Representation of social actors in 17th-century English murder pamphlets: A corpus-assisted discourse study (1600-1674)

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1. Introduction

Early modern propaganda found in cheap print one of its most effective forms of manifestation, given people's growing appetite for news. In particular, the commercial success of crime-related news in 17th-century pamphlets led religious and governmental authorities to appropriate the genre in order to educate the masses about the redemptive power of Protestantism and the efficiency of the judicial system. As Walsham pointed out, "the writing of 'newes' was unashamedly subservient to the ends of religious indoctrination and political propaganda" in early modern England (1999, 40). For the moralistic message to be impactful, the pamphleteer had to satisfy people's taste for wonder and the macabre. To this purpose, religious glossaries and Puritan comments were generally combined with graphic details of bloodshed and thrilling references to the devil "so as to instruct and admonish even the most theologically unsophisticated minds" (Gaskill 1998, 5). In his study entitled "Popular Form, Puritan Content?", Lake (1994a, 316) detects a titillation/edification dial in early modern murder pamphlets. Along this cline, the sermonizing editorials characterizing the opening and closing sections of many pamphlets coexisted with popular narratives where examples of extreme violence, sexual lasciviousness, spectacular and extraordinary discoveries of the murder were presented to the reader not only for their moral edification but also "to shock, titillate and engender that frisson of horror laced with disapproval which allowed for both pleasure and excitement" and

which nourished the buyer's sense of his/her moral superiority (Lake 1994b, 262). At the same time, the reporting of the examination, confession and execution of the criminal reinforced the belief in a rather informal and haphazard system of law enforcement which nonetheless acted promptly to guarantee that even the most sinful murderers would not escape temporal justice (Gaskill 1998, 6).

By representing a world turned upside-down through forms of deviation and disruption, murder pamphlets ultimately aimed at re-establishing the normative social order where religion and law operated as guarantor of Christian values and social well-being. The encoding of murder as a form of moral and social inversion sparked interest in the variety of behavioural patterns and abuses which, in the wrong circumstances, could lead to sin and disaster. In this regard, pamphleteers devoted particular attention to the representation of the social actors in terms of gender, social role, habits and Christian conduct. Indeed, it is through the representation of social actors that pamphleteers constructed people's perceptions of criminality and reinforced their confidence in the power of divine justice and judicial administration.

In my paper I shall analyse a corpus of 17th-century murder pamphlets as vehicles for the promotion of Christian reformation of manners and social order. By drawing upon Taylor's definition of propaganda as "the deliberate attempt to persuade people to think or behave in the desired way" (2003, 12), my study will focus on nomination strategies and their role in informing and biasing people's perceptions of murderers, victims and investigating/judicial authorities. In this regard, special attention will be given to the referential and predicational strategies adopted by the author in the representation of social actors and to the way in which patterns of occurrence contribute to spreading the propaganda message of religious and political authorities. To this purpose, a specialised corpus of murder pamphlets dated from 1600 to 1674 is created and queried with the aid of the concordancing software WordSmith Tools 8 (Scott 2020). Results show that nomination strategies constitute one of the most pervasive means for encoding both a Protestant and pro-government ideology in a popular news genre which was meant to be neither religious nor political *per se*.

2. Corpus and Methodology

In my study of social actors in 17th-century murder pamphlets, I have made use of the *Early English Books Online* archive from which I selected 45 murder pamphlets published in the period from 1600 to 1674. I considered 1674 as a turning point in the history of crime literature since in that year the *Old Bailey Proceedings* made their appearance on the print market. Although murder pamphlets coexisted with this new specialised crime publication for a long time, their primary role as murder news genre began to diminish at the end of the century, also in relation to the increasing circulation of weeklies. The specialised corpus created for the present study amounts to 146,000 words. The texts were selected by searching for the word murther/murder in the entire document and were investigated in terms of word-list and concordances through the software WordSmith Tools 8 (Scott 2020).

In my analysis, I apply the broad principles of corpus-assisted-discourse studies (CADS) as theorised, amongst others, by Stubbs (1996; 2001) and Partington (2004; 2009). The methodology combines the usual qualitative approach to the analysis of text with the quantitative analysis provided by Corpus Linguistics in the attempt to discover previously unnoticed regular patterns and link them to specific societal discourse practices (Lombardo 2009). Given the historical dimension of my corpus, attention is given not only to the surrounding text in which the word or clusters[1] are found but also to the wider socio-cultural context, including the power of the printed word for propaganda purposes, perceptions of criminality and social habits in the 17th century.

In order to investigate the way in which murderers, victims and investigating/judicial authorities are represented in 17th-century murder pamphlets, I adopt Reisigl and Wodak's categorisation of five major strategies for the representation of social actors (2001). Although their categorisation is applied to an analysis of racism in Austrian discourse from 1945 up to the 1990s, it can also prove useful for an inquiry into

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[1] Clusters indicate two or more words found repeatedly near each other in some environments than others (Hunston 2011).

social stigmatisation in historical murder news. Reisigl and Wodak's point of departure is a set of research questions concerning the linguistic encoding of actors in discourse:

- How are persons named and referred to linguistically?
- What traits, characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to them?
- By means of what arguments or argumentation schemes do specific persons or social groups try to justify or legitimate the exclusion, discrimination or suppression of others?
- From what perspective or point of view are these namings, attributions and arguments expressed?
- Are these forms of representation articulated overtly, are they intensified or are they mitigated?

<div align="right">(Reisigl and Wodak 2001, xiii)</div>

On the basis of the above questions, they identify five language strategies: nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivation and intensifying/mitigation strategies. For the purpose of the present study, I shall focus on the first two categories: nomination and predication, although during the analysis considerations on aspects of perspectivation and intensification will also emerge. Nomination refers to those language strategies by which one constructs and represents social actors. This can be done through a set of membership categorisation devices, including naturalising and de-personalising metaphors, metonymies as well as synecdoches. Once constructed or identified, social actors are provided with predications. Predicational strategies may for example be realised as stereotypical evaluative attributions of negative and positive traits in the linguistic form of explicit or implicit predicates (e.g. wicked, obstinate, impudent, innocent, virtuous, by law, immediately). By means of these strategies social actors are labelled positively or negatively, deprecatorily or appreciatively (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 45). Predication cannot be neatly separated from nomination, which usually subsumes it, that is why the two categories are often considered together.

By re-adapting van Leeuwen's analytical categories, Reisigl and Wodak identify 13 major nomination strategies with the corresponding linguistic actualisations and examples. These are collectivisation, spatialisation, de-spatialisation, explicit dissimilation, originalisation, actionalisation/professionalisation, somatisation, culturalisation, economisation, politicisation, militarisation, social problematisation, relationalisation. In my corpus of 17th-century English murder pamphlets, the most frequent nomination strategies are somatisation, culturalisation, economisation, social problematisation and relationalisation and these will constitute the object of my study. Somatisation includes several sub-categories amongst which the most recurrent ones in my data are engendering (e.g. "man", "woman", "girl", "boy"), enaging (e.g. "the aged", "youngsters", "child", "boy", "girl"), specific body fragmentation (e.g. "upper part", "middle part", "lower part"), reference in terms of temporary artificial alteration of bodily, sensual and mental capacities (e.g. "drunk") and reference in terms of 'bad', negatively sanctioned abusive actions or habits (e.g. "wicked/pittiless/wild wretch(es)", "a devil", "brute"). Culturalisation, on the other hand, is mostly encoded in the forms of religionisation (e.g. "Anabaptist", "Papist", "Quaker", "Separatist"), primitivisation, which includes expressions indicating lack of civilization and primitivity (e.g. "savage", "villain"), and a category that is not part of Reisigl and Wodak's classification and that I shall refer to as "animalisation", actualised in the form of de-humanising metaphors (e.g. "wolves", "viper"). Economisation features the sub-categories of professionalisations (e.g. "shopkeeper", "maid", "carpenter", "constable", "officer") and de-possessivisation which includes those anthroponyms referring to persons in terms of possession (e.g. "rich", "poor"). Social problematisation includes negation (e.g. "miscreant", "unchristian"), criminalisation (e.g. "criminal", "murderer", "malefactor", "merciless/abject/ bloudy/shamelesse villaine") and victimisation (e.g. "victim", "prey"). Finally, relationalisation encodes social actors in terms of their personal, kinship or work relations to each other. In my corpus relational identification is usually actualised in the form of family relations (e.g. "husband", "wife", "children", "mother", "father") and master-servant relation. In

the following sections the quantitative distribution of these categories is reported and their occurrences are analysed in context.

3. Nomination strategies for referring to the murderer

From the frequency list elaborated by WordSmith Tools, I have identified, classified and counted the nomination strategies used for encoding murderers in discourse. Table 1 shows the distribution of the five most frequent nomination strategies in the corpus.

NOMINATION STRATEGIES FOR MURDERERS

Table 1. Quantitative distribution of the five most frequent nomination strategies for murderers in the corpus of 17th-century murder pamphlets (1600-1674).

As we can see somatisation, mostly in the form of genderonyms (e.g. "man", "woman", "boy", "girl") is the first label used to encode the murderer, followed by social problematisation, which is perfectly in line with the stigmatisation of the criminal actualised through the pervasive usage of criminonyms (e.g. "villaine(s)", "miscreant", "criminal", "murderer", "assaylants", "offender(s)"). Interestingly, culturalisation comes third, outnumbering references to the occupation and social relationships of the murderer. This seems to be due to the author's primary interest in condemning the do-er in relation to the cultural values of the time, which promote the image of the good Protestant who acknowledges the natural Chain of Being as guarantor of social order and stability, follows the Scriptures and embodies the principles of honesty, modesty and Christian love against the temptations of the devil.

A further quantitative investigation into the distribution of nomination strategies for male and female murderers reveals that the naming policy used by the 17th-century pamphleteers is gender sensitive and varies according to the gender of the do-er, as we can see in Table 2 and Table 3 below:
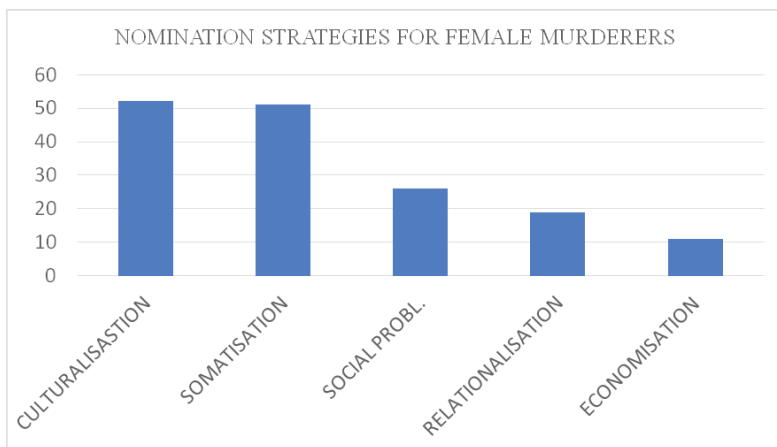

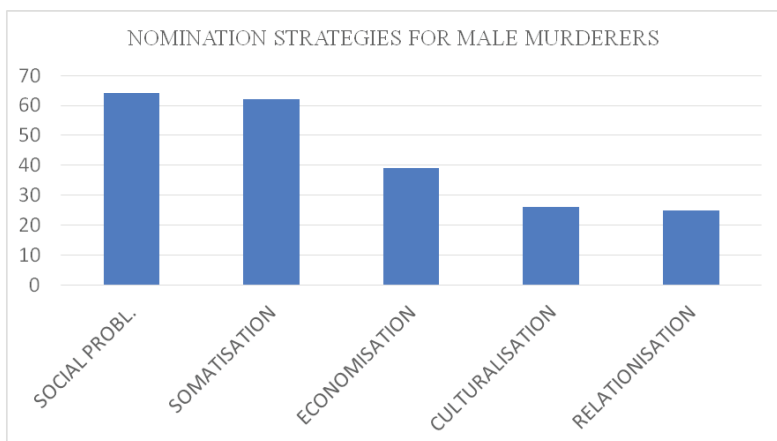Table 2. Frequency of nomination strategies for female murderers in the 17th-century murder corpus (1600-1674).

Table 3. Frequency of nomination strategies for male murderers in the 17th-century murder corpus (1600-1674)

Female murderers are mostly referred to by means of culturalisation strategies in the form of animalisation, thus revealing an authorial tendency to reserve for women the strongest forms of social and moral blame. In this sense, my findings confirm the historians' view according to which instances of women's subversion of the normative order were considered as much more heinous and pernicious to social stability and Christian morality than any equivalent action committed by a man (Lake 1994b, 264; Clarke 2002, 12; Martin 2008, 18). In particular, Clarke noticed how the ideology of the good woman as wife and as mother affected social practices, including legislation and contributed to reinforcing a normative Christian conduct for women from which any deviation was labelled as unnatural and devilish. As she points out:

> The good woman as defined in sermons and conduct books from the Middle Ages on was chaste, modest, obedient: she was patient and long-suffering […] The ideal woman was the good mother and in the Bible St Paul says that although woman transgressed first in Eden, she will be saved in 'child-bearing'. This whole conception was predicated on a view of woman as weak and inferior, requiring both support and control. (Clarke 2002, 12).

Within this strong ideological frame any transgression or attempt to assume power on the part of females was interpreted as an attack on the patriarchal order on which the stability and safety of the early modern Protestant civilization was founded. Table 3, on the other hand, shows that male murderers are mostly labelled in relation to social problematisation. Obviously enough, the evil action committed was socially and morally blamed. Even so, the use of crimonyms, negation and reference terms denoting the wretch's disorderly behaviour (e.g. gambling, drinking, brothel haunting, cursing) suggest a more objective, though still deprecatory, attitudinal stance on the part of the author. As Martin (2008, 18) notices, homicide by men typically occurred during drunken brawls and could be socially or legally mitigated as "momentary excesses of otherwise admirable virile aggression". There are very few categories of male murderer for whom naming policy becomes exceptionally aggressive and harsh. These are religious dissenters, men disregarding their religious duties (i.e. reading the Bible, praying, going to

Church) or natives of colonized lands. In all three cases the unchristian conduct is the main reason for the authorial appeal to primitivisation and animalisation in the representation of male agency.

Another quantitative difference which emerges from the comparison between Table 2 and Table 3 is the higher frequency of relationalisation for encoding women (mainly "mother" and "wife") and the corresponding higher frequency of economisation for men (e.g. "miller", "taylor", "carpenter", "farmer"). This is consistent with a social model whereby women were bound to child-bearing/caring and the household and were deprived of a profession/occupation of their own. Men, on the other hand, were labelled in relation to their social status which was primarily determined by their profession/occupation and their possessions.

In the examples below, we can see how women were encoded in discourse by means of animalisation, primitivisation and religionisation as sub-categories of culturalisation. In example (1) animalisation is combined with somatisation in the form of body fragmentation:

(1)   Still progress **this most graceless audatious and impudent beast** (too bad to beare the good name of a woman) in this sinne, with all impudence. **This Chimera with a Lions upper-part** in bouldenesse: a **Goates middle part** in lust and a **Serpents lower part** in sting and poyson.
                                    (*The Bloudy Mother* 1609, my emphasis)

(2)   Whereupon **this bloody Tygris** to make her selfe more monstruous put out her tongue that she might feel it
                        (*The most Cruell and Bloudy Murther* 1606, my emphasis)

(3)   To be short she proved her selfe to be **an obstinate Papist**, for there was found about her necke a Crucifixe, with other reliques which she then wore about.
                                    (*A Pittilesse Mother* 1616, my emphasis)

(4)   A whole moneth […] **this Savage** continued with this hellish fire kindled in her breast.
                                (*Natures Cruell Step Dames* 1636, my emphasis)

The following examples, on the other hand, show the representation of male murderers through social problematisation as the most frequent nomination strategy (examples 5, 6, 7, 8). In the case of minority outgroups, i.e. religious dissenters and a native of the East Indies, the social problematisation related to the crime is combined with culturalisation (examples 10, 11):

(5)   **The murderer** still remains in Newgate and will doubtlesse (next Sessions) receive the just sentence of Death for this cruell, bloody and barbarous fact.
                                    (*Bloody Newes from Clarken-Well* 1661)

(6)   Then were **these Mallefactors** commited to the common iayle of the white Lyon in *Sowthwark*, where till sessions are to abide, then to have the recompence of their demerrits.
                                    (*A Horrible, Cruell and Bloudy Murther* 1614)

(7)   Now to leave the dead man with the Lord: it is not amisse to declare by what meanes **the offender** escaped.
                                    (*The Manner of the Cruell and Outragious Murther* 1602)

(8)   Yet nothing could move **the mercilesse Villaine** to remorse, he never left stabbing and striking till he had wounded her to death.
                                    (*Bloody Actions performed* 1653)

(9)   But because the voice of these Creatures seemed not loud enough to deter *these* **assaylants** from prosecuting their bloody attempt, soon after the Heavens spake terribly in Thunder, which possibly did so astonish these wretches, that they escaped no further from the place where they did this Horrid exploit.
                                    (*A Perfect Narrative* 1669)

(10) Wherein is shewed how **the wicked Villain** came to the said Ship and hid himself till it was very dark, and then he murdered all the men that were a Board […] **This inhumane dog** staid lurking under the half deck, having 2 dangerous waving Daggers.
(*A most execrable and barbarous murder done by an* **East-Indian Devil** 1641)

(11)   **This Miscreant** of whom we thus write was one Farmer Restal of Stoke near Tueksbury, a great follower of the sect called **Quakers** […] she is overtaken by those bloody villaines murdered also. **O monsters of Nature, more savage then Lions, Bears or Tygers, O viperous brood** fleshed in wickedness

(**The Bloody Quaker** 1668)

Both in the representation of female and male murderers the second most frequent nomination strategy is somatisation. Within this category it is worth noticing the role performed by negative habitonyms in constructing the profile of the blameworthy do-er through predication. The representation of the murderer through a mixture of negative habitonyms and criminonyms contributes to revealing the cause-effect relationship that contemporaries commonly drew between an ungodly lifestyle and murder as the most horrid of sins. Whereas women's social and moral misconduct was mostly associated with sexual lasciviousness (examples 12, 13, 14), which godly authors conceptualized as an instrument of the Devil, men's disorderly behaviour as proxy for murder was related to drinking, cursing, gambling and whoring (examples 15, 16, 17). In particular, example (15) features a concession to primitivisation "inhumanly butchered" as a result of the man's blatant disregard of his Christian duties. The authorial attitude once again is indicative of the primary role ascribed to Christian religion in marking the boundary between civil and uncivil:

(12)   Then **the brazen-face Strumpet** presently claimes acquaintance, that she knew him long time, whose face she never saw before; and so further into familiar discourse and complements they proceed, that further courtesies are desired and promised in some secret place.

(*Heavens Speedie Hue and Cry*, 1616)

(13)   We have before our eyes a most notable example in *this wretched woman* […] named Margaret Ferne-seede, a woman that even from her time of knowledge […] was **given to all the looseness and lewdnesse of life,** which either unlawfull lust or abhominable prostitution could violently cast upon her with the greatest infamie […] she regarded not

[…] into what bed of lust *her* **lascivious bodie** was transported, in *this more then bestiall lasciviousness*

      (*The Arraignemnt and Burining of Margaret Ferne-seede*, 1608)

(14)   Thomas Savage, A Vintners man, at the sign of the Ship at Rate-cliff-Cross, in the Parish of Stepacy, near London, who by the instigation of **a whore, blinded with lust,** was wrought upon to Murther his fellow-servant, who endeavoured to hinder hin in the robbing of his Master.

      (*Gods Justice against Murther* 1668)

(15)   He began with a sigh or two to confess **how careless he had been in serving God, both in the publick and in the Church**. He *spent very many Sabbaths in idleness, in sporting and playing and several in the Ale-house*; particularly in the House of Thomas Corfield… where he committed the following Murthers […] When he had thus **inhumanly butchered** these two innocent souls, he […] continued **drinking** there the greatest part of the day.

(*A True and Full Relation of the horrid Murther of Alice Stephen* 1673)

(16)   He made such free confession at the Barre, declaring the manner of his life, **his odious Drinking, his abominable Whoring, his cruell Murther and the false dealing of his deceitful friend,** which was the cause of his final wracke.

      (*The Unnatural Father* 1621)

(17)   This Gentleman […] **exalted himself above measure, affected preheminance in all Companies used, in his braveries, long hair etc. to ride about the Isle and frequent Taphouses and there to Rant and roar, game and swear exceedingly… and used to quarrel and draw his weapon**,

      (*The Bloody Husband and Cruell Neighbour* 1653)

4. Nomination strategies for referring to the victim

Table 4 below features the most frequent nomination strategies for referring to the victim in my corpus. While somatisation in terms of

good social habits equally applies to men and women, relationalisation and economisation are gender-sensitive categories.
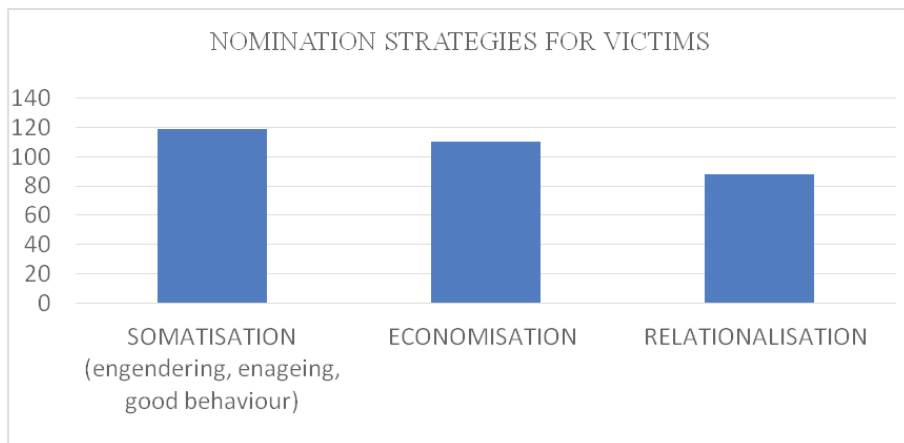

Table 4. Frequency of nomination strategies for the representation of the victim in the corpus of 17th-century murder pamphlets (1600-1674).

As was the case with the representation of the murderer, male victims are generally encoded in discourse through their social status and occupation ("Master Rowland Holt, a merchant and citizen of London", "Mr Trat, Curate of Olde Cleave in the said County", "William Storre, Master of Art, Minister and Preacher", one Mr Daniel, a solicitor", "Edward Hall, a miller of the same parish", "the butcher") whereas female victims are primarily represented in terms of their relation with the murderer or in terms of their family status ("goodwife Woodlane, wife of Henry Woodlane of the said Town", "Maister Cowerly's wife", "his poor wife", "his loving wife"). This is also the case with infants and children, who are referred to by means of their relationship with the murderer combined with their age (enageing) and their innocence of mind ("her own children", "her own childe", "his own sonne", "his other daughter", "his poor innocent children", "the elder Childe of that small age that could hardly discern a Mothers cruelty", "her child being 7 weeks old", "her children being two very pretty girls of the age of six years and the other four years"). Adolescents, on the other hand, are either encoded as having an independent social status relat-

ed to their occupation ("maid", "prentice", "apprentice") or simply as "young girl", "boy" or "young man" in some cases with additional information about their age or their vulnerable social condition ("this young girl was about 14 or 16 years of age", "a poor Fatherlesse Boy of 12 years of age", "a youth somewhat timorous and fearing to live alone)".

Most of the labels for victims are premodified by evaluative adjectives which highlight their innocence, virtues and vulnerability so as to amplify the social and moral stigmatisation of the murderer:
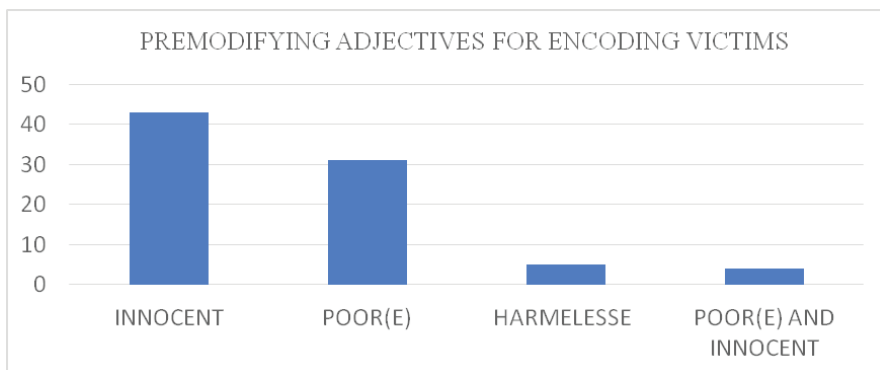

Table 5. The most frequent premodifying adjectives for representing victims in the corpus of 17th-century murder pamphlets (1600-1674)

As we can see in Table 5, the most frequent premodifying adjective is "innocent", a quality which is attributed to the victim from the beginning of the narrative given the a posteriori perspective of the author. The innocence and good faith of the murdered exacerbate the malevolence of the murderer by showing that the victim could not have provoked the do-er's anger in any way. The second most frequent adjective "poore" is meant to elicit the reader's compassion towards the victim, at the same time reinforcing the blame on the criminal. The frequency of the positive evaluative adjectives reveals that most of the narratives in my corpus are characterised by a rather formulaic opposition between the social esteem and compassion for the victim and the strong reprobation for the murderer, in accordance with the moralising aims

of the pamphleteer.[2] The examples below show how the adjectives are used in discourse to enhance the social stigmatisation of the murderer through the innocence and moral rectitude of the victim:

(18)   I leave to the discretion of all consciencious people to iudge of the matter, whether it be fitting for any man to …call his wife whore and bitch, to sweare and to curse… to cut, strike or stub his **harmelesse wife**, as tis known that Thomas Laret did oftentimes doe.
<div align="right">(Bloody Actions Performed 1653)</div>

(19)   When the family used to go out of town, they left only **this poor honest woman** the widdow Burton, the party murthered to look to the house.
<div align="right">(The Full Discovery of the Late Horrid Murther and Robbery, 1674)</div>

(20)   Wherefore they sent for an officer and apprehended upon suspition both his wife and landlady, whose consciences cannot but confesse that they washed both their hands in *his innocent blood* (the husband).
<div align="right">(Murther, Murther 1641)</div>

(21)   It is not to be found that a Father did ever take two **innocent Children** out of their beds and with weeping teares of pittilesse pitie and unmercifull mercy, to drawn them
<div align="right">(The Unnaturall Father 1621)</div>

In example (19) "poor" is combined with "honest", another quality which is often attributed to victims and neighbours as indicative of their moral rectitude, decency and respectability. In the case of women, the word acquired a sexual connotation, in the sense that an honest woman was virtuous as regards sexual morality (*OED*). When attrib-

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[2]   Some exceptions to this pattern, however, occur as we can see in the pamphlet *A True Discourse* (1608) where the murderer is a naïve and weak woman referred to as a "silly soul" who is misled by a ruffian couple and convinced to kill her husband. In the pamphlet the male victim is described as "young and not experienced in the world […] giv[ing] his mind to travel and see foreign countries which tended rather to his losse than to his profit". The man did not take good care of his wife "leaving her often times very bare, without provisions of such means as was fitting for her", which would partially justify her growing frustration and resentment.

uted to a widow (example 19), the premodifier "honest" could denote the moral rectitude of the woman in terms of her chastity after the loss of her husband.

5. Nomination strategies for referring to investigating and judicial authorities

Table 6 below presents the major figures involved in the administration of justice. The most frequent social actors are represented through the nomination strategy of collectivisation, i.e. "jury" and "Court", all the others – with the exception of "neighbours" – are encoded through professionalisation so as to highlight their authoritativeness and reliability as guarantors of justice.

NOMINATION STRATEGIES
FOR INVESTIGATING AND JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES

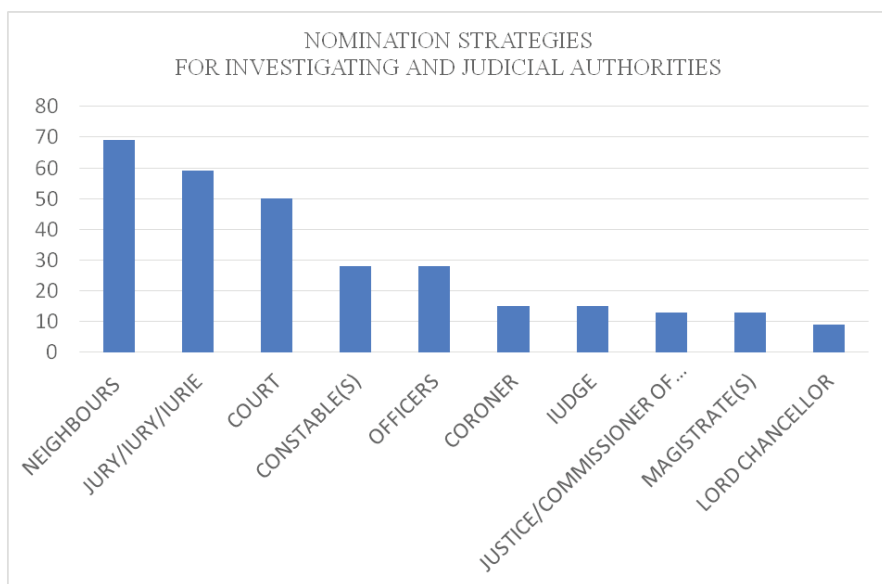| Category	Value
NEIGHBOURS	69
JURY/IURY/IURIE	59
COURT	50
CONSTABLE(S)	28
OFFICERS	28
CORONER	15
IUDGE	15
JUSTICE/COMMISSIONER OF …	13
MAGISTRATE(S)	13
LORD CHANCELLOR	9

Table 6. Frequency of nomination strategies for investigating and judicial authorities in the corpus of 17th-century murder pamphlets (1600-1674)

The distribution of nomination strategies for investigating and judicial authorities reveals that in 17th-century murder pamphlets both the

pre-trial and trial phase were recounted, although the low frequency of references to lawyers suggests that detailed accounts of the examination and counter-examination during the trial were not quantitatively relevant at least until the mid-17th century. In the early Stuart period, readers were much more familiar with pre-trial procedures which took place between crime and magisterial investigation than with the complexity of the trial session which would be increasingly reported in murder accounts of the second half of the century. By reading murder news, people learned how the justice machine was set in motion even if they had never been personally involved in it. In particular, the murder pamphlet supplied consumers with a precious insight into the moral motivations and social circumstances which caused the community to report a suspect to the law-officers and warned them accordingly (Cecconi 2023, 67). As Gaskill argues, pre-trial stages of crime and criminal justice represent a crucial gateway to the mentalities of the time as it is in this arena that popular values and norms, communal practices and expectations emerge more clearly, without being distorted by the formal and ritualized procedure of the courtroom and the gallows (2000, 24).

With respect to this, one descriptor appears to stand out from the others for not belonging to any professional judicial category, i.e. "neighbours". The word falls within the relationalisation strategy and indicates the spatial and social proximity of the murderer/victim with the other members of the parish where the crime was committed. The frequency with which "neighbours" clusters with other professional figures of the pre-trial phase (70%) contributes to their positive semantic prosody. Neighbours are ascribed a crucial role in the community as watchmen and guarantors of order and morality in the parish. They observe, search for evidence, bring the criminal to the Magistrates and give assistance to the victim whenever possible. In this sense they may be considered as 'in-between social actors', oscillating between the category of laypeople and semi-official sentries. The evidence that they provide to local authorities (constables, officers, Magistrates, Justices of Peace) is later submitted to the Assize Court which is responsible for the opening of a trial case. The quotations below show the co-occurrence of "neighbours" and descriptors for official authorities. Their

collocation is indicative of the cooperation existing between the two categories of social actors in the phase of the inquest, apprehension and trial:

(22)   This signe **the *neighbours*** understood well, because they knew the stayres had been remooued and that made them think some foul matter would bee pick out of her other signes. Heereupon they beganne to lay hands on the Mother and her Sonne, to haue them again (now with the Childe) **before the Iustice,** at which the childe seemed to rejoyce.
(*The horrible Murther of a young Boy*, 1606)

(23)   **The Neighbours** by all this and the guilty signs they saw in her did presently apprehend her …when being **carried before a Justice**, she was sent up to the White Lyon in Southwarke, where long she lay not, ere at S. Margaret's Hill, she was arraigned and sentenced to her deserved death

(*Three Bloodie Murders* 1613)

(24)   **The Coroner** Mr Edward Moreton, being sent for, came immediately and having summoned **a Jury of twenty-foure neighbours,** did sit upon Enquiry.

(*A Full and Truest Narrative* 1657)

(25)   Whereupon **the Neighbours** for feare of being guilty of the least crime, in concealing this suspected murder, **went to the Justice** and acquainted him with what had happened.
(*An Exact Relation of the Bloody and Barbarous Murder* 1646)

(26)   The honest woman, maruelously incensed against her, by the death of the infant presently ran and fetched **the constable** and to **her neighbours** to see that-eye-wounding spectacle

(*The Bloudy Mother* 1610)

By constructing and replicating a model of virtual neighbourhood not only does the author create a familiar narrative structuring of the events but also compensates for the negativity of the murder through the representation of a judicious communal behaviour.

All the other social actors are encoded as judicial professionals. In many cases (44%) the descriptors "Judge", "Lord Chancellor", "Justice(s)" are followed by proper name. From a rhetorical point of view, this can be considered a truth-authenticating strategy which enhances the reliability of the account. However, it can also be hypothesised that some readers became familiar with the names of renowned judges and that their interest in purchasing the pamphlets was sparked by some 'big names' advertised on the title page:

(27)   The crying Murther: Contayning the cruell and most horrible Butchery of Mr. TRAT, Curate of olde Cleaue; who was first murthered as he trauailed vpon the high way, then was brought home to his house and there was quartered and imboweld: his quarters and bowels being afterwards perboyld and salted vp, in a most strange and fearefull manner. For this fact the Iudgement of my **Lord Chiefe Baron TAN-FIELD**, young Peter Smethwicke, Andrew Baker, Cyrill Austen, and Alice Walker, were executed this last Summer Assizes, the 24. of Iuly, at Stone Gallowes, neere Taunton in Summerset-shire.

(*The Crying Murther* 1624)

(28)   BLOODY NEWS FROM Clarken-well, BEING A true Relation of a horrid Murther Committed by John Mason upon Gregory Reeves at Mr. Hues a Bakers right over against the Kings Arms, upon Munday night last, being the ninth of July […] Also how he was apprehended, and his Examination and Confession **before Justice Powel** on Tuesday last, by whom he was Committed a prisoner to NEWGATE.

(*Bloody News from Clarken-well*, 1661)

(29)   The Bloody Murther DISCOVERED, or A True Relation of the EXAMINATION and CONFESSION of JOHN RENDOR, late Butler to Esq; Bluck, Before the most worthy Person **Sir William Turner (one of His Majesties Justices of the Peace)** about 12 of the clock on Friday Night […]

(*The Bloody Murther Discovered* 1674)

By extending the focus of the analysis from referential to predication strategies, concordances show three major recurrent patterns for in-

vestigating and judicial authorities, listed below in order of frequency and reported in Table 7:

a) [authorities] + *According to Law/The Laws of the Realm/Order of Law/Law and Justice*

b) [authorities] + positive evaluation (e.g. *industrious, judicious, discreet, with great wisdom and discretion, having care, in great wisdom, very worthly, very careful, learnedly, credible*)

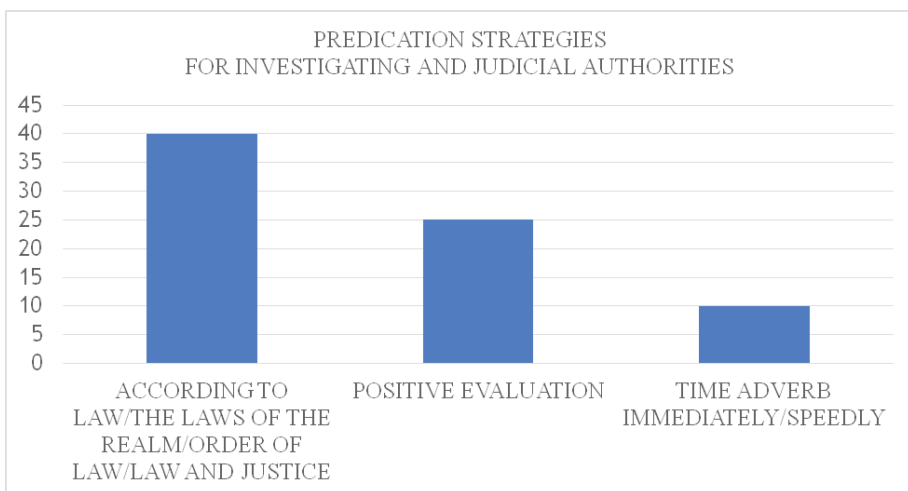c) [authorities] + time adverbs (*immediately, speedily*)

Table 7. Frequency of predication strategies for describing investigating and judicial authorities in the corpus of 17th-century murder pamphlets (1600-1674)

The first pattern underscores the impartiality and fairness of the proceedings as the authorities apprehend, examine and condemn the do-er in accordance with the laws of the country:

(30) He was taken by the Neighbors and brought before **the Iustice of the Peace** and being examined he was by Evidence found guilty and was sent **by order of Law** unto *Newgate* Prison.
(*Bloody Actions Performed* 1653)

(31) **The Iury** finding him guilty of wilfull murder and treason, did so deliuer vp their verdict, and he had sentence of death**, according to law**.
<div align="right">(*A Bloudy new-yeares Gift* 1609)</div>

(32) So being had before **a Iustice,** his Examination was very briefe; for he confest all the whole circumstances of the matter freely; so that he was sent to the common Prison of *Surry* […] So, **according to Law and Iustice,** he was there condemned and iudged (for the murthering of his two Children) to be hang'd;
<div align="right">(*The Unnatural Father* 1621)</div>

(33) The Neighbours came in and sent for the **Officers of the Towne** where she was apprehended and sent to Prison where by Justice she must be tried **according to the Laws of this Realm**.
<div align="right">(*Bloody Newes from Dover* 1646)</div>

The second pattern features positive evaluation of the judicial authorities' conduct through the use of adjectives and adverbials which foreground their conscientiousness, impartiality and reliability:

(34) They both together were apprehended, and by the Authority of Magistracy presently sent unto *Newgate,* unto whom thither an **industrious, judicious, and discreet Gentleman Master Long, a Commissioner of the Peace**, in the County of *Middlesex,* frequently resorted, and tooke there their severall Examinations so **carefully, punctually, and truely**, that both the Malefactors out of their owne mouthes, against themselves confessed the same, **totally iust.**
<div align="right">**(***Heavens Speedie Hue and Cry* 1616**)**</div>

(35) For notwithstanding the **Lord Chancellor** had **in great wisdome** giuen especiall charge and direction that care should be had of this man, as well for his body, as for his soule
<div align="right">(*The True Relation of the Ground, Occasion and Circumstances* 1616)</div>

(36) These presumptions drew her first of all vnto question and examination before the **Iustices**, who were **very sincere and carefull** in the finding out of this murderous and Butcherly plot.
<div align="right">(*The Crying Murther* 1624)</div>

(37) Upon this euidence (the Iury going together) they were found guilty, & a verdict returned: whereupon **the Iudge** according to course procéeded in sentence against them, where **learnedly** he instructed them, that since God had reuealed them Murtherers […] they would yet looke into themselues, séeing how néere they were vnto their graues

(*The most cruell and bloody Murther* 1606)

(38) They were both arraigned, found guilty by a **credible Jury** and from **the utterance of a grave and honourable Judge** received their several sentences

(*Two most unnaturall and bloodie Murthers 1605*)

(39) But the Prudence of the **Judicious Court** in doing of Justice was such, after the Jury had gave their virdit in, that they thought it not meet for them to suffer here, but where they had done the Fact, therefore Condemned them not, but ordered them to be sent to Maidstone Sizes in Kent, there to be further Tried, and receive reward for what they had done.

(*The Arraignment and Tryal of the Coach-Man and Foot-Boy* 1661)

Although positive evaluation appears to be the norm in the representation of members of law enforcement and judiciary in crime and trial narratives, there are, however, some exceptions in my corpus where the pamphleteer ascribes the non-guilty verdict of the jury to the corruption of the jurors or judges or to the constables' hiding of information:

(40) Where either **for lacke of their [Constables] due information of the truth, or by the corrupt, and favourable affection of the magistrate**, or both, there was a very slender baile taken, and the malefactor by this sleight sent away.

(*The Manner of the Cruell and Outrageous Murther,* 1602)

The last pattern shows investigating and judicial authorities clustering with the time adverbs "immediately" and "speedily" in the phraseology *immediately sent for/carried/came* in order to highlight the promptness and speediness of the judicial system in responding to the crime:

(41)   The **Neighbours** questioning the reason of her affrightment, she relating the cause, ***immediately a Constable*** was sent for, who came **as speedily** […]

<div align="right">(The Full Discovery 1674)</div>

(42)   And the **Neighbour** flocking into the Bakers house apprehended the Murtherer and ***immediately carryed him before Justice Powel.***

<div align="right">(Bloody Newes from Clarken-well 1661)</div>

(43)   Upon an Inquisition of one of the **Coroners** Inquest, for the County of *Middlesex,* upon the view of the body of her Basterd-child, taken out of a vault in *Rosemary* Lane, by Tower Hill, by her there-in throwne, being by the *Iury* made, returne unto the **Coroner** of Murder, Warrants were ***immediately sent out*** unto all parts for the apprehending of the said *Ann Willis*

<div align="right">(Natures Cruell Step-Dames 1636)</div>

(44)   Whereupon the ***Justice immediatly*** sent for this *Lewis* and his wife, and also a little Girle that were their prentice, but the man had made an escape, and were gone, which made their cause so much the worse, and to bee the more suspected.

<div align="right">(An Exact Relation of the most bloody and inhumane Murther 1646)</div>

(45)   The *Coroner* Mr. *Edward Moreton,* **being sent for, came immediately** and having summoned a Jury of twenty foure Neighbours, did sit upon Enquiry, concerning the Murder and Murderer.

<div align="right">(A Full and Truest Narrative 1657)</div>

By and large pamphleteers show a deferential attitude towards professionals working in justice administration and provide a positive representation of their lawful and judicious conduct through recurrent lexico-syntactic patterns.

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6. Conclusion

Occasional murder pamphlets were a profitable propaganda vehicle for biasing and constructing people's perception of crime and justice thanks to their low price and wide circulation among a heterogeneous cross-section of society (Watt 1991; Sharpe 1999; Raymond 2003). Ideology was encoded in discourse through the pamphleteer's representation of social actors. The corpus-assisted discourse analysis has revealed a quantitative preference for a set of nomination strategies which were used by pamphleteers for portraying the murderer, the victim and the investigating and judicial authorities in a way which could arouse indignation towards the sinner/criminal and confidence in the justice of divine Providence and efficiency of the government's response.

Murderers were stigmatised for their crime but with a different degree of moral reprobation depending on their gender, ethnicity and religion. In particular, social problematisation was the most frequent nomination strategy for the representation of English Protestant male murderers, whereas culturalisation was the preferred option for encoding the agency of women, religious dissenters and natives of the new colonized lands. While social problematisation depicted murder as a result of bad social habits which, albeit deplorable, were ascribed to the sinfulness of the time (drinking, gambling, whoring) and the weakness of human nature, culturalisation intensified the moral stigmatisation of the do-er by appealing to animalisation. The intensification of the blame corresponded to the social and moral danger represented by the do-er and subversion on the part of minority outgroups was perceived as the most unacceptable threat to natural order and stability.

Victims were represented through somatisation, economisation and relationalisation in order of frequency. While somatisation was homogenously distributed among the different social categories, economisation and relationalisation were more gender-sensitive, with economisation being generally ascribed to male victims and relationalisation to women and children/infants. Unlike criminals, victims were characterised by a certain degree of uniformity in their representation: the author foregrounded their innocence of mind, modesty (mainly in female victims)

and high reputation in the community so as to amplify the unjustified and unprovoked malevolence of the do-er.

Finally, the representation of justice administration featured a scrupulous nomination of the social actors involved in the discovery of the murder, apprehension of the murderer and execution of justice, from laypeople to professionals in law enforcement and judiciary. The nomination strategy of professionalisation sanctioned the authoritativeness of their institutional role while predication revealed the deferential attitude of the pamphleteer towards the judicial apparatus and its representatives. The analysis of concordances has shown that the descriptors for investigating and judicial authorities occur within three major patterns which highlight respectively: 1) the lawfulness of their proceedings both in the pre-trial and trial session ([investigating/judicial authorities] + *according to law/by order of law*); 2) their competence and conscientiousness ([judicial authorities] + positive evaluative adjectives, adverbials) and 3) their promptness in responding to the crime ([law enforcement and judiciary] + *immediately sent/carried/came*). All things considered, the propaganda message that emerged from the analysis of 17th-century English murder pamphlets was that the murderer was the most heinous of sinners but that his/her right punishment was to a large extent guaranteed by the efficiency of the justice system as manifestation of divine justice.

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