

# SHAKESPEARE

ON STAGE AND OFF

Edited by  
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*For Josephine Harris  
and in memory of Dr Jules Harris*

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## "REDEEMING TIME"

*The Dramatization of Desistance in 1 Henry IV*

JEFFREY R. WILSON

In William Shakespeare's *1 Henry IV*, at the end of our introduction to Prince Hal, a drunkard and juvenile delinquent who is nevertheless poised to inherit the English crown, he steps aside to justify his criminal lifestyle (it is his drinking buddies that he refers to in the opening line of this soliloquy):

I know you all, and will awhile uphold  
 The unyoked humor of your idleness.  
 Yet herein will I imitate the sun,  
 Who doth permit the base contagious clouds  
 To smother up his beauty from the world,  
 That, when he please again to be himself,  
 Being wanted he may be more wondered at  
 By breaking through the foul and ugly mists  
 Of vapors that did seem to strangle him.  
 If all the year were playing holidays,  
 To sport would be as tedious as to work;  
 But when they seldom come, they wished-for come,  
 And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents.  
 So when this loose behavior I throw off  
 And pay the debt I never promisèd,  
 By how much better than my word I am,  
 By so much shall I falsify men's hopes;  
 And, like bright metal on a sullen ground,  
 My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,

Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes  
 Than that which hath no foil to set it off.  
 I'll so offend to make offense a skill,  
 Redeeming time when men think least I will. (Shakespeare 2016,  
 1.2.170–92)<sup>1</sup>

The first time I read this soliloquy – with its imagery of the sun breaking through the clouds, of metal shining brighter when set against mud – it made immediate sense to me because it made sense of me. It clarified a central aspect of my own juvenile delinquency. I can clearly remember consciously thinking in the days of my criminal youth exactly what Prince Hal is thinking in this soliloquy: *I am, to be sure, destined for greatness. I shall, in my life, achieve glory and fame; I'm sure of it. People will someday tell my story and hold me up as the exemplar of a human being, and, when they do, the central part of that story will be the adversity I overcame. My current criminal lifestyle – along with all the pain and suffering it causes myself, my family, and my friends – will be the conflict that is resolved in the plot of my life. My life will be like a good story in which, against all odds, our hero's true nature is revealed through his struggle with and conquest of some seemingly insurmountable difficulty.* What's most fascinating about this line of thought is that the imagined narrative of desistance from crime in the future is actually a justification for the persistence of a criminal lifestyle in the present.

Working up from Hal's "redeeming time" soliloquy to some modern examples, this chapter addresses the problem of planned desistance from crime, especially insofar as planned desistance can actually contribute to the present persistence of criminal behaviour. What I call the *dramatization of desistance* in Hal's soliloquy encourages us to bring Shakespeare into dialogue with the emerging field of "narrative criminology." Theorists in this field attend to narratives of crime not as retrospective recitations of past criminal behaviour but as constitutive events that can contribute to crime. As Lois Presser and Sveinung Sandberg wrote in the collection that certified the establishment of the field, *Narrative Criminology: Understanding Stories of Crime*, "Narrative criminology is any inquiry based on the view of stories as instigating, sustaining, or effecting desistance from harmful action" (2015, 1).

Both the stories we tell ourselves (e.g., Hal's stories) and the stories our cultures tell (e.g., Shakespeare's stories) influence our orientation toward law and society. But if narratives can contribute to crime, they can also contribute to criminology. Shakespeare's narratives can help us build criminological theories. Thus, this chapter works from Shakespeare to a testable social scientific hypothesis for the dramatization of desistance: *in both the private stories we tell ourselves and the public stories our cultures create, narratives imagining desistance from crime can become a juvenile delinquent's justification for the persistence of criminal behaviour.*

This effort to activate Shakespeare for the social sciences may seem unconventional in light of traditional literary studies – the formalism focused on the structure and operation of a text, the historicism placing a work in its proper context – but using Shakespeare to develop social scientific theory flows from the fairly obvious fact that literature helps us understand life. Yet the challenge of multiple disciplinary methodologies operating at once – the close reading and qualitative analysis associated with the humanities, the theoretical formulation and quantitative analysis associated with the sciences – can be daunting for any analyst aiming beyond amateurism. Thus, as I built and evaluated the notion of the dramatization of desistance, I sought to bridge the gap between humanistic and scientific thinking by arranging a series of conversations with scholars from the field of narrative criminology. Shadd Maruna, professor of criminology at the University of Manchester, and Lois Presser, professor of sociology at the University of Tennessee, were kind enough to share their expertise.<sup>2</sup> Maruna is a specialist on desistance whose award-winning book *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives* (2001) emphasized the role of narrative in rehabilitation (he also wrote the foreword to Presser and Sandberg's *Narrative Criminology*). At the time of my interview with Presser, she had just completed *Inside Story: How Narratives Drive Mass Harm* (2018), a book examining the "narrative sway" of "storied realities" that are both "strategic and impactful, something we manipulate and something that manipulates us."<sup>3</sup> Our conversations are incorporated in my attempt to theorize the dramatization of desistance in the second half of this chapter, but first comes the foundation for this theory in an account of Hal's "redeeming time" soliloquy from the perspective of traditional literary studies.

APPLIED SHAKESPEARE: FROM LITERARY  
CRITICISM TO CRIMINOLOGICAL THEORY

Hal's soliloquy comes early in *1 Henry IV*, the second play in Shakespeare's second tetralogy. At the start of *1 Henry IV*, the noble and warlike King Henry IV – having recently deposed Richard II and taken the English throne for himself – is disappointed in his dissolute son and heir to the crown, Prince Hal, who spends all his time drinking in the pubs in Eastcheap. After claiming in his “redeeming time” soliloquy that his delinquency is actually part of his master plan to make his future kingship all the more impressive, Hal warns his favourite drinking buddy – the jolly knight Sir John Falstaff – that once he becomes king he will reject Falstaff and the other friends of his youth. Soon, civil war erupts in England, waged by a rival faction trying to claim Henry IV's crown for itself. The young Hal and his Eastcheap friends fight for King Henry in the war. At the battle of Shrewsbury, Hal (now seventeen years old) fights heroically, saves his father's life, and helps win the war against the rebels. Henry IV later dies and, at the age of twenty-seven, Prince Hal becomes King Henry V. At his coronation, Henry V does indeed reject his former friend, Falstaff. Only two years later, at age twenty-nine, Henry V wins victory in the famous Battle of Agincourt, England reclaiming lands previously lost to France, after which he marries Catherine of Valois and settles down to rule over a time of peace and prosperity in an expanded English nation. Thus, when he dies at the young age of thirty-six, Henry V is celebrated in England as a national hero.

Clearly, time is tangled up in knots in Hal's soliloquy. He seems to know how his story will end before it even begins. Hal sees the same thing looking forward into his life that Shakespeare saw looking backward upon it. In other words, the mythologized legend of Henry V that developed after the fact in histories looking backward was repurposed by Shakespeare as a psychological transaction the character experiences in the moment.

Historicist critics have shown the story of a profligate Hal reforming his behaviour later in life was already well established in Shakespeare's sources (Bullough 1973, vol. 4). Even before Shakespeare, the story of Henry V invoked the biblical parable of the prodigal son from the Book of Luke: a wastrel son who squandered his inheritance returns to apologize to his father, who lavishly celebrates the boy because he “was dead, and is alive again: and he

was lost, but he is found” (15.31).<sup>4</sup> But Shakespeare's version, built around the phrase “redeeming time,” also quotes from the Epistle to the Ephesians: “Take heed therefore that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time: for the days are evil” (5.15–16). Teaching good Christians to make the most of the time allotted to them here on earth by living virtuously and working to secure their salvation, these biblical passages helped form the foundation of the Tudor morality plays staging a protagonist beset by the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, another tradition informing Hal's soliloquy. As John Dover Wilson wrote in his influential book, *The Fortunes of Falstaff*, which saw Hal as an Everyman pulled between the vices at Eastcheap and the virtues at court, “Before its final secularization in the first half of the sixteenth century, our drama was concerned with one topic, and one only: human salvation” (1943, 17).

Formalist criticism of Hal's soliloquy has noted it is “the play's only verse soliloquy, and one that sets the tone of all performances” (Kastan 2002, 162n). Immediately after Hal's soliloquy ends the second scene of the play, King Henry IV starts the next scene saying, “I will from henceforth rather be myself” (1.3.5): the question of stable selfhood runs throughout *1 Henry IV*. Prince Hal's “reformation” is the thematic core of the play, with King Henry IV (an illegitimate ruler) and Sir John Falstaff (a dishonourable nobleman) also implicated in an overarching effort “to redeem the time by securing the throne against the forces of disorder in the land” (Dickinson 1961, 45–6). That mission is achieved only at the end of *2 Henry IV*: “I know thee not, old man,” Hal says to Falstaff (5.5.45), a callback to the “I know you all” in the opening of Hal's soliloquy at the start of *1 Henry IV*. Hal then spurns Falstaff by invoking his multiple selves – “Presume not that I am the thing I was, / ... I have turned away my former self” (54–6) – and commands his former friends to do as he has done: “reform yourselves” (66).

Reformed man and national hero, or Machiavellian prince and manipulative master of political theatre: that is the central question dominating discussion of Prince Hal. Dover Wilson's notion of a sincere, straightforward reformation – Hal's soliloquy a choral voice controlling the audience's understanding of character and plot – has largely lost out to the Machiavellian reading. “Hal only *acts* the role of the prodigal,” Alan Young argued in 1979, meaning “dissipation and reformation, as made clear by Hal's soliloquy, are matters of

contrived surface appearances" (1979, 200–1). Here Hal "performs the performance of a parable" (Montrose 1996, 97). Because we in the audience are the unwitting target of this political theatre, however, "Hal's justification of himself threatens to fall away at every moment into its antithesis" (Greenblatt 1985, 30).

Greenblatt's word "justification" points to a third, less common approach to Hal's soliloquy – the one pursued in this chapter. Despite their differences, both the National Hero reading and the Machiavellian Prince reading are politically oriented interpretations overlooking the psychological valences of Hal's soliloquy. With his characteristic psychological insight, Samuel Johnson inaugurated this reading in 1765: "This speech is very artfully introduced to keep the prince from appearing vile in the opinion of the audience; it prepares them for his future reformation; and, what is yet more valuable, exhibits a natural picture of a great mind offering excuses to itself, and palliating those follies which it can neither justify nor forsake" (1765, 123). The modern inheritor of this line of thought has been Harry Berger Jr, who, with equally characteristic psychological insight, noted Hal in his soliloquy "sounds like he is making a speech, rehearsing a preformulated scenario, before an audience," and Johnson's comment on Hal's soliloquy "becomes more interesting if we redirect it toward the only opinion and audience of which the soliloquist can be aware" – that is, Hal himself (1997, 306). Read not as a political manoeuvre designed to manage the opinions of the theatrical audience, but as a glimpse into the protagonist's mind, Hal's soliloquy is, according to Berger, "a contentious, meanminded, and cynical speech even as it solicits moral self-justification" (Newstok and Berger 2011, 148). Here Hal is not a master Machiavellian schemer who has sought out a bad reputation to make his future reputation even more impressive; instead, he is a distraught boy, Hamlet-like in his self-delusion, grasping at excuses to justify the situation he has found himself in through no conscious design of his own.

In traditional literary criticism of Hal's "redeeming time" soliloquy – historicism, formalism, and even the psychological approach – thought generally travels backwards from us to Shakespeare to his sources, and an understanding of Shakespeare is the goal of the scholarly examination. That's how literary studies usually work, but that pursuit avoids something the general public – lovers of literature – grasps more fully than scholars: even as the meanings of

Shakespeare are the immediate concern of academic Shakespeare studies, the meanings of lived experience are the ultimate concern of our engagement with literary texts. The psychological approach viewing Hal's soliloquy as an approximation of a human thought process acknowledges its generalizability: while the particulars may change, Hal's soliloquy and subsequent story are phenomena actual human beings can go through and relate to, allowing for an interpretive reciprocity between the fictional and the real, the particular and the general. Abstract theories can elucidate concrete examples – criminology can help us interpret Shakespeare – but Shakespearean examples can also build criminological theories (Wilson 2014). It is only a short step from literary criticism to criminological theory when, as Lois Presser said to me, "a story or concept in literature reflects a collective narrative that sustains some criminal or otherwise harmful pattern."

#### HAL'S REFORMATION AND LIFE-COURSE CRIMINOLOGY

Our current criminological theories of desistance illuminate how a seemingly irretrievable juvenile delinquent like Prince Hal could stop his life of crime and become the virtuous and prosperous King Henry V (and, likewise, they can elucidate other prodigal son stories). In 1964, David Matza's *Delinquency and Drift* noted that between 60 and 85 percent of juvenile delinquents do not become adult offenders: "Moreover, this reform seems to occur irrespective of intervention of correctional agencies and irrespective of the quality of correctional service. Most theories of delinquency take no account of maturational reform" (1964, 22). Picking up on this point, Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck's *Of Delinquency and Crime* argued "the physical and mental changes which enter into the natural process of *maturation* offer a chief explanation of improvement of conduct with the passing of years" (1974, 149; emphasis in original). In 2001, John Laub and Robert Sampson identified the notion of "life-course criminology" as "the most compelling framework for understanding the processes underlying desistance and the role of social context in shaping the dynamics of desistance" (2001, 3). Laub and Sampson emphasized the moderating role of "key institutions of social control in the transition to adulthood (e.g., employment, military service, and marriage)" (19). From a "life-course"

perspective, Hal's "reformation" from rogue to hero came about due to his strong social and institutional bonds: his connection to his noble father, his place in the royal line of succession, his military service in the Battle of Shrewsbury, his marriage to Catherine, and his job as king of England all came together to serve as institutional corrections on the individual vagrancies of Hal's youth, creating a reformation born not out of personal reflection, enlightenment, and self-determination but instead out of a responsiveness to the most powerful pulls on one's actions at different stages of life, whether the pull of delinquency in youth or of responsibility in adulthood. Hal's purportedly heroic "reformation" was really just everyday maturation facilitated by ordinary social bonds to ordinary institutions.

#### THE DRAMATIZATION OF DESISTANCE AS A TECHNIQUE OF NEUTRALIZATION

Our current criminological theories of desistance are not able to explain, however, Hal's "redeeming time" soliloquy and its imagined or projected desistance in the future that is really no desistance at all in the present. "I think that the character of Prince Hal perfectly captures a real type and a real sociological process," Maruna told me. "However, he would not be familiar in today's mainstream criminology." This gap in our current criminology is especially regrettable because the rationalization and justification of crime, what Gresham Sykes and David Matza called "techniques of neutralization," is a central part of juvenile delinquency. Sykes and Matza positioned their idea against the dominant theory at the time, which saw juvenile delinquency stemming from a youth's attachment to a subculture holding values contrary to those of mainstream, adult culture. That older theory held that what mainstream culture defines as *wrong* holds no sway over the delinquent because the subculture defines delinquency as *right*. From this perspective, Hal's connection to the Eastcheap subculture leads him to express its values instead of those of the royal English court, from which Hal is detached. Not so, Sykes and Matza argued, for the theory of subcultural values is belied by the fact that juvenile delinquents still feel guilt, like Prince Hal: the motive for his "redeeming time" soliloquy is his recognition that he is doing something wrong in Eastcheap. He feels a need to rationalize his actions. Hal remains connected enough to the royal court to hear its nagging voice in his conscience: his values still come

from the court, yet his mind has found a way to justify to himself the violation of those values. "Unquestionably, young people involved in crime seek to neutralize their behaviours to assuage their consciences," Maruna told me. "This is one of the best established truths in criminology." These justifications occur not only after the fact, but also before criminal action. They allow juveniles to commit crime in the first place because they "neutralize" the mainstream values they hold. Sykes and Matza identified five "techniques of neutralization":

*Denial of responsibility*: "I didn't mean it."

*Denial of injury*: "I didn't really hurt anybody."

*Denial of the victim*: "They had it coming to them."

*Condemnation of the condemners*: "Everybody's picking on me."

*Appeal to higher loyalties*: "I didn't do it for myself." (667-9)

Sykes and Matza never said there could only be five techniques, and what I have called "dramatizing desistance" can be a "technique of neutralization," one with applications far beyond Shakespearean drama.

To Maruna, "Our most famous example of a modern Prince Hal is surely George W. Bush, who famously said something along the lines of 'When I was young and irresponsible, I was young and irresponsible,' and somehow (miraculously) his indiscretions from his past were swept under the rug." The "October surprise" in the 2000 US presidential campaign was that Bush had been arrested for drunk driving (Kellman 2000); he subsequently faced (and dodged) questions about past cocaine use (Seery 2007). Shortly after winning the election, Bush – whose political persona hovered between bumbling idiot and corporate stooge – found himself responsible for crafting the nation's response to the terror attacks of September 11th, 2001. The prodigal son was forced to become a national leader, as Mackubin Thomas Owens argued in 2004 with reference to Shakespeare: "As a youth [Prince Hal] is dissolute to say the least ... Upon his father's death, he becomes a war leader of the first rank. President Bush's youth was never as dissolute as Hal's, but like the future Henry V, he became an effective war leader after 9/11." The viability of this analogy has been challenged by Shakespeare scholars Newstok and Berger (2011), but what interests me here is the potential effect of the analogy being made in the public discourse. It seems likely to me that young playboys of privilege, seeing Bush's

story of youthful vagrancy left behind, could very well use that narrative to neutralize any pressures they might feel – from themselves or others – to conform their behaviour to cultural norms and laws. Here the dramatized desistance is a historical account of someone else's reformation, not an imagined account of one's own in the future, but the effect of witnessing that dramatization could be the same: persistence in juvenile delinquency and crime.

The examples of Prince Hal and President Bush suggest precisely what Maruna insisted to me: the dramatization of desistance is a specifically white-collar phenomenon (overlooked in prior criminological research because criminology tends, Maruna said, "to focus almost exclusively on the highly disadvantaged who typically fill our prisons, police stations, and probation offices"). When I think about my own youthful rebellion, it was bound up with feelings of undeservedly being born into privilege: my family was upper middle class by small-town America standards, and I felt I hadn't really done anything to earn that advantage in life. I wanted to succeed on my own merits, so I degraded my starting point to create a level playing field. Even as I turned to juvenile delinquency and crime, however, I remained connected enough to mainstream American values to feel guilt and shame, which were neutralized by self-narrativizing this affair into a future prodigal son story.

At the same time, examples exist that suggest the dramatization of desistance is not restricted to the upper class. We see it at work in a lower-class setting in the Notorious B.I.G.'s song "Juicy," considered one of the greatest hip-hop songs of all time by *Rolling Stone* magazine. Dealing drugs by the age of twelve and arrested for selling crack cocaine at seventeen, B.I.G. spent nine months in prison in the early 1990s (Lang 2007, 9). The lead single off his 1994 debut album, "Juicy" tells a rags-to-riches story of B.I.G. moving from childhood poverty to juvenile delinquency to maturation and success as a rapper in adulthood. In his signature tone – deep yet nasal, almost out-of-breath – B.I.G. raps:

I made the change from a common thief  
To up close and personal with Robin Leach ...  
I never thought it could happen, this rappin' stuff  
I was too used to packin' gats and stuff ...  
We used to fuss when the landlord dissed us.  
No heat, wonder why Christmas missed us.

Birthdays was the worst days.  
Now we sip champagne when we thirsty.  
Damn right I like the life I live,  
'Cause I went from negative to positive.

The music video for "Juicy" frames the song as B.I.G. telling a news reporter his life story of overcoming adversity to achieve the American Dream. The video skips from scenes of hard times, getting arrested on the street corner, to time in prison paying his debt to society, to signing record deals with music industry executives in his new mansion, to hosting lavish parties in the luxury pool in his backyard.

There are two central points to make about the dramatization of desistance in "Juicy." First, the song may have contributed to criminal persistence in some of B.I.G.'s audience. Largely young, black, working-class men and women who were scraping by, his listeners were no doubt inspired by "Juicy" to aspire to work hard, achieve success, and secure a more comfortable life. At the same time, it seems likely that some in B.I.G.'s audience who were living the lifestyle of his youth could have used his story of overcoming adversity to imagine a similar story for their future selves. They could then justify to themselves the persistence of a criminal lifestyle as what had to be done to get by, something that was only temporary, something other successful people such as B.I.G. had to do themselves, and thus something the juvenile delinquent wouldn't strive too hard to avoid. Like Prince Hal, some in B.I.G.'s audiences could use their imagined future reformation as justification for their continued criminality.

Second, B.I.G.'s dramatization of his own desistance may have been – like Prince Hal's – a technique of neutralization allowing him to persist in delinquency. After "Juicy," he continued his lifestyle as a glorified Tony Montana mafioso type. In the mid-1990s, he had additional arrests for harassment, assault, drugs, and weapons charges, and he was accused of being involved in the murder of fellow rapper Tupac Shakur. That murder was part of an East Coast / West Coast gang rivalry that ultimately resulted in B.I.G.'s murder by West Coast rivals in 1997. It's plausible that the dramatization of desistance in "Juicy" and B.I.G.'s other songs alleviated the drive to maintain a reformed life free of criminality – in B.I.G. himself and his audience alike.



## THEORIZING THE DRAMATIZATION OF DESISTANCE

The examples considered thus far – Hal, Bush, Biggie – provide enough of a pattern for us to theorize the structure and logic of the dramatization of desistance. It begins when mainstream culture promoting mainstream values is disrupted by the juvenile delinquent, whose criminal behaviour both stems from and promotes subcultural values. Because he is still firmly attached to mainstream culture, however, the delinquent employs any number of techniques of neutralization to minimize his guilt and shame. One of those techniques is the dramatization of desistance. Desistance is not just a mainstream value; it is a mainstream *narrative*. In the formal terms of literary studies, the story of desistance draws upon the genre of heroic romance, which relates tales of good conquering evil. More specifically, the romance genre tends to involve narratives of overcoming adversity through an individual's admirable exercise of strength, talent, and will power. Historically, as the romantic fairy tales of knights defeating dragons were modernized, there was an internalization of adversity in this kind of story: antagonists transformed from the external enemies of the protagonist to his or her inner demons. The narrative of overcoming adversity thus shifted from a story of good conquering evil out in the world to one of good conquering evil in the mind of the protagonist. In these modern romances, overcoming adversity is often presented specifically as desistance from crime. These public stories of desistance – whether presented as historical or fictional – thus become available as models for the private stories of future desistance that juvenile delinquents tell themselves. The delinquent's dramatization of his or her desistance is an expression of guilt and shame about the present represented through the imagination of virtuous action in the future. An appeal to one's planned character in the future is then used to neutralize guilt over one's character and actions in the present.

Clearly, it's not just cultural and subcultural *values* that come into conflict with juvenile delinquency; cultural and subcultural *narratives* also clash. Specifically, the mainstream narrative of desistance from crime – heroic romance as the story of good conquering evil in the life and mind of a protagonist – comes into conflict with the subcultural narrative of juvenile delinquency, a story grounded not in fictional romance but in gritty reality. Fantasy and history collide, generating tension in the mind of the young criminal. The

dramatization of desistance is one way of neutralizing this unrest: one imagines a future in which one follows the typical "life course" of a human being, maturing from juvenile delinquent to law-abiding adult. That imagined narrative of desistance in the future eases the guilt and shame one feels about being a criminal in the present. The heroism implied in this overcoming narrative makes it all the more appealing to adopt. And this neutralization of one's nagging conscience then clears the way for the continued criminal behaviour that one knows is wrong.

Thus, while a criminological theory like "life-course criminology" can be used to help us understand the events in one of Shakespeare's plays, the trajectory of thought is not always from theory to Shakespeare, as if the understanding of Shakespeare's plays were the end-all, be-all of life. Shakespeare's plays can help us build criminological theories like the dramatization of desistance: here Shakespeare is the means rather than the end of interpretation. His works are not the final object of analysis. An understanding of life is the end-game, and Shakespeare is the avenue through which we come to understand life. Traditionally, theory building in the social sciences is done on the foundation of empirical evidence, usually quantitative data but sometimes case studies. Shakespeare's plays offer a special kind of case that, because it is artistic, has a conceptual density already at work. Theories built from these narratives have the potential to catch hidden aspects of crime that traditional criminology working with "real world" data has missed. Shakespeare can thus be a valuable resource for the social sciences because his works prompt observations that (1) help us understand ongoing experiences in life, (2) we might not recognize without the Shakespearean intervention, (3) are not true simply because they are in Shakespeare's texts, and so (4) need to be rigorously (i.e., scientifically) tested.

When I asked my criminologists how they would test the dramatization of desistance empirically, Presser proposed "research should involve interviews and seek to compare eventual offending rates (in time 1) of persons vowing desistance to a greater versus lesser extent (in time 2)." Admittedly, that would be a difficult study to conduct. Maruna's suggestions would produce less reliable results but could be collected more feasibly:

I suppose one could use a natural experiment, identifying states with robust protections against the stigmatization of adolescents

versus those that routinely treat teenagers as adults, and compare whether young people in the former group offend at a greater rate ... Alternatively, one could do exploratory interviews with very privileged young people who use and deal drugs, engage in computer hacking, cyber-bullying, etc. (precisely the types of samples we lack in criminology) about their offending and how this impacts their sense of identity. It might be nice to do interviews with young people in more disadvantaged circumstances manifesting similar behaviours as a comparator. This would not be a proper “test” of the theory, but it would be a useful first step to look at the viability of the theory in the way young people think about and account for their activities.

#### SHAKESPEARE FOR THEORY

When we think of “Shakespeare and theory,” it’s usually the literary theory that blossomed in the second half of the twentieth century. Abstract ideas about how art is created and interpreted can help us understand Shakespeare’s works: here thought flows from theory to Shakespeare, but we can also reverse this trajectory, as I have sought to do in this chapter: Shakespeare can be used to build theory.

In Maruna’s words, humanistic texts, traditions, and scholarship are, for criminology, “absolutely needed and critical to the development of theory.” He added, in what I see as the most poignant comment from his interview, that this method of using literature to develop theory is “simply making explicit what all of us do when we develop our theories in criminology (or any social science)”:

Yes, empirical evidence is necessary in the testing and development of theory, but theory is fundamentally a story, and we get these stories from the culture around us (literature, mythology, religion, folklore, film, and common wisdom). Yes, ideally, theories emerge from our own real-life case studies, but even though these are cases of “real people,” the theory is based on our storied interpretation of these lives (not, somehow, on the lives themselves), and these are always filtered through the lens of the meta-narratives of a given culture.

All criminological theory is already fundamentally narrative. That’s what a theory is: a story. That’s also largely what literature is. And

often criminological theory and literary narrative succeed or fail based on the same criteria: how well does the story told help us understand our lived experience by revealing hidden aspects of events that are identifiable as common human experiences yet are still troublesome and difficult to interpret? In other words, literature and criminology often serve similar functions in providing readers with highly formalized plots that can be used to identify, understand, and explain patterns of human behaviour, including the origins and outcomes of our stories of crime and justice, hidden aspects usually imperceptible when we are desperately grasping for a foothold of interpretation while *in medias res*.

Shakespeare holds a special place in this prospect. On the one hand, as Manura pointed out, “Shakespeare has had an enormous impact on western culture (indeed probably global culture), and his ideas have impacted the justice system in tangible ways, frequently cited by jurists and legal scholars, so it makes sense that we continue to go back to his writings to understand just how that justice system works.” There are substantive affinities between Shakespeare’s representations of law and order and modern critical legal studies, for instance, because both emphasize the human in the system: the human fallibility that Shakespeare expertly captured – think Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* or Angelo in *Measure for Measure* – ensures the justice system will never run as systematically as it claims.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, Shakespeare has something to offer criminology that other literary representations do not, at least not to the same extent. I am referring to the massive, centuries-long discourse of Shakespearean criticism (represented in this chapter by the competing critical opinions on Hal’s “redeeming time” soliloquy). If it is true that Shakespearean representations of crime can reflect generalizable criminal patterns, and criminology’s job is to identify, explain, and prevent those same patterns, then Shakespearean criticism is a huge, untapped resource for criminology: every interpretation of Shakespearean crime is a criminological hypothesis waiting to be theorized and tested.

## NOTES

I would like to thank Lois Presser, Shadd Maruna, Julia Reinhard Lupton, and Russell Bodi for comments and conversations about the ideas presented in this chapter.

- 1 All subsequent quotations from the play refer to this edition.
- 2 Unless otherwise cited, quotations come from my interviews with Maruna on 15 November 2017, and with Presser on 3 December 2017.
- 3 I am grateful for the opportunity to see a pre-publication copy of Presser's book.
- 4 All biblical references are to *The Bible and Holy Scriptures* (1560), i.e. the Geneva Bible. I have modernized the spelling.
- 5 I owe this point to an unpublished student paper (Paladino 2016).

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