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**Shakespeare Under Arrest:
The Construction and Idea of the Constable in
*Loves Labour's Lost, Much Ado About Nothing and Measure for Measure***

Robert T. McGovern

*Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts in the department of English*

*Seton Hall University
May 2004*

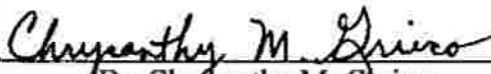
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Approved By:



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Abstract

*And since you know you cannot see yourself,
so well as by reflection, I, your glass,
will modestly discover to yourself,
that of yourself which you yet know not of.*

William Shakespeare

“Shakespeare Under Arrest: The Construction and Idea of the Constable in *Love Labour's Lost*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Measure for Measure*” examines the comedic constables, Dull, Dogberry and Elbow respectively. The constables are constructed from the historical frame work that formed and informed their office. In order to properly construct the comedic constables that appear in these comedies, William Shakespeare had to have a historical frame in order to place them in the proper historical framework before his Elizabethan audiences. This work uses such sources as T.A. Critchley's, *A History of Police in England and Wales* and Joan R. Kent's work, *The English Village Constable 1580-1642* among others, to discuss the historical foundation of the Elizabethan Constable who appears and reappears throughout these plays.

This work also discusses the office of constable through William Shakespeare's personal history, one that includes a discussion of his family and especially his father John, who was a parish constable. There is also a discussion of the historically known encounters of William Shakespeare and the civil law enforcers of this own time and how those encounters may have formed and informed his characters, Dull, Dogberry and Elbow.

Finally, this work discusses the comedic constables through the plays themselves: *Loves Labour's Lost*, *Much Ado About Noting* and *Measure for Measure* and how

Shakespeare's characters represent and reflect of the actual Elizabethan office of the parish constable.

It is never to be forgotten that we are here in the presence of the human character the most magnificently endowed, in all time... so that of him, inevitably, it goes hardest with us to be told that we have nothing, or next

The man everywhere, in Shakespeare's work is so effectively locked up and imprisoned in the artist that we but hover at the base of thick walls for a sense of him... There are moments when we are willing to let it pass a mystery, but there are others when its power to torment us intellectually seems scarcely to be borne...

It is never to be forgotten that we are here in the presence of the human character the most magnificently endowed, in all time... so that of him, inevitably, it goes hardest with us to be told that we have nothing, or next to nothing.. He slunk past in life: that was good enough for him, the contention appears to be. Why therefore should he not slink past us in immortality?

The figured tapestry, the long arras that hides him, is always there, with its immensity of surface and its proportionate underside. May it not then be but a question, for the fullness of time, of the finer weapon, the sharper point, the stronger arm, the more extended lunge?

- Henry James, introduction to *The Tempest*, 1907¹

¹ Henry James qtd. in Holden. Originally taken from "The Finer Weapon, The Sharper Point: Henry James in *The Tempest* in Sidney Lee (ed). *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare Vol XVI*.

Introduction

As Henry James rightly implies, “[William Shakespeare] is always there” within his works, Shakespeare is hidden under the beauty and complexity of the tapestry that appears near perfect on the surface. He is hidden beneath the art in the tangled threads, within the knots and broken lines of humanity; he is in the disconnected colors that appear as a wondrously linked rainbow on the surface. It is from the two sides of his art, the patent and the latent, from which he speaks. From this duality, his characters are born and find their voice; it is an ability to speak through the contemporary cultural values of the playwright’s time. Harold Bloom writes, “In Shakespeare, characters develop rather than unfold, and they develop because they reconceive themselves” (xvii). Their rebirth and transmogrification, on some level, is possible because, as Bloom implies that Shakespeare has a unique ability to create characters that reflect a humanity that is real. He writes, “Shakespeare’s uncanny power in the rendering of personality is perhaps beyond explanation.” (6).

This work will examine Shakespeare’s constables, their character and social construction from a historical point of view, i.e. within the history that frames their moment in time and from the personal history of playwright, William Shakespeare. The constables, Dull, Dogberry and Elbow, will be examined through the realism of contemporary life in Shakespeare’s Elizabethan England through his comedy, particularly evidenced in, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Measure for Measure*. Each work uniquely forms, informs and controls the constable’s identity and authority. It is an identity and authority that is framed within the realism of the Elizabethan constable and his official duties. Louise D. Frazure speaks of the character evolvment and

progression of the constable through the plays as an unfolding, and, on some level, a professional maturity of the office. [They] ...progressed from the inarticulate stupidity of Dull who hardly participated in the plot, to the loquacious Dogberry who brings about the comic resolution, and so to the gross Elbow who, though he counts little in the story presents a sharp but sordid picture of the Elizabethan underworld appropriate to Shakespeare's comedies. (390)

It is also, from their historicity, that Constables Dogberry, from *Much Ado About Nothing*, Elbow, from *Measure for Measure*, and Dull from *Love's Labour Lost* reflect the civil policing system of Shakespeare's England. They are constables who perform their sworn official duties with varying levels of success in Shakespeare's comic applications. And beyond the plays, the constables also mirror the civil law enforcement structure in place at the time. They, on some level, also reflect Shakespeare's judgment of the policing system as well.

In order to look at the construction of the constables in these works, it is important to understand their creation and duties from the historical reality of the office and as a performance element on Shakespeare's stage.

Thomas Alan Critchley, in his *A History of Police in England and Wales: 900-1966* writes,

Total freedom is anarchy, total order tyranny. The police, who represent the collective interests of the community, are the agency which holds a balance somewhere between. Their standing is a rough balance index of society's own attitude towards regulation of civilized living: regard for the

Dogberry: As police, which should not of course be uncritical in regard for law and order.

(xiii) Dogberry: Come, let them be opinioned.

The police, as Critchley implies, gingerly straddle that chasm between “anarchy” and “order tyranny.” In *Much Ado About Nothing* that order is barely represented and held in check by Constable Dogberry and his Night Watch - Shakespeare’s civil policing authority in the play. Shakespeare depicts Dogberry as an “ass.” The association or interconnection between word and character is made clear in a conversation that takes place between Conrade, a felon that the Night Watch has apprehended earlier, and Dogberry. As they stand before the Sexton, the local judicial authority, a dialogue ensues:

Dogberry: Come, let them be opinioned.

Verges: Let them be in the hands--

Conrade: Off, coxcomb!

Dogberry: God's my life, where's the sexton? Let him write down the prince's officer coxcomb. Come, bind them. Thou naughty varlet!

Conrade: Away! You are an ass, you are an ass.

Dogberry: Dost thou not suspect my place? Dost thou not suspect my years? O that he were here to write me down an ass! But, masters, remember that I am an ass; though it be not written down, yet forget not that I am an ass. No, thou villain, thou art full of piety, as shall be proved upon thee by good witness. I am a wise fellow, and, which is more, an officer, and, which is more, a householder, and, which is more, as pretty a piece of flesh as any is in Messina, and one that

the same manner; this play has been dated two years earlier than *Much Ado About Nothing*. In *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, in a conversation between Quince and Bottom, Quince speaks, "Bless thee Bottom, bless thee. Thou art translated." Bottom: "I see their knavery. This is to make an ass of me.../" (3.1.106) It is within this connotation that Bottom clearly understands the derogatory nature of the word and is insulted. Dogberry also understands it linguistically from his own unique perspective as well and wants it documented and recorded by the Sexton. He insists, "Remember that I am an ass; though it be not written down, yet forget / not that I am an ass.../" (4.2. 63-4). Dogberry is adamant and begs those gathered in the prison as well as the audience to "remember" that he is an ass. Dogberry is the personification of the constabulary system of Shakespeare's time on some level. He, along with Elbow and Dull, become the comedic links between the stage and Elizabethan civil law enforcement reality. His initial portrayal begs the question; could the constabulary have been so incompetent and careless? Dogberry's charge to "remember" will be important later as he becomes a more complex character and the unsung and understated hero of *Much Ado About Nothing*.

The word *ass* is repeated by Dogberry four times in his final ten line response to Conrade. In an earlier play, *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, Shakespeare uses the word *ass* much in the same manner; this play has been dated two years earlier than *Much Ado*. (Bloom xiv). In *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, in a conversation between Quince and Bottom, Quince speaks, "Bless thee Bottom, bless thee. Thou art translated." Bottom: "I see their knavery. This is to make an ass of me.../" (3.1.106) It is within this connotation that Bottom clearly understands the derogatory nature of the word and is insulted. Dogberry also understands it linguistically from his own unique perspective as well and wants it documented and recorded by the Sexton. He insists, "Remember that I am an ass; though it be not written down, yet forget / not that I am an ass.../" (4.2. 63-4). Dogberry is adamant and begs those gathered in the prison as well as the audience to "remember" that he is an ass. Dogberry is the personification of the constabulary system of Shakespeare's time on some level. He, along with Elbow and Dull, become the comedic links between the stage and Elizabethan civil law enforcement reality. His initial portrayal begs the question; could the constabulary have been so incompetent and careless? Dogberry's charge to "remember" will be important later as he becomes a more complex character and the unsung and understated hero of *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Although Dogberry insists that he is an ass, and Shakespeare's audiences throughout time will writhe in laughter at his insistence at being so identified; it must also be noted

that each constable, portrayed in these works, does their sworn job. They not only perform the appointed office but are successful in a stumbling Sherlock Holmesian manner. They, particularly Dogberry, perform beyond all expectations of Shakespeare's contemporary audience, many of whom were victims of the inept constable system of Elizabethan England. In order to examine, as realistic Elizabethan constables, Dogberry, Elbow and Dull, the historical framework of constabulary must be laid open.

T.A. Critchley recalls the span of the Parish Constable from 900 through 1750 (1). It is within this 850-year span that William Shakespeare is born, marries, has several children, becomes an actor, playwright, begins to publish some of his works, and dies. He was certainly informed about the constable system and lived within its framework, both in Stratford upon Avon and London. It is from Shakespeare's personal experience of the constabulary, which form his characterization the constables of his plays. The plays are not only informed by the historicity of the office, but from Shakespeare's intimate personal knowledge of the job, i.e. the laws enforced by such local officials, especially in a small country town such as Stratford. Shakespeare's experience of the local constabulary may have come down in the "war stories" told by his father, John, who, 6-years before William was born, was one of Stratford's constables. Anthony Holden recalls John Shakespeare's position in the constabulary of Stratford on Avon.

On 30 September 1558, two weeks after the birth of [John's] first child, the well-married glover had been sworn in (with Humphrey, Plymley, Sadler, and John Taylor) as one of the borough's four constables, 'able-bodied citizens charged with preserving the peace.' Although proverbially stupid – an Elizabethan tradition his son would immortalize the characters

of Constables, Dogberry, and Dull – these local worthies, guardians of law and order, took on unenviable responsibilities in these unruly times. (20).

It would have been John's charge to undertake many of the same responsibilities that Shakespeare's Dogberry, Elbow, and Dull take on in his plays. "John Shakespeare would often have been called upon to break up drunken brawls, confiscate weapons from men menaced by liquor, and give evidence against them in court," according to Holden (20).

This is certainly reflected in Dogberry as he gives orders to his watch. He says,

Why you speak like an ancient and most quite watchmen,

for I cannot see how sleeping men should offend: only have a care that

your bills be not stolen: well, you are to call at all the alehouses, and bid

those that are drunk get them to bed. (3.3. 34-7)

One can not help but see these types of police actions in the local watch of John Shakespeare as he and his peers made their rounds in Stratford. It is from these daily duties that he must have carried home comedic stories to his wife and passed them on to his children. One of those children, William, would tuck his father's tales within and later unfold them through the lines and character construction of the constables, in his plays.

While William Shakespeare may have remembered the positive good will of the constable, he would also remember the difficult times which his father and later in life, he himself had to deal with as legal problems manifested here and there. This may have led to the bumbling account of the constable and a judicial system that is represented as inept and comedic in the works. Russ McDonald writes of this tumultuous time in the Shakespeare family. He recalls the quick rise and fall of John Shakespeare within the

Stratford political structure. It is a rise and fall that occurs within the full view of John's wife and children. Russ McDonald writes,

[John] quickly became involved in town government, serving in several responsible positions, ranging from ale-taster ... to constable to burgess to alderman and finally to bailiff, the small town equivalent of mayor. When William was twelve years old, John Shakespeare's fortunes began to decline: he failed to attend council meetings, began to sell property apparently to raise cash, was fined for failing to make a court appearance, he was replaced as alderman in 1586 for shirking his responsibility... (13).

This fall from political grace must have affected the manner in which William would view, write and remember the government in his plays. This can be seen in the extreme governmental edicts issued in *Measure for Measure*, that prompted Harold Bloom to write, "[The law was] *improbably placed* upon Vienna's books by Shakespeare, [that] promises death for unsanctioned love making..." (361). This is certainly a dark law and one that is easily violated; it assumes that law breakers will be punished regardless of personal political stature or familial status. Marc Shell writes, "The mad law against fornication is Shakespeare's paradigm for all societal laws, his make believe foundation for civilization and it discontents" (qtd. in Bloom 363). If this is so, than Shakespeare is recalling his own familial brushes with the law and its selective enforcement. He recalls this "make believe foundation" in the laws of Vienna that are hardly enforced. This finds resonance as the Duke enters the Monastery and speaks with Friar Thomas about Venetian laws that are selectively enforced. He laments,

We have strict statutes and most biting laws.

The needful bits and curbs to headstrong weeds,
 Which for this nineteen years we have let slip;
 Even like an o'ergrown lion in a cave,
 That goes not out to prey. Now, as fond fathers,
 Having bound up the threatening twigs of birch,
 Only to stick it in their children's sight
 For terror, not to use, in time the rod
 Becomes more mock'd than fear'd; so our decrees,
 Dead to infliction, to themselves are dead;
 And liberty plucks justice by the nose;
 The baby beats the nurse, and quite athwart
 Goes all decorum. (1.3. 19-31)

Considering Shakespeare's personal history and experience as a child witnessing his father's legal humiliation, the line, "Only to stick it in their children's sight" (1.3. 25), can be read several ways. Within the context of this scene, it can be implied that the lack of the enforcement of the laws have led to the sexual corruption of Venetian society. However, it must also be read within the context of Shakespeare's personal history as well. John, his father, was arrested and lost his fortune within "his children's sight" not by a lack of law enforcement, but as T.A. Critchley would say, but "by order tyranny" (xii) which is represented in both Venetian society in *Measure for Measure* and in Shakespeare's personal experience with the over zealous enforcement of civil law in the Stratford of his youth.

These experiences, it may be suggested, are the embryonic substance in which Shakespeare lives and relives his past and his present. John Allen writes that Shakespeare gives us “no convenient route gives to access the inner Dogberry” (35). While this is so, Dogberry and the other constables are formed and informed by the Elizabethan society in which they all function. Although *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Love's Labour Lost* are not set in England, they certainly reflect Elizabethan Society and its law enforcement officers – the constables.

Thomas Meron in “Crimes and Accountability in Shakespeare” writes,

Shakespeare's plays advocate a society in which the law should be respected and leaders held to high standards of civilized behavior. In the constant tension between the interests of power and ethical responsibilities, Shakespeare appears to support the latter, even if with occasional equivocation. His condemnation of crimes and euphemisms for crimes is strong. He emphasizes moral duties and the role of the conscience as a guide to civilized behavior by the leader and the citizen. Furthermore, suggesting that crimes do not or at least should not go unpunished, the dramatist creates a potent image of accountability. However, he shows that the principle and the ideal occasionally cave in under stress and pressure. (39-40).

Meron suggests that Shakespeare writes from his place in history and makes a social commentary on his society with his pen. In order to look at the fullness of the constable and the respectability, or lack of, that are represented in these plays, we must examine the History of the Office, examine Shakespeare's personal experience of the judicial and civil

law enforcement system of his day, and how these influences touch him on a personal level. It will be Shakespeare's construction and idea of the constable who will find his way to the stage imbued with the malapropisms and mannerisms of Dogberry, Elbow and Dull. These stumbling and struggling law enforcement officials will be remembered throughout time as inept, ineffective, and comical, but honorable men. The constable's comedic success in Shakespeare will be recreated three hundred years later in their slapstick counterparts—The Keystone Cops of the 1920's and the *Police Academy* movies of the 1980's. Shakespeare's idea of the comedic law enforcement officer is enduring and comical – but it is grounded and surrounded in historical reality. We must look there if we are to imagine the conception of Dull, Dogberry, Elbow and the evolution of their contemporary counterparts.

Chapter 1 – The Constable of History

T. A. Critchley writes, “The origins of the English police system are to be found in the tribal laws and customs of the Danish and Anglo-Saxon invaders” (1). The term, constable, first “appears on the scene after 1066,” according to Critchley (1). Joan R. Kent notes, in *The English Village Constable 1580-1642*, that “the title ‘constable’ seems to have a military origin.” She continues, “It was probably the result of new military functions, conferred by the state during thirteenth century that some village headmen were first called constables” (16). During the reign of King John, the constables were given the responsibilities of keeping the peace and mustering men for the military. By the reign of Edward I, the high constable comes into notice (Kent 16). In *Much Ado About Nothing*, Dogberry’s watchman, Secoal, sometimes referred to as Watchman-2, refers to Dogberry as “master constable” (3.3. 14) which certainly could apply to high constable from a historical point of view.

Dogberry, Elbow and Dull have been representative of the Elizabethan constable since their appearance on the stage. They have, according to Phoebe S. Spinrad in her article, “Dogberry Hero: Shakespeare’s Comic Constables in Their Communal Context” “been recognized as satiric commentary on the corruptions in Elizabethan law enforcement systems and as a thematic commentary on the judicial or social systems within the larger scope of their plays” (161). While this comment is representative of the constables of Shakespeare’s plays, the constable of history must be juxtaposed against the theatrical representation to reveal as much of the truth as is possible through the historical records that exist. Hugh Evans, in “Comic Constables – Fictional and Historical” asserts that “Shakespeare was drawing on a character type from his own society and reflecting a

situation which was a genuine problem for Elizabethans” (427). Both Spinrad and Evans represent this constable, the one who is incompetent in a comedic way. It is this constable that many Elizabethans encounter in the street and in the pubs. In many ways it is this constable who is most often seen in performance, i.e. Dogberry and his watch. John Cox writes, “The watch scenes have traditionally been played with much slapstick business” (157). However, there are others construct the constable differently.

Joan R. Kent in her work “The English Village Constable 1580-1642, suggests that the comic or inept constables are not always at the fore of the Elizabethan local law enforcement system. In fact it may be just the opposite. She writes:

[Although] Shakespeare’s Dogberry, Dull and Elbow dominated historians’ views of constables as well as those of literary scholars who discussed constableness. They found comic constables in historical records as well as seventeenth-century dramatic works, and portrayed such officers as both reluctant and incompetent agents of royal authority...Such views of constables have been increasingly challenged during the last two decades. (2)

While Spinrad, Evans and Kent offer varying opinions of the constable, I suggest that both views are offered in Shakespeare’s constables. Both Dogberry and Elbow perform the duties prescribed to them. Not only do they perform them, but Dogberry’s actions are crucial to keeping the future peace in Messina. So while Shakespeare’s use of the comical constable is art in its finest form, it also takes its bow from historical reality.

J.A Sharpe writes, “Historians have described constables as inefficient because they have applied twentieth-century standards in assessing the behavior of such officers and

failed to appreciate that the assumptions and expectations which prevailed during the seventeenth-century were different from those of the modern world" (qtd. in Kent 6). This certainly would have to include Dogberry's success in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Kent continues, "Recent work has thus called into question the assessment of constables as lowly bumbling officials, and suggested that different criteria must be employed in evaluating the criteria of such officers" (7). If this assumption is correct, then Dogberry and Elbow are more effectual than their bumbling personalities might at first suggest. They were born from a system that called their office - Frankpledge.

From the time of King Alfred the keeping of the local peace fell upon the locality. In fact, Critchley says that, "every male person, unless excused through a high social position or property, was enrolled for police purposes in a group of about ten persons known as a tything and headed by a tything man" (2). It was their charge to keep the peace in the King's name. In fact, Dogberry uses this form to charge his watch. "This is your charge: you shall comprehend all vagrom men... in the prince's name" (3.3.25-7). It was the responsibility of the parish constable, who is also analogous to the tything man, to perform this function as well as many others. The parish constable was required to swear an oath that set out these duties. They appear in the *North Rising Letters*. (Sharpe 49).

You shall... well and truly present all mannour of bloodsheddes, and assaltes and affrays and outcryes there... done and committed against the Kings Ma[jes]ties peace: all manner of writes, warrantee and precepts to you lawfully directed you shall truly execute: the Kings Ma[jes]ties peace in your own person you shall conserve and keepe as much as in you lyeth

and in all things that apperteyne to your office shall be well and truly
 behave yourself. (*North Riding Session Records*, qtd. in Sharpe 49)

Dogberry keeps the “peace” and “precepts” referred to in the *Rising Letters*, as he stands in for the prince and charges Borachio. He boldly stands in for his prince saying, “Masters, I charge you in the prince’s name” (4.2.32). Dogberry affirms the historical oath of the North Rising as the prince’s principle law enforcement representative. It is clear that Shakespeare includes the structure of the constabulary in Dogberry’s charge – his “hue and cry” as it were. There were times in the local constabulary that the entire system of law enforcement weighed on the shoulders of these unpaid parish constables. Dogberry may represent, for some, the inept constable. As J.A. Sharpe implies,

Evidence can be found of parish officers who were partial, corrupt,
 inefficient venal and open to intimidation... We find constables bound
 over for allowing an escape; indicted for lodging vagrants and wandering
 persons; reprimanded for failing to execute warrants. (106)

However, this is not the portrayal of any of the constables that I will examine within Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Measure for Measure* and *Love’s Labour Lost*. While they each present a bumbling manner on stage, they come through and uphold the sworn oath of their office in ways that are quite unexpected.

One of the difficulties of the local constabulary is that they had to straddle the laws of their local communities and represent the laws of the state at the same time. The constables were drawn and chosen from the community in which they lived and therein lays the paradox of serving two masters. In many cases, the job was certainly undesired by most and very dangerous at its worst. The constable, was, according to Joan Kent, “to

keep watch and ward and to pursue the hue and cry, and if a thief was not apprehended the villages in each hundred were collectively accountable for compensating the victim”

(26). Because of these extraneous burdens on the constable, the office was not desired.

Kent suggests,

Some contend that ... the office was unpopular and that men sought to avoid it if at all possible. Historians suggest that many who were selected for the position claimed exemption or offered other reasons for not serving, and some argue that those who could afford to do so hired substitutes. The difficulties of filling the office have been attributed in part to the fact that incumbents were obliged to remain in the position for years on end. (58)

This apparently is the case of Elbow in *Measure for Measure*. Elbow appears to be a paid substitute and is serving (“continued”) in the office for quite some time; he is doing so now just “for the money.” The normal term of the parish constable, who was chosen from his neighbors, was one year. (Sharpe 49). Elbow was many years beyond the normal term.

This is made clear when he is questioned by Escalus,

Escalus: Come hither to me, Master Elbow; come hither, Master

Constable How long have you been in this place of constable?

Elbow: Seven year and a half, sir.

Escalus: Alas, it hath been great pains to you. They do you

Wrong to put you so oft upon't. Are there not men in your ward

Sufficient to serve it?

Elbow: Faith, sir, few of any wit in such matters. As they are

Chosen, they are glad to choose me for them. I do it for some piece of money, and go through with all. (2.1. 231-42).

In another translation, a key word is added to this same conversation; the word is “continued.” “Continued” implies that Elbow continues in the service as substitute for another - one not willing or one unfit to serve.

Escalus: Come hither to me, Master Elbow; come hither, Master

Constable. How long have you been in this place of constable?

Elbow: Seven year and a half, sir.

Escalus: I thought, by your readiness in the office, you had continued in it some time. You say, seven years together?

Elbow: And a half, sir. (2.1. 228-34.)

It is assumed, by the very nature of this conversation, that Elbow has been a constable for at least seven years, possibly more. Elbow is clear that he stands in as a substitute, as he implies that others cannot handle the duties because, “few [have] any wit in such matters” (2.1.240). Elbow’s use of “wit” may be read in two ways. The first is that “they,” meaning the inexperienced, cannot perform all that the office requires. The additional duties of the office are alluded to in line 42, as Elbow says they “go through it all.” He implies that he carries out all of the responsibilities of the office. This includes, “assuring that the stocks and other instruments of punishment were kept in repair, [the constables] did so as village agents and the whole community was likely to bear the fine if they were found in decay,” writes Joan Kent (26-7).

The second manner, in which Elbow uses “wit,” may be in reference to those who did not possess the necessary intelligence for the position. Hugh Evans writes, “The lack of

intelligent and dedicated men for constables and watchmen was a genuine problem during Shakespeare's life..." (429). This is further exposed in a letter from Lord Burghley to Sir Francis Walsingham near the time of the trial of Mary Queen of Scots. Burghley complains about the lack of decorum regarding the constables guarding the roads as he approaches Fotheringay. He recalls his troubled observations,

Sir – As I came from London homeward, in my coche, I sawe at every towne end the number of x or xii standing, with long staves... I came to Fotheringay I thought no other of them, but that that had stayed... drynk at some ale house.... they were appointed as watchmen, for the apprehending of such as are missing... And I asked who appointed them; and they answered Bankes, a Head Constable. (qtd. in Evans 429).

The letter reflects a Dogberry-like view on the watch; principally, it is a comment on the suitability and reliability of the officers. However, the difference must also be noted. These particular watches clearly neglected their duty and were drunkards; Dogberry's watch, on the other hand, did not neglect their duty nor are they ever described as drunks in the play (Evans 430). The drunken description of the constables guarding the roads at Burghley's approach is ironic, in that it was the constables who were charged with enforcing laws against drunk and disorderly behavior. Joan Kent confirms their responsibilities. She writes,

Statutes against drunkenness and swearing also made constables the agents of justice in imposing penalties on such offenders. An act against drunkenness in 1607, reconfirmed in 1624, gave constables... the duty of

levying the fines or carrying out the alternative penalty of imprisonments in the stocks. (33)

Behavior, such as Burghley describes, surely occurred throughout the constabulary and gives rise to the public perception of incompetence and corruption of the office. The office holder of Shakespeare's time is visualized in Dogberry and the others. A few constables, according to Kent, were "alehouse keepers by trade charged with being so delinquent in their duties as to entertain vagrants rather than punishing them" (34). She talks about "One officer in North Riding of Yorkshire [who] was accused of allowing twenty rogues to drink in his house at untawful times" (202). Even though many were probably of the caliber that Lord Burghley describes, they did have official prescribed duties; some were directly responsible to the High/Master Constable. The behavior of the watch was only as reliable as they were. Their appearance and adherence to official duties varied from region to region even though they all shared the same general obligations.

Sir Anthony Fitzherbert comments on the duties of the constable in 1579. The "constables" he says, "were ordained for two intentes... to keepe the peace, and atso to repress fetons, to take surety of obligation of such persons as they shall fynde" (qtd. in Frazure 385.) A large part of the constable's job was to apprehend vagrants or vagabonds as they were called. The vagrant, defined by sixteenth-century standards was a "masterless man." He was, "by statutory definition ... a person able to labour who possesses neither land nor master, who worked at no recognized trade, and who refused to accept such employment as might be offered to him" (qtd. in Spinrad 167). These idle

persons were involved in a great deal of criminality, so much so, that the Queen took notice. (qtd. in McDonald, 301)

Queen Elizabeth I issued a “Royal Proclamation against Vagabonds and Unlawful Assemblies” in an effort to control the ever-increasing problems of vagrancy, begging and overall crime. She issued her edict on September 9, 1598 (McDonald 301).

By The Queene
The Queen’s Majesty’s proclamation for suppressing of the multitudes of idle vagabonds, and for staying all unlawful assemblies, especially in and about the City of London, and for orders to punish the same.
(qtd. in McDonald, 301)

This same charge, of course, is certainly within the responsibilities of Dogberry’s Watch as well. Joan Kent writes, [The constables] were responsible for setting the watch and ward and for the apprehension of suspicious persons (vagrants –vagabonds), for sending out hues and cries after offenders...” (25). This is Dogberry’s responsibility as he recruits, gathers and charges his watch. He frames his charge to Seacoal with the intent of Elizabeth’s Proclamation hovering in the background. “This is your charge” he stresses, “you shall comprehend all vagrom men; you are / to bid any man stand, in the prince’s name” (3.3.21-2). Shakespeare completed *Much Ado About Nothing* in 1598-99 (Bloom xiv). He must have been well aware of the proclamation and the issues surrounding open crime in London and in the surrounding country side. He integrated those issues into his watch in a pragmatic approach through Dogberry, Elbow and- in a lesser way - Dull. Vagrants were simply not just arrested, but they were whipped, beaten, and then returned to the towns of their birth (Spinard, 167). This responsibility of punishment fell to the

local constable. Because of his propensity to avoid this kind of extremism and sadistic punishment, Dogberry, seemingly peaceful by nature, chooses to ignore criminals if possible. He instructs his watch to do the same if an arrest will create violence or otherwise disturb the peace. He instructs his watch:

(Truly by your office you may, but I think they that touch
 the watch to Pitch will be defiled: the most peaceable way for you, if you do take a
 Thief, is, to let him show himself what he is, and steal out of your
 company (3.3. 47-50).

There is also a historical foundation which asserts Dogberry's position of avoiding an arrest of the offender in the name of discretion or leniency on the part of the constable. J.A. Sharpe, writing in *Crime in Early Modern England, 1550-1750* notes, "Before formal prosecution, attempts might be made to get offenders to amend their ways through persuasion (108). This "persuasion," on some level, is found in Dogberry's instruction to the watch to take "the most peaceable way," by letting the criminal "show himself what he is," and "steal" away. Sharpe continues, "The local petty offender," Dogberry's normal charges, "might be allowed considerable latitude before being taken to court" (109). This discretionary power is evidenced in Dogberry's normal course of business in leading the night watch. Of course, the exception comes in the arrest of Borachio and Conrade.

The alternate reading of Dogberry's lack of motivation to arrest offenders may be considered negligent as well. Constables of Shakespeare's time were often accused of not doing the job, which certainly can be implied by Dogberry telling his watch that it is alright if they sleep: "I cannot see how sleeping should offend," he says to Seacoal

(3.3.35). There was a problem in some communities in the way constables were selected and the manner in which they went about performing their official duties. Their negligence, if too extreme, was answered from the court bench. Joan Kent writes, "General orders issued by justices ... frequently charged that constables were negligent in apprehending and punishing vagrants, and these claims were sometimes combined with accusations that they had failed to keep the watch and the ward" (200-1). William Tate says that more than half of the constables made "no attempt" to discharge their duties. He says that "many were content with levying a modest rate whipping an occasional vagrant, leaving rogues alone so long as they made no attempt to interfere with the constable, upon the principle laid down upon the most distinguished member of their class – Dogberry" (qtd. in Kent 2). Their actions, or lack of, may have led to the promulgation of official rules and duties of the constable.

Sometime before Elizabeth's Proclamation of 1598, William Lambard, the official recorder of documents in the Tower of London, wrote in 1583, *The duties of Constables, Borsholders, Tithingmen and such other low Minfisters of the Peace*. It is from this document, in which the official duties of the parish constables and the other ministers of justice are taken. Lambard also includes a section on vagabonds; he writes, "the arrest such frarunge perfons as do walk abroads in the night feaon" (13) indicating a continued emphasis and importance of ridding the communities of such undesirables. In essence, the real duties and charges of the constables construct the realistic setting of Dogberry and his Watch in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and Elbow in *Measure for Measure*. They both effect responsibilities and reflect actions that are accorded their Office.

Another major issue that was already addressed, albeit briefly, is the problem of intellect and literacy on the part of the constable. Certainly this is reflected overtly in Dogberry's and Elbow's malapropisms and shows "the dialectical oddities of [their] social class," according to Louise Frazure (388). Kent notes,

Historians have attributed some of the failings of constables to their ignorance and illiteracy, seventeenth-century writers too sometimes commented on the problems created by the inability of the officers to read and write. A sheriff of Cornwall reported to the Council in 1637 that illiteracy of the constables in that county had contributed to his difficulties(130)

This reality is noted in Dogberry's tête-à-tête with the watchman as he is procuring members for the night watch:

Dogberry: First who think you the most desartless man to be worthy. Dogberry constable?
 Watchman 1: Hugh Oatcake, sir or George Seacoal, for they can write and read (3.3. 7-10).

Dogberry downplays the importance of literacy and calls it "vanity." He says, "...I knew it would be your answer: well, for your / favour, sir, why give God thanks, and make no boast of it, and for / you reading and writing, let that appear when there is not need of such vanity..." (3.3. 15-18).

Dogberry's "most desartless man" translates easily into "deserving" or man most worthy. Dogberry's malapropism is interesting in that it brings attention to literacy in language. Shakespeare, on some level, appears to be connecting literacy to language.

Clearly, illiteracy had to be a factor in the constabulary, i.e. that the constables had to either read or write warrants for arrest and be able to understand at some fundamental level, legal documents. If they could not read or write, they would be at the mercy of others. Since the job was unpaid, "or they received a small stipend" according to Phoebe Spinard they would probably have to pay for most of this service and then be held bound by the honesty of the interpreter (165). Hugh Evans comments on the literacy levels. He observes, "I have two miles to a scrivener to have warrant read to him" (131). This reality is dismissed quickly. The Literacy levels among constables varied, sometimes as low as 15 percent and sometimes as high as 80 percent, and literate constables usually had neighbors fill out the paper work for them, or as Dogberry does, submitted all paperwork chores to their superior. (164)

While the ranges varied, according to Evans, some constables could not perform the office because of illiteracy. Historical evidence suggests as much, Joan Kent writes, "The officer of one Wiltshire village asked to be relieved of the position on the grounds that he had to travel two miles to a scrivener to have warrant read to him" (131). This reality is dismissed quickly by Dogberry and he moves on to charge the watch. After the arrest he relies on the church officer, the Sexton, to record the criminal proceedings in the prison. Despite his malapropisms, Dogberry is aware of the nature of words. His deputies obey him and the Sexton takes down his examination of the prisoners.

But, in reality, he has no check and balance for the system if he is illiterate. There is nothing in the play to suggest that Dogberry relied on Seacoal or Oatcake to read or write for him. Dogberry was completely enamored with himself and the office. If it is suggested that Dogberry represents both the good and the bad in the parish constable

system, his contemporary counter-parts must have behaved in a similar manner; they acted under the color of their authority, without regard for a document that they could not read. They got by. While many were described as “unprofessional,” they were not as “ignorant about their duties as sometimes supposed,” according to Kent (139). They not only got by but, like Dogberry and Elbow, “many of them accumulated considerable experience in running the affairs of the parish” (Kent 139). And much like Dogberry and Elbow, they sometimes “got it right” despite the odds. In *Much Ado*, Dogberry represents and acts on behalf of Leonato who is Governor of Messina. This is a statement on the office of the governor and on the citizens of Messina. Dogberry and his watch somehow fit the bill, as does Elbow in *Measure for Measure* who is allowed to serve six years in a one-year requirement. Shakespeare, through Dogberry, shows both sides of the constable, i.e., the negligent and incompetent dunderhead, and the Inspector Clueso-like investigative successes of these early civil law enforcers. On some level Shakespeare’s characters accurately mirror the constables who walked the streets outside the Rose and Globe Theaters. Dogberry, Dull, and Elbow all evolve in the plays, some more than others. But

In reality constables, such as Dogberry, would report to higher officials such as the governor of Messina or Escalus in Venice. They would also be responsible to bring charges and travel long distances to make their presentments to court. “High constables, sheriffs, bailiffs, justices and royal visitors and often had to travel long distances to make presentments at leet courts and assizes” according to Spinard (165). Dogberry is well aware of these channels as he invokes “the prince’s name,” on several occasions.

The Office of the Constable was demanding and was not the most desirous of positions. Dogberry, Dull, and Elbow all evolve in the plays, some more than others. But

Shakespeare certainly drew on his personal experience of the constabulary as he experienced it both as an adult and as a child growing up in the countryside of Stratford. In order to look at this influence, the constable of Shakespeare's youth and his interaction with the law must be examined. It would be through this experience, along with the historical foundation of the constable, on which Shakespeare would construct his civil police officials.

Chapter 2 – The Effect of the Country Constable on Shakespeare and His Plays

Ben Jonson wrote on the title page of the First Folio, published after Shakespeare's death,

Soul of the Age!

The applause! delight! the wonder of our stage!

My Shakespeare rise!... stood before the stage; he took them by the hand

and began a conversation in which they all were invited to participate. It was from this

emotional hold from which Jonson calls Shakespeare's works, eternal. In order for the plays to be drawn and framed by the realism that is so evident within, Shakespeare had to draw on outside sources, great books, history and personal experience. This is exactly what the playwright does with the character representations in *Much Ado*. There is a mixing of several sources, some borrowed and some real. Charles T. Prouty commenting about these sources says, "Shakespeare borrowed his main plot from *Bandello* or *Belleforest*, and the trick of deception from *Spenser* or *Ariosto*; but *Dogberry*, *Verges*... are Shakespeare's original creations" (1). It is from these sources that he builds

his plot, integrating the constables. His constables evolve, in some way, as he did; he constructs and deconstructs the office in myriad applications throughout these comedies. There is Dull of the country - perhaps reflective of Stratford-upon-Avon and his early life, Dogberry of suburban Messina, analogous to the lost years; and there is Elbow of the city - possibly a reflection of Shakespeare's London. In order to look at the evolution of the constables in his works, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Measure for Measure*, Shakespeare's life must be introduced.

John Shakespeare, William's father, was born in 1530. John moved to Stratford to better his lot. He had been born into a family of farmers. Michael Wood writes, "[John] gained some prestige almost instantly by marrying Mary Arden, whose family was much respected in rural Warwickshire" (1). As previously mentioned, John was a Glover, Constable, Chamberlain, and Alderman (Holden 19). He worked his way quickly up the political ranks of the "connected" in Stratford-upon-Avon. His connections and influence helped him rise to the rank of "Baliff, which carried with it the powers of Justice of the Peace and later... Chief Alderman" (Wood 1). Several of these positions, especially that of the Baliff, constable, and Justice of the Peace, are intimately related and linked to Dull's, Dogberry's, and Elbow's civil policing responsibilities in the plays. William later will draw on these positions to frame his own constables.

Anthony Holden, writing of Shakespeare's childhood in *William Shakespeare: The Man Behind the Genius*, suggests that the vocational experiences that young William gains by his father's noted work experience will, influence his writing. In fact, he offers an opinion that Shakespeare's father was also a butcher and that William was his

apprentice. It was these butchery skills, offers Holden, which William integrates later as he writes plays such as *Titus Andronicus* and *Hamlet*. He also points out, “It is also likely that young Shakespeare, as would befit the bailiff’s son, himself donned a butcher’s apron and wielded the fatal knife ...” Shakespeare’s practical knowledge, Holden suggests, is displayed “throughout [Shakespeare’s] works [when] he displays a detailed technical knowledge of butchery, and the properties of its prime consequence, blood, which permeates so many of his plays” (41).

Following Holden’s argument, it can be also assumed that William would integrate several of his other life-experiences learned by his father’s side. This would include the idea of civil law enforcement in a growing and tumultuous Stratford-upon-Avon of which his father was an active participant as constable and justice of the peace. This also includes his father’s Catholic roots being closeted away from a changing Protestant England. These roots if discovered, would lead to persecution and arrest. While his father was on the right side of the law, he often found himself in front of the bench as well. Was young William by his side?

John was dealing in wool when William was six (1572). Wool, according to Michael Wood was “...the hottest currency of the day,” and the transference of wool was strictly controlled by the state. John, according to Wood, “looks to have been quite successful in his illegal trade as a brogger”² (1). The brogging of wool will bring John in contact with the civil justice/policing authorities of the time. It will also bring young Shakespeare in contact with the law and its enforcers. There is evidence in the Stratford historical records that John was caught and fined for this practice (1). According to Wood, “He is informed

² A brogger was freelance wool dealer working without the necessary license. Wood, Michael. *Evidence In Search of Shakespeare*. Feb. 2004. <<http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/evidence/evidence66.html>> 14 Mar. 2004.

on – and maybe even set up in the first place – by James Langrake, a professional State informer” (1). Wood further explains, “Recently discovered documents contain details of the fine imposed on John Shakespeare – these records also show the amounts of wool that Shakespeare’s father was dealing in; some 200 tons of wool were involved in this case” (1). John’s appearance before the court, after his arrest, may be mirrored in Elbow’s appearance before the courts in *Measure for Measure*. William, at eight-years-of age, had to be affected by the arrest of his father by the police officials of Stratford. If according to Anthony Holden, William learned butchery at his father’s side – he must also have had to learn to deal with the legal system from both sides of the fence. Michael Wood describes John’s arrest in relation to the influence on young William. Wood reports, “When Shakespeare was six, his father was twice arrested for breaking the stringent laws in usury; and then when the boy was eight, John came before the courts on two charges of wool dealing” (39). These brushes with the law must have given young William an opinion of the legal systems as well as the law enforcers of his time, i.e. the constable and the justice of the peace. On many levels his view is unique. He shared the experience of the officials from both sides of the aisle through his father who had arrested others as a constable, and in turn was arrested by those who held the position as well. Wood says, “There would be no sheltered upbringing for ... Shakespeare. Through his father’s wheeling-dealing, the child was brought into contact with every level of society ... and it would come out later in his language” (43). It would not only be reflected in Shakespeare’s language but also in the construction of characters such as the constable and his description of the early-modern Elizabethan criminal justice system that is depicted in his plays.

In *Measure for Measure*, Elbow's appearances are both times in court. In the first instance, much like John Shakespeare's experience, Pompey and Froth are dealt with lightly. Michael Wood notes that, in John Shakespeare's first appearance before the court, he "would have been able to get off lightly by paying off the man who informed on him" (1). While the scene does not mimic John's arrest and treatment exactly, I suggest, there are some similarities. As John got off easy, so did Pompey and Froth on their first offense. While Claudio is sentenced to "be execute[ed] by nine [the next] morning" (2.1.34), the two others brought before the court are released with a tap on the hand for an offense that by inference, is far worse. The case, presented by Elbow before Escalus and Angelo, is comical in that his language issues are more reflective of his case than the actual charges against the criminals. This certainly could be a commentary on the policing and judicial systems that connect to Shakespeare's experience in Stratford with his father's arrest for brogging. John and Mary begin to move their assets and "strategically dispose of their land

and There was a crisis in the wool industry and John began to skip his public duties. The government became less tolerant of Catholics and people were cited for being recusant. Michael Wood expands this point.

The government became more punitive in its treatment of Catholics, with fines handed out to those who refused to attend Protestant church services. John also refused to pay a levy imposed on the town for strengthening the local militia. (1)

In 1578, John and Mary begin to move their assets and "strategically dispose of their land and property" according to Wood. John begins to fall from grace after increasing his debt and is sued by his creditors. In 1757, according to Wood, "men working in Shakespeare's

Henley Street birthplace found a hand written testament dating from around the time of Edmund Campion's³ visit to England. Each page [of the testament of faith] was signed by John Shakespeare" (1). In many ways, this uneasiness of the State, anti-Catholicism, and John's financial decline informed young William's outlook in law and its punishment, both civil and criminal. While all the constables examined in this work are comical, there is a dark side to be drawn from this period in William Shakespeare's life. He was but eleven years old when their family traumas and tragedies unfolded in Stratford. If we are to draw a connection between the Jesuit priest, his companions, John Shakespeare and John's "Catholic testament of faith, these rebellious Catholic evangelists, their faith, capture, and manner of execution must be considered. This turmoil and fear of being "outed," as closed Catholics must have influenced young Shakespeare, especially if his father was a recusant and a Catholic, in Protestant England.

Campion and his peers were, by all accords, undercover Catholic freedom fighters, i.e. Jesuits or their handpicked soldiers. According to Michael Wood, there is some evidence that Robert Parsons made his way through the countryside near Stratford "disguised as an army officer" (73) and may have met Catholic supporters, including John Shakespeare.

This meeting may account for John Shakespeare's spiritual will (Testament of Faith).

Michael Wood suggests,

...It is probable that John Shakespeare, the former bailiff of Stratford, really did receive the testament – perhaps through a local priest, or through friends, but most likely from the hands of Robert Parsons himself, as a later tradition asserts. (77)

³ Campion was a Jesuit moving through and preaching the Catholic Theology in an increasing Protestant England. He was caught, hanged, drawn and quartered in 1581. Wood, Michael. *Evidence: In Search of Shakespeare*. Feb. 2004. <<http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/players/player22.html>> 14 Mar. 2004.

With all of this cloak and dagger-like behavior of John, it must be assumed that William would be part and parcel of his father's behavior as the eldest son. John was willing to risk a great deal for his faith. It is only right that that zeal would influence his young son in some way. *1580 describes the punishment:*

Robert Parson was the only one of the 1580 mission to escape the hunt by the queen's spies. He claimed that "the Jesuits were received by the thousands of people that summer. For [Edmund] Campion, too, it had been a 'joyous harvest'" (qtd. in Wood 75). "On December 1 (1580) Champion was hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn, the place of punishment or crucifixion for Shakespeare's generation..." writes Michael Wood (78). As it was meant to do, this barbaric/tortuous method of punishment/execution for treason had to send shock waves back to the closeted Catholics. J.S Cockburn in *Crime in England 1550-1800* describes the punishment: *that of his family. This inordinate fear and*

the probable You are to be drawn upon a hurdle to the place of execution, and there you *seditionists* are to be hanged by the neck, and being alive cut down, and your privy-members cut off, and your bowels to be taken out of your belly and burned, you being alive; and your head to be cut off, and your body to be divided into four quarters, and that your head and quarters be disposed of where [his or her] majesty shall think fit. (41)

If John Shakespeare was one of the faithful, and it appears now that he was, he must have been frightened for his own life as well as for that of his family. This inordinate fear and the probable graphic explanation/description of hanging, drawing, and quartering of the seditionist/recusants must have shaken the teenage William Shakespeare to the bones.

Shakespeare was grounded by a culture regularly surrounded by myriad forms of graphic violence. In many ways they had to be desensitized to its extremes but fearful nonetheless. According to Phoebe S. Spinrad, It was after all, “an age that enjoyed bull and bear baiting, and skinned animals alive under the impression that such a procedure improved the pelts” (168). This governmental and personal propensity for violence is juxtaposed against Dogberry’s peaceful nature and his aversion to violence. This is noticed as he mentions that he could not hang a dog never-the-less a man in *Much Ado*.

and being still. Verges: You have been always called a merciful man, partner.

alone in his p Dogberry: Truly I would not hang a dog by my will, much more than a heavy price. man / who hath any honesty in him

the leet courts. Verges: If you hear a child cry in the night, you must call the nurse live attitude. And bid her still it. (3.3. 51-55)

If this set of lines is closely examined, one can almost feel their inspiration drawn from this part of William’s life. After the precipitous fear, that must have been evident in the Shakespeare household, it is only right to see young Shakespeare crying out in the night and being stilled and comforted by his mother, Anne. Spinrad writes that Dogberry is not alone in his peaceful nature for many constables were of the same mind-set and paid a heavy price. She writes, “Of those constables who were charged with neglect of duty by the leet courts, most were accused of failing to apprehend vagrants... Their live and let live attitude... cost them more literally, in the fines levied on them for negligence” (168). Perhaps a gentle constable, a “peaceful -misfit,” warned them of impending suspicion. John Shakespeare had already been charged on the local level with being a recusant.

While John's and William's personal contact with law enforcement authorities never matched that of Edmund Campion, never-the-less, William had personal brushes with the law and court sometime after he surfaces in London. Sometime after the theaters, (Rose, Swan and Rose) appeared in the Southwark⁴ section of London, Shakespeare and a few others were accused by William Waite of breaching the peace - in a manner of speaking - and issued a summons to appear in court (Wood 1). This offense, on some level, was similar to the offenses that John Shakespeare as constable and bailiff, encountered in Stratford. Michael Wood comments on William Shakespeare's brush with the law and the summons he was forced to answer. He writes,

William Waite petitioned for sureties of the peace against William Shakespeare and three others "ob metum mortis" - "for fear of death" (common legal terminology of the day).

Waite would have obtained the writ by swearing to the Judge of the

Queen's Bench that he was in danger of death or bodily harm from the accused. The accused would, in turn, appear before the court where they

would be ordered to pay a bond and be bound over to keep the peace;

failure to keep the peace would result in the bond they had paid being

forfeit, an Elizabethan form of preemptive fining. It seems most likely that

William Waite wasn't actually in danger of being beaten up by the Bard.

Far more likely is the theory that Waite was looking to cause Shakespeare

⁴"Southwark was an area that was undergoing aggressive development by speculators in Shakespeare's day. Crowded tenements were going up as fast as they could build them. Houses were being divided up into apartments and gardens were rapidly disappearing beneath building extensions." Wood, Michael. *Evidence. In Search of Shakespeare*. Feb. 2004. <<http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/evidence/evidence176.html>> 17 Mar. 2004.

part they had played in bringing the theatre to Southwark (and the consequent drop in property value). (1)

It is reasonable to assume that these contemporary law issues, as well as the situations that Shakespeare encountered as a child, would form his opinion of the law enforcement system of this time as both a child and, later, as an adult. He was involved in further litigation as a playwright as well. Shakespeare became "disillusioned with the law and its administrators" (212) according to Anthony Holden. This came as a result of a copyright issue involving a "bad" quarto of Hamlet being performed in 1603. Shakespeare was incensed that the law did not protect him (Holden 212).

Although Elizabethan justice could be swift, it was not contained in a police force but

in a military-like justice system. It allowed the constables to do the best that they could under varying circumstances and conditions. It must be further noted that the law enforcers, i.e. the constables, were, in many cases, part and parcel of the contact that Shakespeare would have with "the system." These contacts would find their offices reconstructed comically within, *Love's Labour Lost*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Measure for Measure*. In order to place the constables of history and their personal impact on Shakespeare's life, their roles within each play must be examined.

Although Elizabethan justice could be swift, it was not contained in a police force but in a military-like justice system. It allowed the constables to do the best that they could under varying circumstances and conditions. It must be further noted that the law enforcers, i.e. the constables, were, in many cases, part and parcel of the contact that Shakespeare would have with "the system." These contacts would find their offices reconstructed comically within, *Love's Labour Lost*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Measure for Measure*. In order to place the constables of history and their personal impact on Shakespeare's life, their roles within each play must be examined.

Chapter – 3 *Love Labour's Lost, Much Ado About Nothing, Measure for Measure*, and their constables: Dull, Dogberry and Elbow.

The *OED* defines “dull” as one who is “not quick in intelligence or mental perception; slow of understanding; not sharp of wit; obtuse, stupid, inapprehensive. In early use, sometimes: Wanting wit, fatuous, foolish” (np). Shakespeare used the word 93 times in his plays and names his constable Dull in *Love's Labour Lost*. In *The Second Part of Henry the Fourth*, perhaps staged “as early as 1597” according to Jean E. Howard (1293). Falstaff represents the depictions of Shakespeare’s constables. Falstaff’s dialogue uses *dull* as an adjective that describes the watch and constables. Falstaff brings about a foolish, and dull, personage affected by alcohol use and its debilitating effects on speech. He rambles,

Falstaff's aside... A good sherris sack hath a two-fold
operation in it. It ascends me into the brain;
dries me there all the foolish and dull and curdy
vapours which environ it; makes it apprehensive,
quick, forgetive, full of nimble fiery and
delectable shapes, which, delivered o'er to the
voice, the tongue, which is the birth, becomes
excellent wit. (4.2.84-92)

Falstaff’s aside can certainly be used to ground and surround Dull, Dogberry and Elbow’s personas. In Falstaff’s persona there is represented a “foolish and dull” aspect to the constables of Shakespeare’s plays. There is also an evolvment of stage persona of the constable in each play. Dull, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, is not central to the plot but is

certainly part of the successful comedic structure of the play. Dogberry, on the other hand, is an integral member in the plot of *Much Ado About Nothing* and Elbow is somewhat significant in *Measure for Measure* as well. There is an evolution of sorts taking place in the portrayal of the constable from play to play. The evolution - it may be suggested, moves the constable from the country/rural area in *Love's Labour's Lost* to the suburbs/urban in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and finally to the city in *Measure for Measure*. As the constables move geographically from play to play, they also move in sophistication within the comedic framework of the plays themselves. It is as if each constable is built from shards that remain from their predecessors.

It is generally believed that *Love's Labor Lost* was written and staged between 1594 and 1595 according to Walter Cohen in his introduction of the play in *The Norton Shakespeare – Based on the Oxford Edition* (733). According to Michael Wood, “In 1598 *Love's Labour's Lost* was published, corrected by the author; it was the first play to be published with his name on the cover” (216). It was in 1598, about the time of the publishing of *Love's Labour's Lost*, that *Much Ado About Nothing* is written. It will not be until 1604 that *Measure for Measure* is dated (Bloom xiv-xv). As the plays evolve, so do the constables from simple to complex characters.

According to David Bevington, John Lyly “was [the] undisputed master of the private theatre stage in the 1570s and 1580s. Lyly's *Endymion*⁵ represents his famous Euphuistic

⁵“*Endymion*, probably composed some time between 1585 and 1588, was entered in the Stationer's Register on October 4, 1591, and published anonymously later that year. The play was printed as Lyly's by Blount in *Six Court Comedies* of 1632. The style, however, would leave no doubt as to Lyly's authorship. †This article was originally published in *Elizabethan and Stuart Plays* Ed. Charles Read Baskerville. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1934. pp. 171-72.” Lyly, John, <<http://www.imagination.com/moonstruck/clsc83.html>> 26 Mar. 2004.

style at its best" (2). *Endymion*, which precedes *Loves Labour's Lost* by almost ten years, renders the Elizabethan constable in an unfavorable light. Joanne Altieri writes, "Lyly's *Endymion* makes use of the watch and constable solely for their humorous value" (6). She continues, "They are distinguished for their foolish value, ineffectuality, and drunkenness, fulfilling the standard picture" (6). A conversation appearing in Act IV involves two watchmen and a constable stereotypically framed by drunkenness and ineffectuality. The conversation is among Samias, Dares, and Epiton about the approaching watch. Samias says, "...Masters, / God speed you" (4.2.81-2). Masters, used in this application - according to David Bevington's note, indicates "persons of inferior rank" (150) referring directly to the constables. These local ranking watchmen are typical of the historical office holders in England at the time of Lyly's play and are properly constructed historically.

The First Watchman says to his peers, "Mass, neighbors, he says true. For if I swear I will never drink my liquor by the quart, and yet two pints, I think with a safe conscience I may carouse both" (4.2.90-3). This conversation assumes that the entire entourage of civil law enforcers has been drinking heavily. Lyly's character, Epiton, plays on their inebriated condition. He says, "Let Master Constable speak; I think he is the wisest / among you. The Constable replies: "You know neighbors, 'tis an old saw, 'Children / and fools speak true'" (4.2.106-09). The scene continues with the Pages calling the Watch "a patch" which translates to imply that they are fools. (Bevington 153). Shakespeare, perhaps writing *Love's Labour's Lost* about the time that Lyly's play was staged in London, may have been influenced by Lyly's portrayal of the constable and the night watch. He may have borrowed Lyly's comical insertion in his own *Love's Labour and*

The constable of Marlowe's play does not speak at all (387). Marlowe's reference is to

McGovern 40

Act V of the play when the constable is glossed over and somewhat minimized in

Much Ado. The constable, in Lyly's work, is extraneous to the plot but comical and well

placed nonetheless. This is very much in the manner of Dull's appearance in *Love's*

Labour Lost. *Itamore: Nor me neither; I cannot out-run you, constable.--O, my belly!*

Louise Frazure alludes to another playwright, Christopher Marlowe, also a

Shakespeare contemporary. He also portrays a constable in his work, *The Jew of Malta*,

int 590; it is written and performed some four years prior to *Love's Labour* in 1594-5.

The constable of Marlowe's play does not speak at all (387). Marlowe's reference is in

Act V of the play when the constable is glossed over and somewhat minimized in

importance. *Barabas: I'll go alone; dogs, do not hale me thus.*

Barabas: I'll go alone; dogs, do not hale me thus.

Itamore: Nor me neither; I cannot out-run you, constable.--O, my belly!

Dull, Dogberry (5.1.19-21)

Perhaps for Marlowe, the constable, although appearing as a diminished presence,

represents the reality of the office holder; he is the necessary baggage of civil law

enforcement of the time and expected by the audience. Dull is a paradigm of Lyly's and

Marlowe's constable as he appears in the *Loves Labour's Lost*. Dull sporadically speaks

only 15 lines throughout the play. He mimics, on some level, the minimal part he plays,

but he does not rise to the level of drunkenness that may be inferred of Dogberry's watch

in *Much Ado* or that of Lyly's *Endymion*. It must also be noted that all three constables-

Dull, Dogberry, and Elbow- are somehow framed by their language, or lack of, within

the misappropriated intrinsic linguistic disability that they all share in part. Dull, however,

creates a balance and foil for Holofernes, the schoolmaster, and Sir Nathaniel, the curate,

and their elevated academic prose in *Love Labour's Lost*. Dull represents the voice of reality, the authentic voice of the audience to a certain degree.

Bobbyann Rosen calls the language of the play "music," in that it rises and falls on language. Dull, then is the metronome; he is the balance, the hybrid voice. He stands between perfect pitch and the voice of reality. He brings reality to the fantasy that exists all around him. Rosen recalls this musical score; she writes, "[It] is a play of many voices, and much of its beauty grows from the sheer music of their rise and fall, the exploitation of their differences of quality of tone, accent and complication" (413).

Rosen comments further on this linguistic correlation in Act 1. Here in the first scene, the frank simplicity of Dull, the awed Elizabethan monosyllables of Costard, are placed by Shakespeare in a deliberate musical relationship with the studied sentences of Longaville, the fantastic style of Armando, and the more attractive elegance of Berowe, and the whole episode is given the quality of polyphonic composition half artificial and half real. (413)

What is important to note in this scene is that Dull represents reality in the phantasm of the play. He is comedic but he is also real. He is represented as "the embodiment of stupidity" (387) as Louise Frazure insists, but he is also represented as the realistic Elizabethan constable as well. Rosen's term, "polyphonic," represents many tones and voices that are independent, yet juxtaposed in an uneasy harmony. This is representative of all three constables as they are revealed within and through these three plays. Each, taken alone, produces a minimalist picture of the constable, but, taken together one can see the broad scope of the office of the constable revealed and the musical chord inferred

by Rosen, i.e. that they (the constables) produce separate songs, but together, within the plays, they represent the complete unified score of the Elizabethan officer.

Dull is represented as the standard for the Elizabethan constable. Joan Alteri writes in "Style and Social Disorder in *Measure for Measure*", "There is little to distinguish Dull... from the popular image of the constable: he is naively stupid, concerned for his own status in a manner faintly foreshadowing Dogberry's more massive sense of self-importance" (7). While Alteri's description can certainly be affirmed in Dull's persona, he also acts like an electrical switch between Holfernes and Nathaniel. His naiveté becomes the balancing point for language in the play. If Holfernes and Nathaniel represent one extreme in language, Dull represents the opposite. Dull, however appears to command respect from the king as he is introduced early in the play. King: "...by sweet's grace's officer Anthony Dull, a man of good repute, carriage, bearing and estimation" (1.1.253-4). A confident Dull responds, "Me, an't shall please you. I am Anthony Dull" (1.1. 255). While Dull may be under educated, he cannot be underestimated. Shakespeare uses Dull to bring focus to language, which is central to this play. It is interesting to note that both Dogberry and Elbow are framed in their own use and misuse of words as well. The "constable" malapropisms first appear in *Loves Labour's Lost* and are retained through the later plays in the persona of the office holder. Although the constable may be of a separate class than that of Holfernes, Nathaniel, and Armando, he is nonetheless cut from the same "social phenomenon" as those in the Academe (Alteri 7). That is one that is close to the "satirical heart of the Renaissance" (Alteri 7). Dull exhibits a kind of common sense that appears to be lacking in the others. This is evident in the hunting scene of Act IV.

kill. The conversation continues as Dull is mocked by Holofernes who says, "*Dictynna Goodman, Dull Dictynna Goodman Dull*" (4.2.34-5). *Dictynna*, according to the footnotes in *The Norton Shakespeare based on the Oxford Edition* of this play, indicates that Nathaniel: Truly, Master Holofernes, the epithets are sweetly varied, like a scholar at the least. But, sir, I assure ye it was a Buck of the first head.

Holofernes: Sir Nathaniel, *haud credo* (I hardly think so)

Dull: Twas not a 'auld grey doe', twas a pricket (Buck in the 2nd year)

The argument continues among the three with Dull rendering the accurate account of the kill. The conversation continues as Dull is mocked by Holofernes who says, "*Dictynna Goodman, Dull Dictynna Goodman Dull*" (4.2.34-5). *Dictynna*, according to the footnotes in the *The Norton Shakespeare based on the Oxford Edition* of this play, indicates *Dictynna* implies "yeoman" (765). This class is certainly the social rank that most constables spring from, including the playwright's father, John. Master Richard Quyny - Shakespeare's childhood friend writes - "John Shakespeare was a glover and whittawer. Adrian Quyny was a mercer, and both were yeoman" (qtd. in Fripp15). Shakespeare bases his conversation in the reality of social class and rank. John was a yeoman as was Dull. They were of equal social status, *Dictynna*.

There is also another reading of the conversation involving the deer and constable Dull in the context of Shakespeare's historicity. In what has been referred to as the "lost years," those years between 1582 and 1592, where Shakespeare disappears from the public records, it has been suggested that Shakespeare fled because he was arrested for poaching. This traditional story is called by some Shakespeare scholars a myth and a possibility by others. Michael Wood writes,

Shakespeare was driven away ... by Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote, who had been active in the government interest against Edmund Campion and

the historical incident or myth involving Shakespeare and deer poaching is important, it is also important to note that Lucy was in fact a Justice of the Peace, a position that mimics that of the local constable (Wood 99). If this incident and direct contact with Lucy occurred, Shakespeare would have had direct contact with the local laws and the constabulary enforcers of those laws. The incident in *Love Labour's Lost* also occurs in a thicket of the country, which finds its mirror image in the countryside of Stratford.

What is interesting to note about the supposed historical incident is that it parallels, on some level, the scene in *Love's Labour Lost* between the constable and the others. It involves a heated conversation involving a deer, a male deer of questionable age. While the historical incident or myth involving Shakespeare and deer poaching is important, it is also important to note that Lucy was in fact a Justice of the Peace, a position that mimics that of the local constable (Wood 99). If this incident and direct contact with Lucy occurred, Shakespeare would have had direct contact with the local laws and the constabulary enforcers of those laws. The incident in *Love Labour's Lost* also occurs in a thicket of the country, which finds its mirror image in the countryside of Stratford.

Although Dull was correct in his identification of the deer, he is diminished (dulled down), by Holofernes and Nathaniel. Nathaniel says, "...He hath not eat paper, as it were, he hath not drunk ink. His / intellect is not replenished, he is only an animal, only sensible / in the duller parts..." (4.2. 21-25). The pun on Dull's name is a parting shot, highlighting contrasting intellects. This parting shot could also mimic the poaching incident of Shakespeare's teenage years in that it is said that "Shakespeare baited Lucy with a slanderous ballad" (Wood 99). Could it be that the slanderous attack on Dull mimics the attack of Shakespeare on Justice of the Peace— Lucy?

While Dull eventually loses in the linguistic barrage that is constructed by Holofernes and Nathaniel, he wins in front of Shakespeare's audience who knew exactly what he was saying, malapropisms aside. In many ways, Dull wins the day. Dull with his lesser

Dogberry is a more complex and complete version of Dull. Dogberry resonates with

education does not distort reality, as do the two pedants; he says exactly what he means.

He literally sees what is before him, i.e., the deer. Dull is educated in the street and

countryside realities of his office. His law enforcement training has been "on the job." In

order to survive, he must, as all successfully constables do, possess common sense. It is a

common sense that neither Holoferness, Nathaniel, nor Armando have within their grasp.

The constable here is a minor hero. The office will grow in importance in *Much Ado*

About Nothing as Dogberry's role and heroism is evoked and saves the day. *is at the center*

Dogberry is a more complex and complete version of Dull. Dogberry resonates with

Darwin's *Origin of the Species* in that his character is conceived and evolved from the

literary genes of his predecessor, Dull. While Dogberry contains all that is Dull, he

becomes the center of the action. He is of primary importance if the plot of *Much Ado*

About Nothing is to succeed. Dogberry's malapropisms must be examined if we are to

give voice and form to his persona. His linguistic missteps must be viewed, not only in

the context of his comedic value, but also in the context of his portrayal of the stumbling

Elizabethan constable who succeeds. The linguistically impaired constable is at the center

of *Much Ado*. This is the first time that Shakespeare has brought a constable in a play to

become the center of the plot. (Altieri 10). If this is so, we must ask, "why," a constable

and not a fool? In many ways Dogberry does possess, in some alternate way, the all

knowingness of Shakespeare's other fools, but he is constructed from reality from which

the audience can identify; he is their neighbor.

In *King Lear*, the Fool says, "Dost thou know the difference, my boy, between a bitter fool and a sweet fool" (1.4.122-23)? if Dogberry is the civil law enforcement presence of

the play, in this connotation, he is the sweet fool. There is some suggestion, by his very mild demeanor, that the criminal types within the play will be on par with his manner. Altieri writes, “Being the kind of man he is, Dogberry tends to keep us from taking the villains very seriously: anyone who can be apprehended by such a constable is not a very threatening figure” (10). Another critic contends, “... And, it is an office that he takes seriously. But the watchmen’s stupidity serves a useful function: Dogberry has to be sharp enough to discover that there is a conspiracy against hero before it is executed, so that the audience may know in advance that all will come to a right end. But he must also be stupid enough to prevent his discovery from taking effect till the conspiracy has served its turn. (Palmer qtd. in Craik 304)”. This is important because the construction of the constable is drawn from the Elizabethan office and reproduced in Messina in Dogberry and the Watch. Sheldon P. Zitner offers an arboretum-like description. He writes, “Dogberry can refer to either the red European dogwood or to its berry...” (1). He continues, “... The names suggest the hearty ordinariness... respectively of the popular

comic actors Will Kemp and Richard Cowley” (1). Dogberry, by action and description, also mirrors a dog, i.e. he is represented as “man’s best friend.” Levith writes, “[He] is lovable but limited in intelligence” (86). Using Levith’s implication, Dogberry mimics a dog that is lovable but one of impure breeding - an inferior animal. Dogberry is one that should be kept far from the table of his master. It should also be noted that Dogberry possesses another parallel with his canine-like name and that is loyalty to his master –

This is evidenced in Dogberry’s conversation with Leonato after Borachio and Conrade have been taken into custody. Dogberry tries to explain the arrest to Leonato on the night before Hero’s wedding, but he is shooed away, much like an errant pesky dog. Leonato becomes impatient with Dogberry’s linguistic faux pas and dismisses him and Verges who are literally at his door step, with their tongues out and panting. They offer the facts that can vindicate Hero, but Leonato only hears their incessant barking. They are patted on the head as Leonato says, “Neighbours, you are tedious” (3.5. 14). Dogberry believes “tedious” is a compliment since it was directed at him from Leonato – one who is higher or of a more noble social class. Dogberry, like the obedient pet willing to please his master, leaves saying, “It shall be suffigance” (3.5.40).

He romps off to “take [the] examination” of Conrade and Borachio. (3.5. 3.5.38) as ordered by his master; he excitedly departs wagging his “tale,” Verges. The constable returns to the prison to “dog” a confession from the prisoners. There is another reference to dog used in this connotation. It is within *The Tragedy of King Richard the Second*.

King Richard speaking to the Duchess of York about the traitorous Duke of Exeter and the Earl of Hunting says, "But for our trusty brother-in-law and the Abbot, / With all the rest of that consorted crew / Destruction straight shall dog them at the heels" (5.4.135-37). *King Richard*, written in 1595 three years before *Much Ado* dated in 1598 (Bloom xiv), may have given rise to Dogberry's name. Perhaps, it denotes one who dogs, catches and then buries, which is exactly what the comical constable accomplishes in uncovering and defusing Don John's plot. Thus Dogberry is more complex than he seems from a cursory glance; his complexity begins with his name. (9)

Dogberry is full of self-righteous importance, but he does recognize, to a varying degree, that he is also wise. His remark is buried in his diatribe late in Act IV after being called an ass by Conrade. He says, "I am a local 'householder.'" He accordingly knows the laws, which is... I am a wise fellow, and which is... more, an officer, and which is more, a householder, and which is... as pretty a piece of flesh as any is in Messina, and one that... knows the law, go to, and a rich enough fellow, go to and a fellow that hath had loses... (4.2.65-69)

Dogberry is describing the typical Elizabethan constable in this self-description. He, being a realistic representative of the constabulary, is recognized and chosen from his community because he is a resident, a local "householder." He accordingly knows the laws, which is certainly required of the constable. Shakespeare never describes, in this play, the origins or the scope of Dogberry's losses. It can be historically suggested that he suffered from his experience as the Master Constable. Joan Kent points out "Not only did officers meet with immediate obstruction in trying to fulfill their police duties, but

sometimes men later sought retaliation against them for action that they have taken”

(260). She continues, “Such retaliation sometimes took the form of physical violence. “A Stafford officer,” Kent continues, “claimed to have been attacked in his own house”

(260). Could it be that Dogberry was attacked, his family injured or killed? His family is never mentioned, and he always appears with members of the watch. He is very clear, when defending his honor and mentioning these losses. Sheldon P. Ziner asks, “Is there perhaps an explanatory personal survival hinted at in Dogberry’s proud reference to his ‘losses’” (3)? While that question is not answered in the play, it is clear that Dogberry is a survivor. He might be considered tragic as well, within the context of this reality.

The losses, that Dogberry describes, certainly appear to be human and intimate hurts in any case. They are also plural— he has “lost” more than once. They are mentioned as Dogberry is verbally insulted and his honor wounded. Conrade’s verbal assault hits Dogberry as much as physical contact might. Throughout much of the play, it appears that Dogberry is emotionless and void of feeling. This burst of anger is the only point in which the inner Dogberry may be vulnerable and exposed. The emotional wound is quickly closed though, as Dogberry concentrates only on the profanity. Although he is comic, he might be considered tragic as well, within the context of this reality. Louise D. Frazee talks about reality. She suggests, “In Dogberry, Shakespeare, for the first time in drama, presents a truly realistic English constable, with appropriate setting, word and deed and with obvious and significant part in the action of the play” (388). This revelation certainly comes within Dogberry’s anger and he is as T.A. Critchley suggests, “Characteristically [...] representative of the parish” (12) or in this case, Messina.

Dogberry is most noted for his malapropisms. It must be noted that, despite Dogberry's misappropriation of the English language and his obvious illiteracy, he performs his office admirably, all things considered. Framed by illiteracy, this well-meaning incompetence is examined by Joan Kent in *The English Village Constable 1580-1642: A Social Administrative Study*; She points out, "... Illiteracy should not be weighed too heavily as a defect among the constables..." (139). It is shortly after Conrade and Borachio are arrested that Dogberry is charged with taking their "examination" by Leonato. Because Dogberry is grounded by the Shakespearian reality of the office, he asks the Sexton to take down the testimony because he cannot. This is exactly what would have happened in the field. Kent argues, "Most officers who found themselves in need of a scribe could probably turn to a literate neighbor, or to the village clergyman, for aid in reading and writing" (139). Dogberry - faithfully requested the Sexton to do the same. The Sexton, the local churchman, was now filling in as a town official and Dogberry's official witness. Dogberry brings Conrade and Borachio before the Sexton. Dogberry wants each word carefully recorded.

Sexton: But which are the offenders, that are to be examined? Let them
Come before master constable.

Dogberry: Yea, marry, let them come before me: what is your name,
friend?

Borachio: Borachio

Dogberry: Pray write down Borachio. Yours, sirah? (4.2.6-11)

While the conversation intensifies and culminates with Conrade's insult, it is important to note that Dogberry's primary concern is that the testimony of the criminals

is recorded officially and accurately. He seems more concerned about this aspect of the proceedings than any other. O. Hood Phillips in *Shakespeare and the Lawyers* claims, "Dogberry is high constable of the hundred and that the court over which he presides is the Court Leet" (67). If Phillip's assertion is accurate, it would be right to assume that Dogberry needs written proof of the accusation to produce in a formal court leet at a later date. Pheobe S. Spinrad comments, "Despite his poor memory for the nature of words, he is aware of the duties which the words signify" (164). And, as self-aggrandizing as Dogberry is, he is aware of the fact that he misrepresents language and thus the weight of the written word is important to him. It may be examined at a later date by others, perhaps by those to whom Dogberry answers. T.A. Critchley points out, "Four times during his year of office [the constable] would be required to ... attend quarter sessions or twice a year to the court leet, and there to produce several dozen, and sometimes upwards of a hundred, separate pieces of paper of all shapes and sizes on which he had written down, more or less literately, the affairs of the parish. (13)

This is why, on some level, he is so angry when he is accused of being an ass by Conrade; it is not officially recorded and to Dogberry it is integral to his hue and cry. He is insulted and the Sexton, the scribe, has just left. There is no one who can record the vulgarity adeptly, and Dogberry does not trust himself to remember the insult. He remarks, "...oh that I had been writ down as an ass" (4.2.70-1). He repeats the insult in the play, and the comedic value is hilariously exploited. It is not written down but it is remembered. Dogberry speaks malprops throughout his time on stage, but he is not so easily translated.

When Dogberry leaves Leonato with his charge to “examine” the prisoners, his final words are, “It shall be suffigance” (4.1.49). Most footnotes replace Dogberry’s “suffigance” with “sufficient” (Greenblatt 1422). Could it be that the translation should become “sufferance instead?” Sufferance mimics the spelling of suffigance more closely than does sufficient. It also suggests one who is patient and enduring. Dogberry, if read as a foil for Leonato, is patient, whereas, Leonato is represented as the personification of impatience throughout the play. If Leonato had given Dogberry one more moment of his time, Hero’s reputation would have been saved and Don John’s plot foiled. Although still comic, this reading places Dogberry in a more competent light. He is patient because it is the politically correct position to take. After all, he is appointed and serves more or less at the beck and call of the town’s politicians of which Leonato is the ranking member. Dogberry was as T.A. Critchley writes, “under legal obligation of great antiquity to bring before the jury of the court leet which appointed him” (12). And his first contact is with Leonato. It makes perfect sense that he would acquiesce to any demands – even they were routed on Leonato’s impatience and held in check by the constable’s “sufferance.” In a conversation between Don Jon and Conrade as the plot against Claudio and Hero is hatched, Conrade says, “If not a present remedy, at least a patient sufferance” (1.3.7-8). On some level with this reading, “sufferance” links Conrade and Don John directly with Dogberry’s malapropism as he departs from Leonato. Patience, or the lack of, allows Dogberry to succeed where the others fail. This is analogous to a contemporary police investigation that is built over time, using a great deal of patience, or as Dogberry would say – “suffigance.”

Shakespeare also appears to represent the dark nature of humanity, personified in the lies and evil motivations of Don John, as against the light side, represented in Dogberry and Verges. This duel between good and evil comes not in physical confrontation but within language. While Dogberry misconstrues almost every conversation in which he is involved, he has honorable intentions. Don John and Borachio are very articulate but honor is not part of their academic vocabulary. The audience is lifted by the comedic constable and his charge to the Watch. Then they are plunged into the dark plot of the play. The audience knows that the only person, who can save Hero, is Dogberry. This pitting of light against dark appears in juxtaposing adjacent scenes.

Dogberry leaves his Watch with his final charge, "One word more, honest neighbors, I pray you watch about / Signor Leonato's door, for the wedding being there tomorrow, there is great coil tonight. adieu, be vigilant I beseech you" (3.3. 75-7). This is comical because of Dogberry's malapropism "vigilant" for vigilant. What is noteworthy is that apparently the Watch understood his charge. There was no after comment nor did they require clarifications of his instructions. Seacoal says, "Well, masters, we hear our charge..." (3.3. 73). Hugh C. Evans writes, "[Dogberry's] belief in himself is seldom shaken, for much of his conversation is with persons from his own little world who seem to find him comprehensible, and who indeed speak the same language" (432).

Dogberry ends his charge with the word beseech. It is used in the proper context and "begs" the Watch to perform their duties carefully on this of all nights. In fact they do; it is within the next scene that they make the arrest that turns the plot and allows for a successful and happy resolution of the comedy.

It is also in this scene that the good (Dogberry), representing civil law enforcement, is juxtaposed to that of the evil plotting (Criminality) of Borachio and Don John. This finds its evidence in the conversation that the Watch overhears between Conrade and Borachio:

The arrest of Borachio: "... But know tonight that I have wooed
 Margaret, the Lady Hero's gentlewoman... / Andly comedie... in every sense of
 his complex... Claudio and my master planted, and placed, and possessed,
 some level, by my master Don John, saw afar off in the orchard this amiable
 in this play. encounter.

While Dog Conrade: And thought Margaret was Hero? / policing and law enforcement,

in also represents Borachio: Two of them did... but the devil my/ al values. He says to

Borachio, " Master knew she was Margaret... (3.3 118-28) / any redemption (4.2. 67-

The arrest of Conrade and Borachio is the direct result of Dogberry's instruction to "comprehend all vagrom men" (3.3.21). Dogberry is certainly comedic in every sense of his complex construction, but he also represents the police of his day. Shakespeare, on some level, is allowing good to triumph over evil and he uses the constable as the hinge in this play.

While Dogberry is a symbolic personification of civil policing and law enforcement, he also represents a Shakespearian infusion of Christian moral values. He says to Borachio, "Oh Villian! / Thou wilt be condemned into everlasting / redemption" (4.2. 47-8). Outwardly, of course, this must be read as a malapropism of damnation for redemption. But, as John Allen suggests, "Shakespeare... frequently put words of wisdom, intentional and otherwise, into the mouths of children and fools. Dogberry blunders into the truth just as he blunders into apprehending malefactors..." (37). Could "redemption"

be that grace offered to lost souls through the Catholic Church of which Borachio certainly qualifies as a sinner. Could the reference recall John Shakespeare's faith and the six-page Catholic Testament of faith that he signed during William's teenage years (Wood 75)? If this connection can be made, then Shakespeare is recalling and reconstructing his father's persona in the constable through a faith that calls sinners away from damnation and towards redemption. He is recalling a time when the family would have avoided all law enforcers in the Stratford area, except for perhaps, a friendly constable.

Dogberry of *Much Ado* must be remembered, apart from his comedy, as one who undertakes his job with the public interest in mind. He, like many actual constables, had conceptions of themselves as law enforcement officials (constables – Justices of the Peace) that were not entirely consistent with reality. But this aside, it is of note to recall Dogberry's devotion to duty that was outside of a system that "was riddled with corruption" (Spinrad 162). Dogberry is recognized for his dedication as Leonato says, "I thank thee for thy care and honest pains" (5.1. 282). He is recognized by his immediate superior—the Governor of Messina, Leonato. He is also relieved of his prisoner. Leonato, as acting Court Leet, and as governor, has the full authority to accept the prisoners.

He relieves Dogberry of his charges; he says, "Go, I discharge thee of thy prisoner, and I thank thee" (5.1.284). This is in full accordance with the duties of the constables, as extended by Acts of Parliament, which stated: "...you [the constable - Dogberry] shall find, you shall present them [criminals – Borachio and Don John] unto the mayor [Leonato] and to the officers of said City [Messina]... So God help you and the Saints" (*Liber Albus* qtd. in Critchley 11). The structure of The Watch's initial arrest of Conrade

and Borachio, their subsequent presentment before the High Constable, and his recording of the event before the Sexton is consistent with the rubrics of the Elizabethan constable and his duties as prescribed by Parliament. The judicial and police hierarchy is clearly understood and reconstructed by Shakespeare. This is evidenced in a conversation between Dogberry and Leonato; he attempts to explain the capture of Borachio and Conrade. He says, "Verges, well, God's a good man, and two men ride / of a horse, one must ride behind" (3.5.28-9). Clearly, Dogberry understands the rank structure and his place as High Constable and the subordinate rank of Verges. Based in a more realistic situation, Elbow, the constable of *Measure for Measure* is clearly a hybrid of both Dogberry and Dull. He is also the only constable who is completely of the city.

Elbow regularly appears in court which is the appropriate setting for an officer or constable of Vienna. While Elbow is a less complex version of Dogberry, Louise D. Frazure argues "[he] depends but little on the old gags and malapropisms of 'mistaking the word' but rather arises from the satiric realism of his part" (389). She continues that he "is a worthy successor of Dogberry" (389). Not only is Elbow more evolved than Dogberry in a composite legal sense, he also appears in a city which is a far cry from Dull's rural county-bumpkin atmosphere. Thus, the constables, by the time *Measure for Measure* is written in 1604 (Bloom xv), have fully evolved and are functioning successfully in more multifarious environments.

While Elbow functions as a less intense character than Dogberry, they mirror each other somewhat. This is first noticed as Elbow appears in court. Both Dogberry and he are connected directly through their malapropisms. They each appear as subordinates before their superiors. Elbow appears in court with Froth and Pompey in front of Angelo

and Escalus, and Dogberry in front of Leonato. Elbow's language is seemingly identical to that of Dogberry. The conversation begins as Elbow attempts, however poorly, to explain his case before the Duke's court. Angeto: How now sir? What is your name? And what is the matter? / Elbow: If it please your honor, I am the poor Duke's constable" (2.1.44-5).. This finds resonance in *Much Ado*: Dogberry - "It pleases your worship to say so, but we are the poor duke's officers" (3.5.18-9). What is important to notice is the word "poor." This finds a reality base in that the constables were poorly paid and often housed prisoners at their own expense and personal risk. T.A. Critchley points out, "In common with other parish officers, he was unpaid, although he was allowed certain customary fees and expenses" (9). This is very clear as Dogberry is given money by Leonato "...for [his] pains" (5.2.307). Elbow is clearly a paid substitute; he is being paid by those who are avoiding service. Responding to questions about his time in the office, He says, to Escalus, "As they are / chosen, they are glad to choose me for them" (2.1.238-9). Clearly, Elbow is deriving a financial gain, although not much, as he describes himself as a "poor" constable.

William Dunkle, in "Law and Equity in *Measure for Measure*," believes that the characters are understood collectively by Shakespeare's audience. They would have recognized themselves and their community in the words, functionality, and actions of the characters. Dunkle expands,

... the minor characters... are universal... not merely background figures recognizable by Shakespeare's audience as persons who appeared before the justices of the peace in the Quarter Sessions or the courts of Common Law... The audience could recognize Elbow as the stupid constable,

... serving without pay in many villages of any shire... Shakespeare has included them all quite properly in depicting the administration of justice. (279). (Manning qtd. in Spinrad 169). The enforcement of civil order in

The recognition of Elbow, framed within in the Elizabethan model of the constable, is clear as he goes into the tavern to arrest those who have insulted his wife. Elbow arrests Pompey and Froth inside the brothel over which a constable would have charge. After his wife was insulted and at risk to himself, Elbow apprehends both of them single-handedly in the “bawd house.” Phoebe S. Spinrad asserts, “The alehouse in which [Pompey and Froth] are taken is actually a brothel, in which Elizabethans knew ruffians and desperate men congregated” (169). Another writer suggests, “One in ten houses [were] functioning as illegal alehouses” (Manning qtd. in Spinrad 169). The enforcement of civil order in these houses fell to the local constable. There are many cases on record whereby constables were assaulted while trying to search a house or make an arrest under the same circumstances in which Elbow acted (Spinrad 165). Elbow, although defending his wife’s honor, does rightly carry out the duties of his office without regard for his personal safety. Joan R. Kent comments, “Constables were made administrative agents of higher officials in their oversight of servants... [and] of alehouse keepers” (28). Elbow was within his civil policing authority to enter the house and subsequently take the action he did, arresting the two criminals.

However, after the arrest, Elbow is not as lucky in his appearance before the court. The officials, Angelo and Escalus, are distracted by his language. Escalus speaking to Angelo remarks, “Do you hear how he misplaces” (2.1. 81)? Apparently Angelo’s sole focus is on Elbow’s misuse of language; he grows impatient with him. He becomes so

annoyed at the course of Elbow's testimony that he leaves the hearing to Escalus. He says, "I'll take my leave, / And leave you to the hearing of the cause, / hoping you'll find cause to whip them all" (2.1.123-25). In a sarcastic way, he includes Elbow in the "all." During the examination of Elbow, it is made clear that his pregnant wife was somehow insulted. However, his malapropisms prevent justice from being fully meted out. His abuse of the language causes Escalus to seek out more qualified individuals as Elbow's replacement.

Escalus says to this end, "Look you bring me in the names of some six or seven, / the most sufficient in your parish." Elbow: "To your worship's house, sir" Escalus: "To my house." (2.1. 241-44). Apparently Elbow is on the verge of being replaced. In Elbow's defense it must be noted that, despite his linguistic faux pas, he like Dogberry and Dull is apparently doing his job well; the jails in Vienna are full.

What must be pointed out is, while Pompey and Froth were let off with warnings, the seemingly inept system is working. Elbow rescues his wife from the alehouse and Dogberry foils the plot in *Much Ado*. Spinrad suggests, "...in each case the official system has been ineffectual while the individual community system has worked" (170). The community system is working because of Elbow - not in spite of him, as Angelo might suggest. This is noted in a conversation that the Duke has with the Friar: "We have strict statutes and most biting laws... which for this fourteen years we have let slip" (1.3.19-21). The only person in Vienna, who is making small inroads controlling vagrancy and other local law enforcement issues, is the misspeaking constable. As Escalus has let off Pompey with a warning, Elbow does not let go and continues to watch him closely. In Act 3, this close surveillance results in an arrest that "sticks."

Elbow is before the disguised Duke. The Duke inquires, "... What offence hath this man / made you sir" (3.1.269-70). Elbow replies: "... he hath offended the law: sir we take him to be a thief..." (3.1.272). Lucio enters and the conversation continues. It concludes with the arrest being validated and Pompey led off to jail to join the many others that Elbow has incarcerated. Elbow grabs Pompey and says, "Come your ways, sir, come." Lucio reaffirms Elbow; he says, "Go to kennel, Pompey, go" (3.1.333-34). Elbow, the seemingly inefficient constable, apparently is very effective. He reflects, on some level, the Elizabethan constable –who in most cases got the job done despite the obstacles that they faced. While this account in Vienna is a success story, there are others that do not end as well. In fact, some end comically. It is the hybridization of juxtaposed stories that gives rise to Shakespeare's constables. His constables are grounded and surrounded by contemporary, now historical, accounts, whereby, the constable did not perform the office as admirable as does Elbow. It is from these stories that infuse Dull, Dogberry, and Elbow with realistic comedic personalities. Thomas Harman, a writer of the time, records one such story about a thief and his escape from custody. Harman was exploring the vagrancy issues that plagued the small communities and captured the realism of the inept constable system. His account lives on.

Harman describes a thief who was arrested by a constable that mimics Elbow and Dogberry in many ways. The constable brings the thief into his own house to hold him. Many constables did this according to T.A Critchley. He points out, "the watchmen ... put [the criminals] in the stocks... or even ke[pt] them in his own cottage until he was able to deliver [them] to a justice" (11). The constable, in Harman's account, strips the thief naked so he can search for further evidence of the theft. The constable, thinking the

man's nakedness will contain him to the house, goes outside to search for additional accomplices. However, the thief apparently did not read the script and has other plans. He asks the constable's wife, who is now alone in the house with him and her children, if he can go outside to the bathroom. Fearing for her children and herself, she hastily provides him with a cloak to cover himself and lets him go outside. The thief casts off the cloak and escapes. Harmon paints the scene: "This crafty cronke, espyin all gon, requested the good wife that hee might goe out on the backside to make water... she bad hym drawe the locke of the dore and goe out... as naked ever he was born, he ran away, that he could neuer be hard of againe" (qtd. in Evans 432-33). Accounts, such as these, would certainly lend credence to the general persona of the Elizabethan constable being somewhat of a joke and incompetent.

In the constables that have been examined in this work, it is apparent that Shakespeare constructed a hybrid from all accounts of the contemporary office holders. There were the corrupt, the inefficient, the illiterate, and the comical. There were also the crafty, the skilled, the commonsensical, and the honorable. In some ways, these adjectives appropriately describe Dull, Dogberry and Elbow. At various times in the play, they all exhibit these characteristics in one way or another - some more than others and some more overtly than others. And, as stated earlier, there is an evolvment in complexity between the early constable, Dull, and the later, Elbow, with Dogberry appearing in-between. Hugh C. Evans writes,

The Elizabethan method of selecting constables, as well as a lack of prestige associated with the position, produced inexperienced, untrained officers who, regardless of their sincerity, were often unable to fulfill their

responsibilities. The escapades of these historical figures quite naturally brought about the development of a national comic type. In literature, this type reached classic proportions in Dogberry, and to a lesser degree, in Elbow, and Dull. (433).

While Shakespeare uses and abuses the constable, they are his silent heroes as well. None claim the prize or the leading lady, but they all are of heroic measure nonetheless. They find their applause from an audience who know them intimately. Dull, Dogberry, and Elbow are their neighbors, their friends, and hope of safety in an unsafe environment. Phoebe Spinrad reaffirms this position. She writes, "... [the constables] are presented early enough in their plays to reassure us that no matter how bad things get, someone who can do something will be watching... They can barely be understood by officialdom; but then, officialdom does not understand a number of things about local conditions, things that Dogberry and Elbow understand very well. (178)

It is those things in which the audience will identify and come to love in these comic malapropism masters. S.C. Boorman writes, "...Dogberry's stupidly and complacent acceptance of his own little social importance, expressed in precisely correct prose tone, has the truth to make us laugh because we too, are his brothers" (87). It is this realistic connection that makes these characters successful in their own right. Louise D. Frazure notices a progression in the development of the constables.

It is a progression of sorts beginning with the appearance of Dull in *Loves Labour's Lost* and exiting with Elbow's departure in *Measure for Measure*. Louise D. Frazure illustrates this point of view as she divides the constables by periods in the playwright's

life. "Dull" she asserts, "represents Shakespeare's earlier experimental period; Dogberry, the comedy of manners of his second period; Elbow the mordant social criticism of his third; and his fourth period, the spirit of romance banished the stupid constable" (390). As the constables evolve and disappear from the plays so does the office of the constable from England.

The office does not collapse in Shakespeare's lifetime, but it disappears in stages as do Shakespeare's constables from his stage. The collapse of the system comes in stages, beginning with the corruption of the constables, the justices, and finally a breakdown in law and order. Much of this was due to expanding population and crime rate that the local constables could not or would not control any longer. London was affected first and then the country parishes. (Critchley 18-21). Critchley argues, "The era of the parish constable and justice, as an effective police system, did not survive the Restoration, and from about 1689 onwards, its decline was rapid" (18). While the office of the constable has disappeared and the constables themselves in the later plays, Dull, Dogberry, and Elbow are immortal. They live on in the likes of Michael Keaton who romped around as a bizarre Dogberry in Kenneth Branagh's 1993 version of *Much Ado About Nothing* and in the many other actors who have brought life to the parts since Will Kemp. While the actors fare from different periods in history, they all bring a version of Shakespeare's constable to the stage where they were always meant to be. And, as Dogberry insists, "when the time and place shall serve" we must all remember that "[he is] an ass" (5.1.239-40), an ass that is remembered 400 years after his feet touched the stage. The constables of history are gone; Shakespeare's history is still out, but the one thing that is "desartless" are the constables: Dull, Dogberry, and Elbow.

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