

Emily George: “Murther, She Wrote: Patchwork Truths and the Intertextuality of Early Modern ‘True Crime’”

In studies of early modern representations of crime, pamphlets have often been contrasted with plays, viewed as more simplistic accounts lacking the moral complexity of plays like *Arden of Faversham* (1592), *Two Lamentable Tragedies* (1594), or *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621). Even when adapting the same plot and moralizing tone as the pamphlets, critics argue, plays inevitably stage narrative contradictions and moral ambivalence because drama as a form “is committed to the exploration of conflict and must by its very nature present multiple subjectivities and voices.”¹ But crime pamphlets, too, can contain visible manifestations of polysemous and often contradictory claims. I argue that considering material elements such as paratexts and typographic markings, not just plots, as part of the intertextual ecology of early modern crime narratives as they move within and between print ephemera and staged drama reframes the relationship between crime pamphlets and crime plays as one of mutual, reciprocal adaptation. Approaching these stories as composite, crowded, collaborative narratives reveals materializations of ambivalence about the relationship between the narratives themselves, the audiences consuming, circulating, and reproducing those narratives, and the criminals, whose voices are at once marginalized and authoritative in telling the story. In this essay, I use *A True Discourse of the practices of Elizabeth Caldwell* (1604) to examine one manifestation of this paradoxical marginalization of and reliance on the criminal voice: the use of confessions and letters from female prisoners as supplementary, paratextual material even as pamphlet authors rely on their access to these women as the source of their claims to narrative authority.

John J. Joughin: ‘The offender was no subject’ – on fugitive-being and piratical identity

While my focus here is on piratical identity, I want to argue that a series of interesting links and associations open up between early modern configurations of the pirate and the more general not to say generic question of ‘fugitive-being’ – of those who are forced to live a ‘worldless’ clandestine existence, or who could be said to live ‘despite the world’; thus falling outside the conventional parameters of transcendent authority. In terms of carceral studies, piratical identity constitutes a destabilizing of conventional jurisdictional distinctions operating as a ‘floating’ concept which not only reveals the limits of law and legal realms; but also threatens what Gil Anidjar provocatively terms ‘a liquefaction of the territory’ – an indeterminacy which threatens to submerge legal distinctions altogether whilst also enabling the invention and creation of new dimensions and other spaces. Specific attention is paid throughout to the carceral regimes configured within Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* and *The Tempest*.

Alicia Meyer: “What Ever Happened to Doll Tearsheet?: Anticarceral Feminism and 2 Henry IV”

¹ Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, 51. On drama as inherently more multivocal than pamphlets, see also Lake 53; Melissa Rohrer, “‘Lamentable and True’: Remediations of True Crime in Domestic Tragedies,” *Early Modern Literary Studies* Special Issue 28: Early Modern Domestic Tragedy (2019): 1–17.

This paper examines Doll Tearsheets' arrest by the Beadle of Bridewell in 2 Henry IV. In this scene, Doll's belly is enlarged. She says that she's pregnant. But the Beadle of Bridewell insists that her pregnancy is just a "cushion." In the context of the play's representation of gendered agency and objectification, I argue that this dispute creates a fault line in the play's political imaginary. The Beadle's accusation, or decision to break the fourth wall, signifies the patriarchal construction of King Henry V's national order. And yet, given that the Beadle of Bridewell is an anachronism in the play, the vision of state power he creates through his denunciation of Doll's autonomy illuminates the cultural and legal purchase that Bridewell Hospital had on poor women's political subjectivity. In this paper, I suggest that reading Doll's arrest and similar scenes that involve unwed pregnancy, sex work, and imprisonment may benefit from recent discussions in anticarceral and abolition feminism. These discussions not only point to how gender, violence, and state power are entangled, but they also offer a helpful guide for unseating the terms of agency and objection, which often inscribe women like Doll as dominated subjects. While Doll is ultimately confined to Bridewell, her political domination is neither innate nor natural but a violent response to her political resistance.

William Kerwin: "Criminal Justice and Social Justice: Carceral Culture and the Prison Prose of Thoams Dekker"

This essay places the prose works of Thomas Dekker at the center of a broader exploration of current trends in contemporary and premodern carceral studies. Dekker's tracts draw upon his own experiences of incarceration and advance wide-ranging and nuanced critiques of social conditions in London in the early seventeenth century, but do not fit easily into the generic categories that writing in confinement often assumes. This essay focuses on two tracts, *The Seven Deadly Sins* (1606) and *A Strange Horse Race or The Bankrouts Banquet* (1613), which offer particularly useful insights into the carceral culture of early modern London.

Charlotte Thurston: "Non-dramatic Prison Texts and Contexts"

Abstract: This paper explores non-dramatic prison writings written from and/or about imprisonment both on their own terms and as potential contexts for the drama, as texts that are themselves as complex and varied as contemporary prison drama. While texts written by imprisoned people describing their experiences of prison are objective historical sources for early modern prison conditions and structures, they do, however, provide insight into the anxieties and opportunities that their writers had about and saw in their imprisonment. This paper first explores some texts by writers whose authority seems to come from their imprisonment, but whose imprisonment also seems to necessitate their writing (they need profit from book sales or to recoup damage to credit and reputation arising from being imprisoned in the first place). This part focuses primarily on a doggerel verse publication and an astronomy text by the merchant and scholar William Bagwell in which he praises prison for strengthening his relationship with God--but also continually returns to the anxieties, fears, and risks to his and his family's credit and survival that imprisonment brought him. The paper also covers prison texts that make a

contrasting move--using language that seems to evoke prisons and carcerality but using them in spiritual contexts (playing on tropes like the body and world as a prison), examining a prayer from Lady Jane Grey as an illustrative example. While their writers cleverly step aside from directly engaging with their prison experience, they nonetheless circle back to it, whether due to publication contexts they do not have control over or because in using carceral vocabulary (liberty, captivity, Tower, long imprisonment) they are reminding continually of their prison context. The end raises some of the questions these non-dramatic texts might raise for the many plays of the period that include imprisonment.