumming production reconfigured the representation of madness and the logic of tragedy. Rather than seeing the wicked woman of Act I deteriorate into madness in Act V, the Cumming production makes Lady Macbeth mad from the very first words of the play. Here madness, rather than immorality, is the cause of Lady Macbeth’s criminality. Here madness—a mental condition unrelated to any conscious moral choice—is Lady Macbeth’s *hamartia*, which complicates any ethical judgment of Lady Macbeth in the same way that mental illness complicates modern justice systems.

But the Cumming production was not simply projecting the modern medical discourse of postpartum psychosis back onto Shakespeare’s play; this interpolation has a strong basis in the oddly prominent imagery of infanticide in Shakespeare’s original text. Most famously, when persuading Macbeth to continue with their plot to assassinate King Duncan, Lady Macbeth alludes to a child that has caused quite a stir in Shakespeare studies:

I have given suck, and know
 How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me;
 I would, while it was smiling in my face,
 Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
 And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
 Have done to this. (1.7.54-59)

How can Lady Macbeth have at least one child, yet Macbeth has no heir?²⁴ There are three possible solutions. First, Lady Macbeth could be a widow with a child from a previous marriage. Historically, that is what happened: Macbeth married Gruoch, widow of Gilla Coemgain, King of Moray, with whom she had a son named Lulach.²⁵ Second, the ambiguity about Lady Macbeth's child(ren) could be the result of imperfect textual transmission. Because *Macbeth* is such a short play, many scholars believe the text we have is a version that was substantially condensed for performance. Perhaps something about Lady Macbeth's child(ren) ended up on the cutting-room floor. Third, maybe the Macbeths had a child together, but it died. This was the supposition of the 2015 film version of *Macbeth* directed by Justin Kurzel, which opens with a funeral for the Macbeths' young child.²⁶ The infant and child mortality rates were high in Shakespeare's England (Shakespeare himself lost a child, Hamnet, aged 11) and would have been even higher in Macbeth's Scotland (see Schofield and Wrigley 1979).

Cumming's production of *Macbeth*, however, opens up the possibility of a child's unnatural death. This production asks us to consider the possibility that the sleepwalking scene in Act V is not the first time we see "a mind diseased" in Lady Macbeth, that maybe she had a mental illness at the start of the play, what we now call postpartum depression, that was aggravated into full-blown psychosis by the end of the play. This was the argument made (about Shakespeare's original text) by Christine Couche in an essay that feels as compelling by the end of the piece as it does improbable at the beginning: "Without openly stating that Lady Macbeth has just had a baby, and that she has become mentally ill in the wake of the birth, Shakespeare includes a cluster of representations, both in the character of Lady Macbeth and in the play as a whole, which gesture in that direction" (2010, 137). As Couche points out, our data about postpartum psychosis indicates that its incidence does not change from time to time and place to place: it seems to be a biological phenomenon not contingent on environmental factors. If it was just as prominent in Shakespeare's day as in our own, then the notion

that Lady Macbeth has postpartum depression is not only a possible reading; it is the most compelling response to a question that has furrowed the brows of literary critics for more than a century. Yet it is not quite right to say that Lady Macbeth “has” postpartum psychosis. That would be an anachronistic statement because it would suggest that Shakespeare thought about this condition in the same vocabulary as we do. Couche’s argument is that Lady Macbeth is a representation of the same human phenomenon that today we label postpartum depression, and I would add that a Shakespearean performance like Cumming’s *Macbeth* allows us to see how criminology has traction in Shakespearean tragedy due to the common denominator of an interest in the root causes of crime.

Lord Macbeth can also be seen as mentally ill, as emphasized by Michael Fassbender in his performance in Kurzel’s *Macbeth*. Kurzel encouraged Fassbender to play the murderous madness of Macbeth as the result of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) incurred during Macbeth’s wartime service, as Fassbender related in a press conference at the Cannes film festival: “Never did it occur to me before this that this character was suffering from PTSD. You have a soldier who’s engaged in battle month-after-month, day-after-day. Killing with his hands. Pushing a sword through muscle and bone. And if that doesn’t work picking up a rock and using that” (quoted in Barnes 2015). In Kurzel’s film, after laying his deceased child to rest, Macbeth starts hallucinating the child along with witches while battling in a bloody war where everything happens in slow motion (for both the audience and the character). When Macbeth later assassinates King Duncan, the film flashes back to these slow motion shots of war waging all around a frozen and desensitized Macbeth, connecting his crime to his trauma. Both Macbeth’s second visit to the witches and his final duel with Macduff are also interspersed with shots of zombie-like soldiers wading through war. The film makes the absolutely plausible suggestion that slicing a person in half during war changes a man.

Indeed, in modern psychology, PTSD is especially associated with military service. According to the US Department of Veterans Affairs, 15 to 30 percent of Vietnam veterans have been diagnosed with PTSD, about 12 percent of Gulf War veterans, and 11 to 20 percent of veterans from the most recent military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan. An estimated 40 percent of veterans with PTSD have committed a violent crime since the end of their active service.²⁷ According to the US Department of Justice, veterans make

up approximately 8 percent of inmates in the nation, down from nearly 25 percent in the 1970s (Bronson 2015). This report noted that veterans (31%) in incarceration facilities are more than twice as likely as non-veterans (15%) to have PTSD, and veterans (64%) are more likely than non-veterans (48%) to commit violent offenses. These incarcerated veterans with PTSD join the more than half of all inmates in the United States with mental health problems (James and Glaze 2006).

Like Cumming and Couche's treatment of Lady Macbeth's postpartum depression, Kurzel and Fassbender's speculation about Macbeth's PTSD asks us to consider the possibility that mental disorders which have been discovered and named by modern medicine were just as prominent in early-modern life. Our vocabulary may have changed dramatically, but many of our experiences are remarkably similar. In an initial reading of *Macbeth*, it seems that the guilty consciences of Lord and Lady Macbeth drive them into madness. If, however, Lord Macbeth can be seen as a veteran with posttraumatic stress disorder, and Lady Macbeth as a mother with postpartum depression, then mental illness is not only an effect but also a cause of the crimes committed by the Macbeths. Here stress and guilt do not drive the Macbeths into madness as much as they aggravate and transform less severe mental illnesses into more severe psychoses, marking another example of what I have elsewhere called "the Hamlet syndrome" (Wilson and Fradella 2016). Thus, crime in *Macbeth* does not work as it did for the classical school of criminology, as the product of free will, rational thought, and a cost/benefit analysis. At the very least, *Macbeth* shows free will and cost/benefit analyses operating in the context of irrational thought. "Rooted sorrow[s]" can create "diseas'd mind[s]," Shakespeare suggested; the "perilous stuff / Which weighs upon the heart" can create "the written troubles of the brain" (5.3.40-45). The view of crime as a utilitarian calculus comes up short when there are compromised minds and brains in play, a Shakespearean suggestion that has been developed into a full-blown argument by these recent productions of *Macbeth*.

As actors, Cumming and Fassbender used ideas from the psychological school of criminology (or at least ideas originating in that discourse which have since been popularized) to create newfound significance and relevance in their performances. We can debate whether these performances are acts of discovery (of Shakespeare's early-modern anticipation of modern medical concepts) or acts of projection (of modern ideas into an early-modern text that does

not call for them). What is less debatable is that tragedy was a discourse that the early modern age turned to in response to problems that today often send us to criminology. Shakespeare underwent an artistic, exploratory engagement with problems that criminologists address in an academic, argumentative fashion, but both modes of reflection are equally theoretical, are equally concerned with using particular examples to formulate abstract models and concepts that describe and explain crime and related issues. Both tragedy and criminology offer analysts abstract schemes for understanding and representing why crimes happen, crimes which, in their particularity, might seem idiosyncratic but which, when viewed or explained by the abstract scheme, become comprehensible and meaningful. Shakespearean performance, which allows for and even glories in the use of modern concepts and events to fill in the famous gaps of Shakespeare's texts, is therefore a particularly good venue to observe the connections between Shakespearean tragedy and modern criminology.

At this point, the terms of our discussion become very slippery. If we can say that Shakespeare represented postpartum depression and posttraumatic stress before those terms were invented to describe conditions which have been around since at least Shakespeare's age, can we also say that Shakespeare represented theories of criminology before those theories were explicitly articulated? Was Shakespeare *doing* criminology? Or are *we* doing criminology when we interpret his works? Can the discipline of criminology be conceived of in such a way that Shakespeare is not an early-modern artistic anticipation of a modern academic discourse but is instead a criminologist himself? If we say that Shakespeare was doing criminology, would we also have to say that he was doing politics, psychology, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc. (can these things be "done" in drama)? And if Shakespeare was a criminologist, does that also mean that Quentin Tarantino is, along with Dostoyevsky, Dickens, Byron, Milton, Dante, Seneca, Aristotle, Aeschylus, and Homer? Can art be criminology? What is gained by opening the field of criminology to non-academic, non-scientific, non-argumentative voices, and what is lost? Is this a terminological inquiry that only matters to intellectual historians, or does it impact how we understand Shakespeare and how we understand criminology? Could Shakespeare's drama have policy implications for modern society?

These are big questions beyond the scope of the current article that drive to the very core of both criminology and Shakespeare

studies. Is criminology necessarily modern, scientific, academic, and written in expository prose? Not according to some recent arguments for the value of “cultural criminology,” “popular criminology,” and “public criminology.” Did Shakespeare expound ethical, political, and analytical positions in his drama? Not according to Terence Hawkes, who argued that Shakespeare’s plays “don’t, in themselves, ‘mean.’ It is *we* who mean *by* them” (1992, 147). At the same time, “meaning by Shakespeare”—bringing his drama into one’s ethical, political, and analytical positions when working in fields such as criminology—clearly has the capacity to open up new insights with traction beyond the bounds of Shakespeare studies. Thus, it could be beneficial for the next phase of integration in criminology to be with the humanities.

NOTES

- ¹ See Stoll (1912); Time (1999), esp. Chapter 6 (63–66) and Chapter 10 (85–91); and Gaakeer (2005a). On *Macbeth* in prison theatre, see Ko (2014).
- ² For the full version of this argument, see Wilson (2014).
- ³ On the disciplinary commitments of criminology, see Wilson (2015).
- ⁴ This story can be distilled from most criminology textbooks, my favorite being Schmallegger (2014).
- ⁵ See Ferrell and Sanders (1995), Rafter (2007), and Loader and Sparks (2010).
- ⁶ William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 1.5.40–43. All references to Shakespeare’s plays are to *The Riverside Shakespeare* 1997 and will be noted parenthetically in the text.
- ⁷ In addition to the other examples cited in this paragraph, see Lombroso (1895, 40; 1889, 2.106–7; 1911, 439). Lombroso was especially fond of citing the example of Macbeth when arguing that epileptics are “born criminals.”
- ⁸ Lombroso (1902b, 6; my translation). Mach was referring to Joseph-Louis Lagrange, Italian mathematician and astronomer.
- ⁹ Lombroso (1901, 142; my translation).
- ¹⁰ Lombroso (1902a, 318–21; quote from 320, my translation). Lombroso made this argument, citing Shakespeare, at least three times in his career: see also Lombroso (1889, 1.64; 1892, 163). The sentiment also appears, citing Shakespeare, in the adaptation of his daughter, Lombroso-Ferrero (1911, 49). See Gaakeer (2005b).
- ¹¹ Ferri (1896, 42–58). See Gaakeer (2005a).
- ¹² Drawing upon pre-modern beliefs in humoral physiology, Lady Macbeth thinks she can only add to her personality (“Fill me from the crown to the toe topful / Of direst cruelty!”) by subtracting from her body (“Come to my woman’s breasts, / And take my milk for gall” [1.5.47–48]): the

dominant theme here is the negation of the negative, a taking-away of the physical features of womanhood that have been loaded up with hostile meaning. See Adelman (1987) and Floyd-Wilson (2006).

- ¹³ Wells (2004) pointed out that this passage in *Macbeth* imitates the “heroic *virtus*” of Turnus slicing Pandarus in half in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, one of the bloodiest passages in the poem (118–19).
- ¹⁴ King (2013, 91), citing Stone (1966) labeling 1540–1640 “the century of mobility.”
- ¹⁵ The classic reading of *Macbeth* as a disruption and restoration of natural order is Knight (1931).
- ¹⁶ See Merton (1938). For a more recent statement of Merton’s theory, see Messner and Rosenfeld (1994).
- ¹⁷ See “Malcolm II” and “Duncan I,” in Cannon and Hargreaves (2009).
- ¹⁸ See “Macbeth” in Cannon and Hargreaves (2009).
- ¹⁹ The notion that the witches are an embodiment of Macbeth’s desires has a strong pedigree in readings from the German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel (“the witches [are] only the poetic reflection of his own fixed will” [1835, 1.585]) and Shakespeare scholars such as August Wilhelm von Schlegel, A.C. Bradley, and G. Wilson Knight (see Curry [1933]). As Adelman points out, “When Macbeth’s first words echo those we have already heard the witches speak—‘So fair and foul a day I have not seen’ (1.3.38); ‘Fair is foul, and foul is fair’ (1.1.11)—we are in a realm that questions the very possibility of autonomous identity” (1987, 90–91).
- ²⁰ This socialization was overlooked by Watson’s influential 1984 reading of Macbeth’s ambition as an individual, instinctual, psychological—he meant Freudian and Oedipal—phenomenon that all humans experience.
- ²¹ For the original formulation of *hamartia*, see Aristotle (1987, 1453a).
- ²² *Macbeth* starring Alan Cumming and directed by John Tiffany and Andrew Goldberg was first performed at the National Theatre of Scotland (June 2012), then for Lincoln Center Festival in New York (July 2012), and then on Broadway (2013).
- ²³ For the details of the Andrea Yates story, see Denno (2003), Resnick (2006), and Ewing (2008).
- ²⁴ Establishing the existence of at least one child for Lady Macbeth, this passage sparked an infamous twentieth-century dispute in literary studies about the extent to which characters should be seen as real people. For a review and critique of the “How many children hath Lady Macbeth?” debate, see Bristol (2000).
- ²⁵ See “Gruoch” and “Lulach” in Cannon and Hargreaves (2009).
- ²⁶ Late in the film, Lady Macbeth delivers her “Out, damn’d spot” speech directly to her hallucinated child before starting to see the witches herself.
- ²⁷ See Smith (2014). Violent crime and aggression are especially prominent when veterans with PTSD also exhibit substance abuse; see Elbogen (2014).

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