

London's Female Thieves, 1700-1710

Nichole Garbrough

The comrade she helped me to dealt in three sorts of craft, (viz.) shop-lifting, stealing of shop-books and pocketbooks, and taking off gold watches from the ladies' sides.... Moll Flanders¹

Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* is a novel of a late seventeenth century woman, who, besides partaking in multiple marriages, child abduction, and prostitution, was well-versed in theft. Defoe based this novel on observations he made of women criminality in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Tim Hitchcock notes in *Down and Out in Eighteenth-Century London* that literary and visual depictions rose during the eighteenth century, giving a stereotypical image of beggars and people in a desperate state.² Was Defoe's *Moll Flanders* just another stereotypical literary tale of a woman turned desperate? Hitchcock states, in regards to Defoe's depiction of female theft in *Moll Flanders*, that this printed observation was typical for London, based off of the many records. The farther from London Defoe discussed the more literary and stereotypical his writings on female crime became because of the lack of depiction thereof in newspapers.³ We can "test" Defoe's depiction of female theft crimes by comparing it with criminal records of the time. *Moll Flanders* was first published in 1722, and the character "Moll," supposedly lived during the late 17th century.

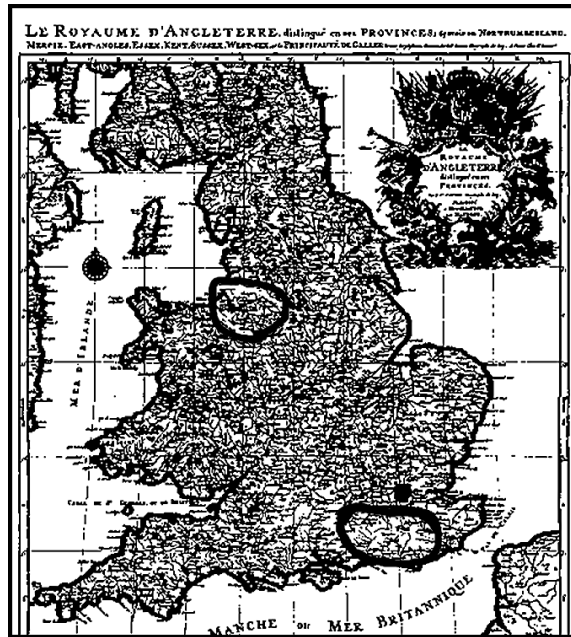
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¹ Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959), 175.

² Tim Hitchcock, *Down and Out in Eighteenth-Century London*. (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), ch. 9: "A Beggar's Mask," 209-232.

³ Tim Hitchcock, Interview by author, Skype conversation. Charleston, IL, July 10, 2013.

Thus, I have sampled women accused of crimes of theft between 1700 and 1710.



John Beattie's and Garthine Walker's case study regions in comparison with London's location. Sussex and Surrey Counties to the south and Cheshire County to the northwest. The black dot being London with Sussex and Surrey Counties circled in black to the south of London while Cheshire County is circled in black to the northwest of London.

Le Royaume D'Angleterre, distingué en ses Provinces. Par le Sr. Sanson. Geographe du Roy. Presente A Monseigneur Le Dauphin. Amsterdam, Pierre Mortier 1700.

Property crimes of the early modern period are described as larceny, shoplifting, pick-pocketing, theft from a dwelling house, receiving stolen goods, and uttering counterfeit coins, according to Malcolm M. Feeley and Deborah L. Little's "The Vanishing Female: The Decline of Women in the Criminal Process, 1687-

1912.”⁴ Few historians have written solely on the topic of female theft in early modern London, rather looking towards prostitution as the typical female crime of the era or taking on more rural regions of England. John Beattie and Garthine Walker focused their research on female theft. As such, property crimes dominated the list of female crime, but their conclusions differ. Beattie’s, “The Criminality of Women in Eighteenth-Century England,” published in 1975, examines the records of Surrey and Sussex, just south of London. Beattie argued, from his research, that women were weaker, often committing thefts that were less violent and daring than men:

Women crime tended, that is, to be rather less direct, less open, risking less of a confrontation with the victim. Though some women entered houses to steal, women robbers were much less common. If they engaged in street crime, it was more often as an associate or decoy, or they picked on children.⁵

Additionally, Beattie argued that women were less willing to participate in criminal activity without the coaching of a man, stole items of lesser value, and was granted more leniencies when convicted due to their femininity.⁶ Beattie’s records showed that from 1663 to 1802 only 24% of the people indicted for crimes against property in Surrey were women.⁷ At the time, this was the only record of female theft activity. However, Walker’s 1994 look at Cheshire County in the seventeenth century gave a different depiction of property crimes committed by women. Garthine Walker’s “Women, Theft and the World of Stolen Goods,” notes that women stole items of the same value of those stolen by men, that 50% were more likely to work with other women as only 25% worked with men, and that women received harsher punishments

⁴ Malcolm M. Feeley and Deborah L. Little. “The Vanishing Female: The Decline of Women in the Criminal Process, 1687-1912.” *Law & Society Review* Vol. 25, No. 4 (1991): 719-758, 736. To utter counterfeit coins was to put them into circulation.

⁵ J.M. Beattie, “The Criminality of Women in Eighteenth-Century England,” *Journal of Social History* Vol. 8, No. 4. (Summer 1975): 80-116, 95.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 91.

than men.⁸ Walker's research found that 22% of those accused of property crimes in the seventeenth century of Cheshire County were women.⁹ While both Beattie and Walker find that the minority of those convicted of property crimes were women, this is perhaps the only information regarding female theft crimes on which they were able to agree. Which depiction of female thieves might apply best to eighteenth-century London?

This study hypothesizes that the closer one comes to central London the more crimes will be committed by women, which urban crime patterns differ greatly from rural ones in this time period. Paradoxically, despite the fact that Beattie studied an area bordering London, Walker's thesis is more applicable to London crime in the early eighteenth century.¹⁰

In order to test these two historians, I created a search on Old Bailey Online in which I looked at all theft offences in which the verdict was guilty from January 1700 to December 1710. From here I deciphered which convict was male and which female based on their name and the use of pronouns in their case descriptions when names were misleading, such as Francis, or missing. In this search, I found 525 cases regarding the guilty verdict for theft crimes. However, 1701 and 1705-1706 were missing from the results. I then created a spreadsheet in order to catalog the individual's name, offence they were found guilty of, the date of their trial, the parish they belonged to, and a description of the crime.¹¹ The description of the crime was of most importance because I could note how many cases had similar aspects such as thefts committed in shops compared to those from one's place of lodging. Analysis of my spreadsheet was needed next in order to decipher the many questions surrounding this topic. Were men

⁸ Garthine Walker, "Women, Theft and the World of Stolen Goods," in *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England*, ed., Jenny Kermode and Garthine Walker, (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 1994), 81-105, 84-85, 87.

⁹ Ibid., 82.

¹⁰ Due to time constraints and the amount of information gathered in just these ten years, my research had to be confined to this time period. In order to create a more accurate visual, many more decades should be added to this research.

¹¹ An image of that spreadsheet can be found at the end of this article.

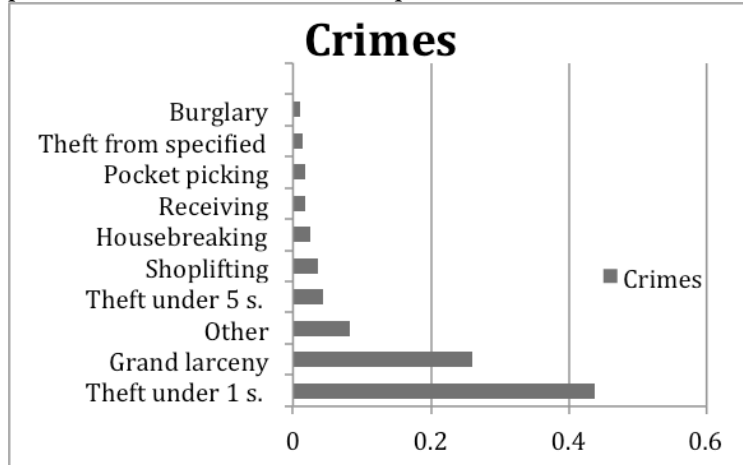
more often convicted of crimes against property than women? Did women more often work alone, or would they more often work with other women or with men? Where and in what situations thefts were most often committed? What punishment was most often given to women for theft? Lastly, were there any specifics that were most similar in these cases, such as where the women were likely to come from? All these questions made up those that needed to be asked in order to create the most accurate depiction of female thieves in London from 1700-1710 and all these questions were able to be answered by looking at the research compiled from Old Bailey Online in this time frame.

First and foremost, my sample has 525 cases of theft, of which 276 involved women. This is important as both Beattie and Walker found women involved in a minority of thefts. The London evidence barely fits into this model, as about 53% of the charges were against women. Women were equal partners in thieving in early modern London. That said, they seem to be disproportionately charged with lesser theft. Women were more often convicted of theft under one shilling (121 cases out of 276: 43%). However, from reading the cases, these women actually stole items of much more value than that, but were only convicted for one shilling or less. For example, Ellinor Painter was found guilty of theft under one shilling on December 6, 1710 but her crime accounts state, “was Indicted for feloniously stealing a Pair of Flaxen Sheets, 3 suits of Head-cloths, 3 Cambrick Handkerchief, and 20 s. in Money....”¹² This may be because in the eighteenth-century death was very often the punishment and many jurors were reluctant to condemn offenders to such a fate¹³ Frank McLynn displays this phenomenon in *Crime and Punishment in Eighteenth Century England* in which he states, “Bloody Code is the name traditionally given to the English system of criminal law during the

¹² *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0, 03 August 2013), December 1710, trial of Ellinor Painter (t17101206-48).

¹³ “The Criminal Trial.” *London Lives 1690 to 1800: Crime, Poverty and Social Policy in the Metropolis*. <http://www.londonlives.org/static/CriminalTrial.jsp#toc4> Updated: April 2012. Access: 3 August 2013. Jury nullification has long been part of common law.

period 1688-1815. In these years, a huge number of felonies punishable by death were added to the statute book.”¹⁴ McLynn notes, however, “The central paradox of the Bloody Code was that a vast increase in capital statutes did not lead to higher levels of execution.”¹⁵ Additionally, Beattie notes that far fewer women were indicted for the most serious offences, “a total of 1445 men were charged in Surrey with robbery, burglary, and horsetheft, for example, as against 228 women....”¹⁶ While this may suggest that men were more often the perpetrators of violent offences, this could also display (expose?) leniency towards women and a desire to protect them from the most severe punishments.



Next, grand larceny was most popular (72 cases out of 276: 26%) and after that “other” included “lesser offences” and combined offences in which the convicted was found guilty of more than one crime in their specific case (22 cases out of 276: 7%). Lesser offences were often tried as misdemeanors rather than the crime they were first accused. For example, Ann Hawkins was accused of burglary but found guilty of a lesser offence:

¹⁴ Frank McLynn, *Crime and Punishment in Eighteenth Century England*. (London: Routledge, 1989), xi.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xv.

¹⁶ Beattie, “The Criminality of Women in Eighteenth-Century England,” 95.

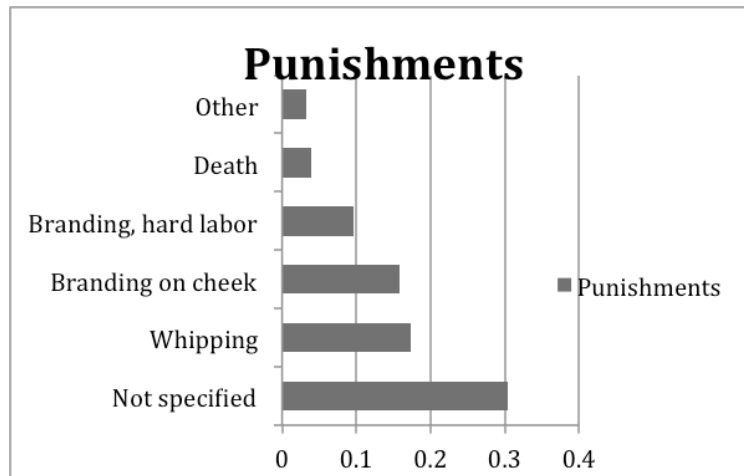
Ann Hawkins...indicted of Felony and Burglary, for Breaking the House of the Royal African Company...about 7 in the Night, and taking from thence 6 Silver Spoons, 6 Rings, set with Diamonds, a Stone Ring, a 5l. Piece, and 4l. 5s. in Money, the Goods of Samuel Storey: the first Evidence deposed that the Prisoner was a Servant to him formerly, and went away from him, and said, that she us'd to call as she went by that way, to see her Mistress, and came that Evening there, being no body at home but a little Boy, he being out of Town, and convey'd away the Booty. The next Evidence was the Boy, who deposed that he was standing in Leaden-hall street, the Prisoner beckon'd to him, and told him that she was very cold, and desired him to let her go upstairs, and she would go and call Tom; (who was her Husband,) and they would have a Pot of Drink; which he consented to, and being come up, she desir'd him to go and fetch the Drink, which he agreed to, and in the mean time, she took the Trunk out of an Inner Room, that was double lockt, and lockt the same again; but he coming back, she pretended to go and call Tom, and in the mean time carried off the Trunk, and staid some while, and then came again, to prevent Discovery.... The Prisoner did not deny the Fact; only saying that the Door was open; and the Boy upon Tryal, delcar'd that it was Day-light: The Jury found her Guilty of Felony only, and acquitted her of the Burglary.¹⁷

This shows that while the theft definitely occurred, whether or not she broke into the house is less certain as the boy may have given her permission to enter the house and the door was open. Whether or not the boy had the ability to allow her in the house is unknown, but the fact that the door was open takes away the possibility of

¹⁷ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0, 03 August 2013), April 1704, trial of Ann Hawkins (t17040426-13).

Hawkins being able to break into the house. Therefore, from these results, it seems that women very often did steal items of high value but were also often times convicted of crimes that carried a lesser punishment, perhaps in order to spare the guilty of death.¹⁸

The punishments most often given to these women from 1700 to 1710 do show that death was actually one of the least likely handed down, only 11 of 276 cases or 3%. However, 30% of the cases did not specify what punishment was given at all. Yet, even if we take away the 84 cases that did not specify the punishment, out of 276 cases, death was still only handed down 5% of the time. Most often whipping and branding on the cheek were given for the cases in which punishments were recorded. Of the 276 cases, whipping was ordered for 48 of those cases (17%) and branding on the cheek for 44 cases (15%). Therefore, it seems plausible that McLynn and Beattie are correct in their assertions that death was not handed down as often as one might think when discussing the era of the Bloody Code.



¹⁸ However, in order to show whether this occurred more often or less than males of the same crimes, one needs to analyze the information given in Old Bailey Online for the same time frame for male thefts. This was impossible given the time constraints of this research.

Looking at the punishments handed down for each case, it is hard to determine why one was given the death penalty and another given whipping or branding. For instance, Mary Jones was convicted of housebreaking in 1700 in which nothing of particular interest would make her crime more dangerous or worthy of death than any other. Jones was not a repeat offender nor was her crime particularly violent.¹⁹ However, Mary Ford, a known offender of grand larceny was only given the punishment of branding on the cheek in 1704.²⁰ The only possible explanation of this is the fact that death was issued more often in the earlier part of the decade than later. In 1700, five cases were punished with death. In 1704, a death sentence was handed out three times, but in all instances was respited for pregnancy, and two of those women were instead branded on the cheek. By 1710, no death sentences were specified. While this research is not conclusive because there are many cases in which the punishment was not recorded, this may show from the beginning of the decade to the end a more humane punishment system in which the Bloody Code declined.

The way in which crimes were committed and the tendency for women to work alone or with others is also questioned. Beattie and Walker give differing accounts on this issue, especially of what is found when using Old Bailey Online from 1700-1710. It is most often contended by historians that domestic servants were the most likely to commit thefts as they have more opportunities to do so. Beattie writes, regarding the crime problem in London that a fear confirmed by depositions was theft by servants, "By 1711 and 1712 a quarter of the surviving depositions in the City of London sessions papers are concerned with an alleged theft by a servant."²¹ Additionally, women were more often employed as domestic servants than in other positions and over men. However, the research from 1700 to 1710 in Old Bailey Online shows that most

¹⁹ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0, 04 August 2013), August 1700, trial of Mary Jones (t17000828-13).

²⁰ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0, 04 August 2013), April 1704, trial of Mary Ford (t17040426-25).

²¹ J.M. Beattie, *Policing and Punishment in London, 2660-1750: Urban Crime and the Limits of Terror*. (Oxford University Press, 2001), 37.

often victims of thefts were random shop-owners. Specified in the cases, 50 thefts or 18% occurred where the victim was a random shop-owner and only 35 cases or 12% showed the relationship to the victim as a current or former employee. Moreover, of these female thieves, 27 or 9% of the cases were lodging at the victim's house and stole therein. Whereas a much larger proportion of this part of the research is unknown (164 out of the 276 cases or 59%), what we do have displays that fears regarding whether your servant might steal from the household are not unfounded, but may not be as significant as previously thought.



William Hogarth's *Night*, a 1738 depiction of London's streets, combined with Hannah Morgan's shoplifting proceedings from 1710 shed some light on how shoplifting was able to be such a popular crime in the eighteenth century. Morgan:

was Indicted for feloniously stealing 8 yards of blew and white callicoe, value 10 s. and 18 yards of linen check.... It appear'd that the Prisoner came to the Prosecutor's Shop Window, and cut the String by which the Grate was ty'd put in her Hands, and took the Goods from thence....²²

²² *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0, 04 August 2013), December 1710, trial of Hannah Morgan (t17101206-61).



William Hogarth, *Night*. 1738.

Looking at Hogarth's print, on the left hand side a table is set up under a window. This would have acted as a display area during shop hours. This would have been where Morgan would have untied the grate carrying the calico and linen. This print, and all the chaos of the city, shows not only how the shop owners were able to use the window fronts for displays but also how a thief would be able to take items from the window just as easily. However, just as often victims were able to call for help and the perpetrator would be apprehended because of the many people in the streets and the lack of law enforcement. Robert Shoemaker notes in *The London Mob: Violence and Disorder in Eighteenth-Century London*, that "raising one's voice to make an insult or to request help was by itself often sufficient for attracting a crowd."²³ In many cases, raising one's voice was sufficient in capturing a suspected criminal. Such was the

²³ Robert Shoemaker, *The London Mob: Violence and Disorder in Eighteenth-Century London*. (London: Hambledon, 2004),114.

case for Jane Wilson, in which, “The Prosecutor’s Wife deposed that she was sitting below the Stairs in the Kitchen and heard a great noise above, upon which she went into the Street and called some People to her assistance, who coming, found the Prisoner with her Lap full of Goods....”²⁴ This was the way in which many accused were taken into custody because of the lack of law enforcement in early modern London. Yet this also suggests that one almost needed to take the accused red-handed thereby assuring that these crimes were most definitely underreported as well.

By examining the cases from 1700-1710 in Old Bailey Online, one can gather ways in which women preferred to commit crimes, alone or with others. *Moll Flanders*’ title character learned the craft of theft from another woman. One such crime two characters committed together was one in which one woman would fall over next to a wealthy lady causing the victim to fall, and in the mess of apologizing and helping each other get up, the other would pickpocket a watch at the lady’s side.²⁵ In 1702, a crime involving two women was recorded in Old Bailey in which the details seem straight from Defoe. Elizabeth Belcher and Mary Wilkinson:

came into the shop pretending to buy some silk, was shewed several pieces, and on a sudden, Wilkinson pulled a squirrel out of the pocket, which got loose, and ran into a little closet, upon which, the prentice went to catch it for them, but the prisoners came and caught it; but he saw Belcher take up some of her Coats, upon which, he mistrusted them, and looking found the piece of Silk [30 yards, valued at 5 l.] missing.²⁶

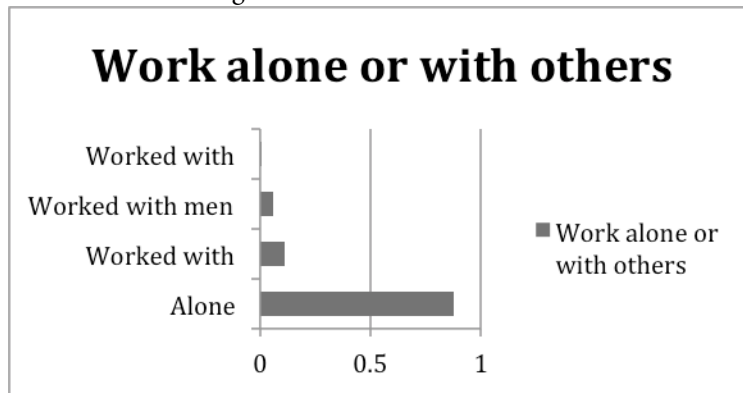
As entertaining and interesting as this case is, how often was it that women worked together? Additionally, how often was it that women worked with men? Beattie argues that when women participated in robberies, most often they were associated with male

²⁴ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0, 04 August 2013), August 1700, trial of Jane Wilson (t17000828-4).

²⁵ Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, 175.

²⁶ (*Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0, 28 July 2013), January 1702, trial of Elizabeth Belcher Mary Wilkinson (t17020114-6).

robbers as decoys or lookouts.²⁷ Sarah Windall and George Way worked together in a case of theft under five shillings but even in this situation, Windall was not just a look out or decoy. Together, Windall and Way took twenty yards of muslin out of a shop and when apprehended the goods were found upon Windall.²⁸ However, Walker contends that 50% of women were more likely work exclusively with other women, usually in pairs. While only 25% of women partnered with men or in a group in which men outnumbered women.²⁹ According to Old Bailey Online from 1700-1710, where it was specified that a woman worked with another or when a female was tried with another, only 30 of the 276 cases or 10% had women working with another woman, only 3 cases showed a woman working with a man, and one case in which the gender of the partner was undistinguishable. An overwhelming 87% of the crimes committed therefore were perpetrated alone. This leaves little doubt that women were just as likely and willing to commit a theft and even more plausible that a woman could do so without the coaching of a man.



Lastly, with the information given on Old Bailey Online, I desired to know which parishes had the largest proportion of women committing crimes of theft. In the map provided, parishes

²⁷ Beattie "The Criminology of Women," 90.

²⁸ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0, 04 August 2013), April 1704, trial of Sarah Windall George Way (t17040426-35).

²⁹ Walker, "Women, Theft and the World of Stolen Goods," 84-85.

were coded according to how often women came from each parish, in cases that the parish was specified.³⁰



Parishes that are white did not have a corresponding prisoner associated within. ● signifies parishes that had less than five cases in which women came from within. ◆ (St. Clements Danes and St. Paul's Covent Gardens) had five instances in which a woman came from that parish. ★ (St. Katherine Cree) on the right hand side, had six instances. St. Andrews Holborne is the on the left hand side, where it is recorded that ten women came from that parish and did so commit a theft. The last three on the top of the map is St. Giles without Cripplegate (●) with eleven instances, St. Giles in the Fields (◐) with eighteen cases, and St. Martin in the Fields (▲) with twenty-two instances in which the woman convicted of a crime against property lived in that parish at the time of the crime. Not plotted on this map are parishes such as St. Ann's Westminster with ten cases in which the prisoner hailed from this parish, St. James Westminster with seven instances, and St.

³⁰ "Map of London parishes," *London Consistory Court Depositions, 1586-1611: list and indexes* (1995), pp. 2-3. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=117335> Date accessed: 28 July 2013. Shading provided by the research completed in Old Bailey from 1700-1710.

Margaret's Westminster with six. It can therefore be deduced that women from the north and the west of the city were more likely to commit crimes against property. This may be explained when discussing the social structure of London during the eighteenth century. Robert O. Bucholz and Joseph P. Ward describe London's layout and society in *London: A Social and Cultural History, 1550-1750*. In the theme of this work we can find the issue behind the reason so many of the northern parishes of London found their women committing property crimes, "nothing is inevitable about London's increasing prominence, power, wealth, or modernity, nor were the opportunities and benefits of growth distributed evenly in metropolitan society."³¹ The further north one ventured outside of the city's walls the fewer opportunities were made available and therefore the poorer and desperate the people were. Of Westminster Hall, Bucholz and Ward describe an area of affluence and depravity in close capacity, "Where the rich congregate, so too does the poor, resulting in more crime and begging."³² Bucholz and Ward continue:

The hall also contains shops and stalls to entice or refresh those pleading a case or waiting a verdict. On court days it is thronged with litigants and spectators, especially when the weather is bad, because it is a good place to get in out of the rain: another indoor public square and proto-shopping mall in early modern London. Naturally, it was also a favorite hangout for nippers (cutpurses), foisters (pickpockets), and queans (prostitutes). . . Despite being limited to the best people, early modern household accounts reveal plenty of complaints about stolen cutlery and rowdy behavior....³³

In this case, it is very likely that domestic servants were stealing from their employers while the many shop-owners found their wares missing. Women had to come into the city from the outer

³¹ Robert O. Bucholz and Joseph P. Ward, *London: A Social and Cultural History, 1550-1750*. (Cambridge, 2012), 32.

³² *Ibid.*, 63.

³³ *Ibid.*, 61-62.

parishes where they lived, usually in the north and the west, to commit these crimes thereby choosing to venture into the more affluent parishes of London.

Looking at the Old Bailey records from 1700 to 1710, it can be deduced that Garthine Walker's arguments regarding female theft crimes may be more accurate than John Beattie's. Walker noted that women stole items of the same value of those stolen by men and that 50% were more likely to work with other women while only 25% worked with men. While Beattie argued that women were weaker, often committing thefts that were less violent and daring than men, were less willing to participate in criminal activity without the coaching of a man, stole items of lesser value, and were granted more leniencies when convicted due to their femininity. Beattie's article interestingly states:

that the underreporting of two other offences, shoplifting and picking pockets, might have had relatively more effect on the apparent rate of women's crime than on men's.... In addition many of the women charged with 'stealing from the person' were prostitutes accused of robbing their clients. This clearly must have added to the reluctance of many victims to bring a prosecution, for in addition to trouble and expense, it involved a possibly embarrassing confession. It was also difficult to get evidence against the women involved, and judges, encouraged perhaps by the feeling that these men had brought their troubles on themselves....³⁴

Beattie's assertion regarding the leniencies provided to women may in fact be correct, however more research needs to be completed in order for it to be proven conclusively.

While there is much more research that needs to be done in order to definitively prove this argument, there are many findings just in the decade of 1700-1710 that display the ways in which women perpetrated property crimes that distinctly contradict Beattie's findings. This research found that in fact 52% of these?

³⁴ Beattie, "The Criminality of Women," 94-95.

women were convicted of property crimes, making them the majority, if only slightly. Women were more likely to be convicted of theft under one shilling, however, in many cases stole items of much greater value. This may show that women were given more leniency than men; however more research must be completed in order to make this determination. Additionally, more research is needed to decipher the value of items stolen by males in order to prove or disprove that women often stole items of lesser value to men. Women more often worked alone than in groups, and when working together would more often work with other women, usually in pairs, than with men, as argued by Walker. Women were more likely to be whipped or branded on the cheek than any other punishment, when specified. However, more information is needed in order to decipher whether women gained more leniency in punishments than men due to their femininity. Women more likely committed crimes against random shop-owners than in households of their employers, as argued by Beattie. Women from parishes further outside the city wall, on the north and west, were more likely to commit an act of thievery either because of lack of opportunities to the north and higher populations of wealth and therefore poor to the west. Lastly, considering the few cases looked at in some detail during the course of this article, it seems Daniel Defoe's literary depictions of female thieves coincide quite well with the historical record.

John Beattie and Garthine Walker had quite differing views from one another, and from the research presented here, regarding the statistics of specific instances revolving around female thieves. Many of this can be explained in the fact that Beattie was performing research in the 1970s when "history from below" was just taking off. Resources were scarce. Walker's research is closer to the findings presented here; however, inconsistencies could be explained by the location of her case study. Cheshire County is a much more rural area than London and therefore found fewer crimes because of a more pronounced sense of moral obligation in the countryside. Urban areas found more instances of poverty, desperation, and depravity allowing for higher cases of crime committed by women. Female acts of thievery were given a better

chance to flourish in London's bustling scene in the eighteenth century. This flourishing of female depravity did not go unnoticed by Daniel Defoe and *Moll Flanders* is the perfect example of what women can do when faced with desperate times and the moral degeneracy of eighteenth century London.

Women theft Old Bailey						
A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1 #	Name	Crime	Date	Punishment	Home Parish	Story
1	Catherine Lewis	Grand larceny	1-15-1700	branding on cheek	St. Andrew Holborne	stealing a linen bag value 1 d. and 40 l. Took money and ran after drinking together. Confessed she had disposed of 15 l., denied later.
2	Hannah Walker	Grand larceny	1-15-1700	branding on cheek	St. Clements Dones	stealing a Stuff Gown and Petticoat, a Muslin Head dress, and divers other Goods from Anne Miles, spinster. Went up stairs took stuff, went up another flight of stairs, taken. Goods upon her, denied she had any Goods.
3	Elizabeth Green	theft from a specified place	1-15-1700	death	Not specified	robber her lodging, taking a rug blanket, pair of shears, and other Goods. Known offender.
4	Elizabeth Lucas	theft under 1 s.	8-28-1700	whipping	St. Magnus the Martyr	stealing 50 yards of worst stuff, value 40 s. Came into shop, pretended to buy some Goods and placed Stuff under her Petticoat. Then decided not to buy things and left the shop with goods stolen. Allegedly she knew nothing of it, veritable, never did an ill thing, or was ever before a judge or justice in all her life. Guilty to value of 10 d.
5	Jane Wilson	housebreaking	8-28-1700	branding on cheek	St. Andrew Holbourne	Robbing the house, in the day time, taking 2 holland shirts, 8 smocks, silver fringes, dimes, and other goods. Prosecutors wife witnessed, deposed, called people to her assistance, found prisoner with lap full of goods. Denied, knowing nothing of it.
6	Mary Collins	theft under 1 s.	8-28-1700	whipping	St. James Westminster	Holland sheet, 2 shirts, goods, 2 shirts, flannel petticoat, suit of faced muslin head, silver thimble. Witnesses watched her, discovered her crime. Mother sick, asking for victuals but did not meddle with anything. Guilty to the value of 10 d. and acquitted her of the robbery.
7	Mary Jones	housebreaking	8-28-1700	death	Stepny	Taking a Damask Gown and Petticoat, Monar Petticoat, shirt, 3 smocks, laced handkerchief, serge mantle, 11 s. in money. Wife saw prisoner come out with things in her lap, took her in the fields, threw things out of her lap, carried her back, found two pick lock keys in her cloths upon searching her. Denied, mistaken identity, knew nothing of theft, could not prove it nor call on her Reputation.
8	Elizabeth Bennet & Ellinor Dic	theft under 5 s.	8-28-1700	branding on cheek	St. Leonard Sporeditch	Breaking house in day time, no one there. Taking a hood, flaxen sheet, laced Cap, 5 penner spoons. Prosecutor's wife came home and found the two prisoners in her house, goods bundled up, making their escape. Did not appear to take anything but a black hood. Guilty to the value of 4 s.
9	Rebecca Maud	burglary	8-28-1700	death	Stepny	Felony & burglary, breaking house, 2am. Took Worst stockings, 5 blew aprons, 2 plates, copper sauce pan, & other goods. Prosecutors wife said they broke a shutter, got in window, took goods. Denied, man asked her to carry goods to Be-Hilthart as she went early to the goods market, agreed, taken with the goods. Could not prove it, known old offender.
10						Stealing stuff gown, silk petticoat, & laced Ticker. Prisoner was lodged at the house, knew nothing of it, could

Figure 5: An image from the spreadsheet used to compare the cases of theft committed by women on Old Bailey Online from 1700-1710.