March 2024

Hidden Monstrosities: The Transformation of Medieval Characters and Conventions in Shakespeare's Romances

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Hidden Monstrosities: The Transformation of Medieval Characters and Conventions
in Shakespeare’s Romances

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Date of Approval:
March 20, 2024

Keywords: monster, knight, clown, fate, determinism, class, hierarchy, heir, gender, colonialism

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ABSTRACT

When Shakespeare’s First Folio was published in 1623, it was entitled *Mr. William Shakespeare’s Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*, the title designating the three genres under which his plays would be categorized for the next 250 years. Later, Irish critic Edward Dowden took it upon himself to restructure the Shakespearean canon by adding plays that were not previously published in the First Folio, reclassifying the genres of several of the plays, and establishing a new genre to accompany the previous three: romance. Within this fourth generic category of romance, Dowden situated four of the Shakespearean plays: *Pericles, Prince of Tyre; Cymbeline; The Winter’s Tale;* and *The Tempest.*

This dissertation argues that, in the final years of his life, Shakespeare began to experiment with the genre of romance by appropriating medieval romance characters and conventions and transforming them, bestowing them with more dark and tragic potential to create plays that would conform to the popular, emerging hybrid genre of tragicomedy and that would also reveal hidden monstrosities in the characters, attitudes, and behaviors to reconfigure heroes as deviants, clowns as villains, submissiveness as aggressiveness, and innocence as monstrous. Shakespeare manipulated medieval romance generic characters and conventions to highlight a greater potential for tragedy and to provide contemporary commentary on early modern anxieties and debates surrounding the turn of the seventeenth century and a changed world: religious discussions on free will versus predestination, desires for social mobility that broke down the hierarchical “chain of being,” political insecurities arising from Elizabeth I’s
death without an heir, gender debates regarding women and their expected behaviors and roles, and colonization concerns focused on the colonizer versus the colonized. The tragic potentiality and the comedic resolutions of romance—which were often bound up with religion, class, and gender—offer William Shakespeare a unique space to explore these issues.
INTRODUCTION: SITUATING ROMANCE IN THE SHAKESPEAREAN CORPUS

When Shakespeare’s First Folio was published in 1623, it was entitled Mr. William Shakespeare’s Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies, the title designating the three genres under which his plays would be categorized for the next 250 years. Later, Irish critic Edward Dowden took it upon himself to restructure the Shakespearean canon in his 1875 Shakespeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art by adding plays that were not previously published in the First Folio, reclassifying the genres of several of the plays, and establishing a new genre to accompany the previous three: romance. Within this fourth generic category of romance, Dowden situated four of the Shakespearean plays: Pericles, Prince of Tyre; Cymbeline; The Winter’s Tale; and The Tempest. Dowden’s classification of the plays into these four genres is now generally accepted by Shakespearean scholars and by the most widely used literature textbooks.

Although the dates of Shakespeare’s plays cannot be precisely verified, the romances have been considered the culmination of Shakespeare’s writing, following a long list of tragedies, including Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, and King Lear. The romances were identified early on as late comedies because both Shakespeare’s romances and his comedies share several common conventions: lovers overcoming difficulty; separation and eventual reunion; deception, disguise, and mistaken identity; and a happy ending often marked by marriage, definitive resolution, and hope for the future. However, the romances have also been labeled as tragicomedies, a blended hybrid genre beginning to emerge on the late Elizabethan stage at the turn of the 17th century, initiated by John Fletcher and used in the Beaumont and Fletcher collaborations. Tragicomedies include the lighter, comic material and happy endings of comedy,
while also accounting for the darker content of tragedy in stark contrast to the lighter material in early comedies like *Twelfth Night*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. In the tragicomedies, potentially tragic elements, like threats of death and suffering, are eventually overcome by a typical comedic resolution. Many scholars consider the Shakespearean romance essentially as a comedy that introduces tragic potentialities, though it ultimately concludes with a happy ending.

Although my dissertation is grounded in traditional close reading rather than digital analysis, it was inspired by a digital experiment in stylometry I conducted while attending the Digital Humanities Summer Institute in 2018. Stylometry has been used in the digital humanities primarily for authorship attribution, but it has also been used to detect stylistic differences between genres, especially in works written by the same author. I selected the works of William Shakespeare because of his ability to write plays successfully in a variety of genres. My original hypothesis focused on demonstrating what I believed to be a close stylistic resemblance between Shakespeare’s comedies and the plays later designated as belonging to the genre of romance based on their similar conventions, making them virtually indistinguishable.

Stylo is a statistical software tool designed for stylometric analysis that uses algorithms designed to analyze patterns of similarity and calculate distances between series of frequent words and, therefore, between texts. When I uploaded the texts of the Shakespearean comedies and romances, I was surprised to discover that my original hypothesis was unfounded and that the two genres were quite separate stylistically, as can be seen below in Figure 1.
**Figure 1.** Bootstrap consensus tree showing that the romances (in green) differ stylistically from the comedies (in red). Only exception is of two comedies often called “problem plays” because of debate in definitively classifying them in one genre or another.

With my hypothesis disproven, I changed course and determined to upload the entire Shakespearean corpus into Stylo to see if any significant results emerged. When the individual plays of the corpus were run through Stylo to identify stylistic similarities, it generated a more linear cluster analysis, or dendogram (Figure 2), which is a visual representation of distance comparable to the consensus tree. Those results were then uploaded into a program called Gephi to view a network analysis or visual representation of the material (Figure 3).
Figure 2. Cluster analysis showing distances and proximities among all of the plays. The most stylistically similar texts are located on adjacent branches. The four genres are color-coded.

Upon reviewing the two visual representations, the following interpretations of the data emerged: 1) While the results from the dendogram show Shakespeare’s histories to be spread throughout, the branch that clumped together the majority of the histories (along with the tragedy of Titus Andronicus) showed some stylistic differentiation from the other plays (more clearly seen in the distances and line thicknesses displayed in Figure 3); 2) The remaining plays branched off into two families: one branch that contained mostly comedies, and the other branch of the dendogram that contained the majority of the tragedies, along with all of the plays designated as romance; 3) The branch comprised of the tragedies and romances also contained four outliers: three plays commonly designated as comedy and one of history. However, these plays have often been regarded critically as “problem plays,” defying distinct categorization into one specific genre.
Figure 3. Visual representation from Gephi of the results produced by Stylo. Genres are color-coded, and closeness of styles are visualized by the thickness of the lines connecting the plays.

One final step was completed in Stylo using the rolling classify function which visualizes correlation between genres. The texts of each genre were uploaded as a whole and compared to the primary genre of romances. The resulting graph (Figure 4) once again shows that the tragedies (colored in blue) had the largest correlation with the romances.

Figure 4. Graph created using rolling.classify() showing the correlation of each genre with the romances. In the first (bottom) tier, tragedies (in blue) were overwhelmingly the largest influence, followed by comedies (in red) and histories (in green).
Based on the results from my stylometric analysis of the Shakespearean corpus, I approached the plays from a new perspective which has become the basis of my argument for this dissertation.

Many theories abound as to why Shakespeare shifted his writing style from tragedy to romance in his later years, theories which include his assumed ill health and possible mental illness. Edward Dowden proposed that the shift occurred primarily because of Shakespeare’s mental state during the two different periods: in the tragedies, Shakespeare was suffering through depression and his writing betrays his psychological state, but a transformative shift can be seen in the romances where he celebrates youth and reconciliation and reunion. Lytton Strachey concurred with Dowden’s interpretation of Shakespeare’s altered mental state in his later years, but he insisted instead that the stylistic shift was based on boredom and the desire to experiment and create something new. Mental exhaustion and/or illness and his desire for creative reinvigoration has also been suggested by Edmund K. Chambers. Additionally, Gerald Eades Bentley noted that Shakespeare’s company acquired the Blackfriars property in the summer of 1608, and so the shift in style may have been due to a very deliberate decision on the part of both the actors and the playwright to provide a markedly different type of play than was previously offered. Since Blackfriars catered to a more aristocratic, sophisticated audience, as recognized by Oscar G. Brockett and Franklin J. Hildy as well as by Alison Thorne, the King’s Men would have been eager to get on the stage and perhaps test their acting mettle with a new audience and with a new genre. The popularity of the hybrid genre of tragicomedy as established by Beaumont and Fletcher is also significant, as other critics including Ashley Thorndike have voiced, because it is possible that Shakespeare sought to bankroll his performances by emulating this new style that was proving lucrative. Other theories have mentioned a stronger focus on redemption during
that period and a general preponderance to reward virtue over vice, which may have also been a contributing factor.

Another theory that is highly credible is that the stylistic shift to romance was based on political predilection. According to Joseph Quincy Adams, when Elizabeth I reigned, her genre of choice was tragedy, and so Shakespeare catered to her preferences; after her 1603 death, however, James I gained the crown, and Shakespeare switched his writing style to romance in order to accommodate the preferences of the new king. In so doing, Shakespeare likely opted for happy endings in contrast to the formerly tragic ones preferred by Elizabeth. He began to experiment with the genre of romance by appropriating medieval romance characters and conventions and transforming them, bestowing them with more dark and tragic potential to create plays that would conform to the popular, emerging hybrid genre of tragicomedy and that would also reveal hidden monstrosities in the characters, attitudes, and behaviors to reconfigure heroes as deviants, clowns as villains, submissiveness as aggressiveness, and innocence as monstrous.

Elizabeth Scala argues that “Shakespeare’s late plays are also some of his most medieval ones [. . . ] in both source and texture.” She also states that the late plays “defy the categorizations of the First Folio” (137) and that even the name “romance” is medieval in origin. I agree with Scala in her designation of each of the late plays (or late comedies) resembling medieval romances and not conforming to the three genres originally categorizing Shakespeare’s plays. However, I further argue that Shakespeare manipulated medieval romance generic characters and conventions to highlight a greater potential for tragedy and to provide contemporary commentary on early modern anxieties and debates.
Originating in the twelfth century, especially in French and Anglo-Norman translations, and gaining immense popularity as they metamorphosed in the early modern/Renaissance period, English romance has been repeatedly identified by scholars as the most popular and widely distributed literary form from the twelfth through seventeenth centuries. The most common conventions of the romance themselves can be easily identified: the valiant and chivalrous knight-errant; the beautiful, distressed damsel he fights for; the long, enduring, solitary quest; the decisive battles and tournaments encountered on that quest; the appearance of magic and of supernatural forces/beings, including fairies, giants, and dragons; the overarching hand of Providence as it guides the hero’s fate or destiny; exotic settings involving the adventure along with the danger of the landscape and of the sea; and of course, the matter of love.

Helen Cooper’s seminal book *The English Romance in Time* is structured around detailed descriptions of a variety of traditional romance motifs, particularly focusing on their evolution and transformation as the romance progressed from the medieval to the early modern periods—from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the death of Shakespeare, as the subtitle clarifies. Cooper explains the romance motif as “a unit of literature that proves so useful, so infectious, that it begins to take on a life of its own”; she then adjusts her terminology to more accurately identify a motif as a “meme,” which she defines as “an idea that behaves like a gene in its ability to replicate faithfully and abundantly, but also on occasion to adapt, mutate, and therefore survive in different forms and cultures” (3). The above memes are seen to do exactly that as the romance evolved across the centuries: they adapted to the historical, political, religious, and cultural context in which they found themselves, mutated to fit those contexts and successfully absorb themselves into the culture, and ultimately, survived because of this transformative nature to entertain and delight a great variety of readers for well over 900 years—and this time span does
not even begin to cover the ancient and classical romances composed outside of England that were the originators of this form. Cooper indicates that the romance memes basically remain the same on the surface, but the usage and understanding of them changes over time as every generation brings different cultural expectations in their readings of past works of literature, allowing for new meanings to be discovered and new responses to be constructed. The abiding appeal of these memes is a result of their tremendous adaptability as well as of their intimate familiarity to multiple cultures and generations.

Although scholars and critics have debated the designation of romance as a distinct genre and several, most notably Julie Eckerle, have preferred to view it more as a strategy used within genres, Cooper among others distinguishes romance as having its own generic identity and likens her terminology to that of a lineage of a family of texts, wherein various narratives share a family resemblance that helps audiences to identify similar characteristics and conventions. She attributes this identification to a generic awareness perceived by both the writers and the readers that contributes to a common knowledge and understanding of the romance, what it should contain and how it should work. Certain expectations are built in to the idea of romance that demands the inclusion and subsequent development of the motifs central to the genre. Successful writers of romances recognize this demand for familiarity, but they rely on variation to make the motif new and surprising in order to bring reinvigorated meanings to audiences so that the convention does not lose its appeal and become mundane and tedious. Instead, the motif becomes vibrant and new as it is reconfigured to suit changing desires and ideas; variation of the pattern gives it power.

Variations and transformations of motifs were integral to my study as I discuss how Shakespeare borrowed earlier medieval and romantic characters and conventions to incorporate
into his late plays, especially his penchant for gleaning subject matter and themes from the medieval period from a variety of similar genres. In her discussion of generic similarities or family resemblances in romances, Cooper explains that commonalities between related genres do exist and are inherently recognizable, but that their unshared properties also indicate generic difference. Although she acknowledges the often very close similarities between romance and a variety of medieval genres, Cooper’s study distinguishes the romance based on these generic differences. For instance, she claims that the romance is distinguished from the saint’s life, or hagiography, by an emphasis on secular ideals and human perfectibility rather than on godly ideals and human sinfulness and imperfection so integral to the need for God’s grace in hagiography. Geraldine Heng suggests that the saint’s life is basically a subtype of romance, similar to family romances that feature families, especially women and children, rather than knights. It is commonly recognized that Shakespeare’s romances prominently feature families, especially fathers and daughters, and Heng’s proposal is essential to any discussion of the heroines in these plays who are often noted for their saint-like behavior and attitudes. One theme that prevails within the saints’ lives genre is that of incest, which Elizabeth Archibald says is typically written as “cautionary tales produced by clerics, warnings to the faithful of the dreadful consequences of unconfessed sin and the dangers of sexuality, or examples of the extraordinary grace granted to those who are truly contrite” (17). In romances, however, Archibald claims that the “heavy moralizing or punishment for sinful desires” (18) is absent and that the heroine somehow learns her identity and escapes any possibilities that would constitute an incestuous relationship to finally experience the happy ending typical of the romance that usually ends in marriage. Archibald argues that the innocent heroine of the romances often is depicted as needing to experience undeserved suffering before earning her reward, making her a model of
Christ, and Shakespeare effectively emulates this medieval model in his own romance, *Pericles*, though he alters the model by allowing the heroine to face the potential threat of incestuous desires from a father that she does not recognize. This opposition between incestuous impurity and suffering saintliness is important to my discussion of Pericles and his several relationships, especially with that of his own daughter. It also informs my argument regarding the saint-like women in Shakespeare’s romances, the lost heirs who have been cast down from their elevated statuses to experience life among the lower classes as I suggest an alternative reading of these females focused on the hidden monstrosity lurking beneath a surface reading of their characters, revealing the heroine as rebellious to patriarchal and to royal authority as well as to cultural traditions and norms.

Regarding romance’s incorporation of Christianity, Cooper pinpoints the First Crusade with “help[ing] to integrate emerging ideas of knighthood with piety and the defence of the Church” (42), and Nandini Das acknowledges the “overtly Christianized and spiritualized context to the actual tasks of knighthood” (12). Additionally, in his *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye claims that the typical romance follows a common narrative thread where the hero is analogous to Christ, or the Messiah, who comes from the upper world, while his foe is analogous to Satan, or the demonic powers, of the lower world. Later in *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance*, he expands the metaphor, saying that romance shares many underlying structures with Christianity that include courtship, heroic struggle, deferral of knowledge, and dilation of desire. Barbara Fuchs also addresses the merging of Christianity and romance, citing Tasso’s argument in an effort to assuage the controversy that “what may seem wondrous from a human perspective […] may be verisimilar when read as a manifestation of God’s power,” essentially “Christianiz[ing] the marvelous into the miraculous” (75). Yet she
acknowledges that this “counter-Reformation attempt to tame the marvelous by placing it in a theological context only risks greater unorthodoxy, by making the poet an opportunistic mimic of God’s truth” (75). Cooper argues that this assimilation of romance and Christian ideologies resulted in the Church’s suppression of the genre and public admonitions to beware the dangers of reading romance.

Dani Cavallaro’s discussion on this issue is pivotal, stating that the chivalric romances involve a “gradual Christianization of originally pagan motifs” (46), and she points to the Grail in Arthurian literature as example. After the Reformation, Arthurian legend in particular was linked to Catholic transubstantiation and was, therefore, seen as dangerous. Spenser’s Duessa from The Faerie Queene also drinks from a grail and has been linked to the biblical whore of Babylon, understood by Protestants to be the Catholic Church. Tiffany Jo Werth’s book The Fabulous Dark Cloister: Romance in England after the Reformation addresses this post-Reformation Protestant reaction to Catholicism, arguing that the romance provided Protestant writers (in which she includes Shakespeare) with a way to discredit Catholicism and its addiction to the supernatural, especially recognizable in the earlier hagiography that focused on religious miracles and wonders. Werth points to the Protestant adaptation of the Catholic supernatural by, for instance, Spenser’s obviously Catholic Duessa being overcome by the Protestant Una. She also cites Sidney’s attempts in Arcadia to “reclaim a popular mode of storytelling by sanitizing it of miracles [and] abbeys” (54), transforming the princess Pamela into a Protestant martyr akin to those in Foxe’s Acts and Monuments rather than engaging in fraudulent miracles and wonders, assumedly like those practiced in the Catholic Church.

One romantic theme that figured in early modern religious discourse was on the concept of fate or fortune controlling the destiny of the hero. On the one side, many Protestants staunchly
believed in the concept of predestination, which is the belief that one is destined to remain in the place appointed to him or her by God, especially regarding the afterlife—God determines who was destined to be saved and who was destined to be damned. To complicate matters further, those who believed in predestination were divided into two basic groups: those who believed that God had ordained some to heaven and some to hell while giving others free will with the capacity to choose; and those who believed that God preordained all men to either heaven or hell without any having free will or choice. The concept of predestination also relates to the early modern ideology of hierarchical order and the Great Chain of Being. On the opposite side, many Protestants embraced the concept of free will and the freedom to choose where one would remain for eternity. This religious debate is recognized by Paul Fletcher who notes that the play *Pericles* is primarily concerned with the overcoming of human evil by divine power over fortune and destiny. While I agree with Fletcher that divine intervention does ultimately allow for the play’s happy resolution that is typical of romance, I suggest that the entire play is driven by fate and destiny as essentially unconquerable through human means. Furthermore, I argue that Pericles’s decision to refuse to provide the deciphered answer to Antiochus’s riddle, namely the revelation of incest between the king and his daughter, forced fate to repeatedly present incestuous and otherwise inappropriate relationships into his story and into his daughter’s story, as if the taboo was an inescapable, unavoidable, foregone conclusion. In her discussion of the source of *Pericles*, however, Archibald recognizes that the prince ultimately experiences restoration because of his rejection of incest toward his daughter, allowing the story to arrive at its romantic conclusion. I agree with Archibald’s reasoning, but I also suggest that Marina becomes both the sacrifice and the savior of the story, and it is only through her wisdom and determination that the story can escape the tragic potential Pericles unwittingly allowed by his
decision to avoid his obligation to answer the riddle and complete his quest. In Pericles’s failed quest, Shakespeare effectively addresses the religious controversy between free will and predestination and highlights the tensions of the debate without actually taking a stance for either theory.

Although it constitutes chronicles of knightly adventures, Cooper also distinguishes romance from another generic similarity, the Old French heroic epic, or the *chanson de geste* (“song of heroic deeds” about heroes like Charlemagne), by romance’s lack of precision regarding time and space; romances, as Heng also recognizes, are traditionally seen as elusive in their depiction of place, existing anywhere or every place. However, with the possible exception of *The Tempest*, Shakespeare’s romances are very specific geographically, even in a play like *Pericles* where his wanderings or quests feature the depiction of multiple countries and settings. To complement Cooper’s recognition of their differing characteristics, however, Cavallaro observes that, unlike the *chanson de geste*, the romance hero is characterized by uncertainty as he sets out without any particular mission or clear goals, seeking adventure and perilous encounters by which he can prove his mettle. Cavallaro insists that the spirit of adventure propels the romance forward so that the actual quest is not nearly as important as the action, a point also corroborated by Jennifer Goodman, yet she is more emphatic about the testing of the hero’s mettle as being the chief purpose of the journey. *Pericles* is representative of this adventurous spirit with Shakespeare introducing a prince/knight who wanders the Mediterranean in search of a bride. Pericles is, indeed, tested with riddles and with murder attempts and with tournaments before losing everything in a terrible tempest. However, he leaves his daughter in another land for the next fourteen years and returns to his own country of Tyre, seeking what he thought was best for his people, a theme characteristic of the *chanson de geste*. 
The epic has also been said to be quite distinct from the romance as a genre. Cooper recognizes that the major differences between the epic and the romance lie in their use of language and in their emphasis: epic focuses on history and the founding of nations, while romance focuses on the inward priorities and objectives of the protagonist. Fuchs also associates the epic with “political instrumentality” and with “the birth of nations” (66), while romance instead privileges the wandering hero and his personal commitments and goals. As stated above, Cavallaro insists that the spirit of adventure is of primary importance to the romance, the “animating force at the heart of chivalric romance” (24). The romantic hero enjoys amorous dalliances and meandering wanderings; courtly games, tournaments, and jousting; fighting supernatural beings when necessary for seemingly no purpose other than to impress the damsel—as well as to entertain and fascinate the reader. He is not involved in battles in which the fate of his nation depends, as in epic. Rather, Cavallaro distinguishes the epic as defined by gravity and solemnity, especially in contrast with the less weighty romance, portraying a warlike feudal society whose primary obligation was to fight and to be brave in battle and to emerge victorious, committed to the shaping of national identities. Shakespeare’s play Cymbeline complicates this careful distinction between epic and romance. Set in ancient Britain and portraying an early Celtic British king, the story was integral to the nation as one of the key legends promoting the Matter of Britain, the medieval legends and literature that helped to establish nationalistic pride. The plotline contains heavy matter that includes much tragic potential, including rape, murder, kidnapping, deception, disguise, battles, and a very gruesome scene with a headless body. It is not the carefree, adventure-filled romance that Cavallaro calls distinct from the war-like epic.
Although scholars note the nationalistic agenda as a prime difference between the romance and the epic (and also between the romance and other literary genres like the chanson de geste and the chronicle), Heng disagrees, arguing that because of its wide audience and popularity, romance “subserves nationalist momentum, and nationalist requirements, in the projection of a national community and its future” (7). She further suggests based on her analysis of Arthurian literature that romance is “a genre of the nation: a genre about the nation and for the nation’s important fictions” (113). The assumption that epic and romance are very different has also been challenged by Colin Burrow in his book Epic Romance: Homer to Milton. He insists that both genres are actually interrelated and, in fact, derive from each other, especially in their evocation of sympathy, although he acknowledges that “different periods have varied in their conceptions of what is involved in sympathetic recognition of self in the other” (9), another motif that transforms as it reaches successive generations. Burrows’s central claim is that epic is not only about imperial duty, but it implies the author’s attempt to embrace “alien forms of feeling,” which in itself is another building block of nation-making and another characteristic of Shakespearean romance and especially of Cymbeline.

Although it is now commonly recognized as being located in the genre of romance, some scholars have argued that Cymbeline belongs to the histories instead, firstly because of its historical basis on an actual ancient British king and secondly because of its background story of being under Rome’s authority and its insistence on the king paying tribute. Fletcher has noted that Cymbeline’s Queen and her son Cloten both reject any obligation to pay said tribute and they initially persuade the king “in sturdily patriotic tones about Britain’s ability to resist any foreign invader” (238) to also refuse this obligation; Cymbeline’s refusal, however, instigates a war between Rome and Britain. The duo’s patriotism then is experienced by the reader as evil
because of the impetus to war and because their characters repeatedly voice nefarious intentions of murder and rape and plot to place Cloten on the throne. Fletcher suggests that the backstory mimics contemporary British politics, which were moving away from Elizabethan patriotism and instead embracing a Jacobean ideal of international harmony.

Joseph Bowling concurs with Fletcher’s analysis, arguing King Cymbeline’s resistance to pay tribute “plays out the desire for English sovereignty, James’s absolutism and isolationist policies, as well as his desire to thereby redefine the kingdom according to his vision of a unified Great Britain” (83). Bowling claims that Elizabethan writers did not attach legends of Geoffrey of Monmouth onto any particular political agenda of Elizabeth other than praise of the queen; however, those legends became central to Jacobean politics with James cast allegorically as a Second Brute: “justify[ing] James’s initiative to unify Scotland, Wales, and England as Great Britain . . . reuniting the realms that the first Brute divided among his sons” (90). Named after the legendary wife of Brutus, Imogen’s story becomes one of “reinvention of the legendary material” as she “emerges as the exemplar of an originary British identity” (99). Ros King agrees with the assessment of Cymbeline as significant to the construction of British nationhood, citing the Roman attitude of Britain as a wild island on the world’s edge, signaling a world beyond Britain, and as such looking forward to Britain’s imperial ambitions. Additionally, the shows of sovereignty (Cloten’s refusal to pay tribute, the Queen’s aggressive speech) reflected James I’s imperial adoptions.

Kristin Bezio also places Pericles in the discourse on national identity, suggesting that the play is an open critique of the union between Scotland and England proposed by James. To the early modern English, union represented the abuse of royal prerogative and the potential loss of English national identity. Susan Frye concurs with Bezio concerning incest themes as helping
to fashion national identity; she claims that the spectacle of incest on the English stage is a recurring theme in Renaissance England that was specifically intended to provide discourse on politics and especially the “search for royal authority” (39). I also agree with their claims of incest themes in literature as representative of a nationalist agenda and suggest within my chapter on *Pericles* that the political and historical climate was reflected through the hints of incest throughout the entire play.

Another prominent medieval genre that is comparable to the romance, and which is also involved in nation-making, is the travel narrative, or ethnography. What makes these two genres so similar to each other, as Heng claims, is that their narratives, while not altogether fictitious, are also not altogether factual. Travel narratives present themselves as representations of reality, yet often they are filled with the same fantastic elements of romance and even use the same chivalric language. In his book *Romance on the Early Modern Stage*, Cyrus Mulready discusses the romance play blending geography and the “language of overseas exploration and voyaging” and “bridging the imaginative with the real” (18), proving that this connection was not just recognizable in print but also in performance. In her book *Chivalry and Exploration, 1298-1630*, Goodman compares the adventures of exploration and conquest to the nature of late medieval chivalry, claiming that exploration is “a natural outgrowth of the medieval ‘cult of knight-errantry’” (6). This material will be very helpful in my discussion of chivalric romance within Shakespeare’s last plays because my contention is that Shakespeare relied on the conventions of medieval chivalry and errant knights and quests setting out on adventures of exploration, particularly in his first romance *Pericles*, only to transform them into motifs laden with much more tragic potential and much more depraved and nefarious intent before ultimately bringing them back to a harmonious and happy resolution.
Claiming likewise that “old tropes of chivalric fiction are turned into something rich and strange” (51) in Renaissance romances, Das also recognizes the “new errantry [of] the young Elizabethan traveler” (95), stating that the trend or the understood necessity of the grand tour of Europe was a rite of passage to help a young man to expand his education through travel. She also notes the change in class hierarchy in these early modern romances, connecting errantry with “romance’s promise of social mobility, rather than as a class-specific knightly ritual” (95), thus providing further evidence of romance’s transformational tendency as they accommodated new audiences and contexts.

Goodman’s study of exploration and conquest, as the title of the book designates, stretches from the late Middle Ages up until the mid-seventeenth century, reflecting the years of intense exploratory travel and global worldview as England strived to stretch its lands conquered, thus making romance, as Heng suggests, an integral part of the story of “Europe’s history of overseas empire-making” (6). New maps and travelers’ accounts were abundant and provided material for Renaissance romance writers, providing more wonder and imagination to readers as they could now trace on a map a hero’s journey, much like one might do with Pericles’s journey. Mulready points to maps as having the unique ability to allow readers “speculative imaginings […] to reflect on those places yet to be found and explored” (8), providing them with “imaginative possession” (9) wherein they experienced a sense of power and “mastery over the foreign” (9). Romance writers drew on these principles, incorporating both real and fictive places into their writings so that readers could speculate about lands beyond their reach and the types of different people that inhabited those lands, again both real and fictive. “As new worlds enter the cultural imagination,” according to Heng, “technology and emergent mentalities enable travel to be configured as adventure, and the wonders of geography to be newly re-invested as magic” (6).
This concept of the wonders of new worlds is very significant to my study of *The Tempest*, an island that scholars are divided about on whether it can, indeed, be mapped or not. Some insist that the island cannot be accurately identified geographically, following Heng’s claim that romance is simultaneously about “no place” and “every place.” Others suggest that Shakespeare includes hints that would position the island in various debatable places, including the Mediterranean or Bermuda. Both sides of this debate are important to my study of *The Tempest* because I argue that the perception of the characters of Miranda and Caliban are tantamount to the former as colonizer and the latter as colonized, and a determination of geographical proximity or definitiveness may enhance that perception. Additionally, Fletcher argues that Prospero “betrays a sadistic delight in threatening Caliban with torments” (249), a delight that Miranda seems to revel in also as retribution for the attempted attack she experienced from Caliban, which furthers my claim about Miranda’s hidden monstrosity in her compliance and even eagerness to abuse the deformed slave Caliban.

One of the key ways that the romance had begun to change in the early modern period was through its insistence on a more realistic concept. Fuchs observes that these later romances “attempt[ed] to convey a refined aesthetics of decorum and verisimilitude, which is used to distinguish them from the perceived improbabilities of chivalric romance” (100), although she does note that they develop a more elevated language to compensate for their departure from overt fantasy, resulting in the characters’ speech and behavior appearing “more artificial and self-conscious” (101). Michael McKeon argues that such movements as the scientific revolution and the Protestant Reformation were responsible for causing authors to champion realistic narratives. Along with the shift toward realism, Cavallaro claims that readers in the eighteenth century, later designated as the Age of Reason, became “deeply suspicious of anything
otherworldly and magical” (22), recognizing supernatural and fantasy to be the “province of gullible peasants” (22). Far from scholarly claims of romance disappearing or ending during this period, however, Fuchs claims that the turn to verisimilitude allowed the romance to survive and thrive within alternative genres, demonstrating the reliance of newer forms on older romance structures. This cultural and historical view will inform my dissertation and my arguments regarding the borrowing of medieval conventions and characteristics and transforming them to provide commentary on the early modern period. The magical and supernatural, for instance, did not disappear but became more focused on theological debates about providence and fate.

My argument focuses primarily on the medieval and romance conventions discussed above, but my main concern is how Shakespeare transformed them within his late romances to endow them with more tragic potential than what had been done in the past without allowing that potential to ever come to fruition. I will discuss characters who embody those tragic potentialities, what I call those “hidden” monstrosities whose motives and intentions are either ambiguous or subtle or who are surprising or ironic. My main areas of concern will be heroes who are participants in either incestuous or otherwise inappropriate father-daughter relationships, clowns who threaten rape and violence toward women, saint-like women who openly rebel and willfully defy patriarchal and social norms and laws, and the ultimate “hidden” monster who poses as colonizer to the actual monster who is the colonized. These recurring elements in Shakespeare’s romances are built on early modern anxieties concerning sexual transgressions and abuses of power. Shakespeare’s focus on the serious tragic potential of these threats—together with his ultimate dispelling of that potential—allows his plays to offer ambivalent commentary on the instabilities of the early seventeenth century.
This dissertation argues that in his final years of his career (and of his life), Shakespeare began to experiment with the genre of romance by taking, what were in the early seventeenth century, archaic medieval romance characters and conventions and transforming them, rendering them with more dark and tragic potential than previously executed in his earlier plays in order to create a new genre that conformed to the popular, emerging hybrid genre of tragicomedy. Additionally, as I will demonstrate, an underlying purpose in writing these final romances was to provide commentary about the anxieties and contemporary issues surrounding the turn of the seventeenth century and a changed world: religious discussions on free will versus predestination, desires for social mobility that broke down the hierarchical “chain of being,” political insecurities arising from Elizabeth I’s death without an heir, gender debates regarding women and their expected behaviors and roles, and colonization concerns focused on the colonizer versus the colonized. I argue that the tragic potentiality and the comedic resolutions of romance—which were often bound up with religion, class, and gender—offer William Shakespeare a unique space to explore these issues.
CHAPTER ONE:

“ALL LOVE THE WOMB THAT THEIR FIRST BEING BRED”:
THE CHIVALRIC KNIGHT ERRANT AND THE RIDDLE THAT SEALED HIS FATE

In 1608, William Shakespeare essentially reinvented himself by drafting and staging a play in an entirely new genre than he had written up to that point, a genre that had gained prominence and popularity in an earlier time: romance. In the medieval period especially, the genre of romance characteristically featured chivalric knights who travel far and wide in search of adventure and prestige and a fair damsel in distress. The chivalric knight was compelled to prove his mettle and bravely fight in tournaments or battles with the persistent echo of “faint hearts never won fair lady” and the unremitting intention of rescuing, wooing, and winning said fair lady. Shakespeare had already made a name and reputation of distinction for himself with the writing and staging of his comedies, histories, and tragedies; however, in the final plays of his canon, I argue that Shakespeare turned his pen toward the the genre of romance and began to experiment with it by appropriating medieval, and by that time, archaic characters and conventions and transforming them to conform to his 17th-century audience in an effort to appeal to their more sophisticated sensibilities of literature and drama and to their particular contemporary issues and debates.

Shakespeare’s first romance was *Pericles: Prince of Tyre*, a play that represented his very first experimentation with the genre, in which he made sure to include almost every medieval romance character and convention within the five acts. The hero Pericles experiences the episodic adventures and wanderings typifying him as knight errant. He pursues the obligatory
quest and deciphers a puzzle to win the hand of a princess. He marvels at the battered armor that had earlier preserved his father’s life miraculously washing up on shore. He courageously faces a joust or tournament in which he battles for the hand of yet another princess. He possesses the ship and endures the shipwrecks. He encounters the assistance as well as the opposition of supernatural forces, both divine in Providence and in the goddess Diana and natural in the stars, wind, rain, thunder, and the seas that persistently drive him and guide him on his journey and toward his destiny. He even suffers the fall from high elevation and prominence with a return to that high place at the end of the play, the typical romance pattern recognized by Northrop Frye (Secular Scripture). All of the typical motifs that are characteristic to the chivalric knight and the medieval romance genre were included within this play.

Shakespeare’s Pericles is the epitome of the romance hero and of chivalric knighthood with all of its accompanying characteristic obligations and attributes. He is royalty, a prince who travels to a foreign country in the first act of the play to attempt to solve a riddle posed by a king. The opportunity to play the game and guess at the riddle has only two possible outcomes: for whomever may discover the answer to the king’s riddle, the promise of the hand of his daughter, the princess; for whomever guesses incorrectly, death. The riddle, however, divulges an unthinkable secret: the fact that King Antiochus had been sleeping with his own daughter for apparently some time.

The incestuous relationship that Antiochus and his daughter share is overt and indisputable, especially in its interpretation by readers as taboo. However, two other father-daughter relationships exist in the play that some scholars have considered to be representative of “proper” father-daughter relationships in contrast to this first one discussed in Act 1. The first relationship again features a king and his unmarried daughter, and it indirectly involves Pericles
when he participates in a tournament to win the hand of this princess after his devastating loss and escape from Antiochus. The second relationship involves Pericles more directly when he meets his grown daughter Marina whom he had believed to have died. Several scholars have recognized that the relationship between Pericles and Marina may be indicative of the possibility of incest, including Ruth Nevo and Margaret Jane Kidnie. I argue, however, that both of these two later father-daughter relationships are not proper in the least and actually constitute a continuation of the incest cycle, which had its inception when Pericles made the choice to eschew his chivalric duty and not intervene and confront King Antiochus once he discerned the true meaning of the riddle. His responsibility as chivalric knight and romantic hero demanded that he rescue the damsel in distress and free her from a tyrannical ruler, even if that tyrannical ruler were her own father and even if the incest were consensual, as it seems to be in the narration: “custom what they did begin / Was with long use accounted no sin” (I.Chorus.29-30). Pericles’s deliberate decision to evade his responsibility to free the princess from the hands of a lascivious father enacted a cycle of incest for approximately the next two decades of his life, allowing fate or destiny to control his life and the lives of his family.

This chapter explores the unfortunate early decision made by Pericles to ignore the sin of incest, leading to a perpetual cycle of both real and potential incest implicit in the three father-daughter relationships within the play that only finally reaches its culmination when Pericles decides not to act on his attraction to his own daughter and instead interrogates her familial background to at last arrive at the truth. In writing this play as his first foray into romance, I suggest that Shakespeare adopted the medieval character of the chivalric knight errant and transformed this hero into a deviant, unable to escape the shadow of incest and persistently tormented by phantoms of inappropriateness until his actions finally proved meritorious and worthy
as he finally rescues a damself in distress—his own daughter. Furthermore, I suggest that
Shakespeare used the theme of incest as analogy to address and contextualize several larger
cultural, historical, and political anxieties of the period, including allegations of incest within the
Tudor and Stuart dynasties and incest used as metaphor for the desires of colonization. Primarily,
however, I suggest that the overarching theme of incest within *Pericles* was particularly intended
to provide commentary for his seventeenth-century audience on early modern religious debates
regarding free will and predestination.

A preoccupation with incest was a dominant social and cultural concern of early modern
England, according to Bruce Boehrer, with incest themes appearing both implicitly and explicitly
in the imaginative literature of the period, reflecting “cultural anxieties regarding family
structure” (5). J. A. Sharpe also discusses early modern family structure, recognizing two family
types that co-existed at the time of Shakespeare’s writing: the “open lineage family” which was
“open-ended, low-keyed, unemotional and authoritarian” with little to no intimacy or close
feelings shared among immediate family members; and the “patriarchal nuclear family” in which
loyalties to immediate family members was “replaced by strengthened loyalties to the nation
state or the monarch, or to a sect or church” (58). In both family types, the family structure
seems to place low priority on close kinship and the family unit and more focus on the
individual.

To accompany these cultural anxieties with the family structure, Elizabeth Barnes argues
that charges of incest have been historically “aimed at marginal or underprivileged groups as a
way of demonizing them” (4). This demonization is certainly evident with another
Shakespearean romance character: *The Tempest*’s Caliban as half monster/half human native of
the island who is subject to colonization by Prospero and his daughter. However, Shakespeare
also took an alternative course of action in his romances and chose to demonize the elite instead, most obviously with King Antiochus and his daughter in *Pericles*, the immoral and incestuous relationship that begins the play and that, in my argument, drives the entirety of the play toward its ultimate conclusion, one which has the tragic potential to end in incest until the revelation that Pericles and the young female he is perhaps briefly attracted to are, in fact, father and daughter.

Barnes further explains that incest became a “prerogative of the rich” and that in medieval and early modern literature, incest “frequently represents aristocratic privilege [. . . ] a way for the powerful to maintain and solidify their political control” (4). Similarly, Elizabeth Archibald argues that the taboo of incest was socially determined and more of a cultural construction based on its popularity and predominance in medieval literature, which looked on it with “unblinking acceptance” (18), or as what some have called a patriarchal privilege. Lisa Hopkins concurs, noting that incest in the seventeenth century was viewed as an abomination in the lower classes, but certain degrees of it was practiced with impunity in royal families, calling incest “the perk of families in power and operat[ing . . . ] as a way of perpetuating that power and of excluding others from access to it” (104). Frank Whigham also takes into account aristocratic privilege and explains that feudal societies desired stasis and sought to keep the blood within one’s own kinship group. Whigham further argues that incest functions as the elite’s fear of contamination from the lower classes, though the intrigue of upward mobility may have been a catalyst for literature that featured aristocratic incest as a subtle attack on the upper classes.

Additionally, incest was a recurring theme of politics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as recognized by Susan Frye, especially since royalty constructed their own meaning of incest, often debating which relationships were included in or exempt from the taboo. She notes that the theme of incest was often used as political commentary: “In Renaissance England
the heads of the Tudor and Stuart families used shifting definitions of incest to fashion the personal and familial identities that figured in an emerging national identity” (39). Seventeenth-century audiences had been provided several examples of royal incest; for instance, Elizabeth’s father Henry VIII suffered accusations of having an incestuous relationship with his first wife Katherine of Aragon because she was his brother’s wife, a designation that the king ultimately encouraged after his 24-year marriage because, according to S. Frye, his political motivation was to have a son and he wanted to justify his divorce to potentially produce a male heir with another wife (40). She goes on to explain that Henry wished to end his marriage to Elizabeth’s mother Anne Boleyn and execute her for treason because of her supposed multiple sexual liaisons, including the charge of double incest: Henry had apparently had relations with her older sister before the marriage, and Anne was accused of having relations with her own brother during the marriage. Elizabeth was a victim as well because she was the daughter of “the incestuous queen” (42). Her successor, James, was also a child of incest because his mother Mary Stuart had married her cousin, though Boehrer claims that, unlike Elizabeth, he never suffered from that stigma but the allegations instead strengthened his claim to the throne as male heir and as the father of two sons who would continue the stability of the royal line (87-88); most notably, however, he was, in fact, rumored to have had an incestuous romance with his mother, though this was most likely untrue.

Another reason that the theme of incest may have been so popular and prevalent in early modern literature, and especially at the turn of the seventeenth century, is because of the transition of monarchy from Elizabeth to James and the political ideals espoused by the new king in terms of the unification of Britain. Joseph Bowling claims that Elizabethan writers did not attach legends of Geoffrey of Monmouth and other such legends of romance onto any particular
political agenda of Elizabeth other than praise of the queen; however, those legends became
central to Jacobean politics with James cast allegorically as a Second Brute: “justify[ing] James’s
initiative to unify Scotland, Wales, and England as Great Britain . . . reuniting the realms that the
first Brute divided among his sons” (90). Kristin Bezio also places Pericles in the discourse on
national identity, suggesting that the play is an open critique of the union between Scotland and
England proposed by James. To the early modern English, union represented the abuse of royal
prerogative and the potential loss of English national identity. S. Frye concurs with Bezio
concerning incest themes as helping to fashion national identity; she claims that the spectacle of
incest on the English stage is a recurring theme in Renaissance England that was specifically
intended to provide discourse on politics and especially the “search for royal authority” (39).
When Shakespeare wrote about incest, it is very likely that he was using it as metaphor for
James’s political agenda at uniting kindred nations into one.

Along with its preoccupation with incest, another romantic convention that figured in
eyearly modern literature was the concept of Fate or Fortune controlling the steps of the hero with
Providence guiding him toward his destiny and the story’s denouement. I argue that Shakespeare
wrote this concept into Pericles, employing it as a means of commenting on the extensive debate
in early modern religious discourse concerning free will versus determinism, and as David
Bevington has expressed, “No controversy loomed larger in the Renaissance than that of
religious differences” (107). The controversy revolved around whether or not man completely
exercises free will with the ability to act according to his or her own discretion without any
constraint of fate or necessity. Determinism, at the opposite end of the spectrum, believes that all
of life is determined in advance by causes external to the will, with some extremists claiming
that man cannot be held morally responsible for his actions because of the direction and intervention of outside forces.

Central to this argument is the question of what would happen in the afterlife. Some embraced the idea of free will and the freedom to choose one’s actions and beliefs, the freedom to choose to do good deeds and accept divine grace, which would then determine where one would remain for eternity. Others adhered to the concept of predestination, or the belief that one is destined to remain in the place appointed to him or her by God, whereas God ultimately determines who is destined to be saved and who is destined to be damned. Protestants leaned toward this concept, according to Bevington, because of their belief in salvation by grace and not by “meritorious acts [. . .] as a presumed means of ‘earning’ salvation”; he further states that Lutherans and Calvinists in particular maintained this position, believing that “salvation was the gift of God alone, to be bestowed as he chose on the Faithful” (112). God, or Providence, determined who would be the elect, the chosen ones who would be redeemed and share in the inheritance of heaven.

Shakespeare approaches the religious debate in *Pericles* by providing for both free will and for determinism and thereby challenging his audience to make their own assumptions and determinations. First, he highlights the concept of determinism by emphasizing fate and destiny as essentially unconquerable, at least through human means; therefore, divine intervention and the guiding hand of divine providence become the only means possible to allow for the play’s happy resolution that is typical of romance. This divine intervention is recognized by Paul Fletcher in his suggestions that the play is primarily concerned with the overcoming of human evil by divine power over fortune and destiny. As I have argued, Pericles’s decision to refuse to provide the deciphered answer to Antiochus’s riddle, namely the revelation of incest between the
king and his daughter, forced fate to repeatedly present incestuous and otherwise inappropriate relationships into his story and into his daughter’s story, as if the taboo were an inescapable, unavoidable, foregone conclusion. Without divine intervention, the predetermined fate of Pericles would lead to his demise: physically, morally, and spiritually.

Shakespeare, however, also allows for free will by presenting opportunities for Pericles to successfully navigate in order to alter his destiny and break the cycle of incest he initiated with the refusal to rescue the princess from tyranny. The father-daughter reunion between Pericles and Marina and the resultant attraction is foreordained because of Pericles’s refusal to act over fourteen years previous and, likely, so is the outcome, but Pericles still is given free will to make that choice or to refuse to listen to the hints of impropriety. Therefore, in Pericles’s spiritual failure and his ultimate restoration, Shakespeare effectively addresses the religious controversy between free will and determinism and highlights the tensions of the debate without actually taking a stance for either side.

Integral to this combination of free will and determinism in Pericles is the idea that man is allowed to make mistakes and to learn from them; and he is then shown grace and mercy in return through the act of restoration. Bevington further elaborates on this combined approach to the debate by pointing to God’s “foreknowledge” of man’s sinful nature, claiming that “he knows that some humans will fall spiritually and be eternally damned. God does not will each person’s actions, but he does evidently grant that some will be saved and some will not”; he goes on to state that “mercy is God’s gift to give or not to give as he sees fit in his mysterious and infinite wisdom” (129). Pericles, too, missed the opportunity to be the hero and illuminate the sinful transgressions of a king. His choice to avoid his chivalric obligations and instead preserve his own life carried with it the punishment of years of torment revolving around the same
transgressions he refused to voice. But mercy is provided by divine providence, allowing him to alter his destiny; all he has to do is receive that gift in order to earn his reward and discontinue the cycle.

The beginning of the cycle of incest in *Pericles* is revealed in the first lines of Act I by the medieval poet Gower, who himself had written a medieval romance version of this story, dating back to Greek antiquity--another nod to the romance genre and its antiquated roots. In Shakespeare’s version, Gower poses throughout the play as the Chorus, and he explains that the wife of King Antiochus had died, leaving behind a daughter, “So buxom, blithe, and full of face / As heaven had lent her all his grace” (1.Chorus.23-24). Gower’s fond admiration then turns to horror as he exposes that this daughter “With whom the father liking took / [ . . . ] her to incest did provoke” (1.Chorus.25-26).

Because of her apparently extraordinary beauty, many princes far and wide approach the king asking for her hand, yet Antiochus’s possessive jealousy will not allow his daughter to leave his side, emphasizing the concept of patriarchal privilege mentioned in the discussion above. So Gower explains that the king “. . . to prevent [marriage] made a law / To keep her still, and men in awe, / That whoso asked her for his wife, / His riddle told not, lost his life” (1.Chorus.25-28). Antiochus concocted a very difficult riddle that was fully intended to be impossible. Any prince who could not solve Antiochus’s riddle was put to death, and the story is clear that no one had given an answer yet. Antiochus commits sexual sin with his daughter because of her great beauty that likely reminded him of his departed wife, but as mentioned above, S. Frye also discusses the significance of incest for “political purposes,” noting that physical incest within royal families as is exhibited here “functions to keep out any suitor who wishes to share in the familial power” (40). Antiochus is not eager to give his prized daughter over to a suitor because he would
necessarily relinquish his patriarchal power over her as daughter and lover, along with some of his political power. Many had failed in their quest for the princess’s hand because of their inability to solve the riddle, “martyrs slain in Cupid’s wars” (1.1.39); Antiochus even mounts the heads of those who failed above the stage for all to witness, what Jane M. Ford calls “a classic castration symbol” (43), wherein the king mutilates and desexualizes anyone who would endeavor to try to win his daughter from him. But then Pericles enters the story to try his hand at answering the riddle.

Pericles is proud and bold, confidently boasting to the king that he “Think[s] death no hazard in this enterprise” (1.1.5). He is unafraid of death because of the glory that would accompany the solution to the riddle both in the praise of the princess and likely in the praise of the world. He scoffs at the danger voiced by Antiochus in undertaking the task, with the king even comparing it with “deathlike dragons” (1.1.30) to once again evoke a primary characteristic of medieval romance and its emphasis on dragons and other monstrous beasts. This forewarning of danger, though, only further strengthens Pericles’s resolve, and he announces, “Like a bold champion I assume the lists, / Nor ask advice of any other thought / But faithfulness and courage” (1.1.63-65). The lists were battles by knights in tournaments or tilting matches in the bygone era of romance tradition, and Pericles’s declaration of “faithfulness and courage” represent two of the most basic tenets of chivalric knighthood.

The Riddle is then read aloud:

I am no viper, yet I feed

On mother’s flesh which did me breed.

I sought a husband, in which labor

I found that kindness in a father.
He’s father, son, and husband mild;  
I mother, wife, and yet his child.  
How they may be, and yet in two,  
As you will live resolve it you.

(1.1.66-73)

It immediately becomes evident to the audience that Pericles has quickly comprehended the interpretation and the implication of this impossible riddle. His love for the princess turns to revulsion, but he realizes that openly declaring the solution to the king will only result in a death sentence for him, which was possibly worse than the deaths experienced by the earlier suitors who failed to provide a solution to the riddle.

Pericles makes the decision to approach the king with flattery, giving away just enough hint that he knows the king’s secret, while politely refusing to voice it: “Great king, / Few love to hear the sins they love to act. / ‘Twould braid yourself too near for me to tell it. / Who has a book of all that monarchs do, / He’s more secure to keep it shut than shown” (1.1.94-98). Then, to protect himself as much as possible, Pericles essentially offers the riddle’s answer as allowable due to royal prerogative, claiming that a king is basically a god and can create his own construction of law and apparently of ethics: “Kings are earth’s gods; in vice their law’s their will; / And if Jove stray, who dares say Jove doth ill?” (1.1.108-109). In other words, if a god sins, who can venture to accuse him of that sin? In approaching this quest, Pericles had no concerns that he might not be able to solve the riddle; if so, then death would have been an acceptable consequence for the failure. However, he never suspected that, once solving the riddle, he would have to conceal its solution in order to preserve his own life and not fall prey to the evil machinations of the riddle’s creator.
Pericles then gives an attempt at a subtle answer that is essentially a riddle in itself: “All love the womb that their first being bred; / Then give my tongue like leave to love my head” (1.1.112-113). Pericles references the incomparable love that a man has for his mother, yet he sexualizes it by speaking of the womb--the innermost part of a mother’s body, the body part instrumental in creating and sustaining life--which reiterates the riddle itself and its configuration of the princess as “mother, wife, and yet his child.” This answer also prefigures Pericles’s later soliloquy concerning the king’s incestuous relationship with his daughter as “untimely claspings with [his] child, / Which pleasures fits a husband, not a father,” again expressing the multiple roles enacted by the duo, and identifying the princess as “an eater of her mother’s flesh / By the defiling of her parents’ bed” (1.1.134-137). This allusion to matriphagy, or the consumption of her mother’s body, indicates a symbolic ingestion of her mother, incorporating the mother’s very life into her own body so as to essentially embody her own mother and, therefore, become wife to her father.

Pericles ends his speech by requesting that his life be spared, though he has not provided a clear, concise solution to the riddle. To protect his secret, Antiochus refuses to admit neither to the solution nor to his guilt. Rather, the king admonishes Pericles for his misinterpretation, and he appears to show mercy by not executing Pericles immediately and by instead allowing him forty days to try to discover the correct solution. However, the remainder of the act exposes Antiochus’s plot to exact revenge for Pericles’s newly discovered knowledge of the king’s sexual transgressions, and Antiochus resolves to murder Pericles at the earliest opportunity.

The king’s riddle was intended to weed out suitors for the princess’s hand as Antiochus feigned diligent effort to find her a husband while in reality keeping her solely for himself. The rules of the game were clear that any prince who could not solve the riddle would be
immediately put to death, but Pericles’s ability to recognize the king and his daughter’s incestuous relationship as the answer to the riddle also served to put his life in danger as Antiochus sought to cover up his sins and silence the one who discovered his secret.

The riddle of Antiochus and the aftermath following the recognition occur only in the first couple of scenes in the first Act of the play; however, I argue that the theme of incest, or at least of inappropriate father-daughter relationships, occurs throughout the entire play and is the direct result of Pericles’s decision to avoid his chivalric obligation integral to romance and rescue the damsel in distress. Because of his refusal to answer the riddle and, therefore, to complete his quest, Pericles in that moment transforms from chivalric hero, able to immediately halt the abuse of Antiochus toward his daughter, to tragic hero, succumbing to the uncontrollable course of fate or of destiny and making his entire story one of incest. Because of his choice to ignore the abuse and run away, selfishly protecting only his own life, fate must intervene and demand that Pericles make restitution: first, by succeeding in marrying into a potentially incestuous or inappropriate father-daughter relationship; and then inadvertently almost falling prey to incestuous or inappropriate father-daughter relations himself once he inadvertently rediscovers his own daughter whom he believed to be dead, suggesting that Pericles is unable to escape the horrific concept of fathers and daughters sinning sexually. Inherent in this basic plotline is the early modern religious debate concerning free will and determinism with this first episode in Pericles’s adventures emphasizing a predetermined, inescapable fate manipulating the course of the hero’s life because of his bad decision to ignore customs of knighthood and chivalry and adversely affecting any relationships that followed.

The incestuous relationship between Antiochus and his daughter is explicit, yet the other two father-daughter relationships that are discussed are more subtle and concealed, inviting
further analysis and interpretation to understand the perpetuation of the theme of incest throughout the entirety of the play. Again, Antiochus and his daughter are only discussed in the first act, other than a brief explanation later that tells the fate of the sinful duo. In Act 2, however, Pericles is introduced to the prospect of meeting and potentially wedding another princess, Thaisa, whom I suggest also provides hints at the potentiality of incestuous or inappropriate relationship with her father Simonides based on the dialogue between the king and his daughter during the processional of knights preceding the tournament, along with language used by Simonides and his behavior toward his daughter, which is eerily reminiscent of that used by Antiochus toward his daughter. This similarity of language and behavior by both kings toward their respective daughters suggests that at least some hint of impropriety exists in this second father-daughter relationship to allow the continuation of the cycle of incest that hangs over Pericles. I also think it important to mention here briefly that Thaisa in the origin story, Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*, is actually the name of Pericles’s daughter rather than the name of his wife, which is also essential to seeing this story as a repetitive cycle of incest, especially since upon first meeting him Pericles in an aside imagines the likeness of Simonides as similar to his own father: “Yon king’s to me like to my father’s picture” (2.3.41).

As in the first act of the play, Act 2 includes a game consistent with the medieval romance tradition for knights to engage in with the hopes of winning fair lady. In this next episode, Pericles is shipwrecked upon the shores of Pentapolis and is told that the king’s daughter would be enjoying her birthday celebration the next day and that “there are princes and knights come from all parts of the world to joust and tourney for her love” (2.1.113-115). Once again the audience is introduced to another fair and beautiful princess for whom princes and
knights risk life and limb, danger and death, for the opportunity to compete in a tournament and win her hand in marriage, probably along with a portion of her kingdom as well.

The multiple similarities intrinsic in the basic plotlines of these two episodes, along with the language used and the behaviors exhibited by fathers, carry the insinuation that the first incestuous relationship may point to the second relationship as potentially incestuous as well. In analyzing the three key father-daughter relationships in *Pericles*, S. Frye has noted the “centrality of incest” (48) that persists throughout the play. Regarding the relationship between Simonides and his daughter Thaisa, S. Frye looks at the tournament or joust hosted by this second king, including the parade and presentation of the prospective suitors, claiming that its “genealogy expressed in heraldic riddles reveals a continuing anxiety about parental authority and its relation to the search for a mate so intense that at particular moments the distance between Antioch and Pentapolis evaporates” (48). This declaration of similarity between the two episodes is significant because it underscores the parallel circumstances that these two princesses present to Pericles as he attempts to win their hands and hearts through contests of knightly valor.

In the processional, S. Frye explains that each knight carries a shield and sports a motto, or an “impresa,” which is a riddle of sorts giving clues that “simultaneously exhibit and disguise identity” (48). This dichotomy of purposes for the riddles of the impresas are very similar to the riddle of Antiochus and its revelation of his true multiple identities as “father, son, and husband mild” (1.1.70). S. Frye also recognizes Pericles’s self-representation within the processional and his construction of his own identity riddle, once again showing the similarity between the two episodes: “Like Antiochus in the first incest spectacle, Pericles constructs a riddle of identity that is simultaneously a disguise and a challenge” (50). His manner denotes education and nobility,
yet he wears the rusty armor of his father and does not carry the same fancy accouterments as the other knights.

While S. Frye has looked at these impresas generally as clues to each knight’s individual identity, I wish to examine them in further detail here and suggest that each knight’s impresa carries key information that points to the basic plot and its medieval romantic tradition as well as to a clear indication of inappropriate relations between Simonides and Thaisa. At the exhibition before the commencement of the tournament, six knights come forward presenting their shields and mottoes. With each knight who advances, Thaisa declares to her father the emblem and the motto which he is displaying and promoting with his impresa.

The first knight whom Thaisa announces to Simonides is from Sparta: “A knight of Sparta, my renowned father” (2.2.18), which is significant because the construction of the line invites the comparison of this first knight and his Spartan, warrior-like origins with her own “renowned father” as if the two should be recognized as connected in their greatness, distinction, and prestige. This knight’s shield bears the image of “a black Ethiop reaching at the sun,” alongside the words “Lux tua vita mihi” (2.2.21-22), which the textual comments interpret as “Thy life [is] light to me” (Mowat and Werstine 56). It is interesting to note that Simonides immediately chimes in to offer his impression of this first impresa, saying, “He loves you well that holds his life of you” (2.2.22). Simonides has already been compared to this first knight by Thaisa, and now the knight’s impresa seems to parallel the feelings and endearment that the king holds toward his daughter. In fact, just previous to the parade, Simonides said of his daughter that she “Sits here like Beauty’s child, whom Nature gat / For men to see and, seeing, wonder at” (2.2.6-7), so even the image on the first knight’s shield with a black Ethiopian, and its connotations of slavery, reaching up to the sun, itself representing an object fashioned from Beauty and
Nature, acts as metaphor for the king’s feelings of being a slave to the love of his daughter who is life and light to him.

The second knight is then announced by Thaisa: “A prince of Macedon, my royal father” (2.2.24), Macedon comprising connotations of war and of conquerors, and Thaisa is shown once again employing a construction implying a close comparison of knight and king. This shield bears “an armed knight that’s conquered by a lady” with the motto “Pue per doleera kee per forsa” (2.2.26-27), loosely translated as “More by gentleness than by force” (Mowat and Werstine 58). This second knight is reflecting the image of the chivalric knight consistent with the romance tradition, but the comparison with the king was insinuated with Thaisa’s announcement and this motto once again reiterates the potential feelings carried by Simonides toward his daughter. Daughter has conquered father through her beauty and filial affection, and yet the presentation of the second impresa shows that father has managed to conquer daughter through his insistence on gentleness and fond affection as opposed to something so horrific as force. It is interesting to note here that this motto may have hit Simonides too close to home because he quickly avoids any elaboration on this knight and asks after the third one to perhaps move things along more speedily.

The third knight is from Antioch, the very land from which Pericles had previously escaped because he discovered the secret of incest involving King Antiochus and his daughter. This third knight bears a “wreath of chivalry” accompanied by the words “Me pompae provexit apex,” (2.31-32), translated as “The desire of renown hath set me forward” (Mowat and Werstine 58). It is significant that Thaisa does not address her father here or use any terms of endearment, so as to not allow him identification with this knight since the implication would be that her father could be compared in any way with Antiochus and his sinful behavior with his daughter,
yet she also had already inadvertently used the same verbiage in English rather than in Latin when she introduced her father earlier as “my renowned father” (2.2.18).

The shield of the fourth knight displays a “burning torch that’s turned upside down” with the Latin words “Qui me alit me extinguit” (2.2.34-35), translated “He who feeds me extinguishes me” (Mowat and Werstine 58). Though Thaisa here is not shown to address her father to clearly identify the association between knight and king, this knight’s emblem and motto seem to resonate with Simonides as he once again interjects his own interpretation, as he did with the first knight and its perhaps more positive endearments. Simonides explains that the burning torch “shows that beauty hath his power and will, / Which can as well inflame as it can kill” (2.2.36-37). Like the first knight and his impresa about the sun and its affiliation with light and life, Simonides again experiences a connection and shares in the affection expressed by the fourth knight, alluding once more to light emanated by the burning torch and its ability to inflame, a word often used to refer to lust and lascivious intention.

While the first four knights seem to point directly back to Simonides and the potentiality of incest with his daughter, the fifth knight shifts its representation. The fifth knight features a “hand environed with clouds, / Holding out gold that’s by the touchstone tried” with the words “Sic spectanda fides” (2.2.38-40), translated “So should faith be tested” (Mowat and Werstine 58). This knight seems to be embodying Providence or God or some other deity reaching down from heaven to offer gold tested by trial and comparing it with faith. Nothing else is said about this knight, with no further commentary from either Simonides or Thaisa; however, his knight is just as essential to the story as the ones who came before him. My contention is that Pericles unintentionally caused his own downfall by refusing to fulfill his chivalric obligations to rescue the first princess, and so this new tournament designed by Providence or God comes along to
once again test Pericles and to present a less explicit father-daughter relationship that is potentially incestuous and inappropriate. This fifth knight, only mentioned in three short lines, contains the overarching guiding hand that determines the fate or destiny of Pericles and whether or not he will prove faithful in the long term and ultimately defeat the cycle of incest, once again evoking the religious discussions of free will and determinism and challenging those anxieties and tensions within the debate. The cycle of incest began with Pericles’s refusal to act on his knowledge of Antiochus’s sins, but it still has yet to run its full course.

The sixth and final knight to make his appearance is Pericles himself, “strangely furnished” (2.2.55), wearing old, rusty armor that had been fished out of the sea after his shipwreck. He brandishes no shield but a “withered branch that’s only green on top” with the motto “*In hac spe vivo*” (2.2.45-46), or “In this hope I live” (Mowat and Werstine 60). After Thaisa’s introduction of this knight, a veiled glimpse of jealousy is seen from Simonides when he offers his commentary on this impresa:

> A pretty moral.

> From the dejected state wherein he is,

> He hopes by you his fortunes yet may flourish. (2.2.47-49)

In his only other two comments on the impresas of the first and fourth knights, Simonides spoke about love and how it is life-giving and inflaming, speaking very generally, which makes sense so that he might not betray his inappropriate feelings for Thaisa. Yet when he discusses the impresa of Pericles, Simonides seems to personalize the commentary and sarcastically ridicule the appearance and question the motives of this unlikely knight.

The exhibition at the tournament and its presentation of the knights seems to convey the basic plot points of this play and even the hidden potentially incestuous or inappropriate
relationship of Simonides and Thaisa, furthering the cycle of incest that Pericles cannot seem to escape. Along with the exhibition, however, several correlations exist between the two episodes, clearly demonstrating close, parallel connectedness.

The language used by both kings concerning their daughters, for example, is pivotal in that they both hyperbolize supernatural origins of the princesses. Antiochus, for example, says his daughter’s beauty is such that “Nature this dowry gave” and that she is befit “For embraces even of Jove himself” (1.1.10, 6), suggesting a sexual liaison with a god. He also identifies the princess as “the fair Hesperides,” or the nymphs who guard the golden apples in a mythological garden, and he references her “face, like heaven” and her “countless glory” (1.1.28, 30-31). Simonides, as mentioned before, also expresses supernatural origins for his daughter by declaring her a child begotten by a liaison between Beauty and Nature:

[. . . ] Our daughter here,

In honor of whose birth these triumphs are,

Sits here like Beauty’s child, whom Nature gat

For men to see and, seeing, wonder at. (2.2.4-7)

Additionally, both kings use the “royal we” wherein they ascribe a plurality to themselves. For example, both call the princesses “our daughter” (italics added), the plural pronoun detaching king from daughter so that all people in the kingdom may see her as their own and presumably so that the fathers might not then be implicated for their unnatural attraction to their offspring. Alternatively, the “royal we” might also indicate the daughter being considered by the father/king as a personal and royal possession, again emphasizing the patriarchal privilege claimed by royalty as God-given right.
The behavior of the two kings toward their daughters also illustrates plot similarities, beginning with the organization of contests for their daughters’ hands in marriage and the riddle-solving theme; however, the two kings do differ in the execution of the contests. Antiochus designs an impossible riddle to secure his daughter’s inability to marry and, therefore, keep her unmarried for himself; S. Frye says that he “creates the riddle to perpetuate his crime” (45). Simonides, on the other hand, designs a confusing tournament that allows him alone to choose his daughter’s suitor, seemingly regardless of which knight actually is declared the champion. Although Pericles does win Simonides’s tournament, it becomes clear that the decision for marriage is not linked to winning, but only to the king’s decree. Simonides dismisses all of the other knights vying for Thaisa’s hand by telling them that she is determined not to wed for the next year: “One twelve moons more she’ll wear Diana’s livery” (2.5.9), Diana being the goddess of virginity. He then tells Thaisa and Pericles,

hear you, mistress: either frame
Your will to mine--and you, sir; hear you:
Either be ruled by me--or I’ll make you
Man and wife. (2.5.83-86)

Though Antiochus’s refusal to allow his daughter to marry may constitute a clear mark of the incest motif, another mark is a father exercising his patriarchal authority to personally choose the suitor, as Simonides seems inclined to do here, rather than allowing the daughter to make her own choice as if the father can only cope with the daughter’s marriage partner if the father himself were integral and even primary to the decision process. Ford has also suggested that there is a “sadistic streak in the father’s forcing marriage on an unwilling daughter in the name of authority” (40). This awkward exchange with the couple may be Simonides’s eccentric way of
retaining control over his daughter’s marriage prospects in order to assert his own patriarchal and royal authority over his daughter and over her marriage partner.

One other close similarity in the behavior of the two kings is the deceit that they both practice after their respective contests have concluded. Antiochus outright denies any truth presented by Pericles and refuses to admit his guilt. He allows Pericles forty days to guess at the right answer, but then his jealous anger reveals itself and he immediately orders Pericles to be murdered. As S. Frye has noted, Simonides also appears to become angry, recalling Antiochus’s murderous anger and “deadly jealousy” (50). As mentioned previously, Simonides is deceitful by first lying to the other knights who have competed in the tournament because he has secured the suitor that he wishes his daughter to marry. Then Simonides lies to his own daughter and to Pericles, handing him Thaisa’s letter expressing her love and determination to marry him. Pericles recognizes close parallels from his last encounter with a king and believes it might be a trick: “A letter that she loves the knight of Tyre? / ‘Tis the King’s subtlety to have my life” (2.5.43-44). Simonides then feigns anger over the pretense of Pericles wooing his daughter behind his back without consent. He employs deceit perhaps to test Pericles and his faithfulness or to make sure that the knight is not simply wanting to increase his fortunes and his kingdom through Thaisa; however, his actions and anger parallel Antiochus. While it may be an act, there is not an easy or sensical notion of why Simonides would go to those extremes when his daughter has already demanded the match.

The similar persons of the kings are considered the “antithesis” (44) of one another by Ford, and the similar circumstances between these two relationships and episodes are proposed by S. Frye as displaying contrasting images of an inappropriate daughter versus an appropriate one. I disagree and argue that the similarities are instead comparative, an instance of doubling,
subtly hinting at an equally inappropriate father-daughter relationship, coexisting as mirror images to highlight their similarities and further progress the cycle of incest begun by Pericles with his refusal to intervene and rescue the first princess. The language used by Simonides toward his daughter and his behavior toward the idea of a suitor too closely resembles that of Antiochus toward his daughter, suggesting the two relationships are indeed parallel to one another and should both be seen as containing the potentiality and the possibility of incest.

Physical incest may indeed not have occurred between Simonides and Thaisa; however, the similarity in language and behaviors, compounded with the echoed circumstances of a contest to wed the princess, the riddle-solving theme, and the anger directed at Pericles from both kings (even though one, admittedly, is feigned), provides support to the argument that the two episodes comprise mirror images of inappropriateness, though they may possibly vary in degree. I argue that this second contest and wooing of a princess reiterates the first because of Pericles’s failure to complete his knightly obligation to rescue the damsel and thwart the evil and tyranny assaulting her. That choice to ignore his chivalric duty set him on a predetermined path wherein his free will was compromised because of his inaction. This failure perpetuated the cycle of incest and destruction that would pursue him until he is at last confronted with a third “test” of relationship once he meets his grown daughter, whom he believed to be dead.

Pericles does indeed wed the second princess, Thaisa, and they become pregnant. News arrives, however, that Antichus and his daughter have finally met their doom for their sinful indiscretions:

A fire from heaven came and shriveled up
Those bodies even to loathing, for they so stunk
That all those eyes adored them, ere their fall,
Scorn now their hand should give them burial. (2.4.9-12)

Since there is no longer any danger from Antiochus, Pericles and his wife, big with child, set out to return to Tyre. During their journey, a fierce storm arises, which Gower tells the audience was driven by combined supernatural forces of Neptune, Fortune, and the North; Pericles then seems to call upon the gods of the sea, of the winds, and of thunder. This catalog of supernatural forces serves to reiterate the point that Providence, God, and/or other deities are actively administrating and enforcing destiny or fate to guide Pericles to his ultimate test and the eventual culmination of the cycle of incest he has initiated. During this savage storm, Thaisa goes into labor and delivers a daughter, Marina, and then she appears to succumb to death. Later it is discovered, however, that she either did not, in fact, die or that she was miraculously reawakened from death. Pericles then changes course for Tarsus and leaves his infant daughter with Cleon and Dionyza for them to raise alongside their own daughter. When he returns fourteen years later, he is told--incorrectly--that Marina has died.

Through a chance meeting with Marina three months later and recognizing her extraordinary beauty that reminds him so much of his also presumed dead wife Thaisa, Pericles is confronted with a potentially incestuous situation, though unknown to both parties. However, ultimately refraining from pursuing a relationship with this young girl and paying heed to the clues that would finally descry their kinship as father and daughter would save Pericles from further destruction and languishment in the cycle of incest, allowing him to finally receive his redemption and deliverance from his torment.

Before this reunion, however, Marina also figures in relation to others who serve as substitute or surrogate father figures and, therefore, constitute inappropriate relationships. The first surrogate father is the previously mentioned Cleon of Tarsus with whom Marina was left as
a baby. The second is the brothel owner Pander to whom Marina was sold by pirates who
kidnapped her. In observing the surrogate father role that Pander fills for Marina, Ford explains
that “the daughter’s sexuality becomes a commercial commodity for the father who, in a sense,
acts as her pimp” (45). Pander’s wife, Bawd, also participates in this attempted sale of Marina’s
sexuality and even encourages the brother surrogate, Bolt, to ravish or rape her and take away
her virginity--“Bolt, take her away, use her at thy pleasure, / crack the glass of her virginity, and
make the rest malleable” (4.6.148-50)--and her reasons for not allowing her body to be
prostituted.

The governor of Mytilene, Lysimachus, is the last man to pose as surrogate father to
Marina, yet it is noteworthy that Lysimachus’s original intentions upon meeting Marina were to
employ her as prostitute and have sexual relations with her, or in his own words, “wholesome
iniquity” or “deeds of darkness” (4.6.25, 29). Marina’s gentle, saintly spirit, however, convinces
him otherwise, and he instead becomes her protector. He, in fact, even steps into Pander’s
position at one point as manager and as pimp by urging Marina to use her talents and sing for the
distraught, undernourished, mute Prince Pericles, yet Lysimachus’s insinuations verge on the
sexual:

She questionless, with her sweet harmony
And other chosen attractions, would allure
And make a batt’ry through his defended [or deafened] ports,
Which now are midway stopp’d. (5.1.49-52)

The fact that Lysimachus later is allowed by Pericles to marry Marina only serves to increase the
intimations of the incest theme since he was previously featured as surrogate father and
protector. Though the cycle of incest reaches its culmination with Pericles finally making
As mentioned before, fourteen years after he has lost his wife to the sea and to childbirth, Pericles returns to Tarsus to claim his daughter, only to be told, erroneously, that his daughter has died. This false allegation obviously causes him to fall into great despair; Gower as the Chorus states that he is “in sorrow all devoured” (4.4.25), and in his anguish he sets out to once again face the danger of the seas. Upon reaching the shores of Mytilene, his loyal servant Helicanus explains to the governor, Lysimachus, that for the past three months Pericles hath not spoken

To anyone, nor taken sustenance

But to prorogue his grief. (5.1.27-29)

At the behest of Lysimachus, Marina begins to try to break through to Pericles with her gentle ways by singing to him. When that fails, she comes closer to speak with him, but he violently pushes her away. The stage directions seem inconspicuous, but Ford emphasizes that the violence of the force is not clearly defined in Shakespeare’s version; instead, the origin stories are more conspicuous in clearly associating the physical push with that of the violence of domestic battery, ravishment, defilement, and rape.

Pericles and Marina then begin a dialogue where they both experience a kinship in their shared heartbreak, with Marina saying that she “may be hath endured a grief / Might equal [Pericles’s grief], if both were justly weighed” (5.1.98-99). She also insists that there is some unknown force that is bidding her to stay and not give up on talking with this royal stranger or
leave until he speaks with her as well. Pericles does indeed speak then, and asks her to look upon him as he examines Marina and her appearance:

My dearest wife was like this maid, and such
A one my daughter might have been: my queen’s
Square brows, her stature to an inch;
As wandlike straight, as silver-voiced; her eyes
As jewel-like, and cased as richly; in pace
Another Juno, who starves the ears she feeds
And makes them hungry the more she gives them speech.

(5.1.121-28)

In this expression of admiration, Pericles associates Marina with his beloved wife and starts to feel a sexual attraction to his (unknown) daughter demonstrated through his cataloging of her physical features, constructing a blazon that betrays the fascination and obsession he feels for her. He then compares her with the goddess Juno, repeating the motif of the daughter being associated with the supernatural that was first observed in the previous two father-daughter relationships as evidence of a further attempt at doubling and an indication of the potentiality of incest. He also recognizes Marina’s “Endowments” (5.1.133) she possesses, which likely refer to her beauty, grace, and her accomplishments such as singing, but the sexual reference to body parts may also be implied here. For a man who has not spoken in approximately three months, he now seems to have much to say as he tries to ascertain Marina’s history and parentage, and he flatters her by extolling her supposed attributes of honesty, modesty, justice, and patience. He declares that he would believe anything she said even if impossible because, as he explains, “for thou lookest / Like one I loved indeed” (5.1.41-42).
As several scholars, including Nevo and Kidnie, have pointed out, the reunion of Pericles with his long-lost, presumed dead daughter Marina at the end of the play contains hints of sexual tension and lascivious interest on the part of the father to the daughter. Kreg Segall also sees the resolution of the play in distinctly incestuous terms, and S. Frye states that “Marina’s performance before Pericles appears variously in the sources, but all of them hint at incest” (52). The bewilderment of Pericles in seeing and speaking with this young woman is apparent because she looks so much like his wife and so much like what his daughter might have been, representing what S. Frye calls “the confusion across time of daughter with mother” (54), wherein the daughter essentially takes the place of the absent mother, a plot device that Shakespeare will use in two later plays also written in the romance genre. Incidentally, Thaisa’s nurse Lychorida also displayed similar confusion fourteen years earlier when Marina was a baby, telling her father, “Here’s all that is left living of your queen” (3.1.21), as if in prophecy of this very moment when Pericles is reunited with Marina and his recognition of likeness between the two women.

Ford also explains that in some of the other origin stories, especially in Gower’s version, the “incestuous attraction that Marina holds for her father is much more explicit” (47). She then discusses the historical precedent that occurs at the reunion of father and daughter where two separated family members are “more prone to incest” (45) when they finally meet because of a mystifying, unexplainable attraction that they feel for each other. She also voices the implication that the audience feels that “a sexual involvement is imminent” (45) if Pericles does not discover that she is, in fact, his daughter.

In the medieval romance tradition, however, the potential for unknown incestuous relations between relatives is presented, but then the heroine somehow discovers her true identity and is
able to escape the horrific situation where she would fall to inadvertent sexual transgression. Her saintly, angelic behavior allows her to experience salvation rather than destruction, and she experiences the characteristic romance happy ending that typically ends in marriage. Archibald further argues that the innocent heroine of the romances often is depicted as needing to experience undeserved suffering before earning her reward, making her a model of Christ. Marina’s suffering saintliness is contrasted with the incestuous impurity that has besieged Pericles throughout his entire life and to which she might concede, and Shakespeare effectively emulates this medieval model in his first romance.

Though it is not evident in Shakespeare’s play, the origin stories, according to S. Frye, also often include the theme of riddle-solving surrounding this reunion of father and daughter, wherein the daughter provides a series of riddles as clues to her identity, her story, and her lineage. This continuation of the riddle-solving theme once again points to the connection between all three father-daughter relationships, thereby furthering proof about all three episodes being entirely absorbed in the potentiality of incestuous or inappropriate relations.

Also significant here is the fact that Pericles moves hastily after the recognition scene to insist on the marriage between his daughter Marina and the governor Lysimachus, once again creating a situation where the father chooses the marriage partner to assert patriarchal authority and, in this case, perhaps to curb the shame and guilt of his near miss in avoiding the potential incest. It may be also that Lysimachus is an older man since he has such prominence in his country and since he has obviously been a loyal and frequent guest at the brothel, and one aspect of the incest motif, according to Ford, is a choice that she may not find sexually attractive and that may provide the father Pericles with “the knowledge that she will not be happy or sexually satisfied” (40). According to Ford, Lysimachus replays the “ironic parody of the series of
suitors” that has previously occurred with the contests involving Antiochus’s daughter and Simonides’s daughter. Marina has been pursued by all sorts of men in the brothel, yet Lysimachus has “played the ‘good’ father by not exerting his authority” (46), using gentleness rather than force as discussed previously in the impresa of the second knight in Simonides’s tournament. Ironically, Lysimachus as surrogate father reflects the mirror image of Pericles, becoming the hero who actually saves the damsel from the tyranny and dishonor of the brothel and who then is rewarded by marriage to Marina. Thus finally concludes the cycle of incest, ending with Pericles meriting redemption and Lysimachus embodying this new type of hero with his princess by his side.

As I have demonstrated here, the theme of incest in this first Shakespearean romance begins with Pericles’s discovery of Antiochus’s posed riddle and the horrible secret hidden within its lines. With his refusal to fulfill his chivalric knightly obligation to intervene in the sexual transgressions at Antioch and rescue the princess from her tyrannical father and his incestuous advances, the cycle of incest is allowed to continue, pursuing him even into his next adventure where he enters Simonides’s tournament to win the hand of yet another princess, Thaisa, who would become his wife and bear him a child. The father-daughter relationship between king and princess, however, incorporates several of the same components as the first father-daughter relationship, including plotline, contests, riddles, language, and behavior--similarities so prevalent to compel the argument that they both are indicative of incestuous or at least inappropriate relations. As I have shown, the cycle of incest is only broken once Pericles meets his grown daughter Marina and successfully negotiates that initial sexual attraction to her, finally earning redemption from his earlier failure to act. Fate or destiny governed the life of Pericles with his refusal to accept and obey chivalric duty, setting him on a predetermined course...
toward destruction, but Providence stepped in and allowed the happy ending so integral to romance.

The theme of incestuous or inappropriate relationships, however, is not discontinued with the happy ending featured in *Pericles* because Shakespeare employs that theme in his next three plays, all of them falling into the category of romance. His next play is *Cymbeline*, which also imagines a king who does not accept or approve of his daughter Imogen’s suitor, Posthumus Leonatus, whom she marries without his consent. Posthumus was raised in the royal family after his parents died, essentially becoming a brother to Imogen. Since King Cymbeline has remarried, the stepmother’s son Cloten also expresses a sexual attraction to Imogen, wherein he even threatens to rape her in order to possess her. Therefore, the incest theme in this play focuses on surrogate brothers, but Cymbeline’s desire to personally choose his daughter’s suitor may constitute an inappropriate relationship at the very least.

*The Winter’s Tale*, Shakespeare’s third romance, also is comprised of a couple of relationships besieged by incestuous or inappropriate relations. This play introduces Leontes, king of Sicilia, and his queen Hermione who are entertaining an old friend, Polixenes, the king of Bohemia. Polixenes has been staying in the royal palace for at least nine months, and after his wife’s persuasions to stay longer are more successful than his own, Leontes becomes suspicious of their relationship and believes that her baby may, in fact, belong to the other king—-the nine-months’ holiday certainly doesn’t help them prove any innocence since she had to have gotten pregnant during Polixenes’s visit. The baby is a girl, Perdita, but Leontes’s jealousy commands that the infant be put to death, though she is instead secreted away from the kingdom and the king’s wrath. Jump ahead sixteen years, and Perdita is found to be living the life of a shepherdess in Bohemia who has fallen in love with the king’s son, Florizel. The potential incest is subtle
with the young couple’s relationship because, if it were true that Polixenes and Hermione did engage in sexual relations, this young couple may, in fact, be brother and sister. The incest theme really materializes, however, when Leontes meets Perdita, not knowing that she is the lost princess, and he develops a strong sexual attraction to her, particularly because she looks so much like his believed dead queen Hermione.

Shakespeare’s final play and romance is *The Tempest*, the only one that does not feature a king in the traditional sense; however, Prospero was a former Duke of Milan before being usurped by his brother and then stranded with his daughter Miranda on a remote island populated by spirits. Prospero has basically set himself up as king of the island, ruling over the spirits and attempting to train and civilize the only non-spirit, native, Caliban. Regarding the suggested inappropriate relationship of Prospero and Miranda, Tom Lindsay has pointed out that Prospero has carefully constructed his image as Miranda’s instructor, “cast[ing] his ‘cell’ as an early modern grammar schoolroom, with himself as the presiding ‘schoolmaster’” (403), thus distancing himself from his daughter as her teacher. Additionally, Prospero’s remarks that he has been a better instructor to Miranda than other “princes” and “tutors” could have been (1.2.172-74) may suggest hinted qualities of incest—and also of a more experienced older man to a less experienced younger woman—instructing her on how to perform sexually and intimately. The concept of the schoolhouse also submits the story, according to Lindsay, to a “strict hierarchy, with the schoolmaster or tutor at the top, advanced students in the middle, and neophyte students at the bottom. They naturalized and reinforced this hierarchy by aligning the instructor with the monarch and God” (406). Also, Lindsay explains that Prospero uses Miranda as pawn in his political strategies, a pattern that is prominent in potentially incestuous, inappropriate father-daughter relationships. He even uses the attempted rape “to justify Caliban’s enslavement” (422)
because no one can touch his daughter unless he has personally allowed it, reiterating once more the surrogate brother-sister incestuous potentiality.

As I have suggested, the incest theme may have been so integral to Shakespeare’s experimentation with the genre of romance because of his proclivity for integrating a subject into the play’s discourse through metaphor or other symbolic or inconspicuous language in order to introduce debates and controversies of the early modern period without necessarily endorsing or attacking one side over another. It was my contention in this chapter and in the following chapters of this dissertation that Shakespeare borrowed and then manipulated medieval romance characters and conventions to provide commentary on particular sixteenth- and seventeenth-century anxieties and issues and allow the audience to enter the conversation and develop their own determinations.
CHAPTER TWO:
“GROWN IN GRACE” OR “PAST GRACE? OBEDIENCE?”:
DEVOTION AND DEFIANCE IN THE DISCOVERY OF THE LOST HEIR

The last chapter focused on potentially incestuous relationships within *Pericles*, and I argued that the cycle of incest that began with the hero/knight Pericles was set in motion by his refusal to act on his chivalric obligation to protect the damsel in distress. Incest was a common motif in medieval romances, yet it was not typically practiced or even threatened by the hero of the story. Therefore, it was my argument that Shakespeare appropriated the character of the chivalric hero and adapted him for his contemporary audience by transforming the hero into a sexual deviant, almost marrying a girl who was knowingly having an incestuous relationship with her father, marrying a girl who may have been having an incestuous or at least an inappropriate relationship with her father, and finally experiencing as a father himself potentially incestuous feelings for his own daughter whom he believed dead, unwittingly perpetuating the cycle of perversion.

Romances typically would feature the theme of incest, often because of the daughter being lost at an early age or her identity otherwise being unknown, a romance convention recognized by Helen Cooper as often contributing to the tragic potentiality of the romance. However, as Elizabeth Archibald has recognized, the ending ultimately discovers and reveals the identity of the heroine just in time to avoid disaster, and she escapes the tragic potentiality of an incestuous relationship to experience the requisite happy ending of romance, resulting in marriage with an appropriate partner and restoration of an appropriate father/daughter
relationship. If incest was not a theme of a medieval romance, however, the threat of sexual enforcement and/or violence was often featured within the medieval romances. Additionally, the innocent heroine of the medieval romances, as Archibald further explains, often is depicted as needing to experience undeserved suffering before earning her reward, making her a model of Christ and, I suggest, of the Virgin Mary.

Despite the traditional idealized concept of heroism that one would typically find in the romance tradition, Mary Beth Rose argues that the idea of masculinity began to change at the end of the late sixteenth century in English culture, initiating a new type of heroic identity that was more passive and more “female,” a heroic identity that Shakespeare chose to exploit in Pericles. Rather than valiantly rescuing the helpless and vulnerable, courageously facing dangers to life and limb, and bravely exploring unknown territories, heroism, according to Rose, came to be defined in terms of patience, as the ability to endure suffering, catastrophe, and pain. This new perspective on the heroic identity yielded a model of both “feminine” passivity and suffering endurance which can be identified in Pericles in his decision to eschew his heroic obligation to rescue a princess out of fear for his own life and in his prolonged absence from his daughter and wife for many years wherein he bore the pain of his grief in silence.

This model of a “feminine heroism” seems to have been a result, Rose argues, of Elizabeth I’s creation of her own heroic identity in her public speeches. In her 1599 Parliament speech, Elizabeth publicly announced her dedication of her royal person to her country rather than giving it to a man to rule over, stating, “And in the end this shall be for me sufficient, that a marble stone shall declare that a Queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin” (qtd. in Newport). And so that identity was established foremost, but in later speeches toward the end of her life, according to Rose, her virginity was stressed less and instead patience and
endurance were emphasized, granting her a new self-imposed heroic identity, which authors attempted to replicate in their literature. As a result, writers in the early modern period began to write tales of this feminine heroism, which could be practiced by either gender, in which the endurance of pain and struggle was paramount to the hero’s or heroine’s character.

In his romances, Shakespeare effectively borrowed the medieval romance plotline of threatened sexual enforcement and emulated the medieval model of the heroine as saint enduring undeserved suffering by situating the women in his romances in potentially perilous circumstances, making them easy prey for threats of rape and sexual violence. In his experimentation with romance and his desire to reimagine the genre, however, Shakespeare presents each of his heroines as suffering saint victimized by sexual threat, and he combines that characterization with the romance motif of the lost heir who has been somehow cast down from an elevated status to experience life among the lower classes for a time before eventual discovery or re-discovery allows her to regain her rightful place to that elevated station, the typical romance structure proposed by Northrop Frye. However, I argue that Shakespeare transforms the typical romance heroine in the course of each of the final four plays, not only depicting her in terms of these conventional romance motifs, but also revealing a hidden monstrosity lurking beneath a surface reading of her character. I will show within this chapter how Shakespeare’s suffering-saintly heroines may also be perceived as openly rebellious and willfully defiant to patriarchal and to royal authority as well as to sociocultural traditions and norms, challenging an early modern ideology regarding gender in which women were expected to be subordinated, suppressed, and silenced.

Shakespeare used the lost heir motif of medieval romance within his final plays, in my argument, specifically to speak to the political climate surrounding Elizabeth I’s 1603 death as
she died without an heir, resulting in the culmination of the Tudor line and its subsequent transfer to the crowning of James I and the beginning of a Stuart reign. I suggest that Shakespeare’s reintroduction of the “archaic” romance meme of the lost heir was intended to provide commentary on the anxieties of the people surrounding the death of Elizabeth I which was still a matter of debate years later, a situation which Cooper calls “the most dangerous of all political scenarios, and the closing decades of Elizabeth’s reign made it a matter of increasing anxiety.” Each of the four romances features the motif of a lost heir, and each also “present[s] the safe negotiation of a succession crisis involving an heiress,” according to Cooper. A failure to discover or rediscover the lost heirs meant that the future of each individual kingdom was uncertain and full of trepidation. The prevalence of the lost heir motif suggests the significant impact that Elizabeth’s death had on Shakespeare’s writing and on his audience as he sought to cater to their concerns and tackle their ensuing anxieties from the stage. In considering the social climate surrounding Elizabeth’s failure to provide an heir, the questions concerning rightful succession, and the ramifications involved, Cooper explains,

> The potent mix of the ardently desiring virgin, dynastic succession, and the ending of romance in the harmony of rightful monarch and state became explosive in late Elizabethan England. [. . .] The story of England threatens to turn into the story of a missing heir, not shaped as a romance but bringing all the horrors of a disputed succession. The heir to Elizabeth is not lost and awaiting recovery, but not there at all.

Elizabeth’s death brought much political upheaval and controversy, especially regarding legitimacy and the divine right of kings as placed in their rightful position by God alone. Cooper further explains,
The insistence of romance that there was such a thing as a *true* heir, however—that one person, and one person only, carried the right to the crown, and with it the approval of God—bore an ideological charge that [...] was very widely subscribed to, and which carried immense judicial, ethical, and theological weight.

Shakespeare’s foray into romance began shortly after Elizabeth’s death and the controversy of James I’s legitimacy and succession, and the lost heir motif would address the debates and bring that discussion for dissemination to the public, allowing them to participate in the debate and thereby process their anxieties through the onstage action and commentary.

Audience anxieties with the political climate of the missing heir is especially relevant with *Pericles*’s Marina since she is Shakespeare’s first romantic heroine following the death of Elizabeth, and the connections between Marina and the late queen are clear and undeniable. Elizabeth had also lost her mother at a very young age, and after the death of her father Henry VIII when she was only fifteen years old, Elizabeth went to live with her stepmother, Catherine Parr, where she experienced a type of first love with her stepmother’s new husband, Thomas Seymour, creating an inappropriate relationship verging on the incestuous through this alternative father figure. Additionally, Marina’s virginity and chastity are exemplified repeatedly and her saint-like character praised exuberantly, prompting an unspoken association between Marina and the virgin queen.

After her mother has presumably died at sea, Pericles’s daughter Marina is taken to Tarsus to be raised by the governor Cleon and his wife Dionyza, at the same time making a vow that he would not cut his hair until his daughter was married. In a plotline seemingly stolen from
a fairy tale, Dionyza becomes jealous because her own daughter, Philoten, cannot compare with
Marina’s extraordinary beauty and talents. The ancient poet Gower as Chorus explains,

Marina gets

All praises, which are paid as debts
And not as given. This so darks
In Philoten all graceful marks
That Cleon’s wife, with envy rare,
A present murderer does prepare
For good Marina, that her daughter
Might stand peerless by this slaughter. (4.Chorus.33-40)

In Gower’s terminology referring to Philoten’s “graceful marks,” I suggest that Shakespeare
alludes to marks of nobility or marks of legitimacy, called kinmarks, in medieval romances that
are often used as identifiers of a rightful heir. Therefore, Gower is saying here that any marks in
Philoten that are “graceful” are strictly provided by God’s grace, and yet Marina’s God-given
graceful marks outshine and darken any marks that Philoten might have. Marina’s marks are so
unique and sublime that the praise she receives is as if the ones giving that praise are doing it out
of debt or obligation to a being so venerable and praiseworthy, as one would offer praise to a
saint or to a deity. This praise of Marina so infuriates Dionyza since it diminishes any praise of
her own daughter Philoten, and so Dionyza plots to kill the princess.

When Dionyza attempts to engage Marina in pretense of affection as her mother
substitute, Marina bemoans her birth and her very life, comparing it to a storm:

Mary me, poor maid,
Born in a tempest when my mother died,
This world to me is [as] a lasting storm. (4.1.19-21)

Marina’s despondency over her distressing situation bears witness to the beginnings of her suffering saintliness at the young age of only fourteen. Marina is saved from the murderer Leonine by a group of pirates, and the first indications of sexual threat and violence emanate from the voice of the murderer in his suppositions that she will be ravished and, perhaps being abandoned afterwards, he will then take the opportunity to kill her:

Perhaps they will but please themselves upon her,

Not carry her aboard. If she remain,

Whom they have ravished must by me be slain. (4.1.112-114)

The pirates who have captured Marina do not ravish her or abandon her as Leonine had speculated, but they do promptly sell her off to a brothel in Mytilene where her virginity is touted in the market as a prime “commodity” (4.2.31) with brothel owner Bawd claiming, “Such a maidenhead were no cheap / thing, if men were as they have been” (4.2.60-61). Bawd also makes note of the “marks” (4.2.57) of Marina, an allusion perhaps to the kinmarks mentioned in the previous paragraph as signifier of her royal identity, and she later calls her a “paragon” (4.2.144), insinuating Marina’s uniqueness in the deplorable business of prostitution. And once again, Marina is depicted as suffering saint, lamenting that her life had not been taken before being sold into the direful prospect of prostitution, even blaming herself for trying to evade the knife of the murderer Leonine:

Alack that Leonine was so slack, so slow!

He should have struck, not spoke.

........................................

The more my fault, to ’scape his hands where
I was to die. (4.2.64-65, 75-76)

When she hears Bawd instructing her on how she is to be used by men and enjoy it or else she is to experience the whip, Marina cries out, “The gods defend me!” (4.2.91), exhibiting her firm reliance on spiritual beings. Bawd continues in her admonishments to command Marina that she must use that suffering saintliness to her benefit in order to raise the most profit:

You

have fortunes coming upon you. Mark me: you

must seem to do that fearfully which you commit

willingly, despise profit where you have most gain.

To weep that you live as you do makes pity in your

lovers. Seldom but that pity begets you a good

opinion, and that opinion a mere profit. (4.2.119-125)

Bawd believes that she will be able to bend Marina to her will and to “willingly” provide sex to customers, but she also recognizes that Marina’s chaste, frightened demeanor with feigned weeping and disinterest in recompense would actually yield her and the brothel owners more profit because it would arouse pity in men to give over more money than they might have otherwise. Marina once again begs for help from above, while protesting the loss of her virginity no matter what afflictions or punishments might be in store:

If fires be hot, knives sharp, or waters deep,

Untied I still my virgin knot will keep.

Diana aid my purpose! (4.2.151-153)

When Pericles returns to Tarsus to visit his daughter, he is told by Dionyza and Cleon that Marina had died, and he is filled with deep sorrow and remorse. He wanders aimlessly,
isolating himself and withdrawing from the world in his grief and mourning over the loss, first, of his wife, and now of his only beloved child. However, as Gower tells it, “His daughter’s woe and heavy welladay / In her unholy service” (4.4.50-51) back at the marketplace in Mytilene has yet to be resolved in its tragic potentiality.

Fueled by lust due to her unique marks and qualities and to her virginity, customers quickly accumulate for the opportunity to deflower Marina, and even the servant of the brothel owners, Bolt, threatens to take her by force himself because of her resolution to maintain her virginity and virtue. However, Marina is resolute in avoiding the pollution of her body, a fate she sees as worse than death—the loss of virtue and virginity being the worst possible thing that could happen to her. While the brothel owners were not technically her parents, they did have possession of her and could exercise a patriarchal prerogative over her body to do with as they pleased, and rape was a distinct potentiality if Marina was unwilling to yield. As Melissa E. Sanchez has pointed out, rape may leave physical marks on a woman’s body, such as pregnancy or disease, so the violated woman poses the contradiction of a pure mind in a polluted body; additionally, even a virtuous subject could be held responsible for resisting a tyranny that refuses to be stopped.

Therefore, because Marina likely lacked the physical ability to resist the lascivious intentions of potential customers, Marina instead uses her voice to bypass patriarchal norms and prerogatives, according to Deanne Williams, to “move beyond the old pattern of masculine domination and submissive female silence” (243). Rather than allow her body to be ravished and her virtue to be forfeited, Marina is depicted as a model of suffering saint, ministering and winning souls through her “discursive and rhetorical powers” (Williams 45). Marina’s preservation of her virginity is called “divinity preached” (4.5.4) by one gentleman converted by
her saintliness, claiming that he will now do anything “virtuous” (4.5.8), claiming his life is forever changed, and his fellow gentleman feels compelled to go hear the “vestals sing” (4.5.7) because Marina’s words have altered him so drastically.

Marina has become so much a model of saintliness that Bawd and her servant Bolt engage in heated discussion about Marina’s ability to sway men toward holiness and away from lechery:

Bawd: [She has] her prayers, her knees, that she would make a puritan of the devil if he should cheapen a kiss of her.

Bolt: Faith, I must ravish her, or she’ll defurnish us of all our cavalleria, and make our swearers priests. (4.6.11-12)

When the governor Lysimachus arrives on the scene to procure the purchase of her services, he acknowledges prostitution as “deeds of darkness” (4.6.29) and “seeds and roots of shame and iniquity” (4.6.88), yet he does not allow the immorality of the profession to dampen his desire for Marina. But once again Marina uses her powerful words of persuasion toward her virtue and toward holiness, saying that she hoped the gods would set her “free from this unhallowed place” (4.6.103) and pleading with Lysimachus to her cause, that he has no choice but to repent of his “corrupted mind” (4.6.109), lavish gold upon her, and proclaim,

Persevere in that clear way thou goest
And the gods strengthen thee!

Thou art a piece of virtue,
And I doubt not but thy training hath been noble.
Hold, here’s more gold for thee.

A curse upon him, die he like a thief,

That robs thee of thy goodness! If thou dost

Hear from me, it shall be for thy good. (4.6.111-112, 117-122)

Marina’s saintly rhetoric has altered Lysimachus and his former carnal inclinations, even allowing him to realize that she must surely be nobility, a significance that will be realized soon when he presents her to the prince of Tyre, Pericles, who is, in fact, her father.

The lost heir would be recovered because of Marina’s decision to fight her battles with her voice and her words, marking her as a hidden monstrosity in her defiance of patriarchal norms and prerogatives, but in true romance fashion, her persuasive appeals ultimately being utilized for her restoration to rightful place and to happy resolution of marriage to Lysimachus. As Cooper has noted, Pericles “does not emphasize the question of succession, [but] the rediscovery and marriage of Marina tacitly ensure the future of the royal line,” which served as testament to the anxieties surrounding succession at that critical moment in history.

The lost heir motif within Pericles is most apparent with the heroine Marina, but I would also like to point out that Pericles himself was a lost heir as well, spending many years away from his home country, first, as knight errant, wandering in search of adventure and love, and then continuing his wandering because of his deep grief over the assumed loss of his beloved wife and daughter. His wife, Thaisa, also could be considered a lost heir since she was nobility even before she met and married Pericles, yet she was considered dead and even buried at sea in a coffin that carried her to Ephesus where she served as votress in Diana’s temple until her rediscovery at the end of the play. The motif seems to have been utilized by Shakespeare abundantly just within this first romance, yet he uses it repeatedly in his next three romances as
well, indicating the significance that the lost heir implied in regard to the sociopolitical climate in the early seventeenth century.

In Shakespeare’s subsequent play, *Cymbeline*, the title character’s sons were kidnapped in infancy, and the assumed kidnapper raises them in barbaric surroundings with bestial mannerisms, a far cry from the life they had been destined for as princes. Their sister Imogen is then imprisoned by her father the king before she absconds from the country, resulting in another lost heir, one of the “lopped branches” (5.4.144) as foretold in a prophecy, who must succumb to a new lifestyle where she must brave the world without anyone to protect her from it. Like Marina in *Pericles*, Imogen can be identified with Elizabeth in the fact that they both have lost their mothers early and that they are females with no male heirs in line to claim the throne. In referencing the motif of the lost heir within the romances, Cooper claims, “A girl is generally of interest to patrilinear romance only if she has no brothers. Imogen earns her place as the heroine of *Cymbeline* since she is the heir presumptive after the abduction of her brothers in infancy.”

Also, similar to Marina, Imogen uses her voice early in the play to rebel against her father the king and to marry against his will, refusing to allow him to control her choice of a marriage partner, thereby deviating from patriarchal and political prerogatives and from sociocultural norms and traditions. In the first onstage interaction between the king and his daughter, Imogen berates his indignation concerning her husband Posthumus Leonatus, exclaiming,

> I beseech you, sir,

Harm not yourself with your vexation.

I am senseless of your wrath. A touch more rare

Subdues all pangs, all fears. (1.1.160-164)
Imogen’s defiance to her father and to her king verge on rebellion and disloyalty, a direct challenge to the early modern patriarchal system and ideology, which could have disastrous consequences if she were to continue in that vein. Complicating this overt rebelliousness from Imogen, Ros King has suggested that the sexualized undertones of Imogen’s dialogue with her father complicate the impression of the sweetly innocent heroine. The “touch more rare” in the text above likely refers to the sexual activity that she and her husband have engaged in, suggesting that their intimacy in the bedroom permits her to have that defiance as it has alleviated any fears of what might become of her. Cymbeline questions this defiance, questioning, “Past grace? Obedience?” (1.1.164), and the notes in the Folger edition of the play explain that his term “grace” here could be defined as “sense of duty or propriety,” indicating an acknowledgement that Imogen is, indeed, asserting herself against patriarchal authority, which would have been considered taboo and, therefore, monstrous.

The king’s desire for her marriage was a royal match with Cloten, the son of his new wife, as he attempts to reason with Imogen, saying, “That mightst have had the sole son of my queen!” (1.1.166). In an air of further defiance to her father, she replies, “O, blessed that I might not! I chose an eagle / And did avoid a puttock” (1.1.167-168). Therefore, Imogen’s insolence in thwarting that intention was tantamount to betrayal. Imogen then squarely places the blame for her love of Posthumus on her father because he “bred” them to be “playfellow[s]” (1.1.176). Cymbeline had, indeed, brought up Posthumus as his own child when the two princes were kidnapped, thereby causing all in the court to love Posthumus, including Imogen, honoring him as a substitute prince to replace the two lost heirs. Cymbeline’s anger only worsened, though, when Imogen insinuated that he were cause for her defiance and disobedience, and he rashly and unreasonably pronounces sentence on her:
let her languish

A drop of blood a day, and being aged

Die of this folly. (1.1.192-194)

Imogen’s suffering saintliness is exhibited in her own words about her miserable condition as she laments her royal position, nobility being the cause of her misery and not worth any of the advantages. Upon the departure of Posthumus, she wails, “There cannot be a pinch in death / More sharp than this is” (1.1.155-156). She then articulates to her father the wish that she would have been born instead a “neatherd’s daughter” (1.1.181), or a cowherd’s daughter, and Leonatus her “neighbor shepherd’s son” (1.1.182), desiring a life in a pastoral setting far outside of the kingdom. She later expresses regret for her station in life and wishes she had early met the same fate as her lost brothers:

My supreme crown of grief and those repeated

Vexations of it! Had I been thief-stol’n,

As my two brothers, happy; but most miserable

Is the [desire] that’s glorious. (1.6.4-7)

Incidentally, Imogen’s earlier reference to Cloten as puttock, stated above, insinuates that her stepbrother is a bird of prey intent on feeding on and thereby massacring a living being, an apt metaphor for Cloten since he is revealed shortly thereafter as a jealous lecher intent on raping Imogen regardless of her marital status or the fact that she is his stepsister. Imogen’s feelings toward Cloten are very obvious in her concerns that he is to be feared in his threatening mannerisms, marking her as a suffering saint who must endure the sexual and violent threats imposed by Cloten. Imogen is relentlessly pursued by Cloten, who wishes to marry her to attain the kingdom for himself, but his intentions lean strongly toward enforcement and violence,
insinuating his inclinations through bawdy talk such as “go[ing] up and down like a cock” (2.1.22), “penetrat[ing]” with “fingering” (2.3.14-15), and explicitly avowing his intentions to rape her on top of her husband’s dead body and donning her husband’s armor in attempts to deceive her.

Imogen’s defiance of gender norms is also conspicuous in dialogue that she had with Cloten in which her insolence and impatience is very evident. She reasons that she needs to speak in such a manner to him because her silence might cause him to think that she is in consent to his proposals, and she outright warns him that if she were to speak she would “unfold equal discourtesy / To [his] best kindness” (2.3.111-112). Imogen insinuates that he is a fool and then appears to apologize, though I would argue in a passive aggressive manner because the apology quickly turns to declarations of hatred for Cloten:

I am much sorry, sir;
You put me to forget a lady’s manners
By being so verbal; and learn now for all
That I, which know my heart, do here pronounce,
By th’ very truth of it, I care not for you,
And am so near the lack of charity
To accuse myself I hate you—which I had rather
You felt than make ’t my boast. (2.3.120-127)

Cloten’s response is to attempt persuasion on the basis of gender and patriarchal norms by declaring, “You sin against / Obedience, which you owe your father” (2.3.128-129). He also notes that she is “curbed from that enlargement [of marriage to Posthumus] by / The
consequences o’ th’ crown” (2.3.137-138), once again referring to patriarchal as well as to royal prerogative in the king’s decision on whom the princess was to marry.

Along with the hostility and imprisonment imposed upon her by her father and the perceived threats of sexual enforcement and violence from Cloten, Imogen also experiences suffering saintliness in the loss of her husband who was banished. Despite her intense love for him, Imogen’s own husband Posthumus Leonatus, whom she loves and for whom she lost the favor of her father, is psychologically and even physically violent to her at times, though his abuse of her is largely ignored, perhaps as testament to patriarchal privilege in early modern England and a man being able to treat his wife in such a manner without repercussion or even admonishment. Posthumus’s distrust of her loyalty leads to the potentiality of Imogen being almost raped by Iachimo when he sneaks into her room while she is sleeping in an attempt to find evidence that would deceive Posthumus. At the very least, there is strong intimation of the potentiality of rape because he alludes to the rapist Tarquin once he alights from his hiding place in the trunk in Imogen’s bed chamber:

Our Tarquin thus

Did softly press the rushes ere he wakened

The chastity he wounded. (2.2.15-17)

Iachimo can be said, in fact, to rape her virtually with his eyes, the scene being strikingly similar to the bedroom scene in Shakespeare’s poem *The Rape of Lucrece* as Tarquin stares lasciviously at Lucrece’s body before committing the rape. As he proceeds in his lengthy monologue, Iachimo watches Imogen sleep and takes off her bracelet to trick Posthumus into believing in her infidelity. He then takes notice of the book she has been reading, and he once again brings up allusion to a rapist, stating,
She hath been reading late
The tale of Tereus; here the leaf’s turned down
Where Philomel gave up. (2.2.48-50)
Tereus as a mythological king of Thrace who raped his sister-in-law and then cut out her tongue so she could not accuse him of the rape, according to the notes in Folger’s edition of the play. Iachimo then returns to the trunk to await morning, declaring Imogen “a heavenly angel” (2.2.54), one of only many statements made by him concerning her angelic and unique attributes and qualities. Imogen, however, is pictured as beautiful, intelligent, and even “angel-like” (4.2.62), and she is incredibly faithful to her husband, even when he questions her fidelity and threatens her.

In Imogen, Shakespeare also returns to the convention of the heroine cross-dressing, a motif that he used in previous plays, in order to effect her will and take matters into her own hands. When Imogen chooses to leave her father’s household to pursue her banished husband, she dons a disguise which, as noted by Elizabeth Scala, “allow[s] her to lose the aristocratic status that has blocked acceptance of her marriage to Posthumus” (140). She willingly sheds her place of privilege to follow her beloved, a man of inferior social status, without regard to her own social status and the obligations that accompany it. Additionally, Scala argues that Imogen’s “feminine status” requires a standard of “silent obedience” (155), especially to her father, King Cymbeline—a standard which he obviously expects her to adhere to unquestioningly and which she completely disregards.

Joseph Bowling has also called attention to Imogen’s role as an exemplary British heroine, saying she “represents a different originary model of antiquity that falls outside of the masculinist coordinates of the native legends as well as the place of women in legendary history
generally” (84). Indeed, Imogen is depicted as a strong warrior who does not necessarily need a man, resembling Spenser’s Britomart from The Fairie Queene who was candidly identified as Elizabeth, therefore intimating the idea that Imogen could also be identified with the late queen, especially reminiscent of Elizabeth’s construction of her heroic identity, as Rose has claimed. Furthermore, the wager narrative that Posthumus and Iachimo engage in regarding Imogen and her fidelity has been seen by Bowling as indicative of the construction of British national reputation: “whether or not Britain’s women, or land, can be penetrated” (95). The fact that Imogen resists both Iachimo and Cloten despite her husband’s supposed abandonment gives credibility to her label as national hero, “the bearer of native Britain valor” (99), but it also implies that she is able to firmly withstand tyrants that would turn other women into victims, helpless and powerless and weak, incapable of anything other than defeat. In her ability to stand strong against her attackers and to remain faithful to her husband even through his ruthlessness, she comes to represent, according to Bowling, “a new model of fidelity” (103), as is suggested by the name that she takes on when she chooses to take on the persona of a young male warrior, Fidele. Additionally, she “defies filial allegiance for the sake of political reconciliation [ . . . ] disavowing ‘kinship’” (105) with her father and thereby proving herself rebellious and defiant, therefore monstrous, in order to affect her own personal agenda.

King Leontes in The Winter’s Tale also suffers the loss of his only heirs. First, Leontes’s son, Mamillius, experienced a wasting sickness seemingly brought on by the trauma and anxiety caused by false accusations of infidelity by his father toward his mother, and Mamillius died from the sickness. Next, Leontes rejects his newborn daughter Perdita because he was convinced that his wife was guilty of infidelity with his friend Polixenes, the king of Bohemia. Echoes of
Elizabeth can be seen here in the heroine Perdita because Elizabeth had also lost her mother, Anne Boleyn, at a very young age because of suspicions and rumors of her mother’s infidelity.

When the noblewoman Paulina brings the baby to Leontes, he refuses to accept or even consider the baby as his own child, stating, “This brat is none of mine; It is the issue of Polixenes” (2.3.91-92). Despite efforts by his closest advisors to offer evidence to the contrary, the king commands that the baby be put to death, appointing Paulina and her husband Lord Antigonus to commit the foul deed, demanding, “[T]ake it hence, / And see it instantly consumed with fire” (2.3.131-132). If they were unwilling to commit the deed, Leontes declares, “The bastard brains with these my proper hands / Shall I dash out” (2.3.138-139), setting into motion from her infancy the strong threat of violence to the heroine even in her most innocent position. When the lords protest against the cruelty of what the king has determined, Leontes lobbies for justification in his decision to put the baby to death, but he changes his mind about death by fire:

Shall I live on to see this bastard kneel
And call me father? Better burn it now
Than curse it then. But be it; let it live. (2.3.153-155)

He then charges Antigonus with the task of taking the baby out of the kingdom and committing it perhaps to an even crueler death by exposing it to the elements and letting nature decide whether the baby lives or dies:

We enjoin thee,
As thou art liegeman to us, that thou carry
This female bastard hence, and that thou bear it
To some remote and desert place, quite out
Of our dominions; and that there thou leave it,
Without more mercy, to its own protection
And favor of the climate. As by strange fortune
It came to us, I do in justice charge thee,
On thy soul’s peril, and thy body’s torture,
That thou commend it strangely to some place,
Where chance may nurse or end it. (2.3.171-181)

One of the plotlines that revolve around the motif of the lost heir is through charges of infidelity or a claim that the child in question is not actually an heir or of the royal bloodline. As Cooper states, “An alternative way of depriving an heiress of her true inheritance is, therefore, for the villain of the story to charge her with bastardy, to enforce the loss of her dynastic identity rather than her person. Leontes inflicts both on Perdita.” Cooper further explains that the identity of the lost heir is also often identified allegorically by his or her name by a “kind of legitimacy of title conferred [. . .] by the writing of their loss into their names,” and as Paul Fletcher has pointed out, the name “Perdita” translates to “one who is lost.” Perdita is rescued from the death sentence imposed on her by her father and raised by a humble shepherd, but Cooper claims that “nature wins over nurture,” and so sixteen years later, Perdita’s “innate curiosity” as befits the daughter of a king as opposed to the daughter of a simple shepherd marks her as “too noble for this place” (4.4.159) and, along with her mother’s cloak and jewel that was left when she was exposed, the lost heir is then rediscovered. Shakespeare’s terminology that she has “grown in grace” (4.4.243) comprises both physical beauty and spiritual goodness, further demonstrating her kinmarks or marks of nobility that would help identify this lost one.

Before she is identified, however, the lowly shepherdess Perdita is revealed to have been planning an imminent secret marriage to the prince of Bohemia, which is directly against the
King’s wishes and against the laws and culture of the land. Perdita willfully chooses to marry Florizel, though it is against social custom and even against royal edict and the authority of the king. Because of this development, Perdita suffers the effects of a perceived social inequality between herself and her beloved, and I argue that she could be considered monstrous because of her defiance of any filial allegiance and kinship, though perhaps not as overtly because she does so without actually recognizing that the one she is rebelling against is her own father. Her rebelliousness to royal, social, and political custom or law is tantamount to treason and threatens her very life as she is seen by the King of Bohemia as only a humble shepherdess of no worth or value and therefore inadequate to serve as wife to his son.

Furthermore, Perdita reflects the same fierce determination and rebelliousness against accepted patriarchal traditions and gender norms. Dressed in fine garments in pretense of being mistress of the feast that she and Prince Florizel are attending, Perdita calls herself a “poor lowly maid / Most goddesslike pranked up” (4.4.9-10), yet she is in full knowledge that she and her beloved are in defiance of custom and law concerning their intimate personal relationship and their decision to wed, recognizing that Florizel must eventually choose to step down from his position of status or she must be put to death. Yet she chooses, selfishly perhaps, to continue the relationship despite the dangers if their relationship were to be discovered.

In addition, the pastoral scenes of *The Winter’s Tale*, according to François Laroque, demonstrate that the “hope of a return to nature pure and simple is nothing but a naive illusion” (1). The discovery of Perdita, therefore, as the long-thought-dead princess of Sicilia guarantees that she will not be able to return to her carefree, simplistic life that she had enjoyed since being abandoned in Bohemia as a newborn. The discovery of the lost heir may ensure the future of the kingdom of Sicilia and may allow her to legally marry Florizel without any hindrance; however,
she cannot profit from her sudden elevation in social status because her passion and willingness
to defy social and patriarchal norms as well as royal law will ultimately interfere with any peace
or prosperity that she has gained by finding out her birth origins. It also speaks volumes that her
father tried to murder her, so that discovery in itself will hinder any ability to enjoy the royal life.
Even what Laroque calls her “resistance to cosmetics and face painting” (3) can be perceived as
rebellion to custom, one that will haunt her when and if she returns to Sicilia to take her place as
heir, a place where the ladies in court and even her own mother were likely inclined to wear
cosmetics. Laroque suggests that this understanding of the potential aftereffects may hint at the
controversy voiced by early modern Puritans as cosmetics being immoral because of their ability
to “hide and deceive” (4). Perdita’s transgression and defiance of social, patriarchal, and royal
norms as well as custom suggests that she will never be able to extricate herself from her current
state in order to successfully claim her rightful place as heiress of Sicilia or even of Bohemia as
Prince Florizel’s wife, and therefore, can only be seen as monstrous.

Prospero’s daughter Miranda in *The Tempest* is also a lost heir, though she is not lost to
her father—only to the rest of the world and to her position as the daughter of the Duke of Milan.
The lost heir motif, however, is significant to early modern audiences both with Miranda and
with Perdita because their rediscovery not only leads to a continuation of their lineage but also to
future negotiations, relationships, and merges with neighboring kingdoms. As Cooper explains,

The *Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* negotiate their political crises not only by the
recovery of the missing heiress but by her marriage to the heir of a potentially
hostile line, so that she both absorbs the rival dynasty and is absorbed in it: a faint
but telling analogy of the relationship of female-ruled England and male-ruled
Scotland across the Stuart accession. These two plays also offer strong central
images of positive female sexuality, the desirable desire that promises to make the heroine the founding mother of a future line—that promises a happy issue, in both senses of the word.

Both Perdita and Miranda are lost when they are very young, and so they had never experienced any life other than the one that they know, so a return to a life of nobility is problematic. Like Perdita, however, Miranda can be seen as monstrous because she, too, may be unable to conform to her elevated status when she returns to proper society. Though she had attained an elevated position on the island that granted her many privileges, I suggest that her ignorance and abuse of those privileges created an aggressive posture and dominance that she felt rightfully belonged to her as co-ruler of the island.

Although Perdita and Miranda encounter an alternate lifestyle than what they should have experienced as daughters of royalty, they did enjoy a seemingly idyllic life straight out of a pastoral romance. This fact, however, does not discount the fact that their lives had a potential toward tragedy that was only resolved in some kind of twist at the end of each play. Not only does Perdita almost lose her life because of her father’s command to put her to death as a baby, but later she almost loses her love, a royal prince, because of her seeming humble origins as a mere shepherdess, an illicit love which also constitutes a threat to her life. Miranda, on the other hand, faces the threat of rape and violence from a group of shipwrecked men because of her isolated existence on a deserted island and their desire to take over the island by conquering the ruler’s daughter sexually. Furthermore, the return to society of these lost heirs must also be considered. Because the young women are completely unaccustomed to royal lifestyle and because they often found themselves in nefarious circumstances that represented the lower
classes and bottom-of-the-barrel humanity, the return to civilization and society and culture will presumably not be smooth and peaceful.

Miranda also experiences the same suffering saintliness in fear of sexual transgression as it is revealed early in the play that she has been attacked by the only other “human-like” inhabitant of the island, the monster Caliban, in order to rape her and repopulate the island. Additionally, when strangers appear on the island, Caliban convinces two of them that it would be in their best interest to take Miranda by force in order to gain control of the island and depose Prospero. Miranda has long been considered by many scholars to be the epitome of beauty and saintly goodness, virtuous and innocent. More will be written in my final chapter, however, as I position Miranda as hidden monstrosity who meets certain conditions and characteristics also seen in the real monster of Shakespeare’s romances, Caliban. Miranda is also outspoken and tactless and even sadistic, a woman oblivious to the patriarchal norms of submissiveness that may ultimately lead to her ostracization and perhaps banishment from civilized society and to her fall from the saintly appraisal voiced by Ferdinand who falls in love with her at first sight.

As Shakespeare continued on his quest to write romances, his heroines appeared to become more and more rebellious toward norms and traditions, challenging authority with aggression, determination, and resilience that went against the early modern ideology of subjugated, suppressed, and silent femininity. Each of Shakespeare’s romance heroines displays a remarkable rebellion and aggression and hostility, while still maintaining a saint-like persona, that purposely and willfully defies patriarchal norms to demonstrate a feminine monstrosity that is hidden and perhaps more obscure. Each of the women was forced into positions initially that would require them to be submissive and compliant, yet each managed to rise above that circumscribed position to rebel against cultural norms and expectations, rendering them as
monstrosities who vocally and physically deviated from tradition to assert their independence and autonomy.
CHAPTER THREE:

“WHEN MY LUST HATH DINED...I’LL BE MERRY IN MY REVENGE”:

LANGUAGE OF RAPE AND VIOLENCE IN THE MOUTH OF THE CLOWN

Regardless of the genre of a particular play--history, tragedy, or comedy--Shakespeare would often include the role of a clown. They are peasants or servants or lower-class rustics who, knowingly or unknowingly, combine wit with foolishness to underscore principles and lessons integral to the play and its reception by the audience. Many of Shakespeare’s clowns have names that are allegorical in providing clues to their character and personality: Bottom, Touchstone, Feste, Speed, Lavatch, Dogberry, Falstaff.

In the introduction to Clowning and Authorship in Early Modern Theatre, Richard Preiss categorizes the clown as distinct from any other character to help readers today to identify him from the text and context of the play as opposed to what could be derived from the performance:

They are clods, dolts, wags, oafs, bumpkins, shepherds, villagers, drunks, hired hands, tinkers, tradesmen, servants, porters, pages, occasionally constables or criminals, the people who fill the gaps of a society and who sometimes are those gaps themselves: strangers to metropolitan life and its manners, but wise enough to critique them; strangers to the nuances of language, but witty enough to manipulate them; strangers to the duplicity of human desire and the intricacy of social relations, but clever enough to survive them; strangers to the world of the play in which they find themselves, and happy enough to remark on that fact. (2)
The key word Preiss uses in the above description of the clown insists that he is foremost a “stranger,” one who is an outsider: uncommon, unconventional, unknown. His ambiguity invites the audience to consider or reconsider the play’s substance, relevance, and magnitude, while still enjoying the entertainment value that the clown embodies. Clowns often diverge from the more sophisticated rhymed verse and tend towards crude “intensely colloquial carnal, oath-laced” (2) prose, according to Preiss, as if to more accurately reflect their lower-class status or to more closely identify with the groundlings in front of the stage who were closer to the action and, therefore, responded with more raucousness and volume and temerity than the elite watching from the gallery as they involved themselves in the action on stage. Preiss claims that we can best know we are looking at a clown by several characteristics:

[W]hen he is tripping over his words, tripping over his feet, tripping over someone else’s feet, eating, expressing a desire to eat, being called ‘honest fellow’ by someone about to give him instructions, miscarrying the most rudimentary of those instructions, being beaten or chased for his stupidity and impertinence, complaining of his abuse, or issuing a verbal stream of self-reference whose incomprehensibility might be alleviated if we could see the physical antics that accompanied it [. . ., and] when he considers himself the hero of his own story, yet is all too aware that it is not his own. (2)

While clowns today are seen as offering comic relief and the opportunity to laugh at their antics, clowns in Elizabethan England were not merely given roles in plays just for the sake of audience laughter. They were comic characters, but they personify so much more than mere comedy. In his book *Shakespeare’s Clown, Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse*, David Wiles claims that Shakespeare’s clowns had a purpose beyond mere comic relief as they were “a
flesh-and-blood spectacle capable of yielding complex meanings” (172), meanings which were sometimes grasped quickly by the general majority of Elizabethan audiences and sometimes only understood by certain groups or classes viewing the plays. Class structure was also significant to Victor Turner, who recognized that a clown embodied the lower classes as representative of the poor and the deformed; he coined the term *communitas* in reference to a community of individuals who are all equal with no hierarchy, and the implication is that a clown is committed to *communitas*, to the breakdown of structure imposed by the political figures and the elite.

Clowns have been theorized to have had a variety of purposes on the London stage: poking fun at the upper and the lower classes, reinforcing religious values, displaying cultural values, providing commentary on contemporary issues. Mikhail Bakhtin claims that clowning, or carnival to use his term, carries the responsibility for employing the voice of the people to address sociopolitical issues and debates or telling rudimentary comments and jokes, especially about bodily fluids and excrement which only a clown could possibly utter, in order to give unofficial views of perhaps controversial topics in a comical fashion. British theater director John Wright also sees the clown’s role as offering a voice through which the audience can relate to and identify with the clown, who looks at the enfolding tragedy and must discover a way to navigate the storms to once again find joy and laughter:

We all know this feeling: when events are so momentous, and so personally overwhelming that we’re momentarily stranded at a point beyond our comprehension. [. . . ] Anarchy is electrifying in short bursts, but ultimately, we want to see somebody we can relate to and identify with. We want to see somebody who can go to the edge of the precipice for us, look down into the
abyss, and ask the questions we don’t have the courage to ask ourselves. At its best, clown is a walking testament to our common humanity. (218)

Artistic theater director John Flax agrees with Wright about the clown being the primary role in which there exists a universal identification as he encourages the audience to become joint participants in the theatrics and reconcile their own feelings and thoughts as they see themselves through the figure of the clown. Flax insists that the clown’s purpose is “finding that basic state of vulnerability and allowing the audience to exist in that state with you. [ . . . ] A clown state is a state of innocence and poetry and naivety that allows the audience to draw their own conclusions” (qtd. in Butler 64). Michael Bala concurs, stating, “to a large extent we identify ourselves with him; we are going through the same experience imaginatively which he concretizes before our eyes” (32). The clown is a reminder that we all share the same concerns and struggles, and so the clown’s role is integral to tragedy in order to provide some semblance of catharsis for the audience. Peter Burke recognizes the potential for catharsis as well by comparing the Elizabethan clown to a “safety valve” (187) allowing “a controlled escape of steam” (202) so that the audience can momentarily escape the more difficult, tragic aspects of a play to provide some measure of relief, some moment of calm or release before returning to the chaos. My argument finds each of these purposes for the clown role plausible, especially reiterating the proposition of the clown being intended as an instrument to voice the anxieties of the audience to allow them to process and construct meaning central to the controversies and to provide an outlet for their emotions and concerns. I argue that the objective of Shakespeare’s clowns in particular was to embody the voice of the people, though each actor performing the scripted clown roles portrayed them in a manner particular to that actor, providing opportunities
for varying perspectives and allowing freedom of discussion on early modern debates and issues, particularly those involving gender and class.

Three actors played the primary comedic character role over the course of Shakespeare’s career: Richard Tarlton, Will Kemp, and Robert Armin. Wiles argues that Shakespeare scripted the role of the clown in each of his plays based on the individual influence and attributes of the chief “clown” employed for his company at a given time, the roles noticeably changing with each new chief comedic player introduced to Shakespeare’s company. Each actor brought his own comedic stylings into the role and influenced Shakespeare’s hand as he penned roles designed especially for them. According to Wiles, Bertolt Brecht was the first to recognize “a creative fusion of the actor’s and the writer’s art,” particularly in Elizabethan theater as “collaborative creation” (qtd. in Wiles 165). Bart Van Es agrees with the collaborative nature that would have existed between Shakespeare and, specifically, his last clown, Robert Armin, as they worked together in a “collective sense of theatrical endeavour” on a dozen plays over a dozen years. Armin had written plays, ballads, and poetry, along with booklets regarding the nature of fools and various types of both natural and wise, or philosophical, fools, and Van Es states that Armin as both performer and published author had a “traceable influence on Shakespeare that is as great as that of major poets.” That influence becomes more evident when one analyzes the most likely clown roles which Armin would have portrayed and which Shakespeare created specifically for him.

While the role of clown is not a conventional romance character, it is a role that is featured in later medieval morality plays in the character of vice. The vices began as serious allegorical characters embodying evil and sin as counterpoint to the other characters who embodied virtue; however, the vice later evolved to one individual, the “chief comic character”
(Wilson), as if to provide an outlet or relief for the audience and perhaps to garner an antipathy for the wickedness that the vice represented: “dramatists, and many a preacher, knew that men and women will not listen for long to unrelieved gravity” (Wilson). In his experimentation with romance, I argue that Shakespeare dramatically transformed the medieval romance genre for his contemporary early modern audience by inserting the theatrical role of the clown and reimagining it, intentionally diverging from any clown role he had previously written to develop a unique and distinct clown based on the influence, attributes, and aspirations of the last actor to play the clown role: Robert Armin. Furthermore, I suggest that Armin, himself also a published poet and author of wit and satire, collaborated closely with Shakespeare to create a new clown type based, first, on the medieval Vice character, and second, on Armin’s intense desire for social elevation and fierce determination to break free from the early modern concept of an insurmountable hierarchical chain of being. This collaboration of actor and performer provided a new perspective on the romance in which Shakespeare chose to conceal the hidden monstrosity, or the villain, behind the face of a clown, using the clown figure as an instrument of class subversion by using disorder to disrupt class dynamics and proving that the character could emerge from the elite as well as from the commoner.

Richard Tarlton was the first actor employed to act Shakespeare’s chief clown roles. Tarlton’s invention of his own clown character was based primarily on his study of “real rustic simpletons” (Wiles 12), adopting crude word play and donning unfashionable peasant costumes as he “fused” the medieval Vice character with the rustic “countryman” (Wiles 12) transported to an urban setting. In classical drama, the clown had traditionally been a bumbling simpleton serving some greater master, and each of Tarlton’s clowns followed that tradition. Wiles claims that Tarlton’s skill rested “in convincing the audience that he has been outwitted and
humiliated,” a role he played out as long as possible until he was at last able to deliver “the punchline which gives him the final laugh” (17). He stretched the comedic tension through physicality, song, insult, improvisation, and verbal banter of wit and rhyme that was both “interactive and competitive” (Wiles 20) wherein his audience expected and coveted participation in the comedy. Based on references in Shakespeare’s plays and elsewhere, Tarlton had a pudgy physique, a flat nose, and a squint, and he was often regarded as a “swine-faced clown”; Wiles further elaborates that “sight of his face was enough to send an audience laughing,” and his “physical ugliness [. . .] invites mockery from the audience” (17). Tarlton was not only a stage comedian, though, as he also frequented taverns, private homes, and the court to perform his jests and songs, and Wiles claims that Tarlton’s “comedy cut across barriers of class” (23) as he was accepted and venerated in whichever venue he found himself. Through costume, characterization, and physical appearance, Tarlton consistently projected a lower-class “rustic stupidity” (Wiles 17), though his prominent stage career and reputation earned him “status as a royal favourite” and allowed him to achieve both “social and financial elevation” (Wiles 14) at the same time that Shakespeare’s company also experienced gains in prosperity.

Tarlton’s successor as “clown” was Will Kemp, who embodied the character of clown in a vastly different manner than Tarlton. Kemp’s physique and ability to demonstrate strenuous physicality was the most obvious difference. As a morris dancer who once danced for nine days across the country from London to Norwich, as chronicled in his *Nine Daies Wonder* (1600), Kemp had to have stamina and agility and a powerful build to perform the leaping and persistent rhythmic stepping required of him. Like Tarlton’s squint, however, Kemp’s “ill face” (Wiles 24) marked him as clown. His typical costume also set him apart from Tarlton, flaunting plumes and scarves and motley colors, all marks of a country morris dancer and suited more to the
identification of court jester as opposed to Tarlton’s rustic clown. Kemp also brought a different
dynamic to the role of clown than what Tarlton had brought. Tarlton had been given much
freedom on stage to allow banter with the audience and spontaneous improvisation, while Kemp
was much more restricted in his freedoms. In his discussion of Kemp, Wiles argues that at the
end of the sixteenth century there existed a “tension between a neo-classical aesthetic which
could not accommodate the clown and a performing tradition in which the clown was central”
(43). As a result of this tension and of growing regulation over the authorial script, the clown
role became more relegated to a subplot with very little deviation from the script and very little
audience interaction, though a jig was often performed in the postlude to accompany the clown’s
contribution, an ability for which Kemp was perfectly suited. The stage jig was ripe with sexual
innuendo and provided freedom for the dancer/comedian and release for the audience, allowing
for their active participation after two hours of concentration on the drama beforehand. Kemp
most likely began his employment with Shakespeare’s company in 1594 since the clown part in
*Titus Andronicus* is well-suited to his comedic style as opposed to Tarlton’s. Wiles attests,
however, that the “partnership between Kemp and Shakespeare ended abruptly” (35) in 1599; he
further states that the absence of an “obvious clown part in *Julius Caesar*” (36) is perhaps
testament to Kemp’s departure, leaving the company with a void to fill.

That void came in the person of Shakespeare’s last clown and the one with whom my
primary argument concerns itself: Robert Armin, hired after Kemp’s seemingly sudden departure
in 1599 and acting as chief comic player until around 1612 at the end of both his and
Shakespeare’s lives and careers. The histories contain very few, if any, clown roles, and when
Shakespeare turned to tragedies and the “problem plays,” the role of the clown has been notably
altered, as has been recognized by Wiles and Alex Davis among others, and the jig has been
discarded because, unlike Kemp, Armin was not a jig-maker and did not have the physical abilities or physique that would allow him to maintain that persona. Armin was considerably small, a fact that can be discerned through a multitude of textual references in plays written after 1599, specifically indicating his diminutive size and stature. The jig required an athleticism that Armin simply did not have. Additionally, Wiles states that Armin’s “principal physical traits were ugliness and dwarfishness” (148), a perfect combination for a clown character and a popular conception of the early modern concept of fool as “sub-human [ . . . ], a stunted grotesque” (150). Wiles further claims that Armin’s comedic style was “obsessed” with playing the “natural” fool (148), and his physical appearance fit with that depiction. Along with being physically deficient, Armin’s natural fool also embodied the mentally deficient equivalent of the village idiot; however, Armin’s intention in portraying a physically stunted, half-witted fool, according to Wiles, was “to leave the ambiguity open, whether he is a congenital moron [. . . ] or whether he is merely the artful jester” (140). Armin’s position as “a mimic and an intellectual” resulted in a transformation in the clown role wherein he “never projected the clown persona of the common Englishman” (Wiles 136). Accordingly, Armin originated a clown type in which he acted the fool but sporadically spoke wisdom in order to reveal the foolishness of others, thereby providing an intellectual influence into the clown role to become what has been termed the “philosopher-fool.” This terminology suggests a wisdom arising from the folly and a turn away from the mere rusticity that the term “clown” implied at the time.

Although each of Shakespeare’s “clowns” approached the role in a particular way that was specific to him, in the course of his employment with Shakespeare’s company, Armin deviated from the previous clown personas originated by Tarlton and Kemp and influenced Shakespeare to transform the clown role in a novel manner. Though Armin’s clowns were quite
distinct from Tarlton’s and Kemp’s clown’s, Armin’s true “clown evolution,” if you will, occurred with his roles in the romances, especially in the final three plays assumed to have been solely written by Shakespeare. As Shakespeare’s writing began to be transformed in his experimentation with medieval romance and its conventions, the characterization of Shakespeare’s clown, under Armin’s influence and abilities, also transformed in two significant ways: a change in the quest for elevated social status and a change in the attitudes, behaviors, and intentions voiced by the clown.

The first transformation in Armin’s clown, and which seems to be unique to the clowns in the Shakespearean romances, is the quest for social elevation, essentially shaking up class dynamics in the desire to surmount traditionally prescribed ideology of hierarchy. To understand this transformation in the clown’s social status, we must first look at one of the possible explanations for Shakespeare’s late turn to romance. The King’s Men moved into the Blackfriars Theater in 1608, a venue that traditionally had catered to a more elite audience, as has been recognized by such scholars as Alison Thorne, Gerald Eades Bentley, and Oscar G. Brockett and Franklin J. Hildy, among others. With the change in venue, the writing—and acting—necessarily would have changed to more appropriately engage the new class of theatergoers. Strict social status boundaries were, therefore, being disrupted by intermingling the elite classes with the more fluctuating and inconstant classes of the actors on stage. Furthermore, the genre of romance had always proven very popular with the upper classes because of its focus on gentility and nobility. Major characters were always part of the elite; though they may fall from those higher rungs, as Northrop Frye (The Secular Scripture) claims is indicative of romance, they always have the ability to return to that higher rung strictly because they were destined for that elevated status
and need not remain forever in a lower status, which is essentially the typical structure of romance.

Armin’s biography is also significant to our understanding of his clown’s metamorphosis. Born to a tailor and later apprenticed to a prestigious goldsmith, Armin himself belonged to a “rising social group”; he was “an intellectual, a Londoner” (Wiles 136), and he diligently aspired to rise above the social status to which he was born. In contrast, Tarlton had embraced the concept of “clown” and the connotations of rusticity, simplicity, and inferiority that accompanied it. Likewise, Kemp had presented himself as the common Englishman who had no designs on being a gentleman. Wiles calls Kemp a “traditionalist who looks back to a more stable order when every man knew his place” (25), and he states that Kemp “made it his priority to be popular with commoners rather than to woo the London gentry” (144). Regarding Armin, however, Wiles explains, “Upward mobility was something which Armin persistently sought” (144), and I argue that Armin purposed to portray a variety of comedic characters with elite social statuses or with aspirations for elite social statuses, as opposed to the sole roles of Tarlton’s “eternal English peasant” and Kemp’s “plain Englishman” (Wiles 139). Armin coveted an elevation in social status, a rise to a higher rung on the hierarchical chain of being, and with Shakespeare’s company attaining more popularity and prosperity in the early 1600s, Armin partially achieved the “upward mobility” (144) he craved. Additionally, in 1607, he elicited patronage for his performances, attempting to further achieve higher social status.

It is my argument, therefore, that Armin’s aspirations and influence governed Shakespeare’s scripting of clown roles for him which included more clout and prestige and autonomy, transforming the clown in the romances from characters of traditionally low social status to characters of more noble or more ambiguous elevated status and crafting multiple
persons that coincided with Armin’s own lofty ambitions. This desire to transgress the linear boundaries of the hierarchical chain of being in order to rise above one’s prescribed station is significant, first because it once again points to the debate concerning free will and determinism discussed in the previous chapter. Additionally, it is significant because the clown figure had always traditionally been relegated to a lower social status, and now Shakespeare and Armin’s collaboration as playwright and performer created a new clown type that transgressed social status and allowed him to become one of the elite, the upper echelons of society, demonstrating that foolishness and vice could be found at a higher social status as well as a lower one; therefore, as the aforementioned scholars agree, the clown acts as mediator between the classes or as a signifier of universal humanity. The clowns portrayed by Tarlton and Kemp were simpletons, rustics, country folk, and Armin’s clown was determined to become one of the elite of which the romance has always been traditionally concerned. Armin himself was determined to rise above his allotted status and desired the same social elevation that we can see in each of Armin’s clowns within the romances. It did not seem to matter to Armin that his diminutive stature and odd-looking appearance might hamper that elevation; both his published works and his comedic abilities would advance him to preferment and provide the status he so craved. It is my contention, therefore, that Armin’s strong desire for social elevation influenced Shakespeare to create clown roles for him that would also yearn for that same freedom from restriction of prescribed social status.

Furthermore, Armin’s ambitious endeavors to attain a higher social status were transformed by Shakespeare into a type of clown who exuded more tragic potential than previous clown roles with their use of vulgar sexual innuendo and threats of rape and violence toward the heroines. Shakespeare’s romances reveal a transformation of Armin’s earlier, more comedic
clowns into ones resembling the vice characters of medieval morality plays: darker, more sinister characters with nefarious intentions, voicing rape and violence toward women, though always failing in their threats and attempts, as would necessarily characterize the romance genre and its attention to a happy resolution. This transformation is evident in at least three particular clown roles within the romances, the last three plays conjectured to have been solely written by Shakespeare. Wiles explains that the “clown’s identity” would have been obvious to original early modern audiences and yet not so obvious to the modern “uninitiated reader” (151), so the role in which Armin would have acted as clown may only be speculative, but enough clues exist to point to the characters that would likely have been played by Armin.

When Armin was recruited as chief comedic actor in 1600, beginning with the role of the jester Touchstone in *As You Like It*, the role of the clown changed noticeably to much darker moods and sinister tones, accompanied by a “new, more caustic source of laughter” for which Armin had been distinguished, which Van Es claims were “diametrically opposed to those of Shakespeare’s earlier comic roles.” Other Armin clowns followed, including Thersites from *Troilus and Cressida* and Lavatch from *All’s Well That Ends Well*, who suffered egregious punishments and violent abuses at the hands of their masters or of other characters, all for the amusement, laughter, and applause of the audience. In examining these atrocities committed upon the clown and the pronounced difference in this new clown type influenced by Armin, Van Es remarks,

> It can hardly be overstated how radically such exchanges differ from those that Shakespeare wrote when Kemp was the clown of the company—not only for the reason that Armin’s fools fall easily into the role of victim, but also because they can turn so quickly to persecutors of vice.
The cycle of violence begins with abuse placed on the clown in a comical fashion, and then the clown turns that violence he suffered onto other characters in the play. Feste in *Twelfth Night*, for example, is one of Armin’s clowns who uses his wit and intelligence to inflict humiliation and torment on Malvolio, which is cruel and, therefore, unusual for a comic character to enact. Van Es also notes that the fool in *King Lear*, another clown who routinely is threatened with violence, introduces “a pervasive mood of dark comedy, paradox, and purgative judgment,” which is very similar to Armin’s own published writings about various types of fools, once again demonstrating that Armin had a profound impact and influence on Shakespeare’s inclusion and characterization of this new clown type as he constructed his final plays.

In the romances, however, Shakespeare and Armin stretched the foundation of this new clown type to include even more nefarious attitudes, behaviors, and intentions, particularly as they referred to women, voicing their intentions on rape and violence toward the heroines within the plays, revealing through the text the hidden monstrosity that the clown had become under the pen of Shakespeare. As mentioned above, the transformation of Armin’s clown within the romances then is distinguished in two important ways: by the combination of intense desire for social elevation and of determined resolve to enforce rape and violence upon women. This combination set the foundation for the Shakespearean romance clown to be a representative of class subversion, flaunting the supposition that upper-class characters could be both vicious and foolish and not just figures of gentility.

First, in *Cymbeline*, Armin’s likely role was that of Cloten, the stepson of Cymbeline, the king of Britain and, therefore, nobility. Cloten’s name—likely pronounced with two ‘t’s as that is how it is written in the First Folio—is the first thing to suggest his status as clown. Not only does the word *clotten* have connotations of “clots” and grotesque bodily functions, a characteristic
specific to clowns according to Bakhtin, but the Oxford English Dictionary defines a “clot” as a “foolish or clumsy person.” Later in the play, Guiderius, one of King Cymbeline’s true sons believed dead, refers to Cloten’s head as a “clotpole” (4.2.234), which means a blockhead, a dolt, an idiot, or a stupid person according to various sources; the notes in the Folger’s edition of the play define it as having a “thick or wooden head.” Several times Cloten is called a fool by various characters; he is also called an “ass” on two separate occasions by the Second Lord, which recalls the clown’s portrayal of Bottom in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, a role which Armin would have taken over from Kemp in later performances. Additionally, Cloten’s mother, the queen, admonishes him that if Imogen were to dismiss him as suitor that he should be “senseless” (2.3.56), meaning incapable of hearing or using the sense of hearing, yet Cloten exhibits his foolishness by taking immediate offense, erroneously interpreting it to believe his mother had called him foolish or stupid, literally without any sense. Cloten is depicted as being mentally incapacitated in various ways, not even being able to do simple subtraction, and Imogen condemns him a “simple nothing,” while in the same breath she also calls him “noble,” referring to his elevated status:

No court, no father, nor no more ado

With that harsh, noble, simple nothing,

That Cloten, whose love suit hath been to me

As fearful as a siege. (3.4.151-154)

Armin’s physical appearance is also noteworthy in identifying the role of Cloten with the actor. Armin’s diminutive stature and unappealing looks, or unattractiveness for lack of a better term, are depicted likewise in the character of Cloten. For instance, after a brief sword fight between Cloten and Posthumous, the Second Lord twice references measurements regarding
height in relation to the amount of leeway Posthumus had given to Cloten during the encounter. First, the Lord caustically mutters in an aside on the great amount of deference given to Cloten by Posthumus in allowing him to save face and halt the fight without injury, saying the latter gave Cloten “As many inches as you have oceans. Puppies!” (1.2.20-21). The sarcasm in the aside subtly references Armin’s/Cloten’s small stature and his need for more inches to be added to his frame. Incidentally, the bizarre exclamation here following the impertinent remark regarding Cloten confirms this role as Armin’s since terminology regarding dogs had been consistently applied to him in previous plays, presumably because he looked somewhat dog-like or dog-faced. Perhaps it also has something to do with clowns being viewed, according to Jason Crawford, as “corrosive figures, [ . . . ] as degradations of human life to be beaten like bastards or dogs. Regardless, the oath of “Puppies!” to accompany this aside specifically pointing out the size of the character/performer also intimates a miniature version and not a fully-grown dog. When Cloten then boasts, “I would they had not come between us” (1.2.22), the Lord scoffs at the fact that he wished someone would not have come between the duel until Cloten “had measured how long a fool” he was lying on (1.2.23-24) the ground, which hints at a noticeable deficiency in height, a visual spectacle which the audience would have seen as laughable when they observed how small Armin/Cloten was.

Like any clown, Cloten sports a costume or clown apparel with reference being made to Cloten having a cockscomb (2.1.25), a traditional embellishment for fools. Cloten’s clownishness is also revealed by refusing to change his shirt though it “reek as a sacrifice” (1.2.2), with the First Lord exclaiming, “There’s / none abroad so wholesome as that you vent” (1.2.3-4), which may have been emphasized on stage by a malodorous stench that could be smelled by the viewers closest to the stage. Cloten also dons a disguise, the clothing of
Posthumus to try to trick Imogen, and his high opinion of himself as he admires his new costume in the mirror betrays his delusions about his appearance and superiority:

I dare speak it to myself,

for it is not vainglory for a man and his glass to confer in his own chamber. I mean, the lines of my body are as well drawn as his, no less young, more strong; not beneath him in fortunes, beyond him in the advantage of the time, above him in birth, alike conversant in general services, and more remarkable in single oppositions. (4.1.7-14)

These lines are rendered hysterical if we were to imagine a very short, very ugly man wearing the apparel of a much taller, much more good-looking man, and completely believing that the ill-fitting garments would somehow convince Imogen that he is, in fact, her husband. Note that the emphasis is also on prepositions that refer to places of status and position as if to subtly point to Cloten’s—and Armin’s—obsessive desire for elevated status: “beyond him,” “not beneath him,” “above him” (italics mine).

Additionally, allusions are made about the value of gold in lining palms, directly referring to his trade as goldsmith, further identifying Cloten with Armin. Cloten also speaks in the colloquial prose that traditionally differentiates clowns from the gentility who more often employed the noble verse of rhyming couplets. Yet, Cloten ultimately is the son of the king and the potential heir to the throne once Imogen marries him or is otherwise removed from that position. He is referred to multiple times as “princely” and Belarius insists that he should be seen as nobility:
He was a queen’s son, boys,
And though he came our enemy, remember
He was paid for that. Though mean and mighty,
Rotting together, have one dust, yet reverence,
That angel of the world, doth make distinction
Of place ’tween high and low. Our foe was princely,
And though you took his life as being our foe,
Yet bury him as a prince. (4.2.311-318)

The hierarchical chain of being is briefly referenced here with high and low classes being
supernaturally ordained as distinct and immutable, yet death alone has the ability to finally
merge classes together. With the character of Cloten, Armin successfully elevates his clown to a
higher status than the traditionally lower-class status of Tarlton’s rustic clown or of Kemp’s fool,
amplifying his own ambitious endeavors to attain higher social status in the world outside of the
theater and imbuing the clown role with designs toward class subversion.

As mentioned before, Armin’s clown also had a second significant transformation
involving his attitude, whereby the character of clown became darker and more nefarious in
intentions, especially toward women. Shakespeare literally allowed threats of rape to proceed
from the mouths of his clowns in the romances. In conformity with Shakespeare’s development
of the romance and the darker conventions that he chose to employ to accompany his foray into
this genre, within Cymbeline, Cloten was also given the task of declaring his intentions of
violence and rape on the heroine. This trend toward threats of violence and rape may seem out of
character for a comedic role, but nevertheless it represented a transformation in the
characterization of the clown role as envisioned by the collaboration of Shakespeare and Armin
in creating their version of the romance clown, turning him into a more nefarious and sinister creature, while still garnering laughter from the audience. Bawdiness and sexual innuendo were traditional Shakespearean clown attributes, but Cloten and other romance clowns take the concept a step further to actually plot and plan rape, providing that tragic potential that is so integral to the Shakespearean romances.

It is apparent from the text that Imogen senses the snare that Cloten is attempting to set in enforcing his sexual desire upon her. In the very first act when her father Cymbeline laments her choice of Posthumous over Cloten, he exclaims, “Thou mightst have had the sole son of my queen!” (1.1.166), to which Imogen replies, “I chose an eagle / And did avoid a puttock” (1.1.167-168). A puttock is a bird of prey akin to a kite or a buzzard that preys on weaker animals to kill and devour them, and it is apparent that Imogen is in fear for her life and for her body. The Oxford English Dictionary also defines a puttock figuratively as “a contemptible or rapacious person, aggressively greedy, greedily desirous of,” and the word “rapacious” here means “to seize or take by force” with the word “rape” being derived from the same root word. In other words, Imogen views Cloten as a predator or a lecherer, someone seeking to hunt her down in an effort to kill or otherwise harm her. Imogen also laments that Cloten’s “love-suit” is “as fearful as a siege” (3.4.153-154), indicating the worry and fear that accompanies Cloten’s relentless and unwanted pursuit of her. Imogen knew his lascivious intentions, and she was fearful. Additionally, referring once again to the scene of Cloten dressing in Posthumus’ clothing, Cloten threatens in soliloquy to behead Posthumus, while at the same time unknowingly foreshadowing his own fate of losing his head, by exclaiming,

Posthumus, thy head, which now is
growing upon thy shoulders, shall within this hour
be off, thy mistress enforced, thy garments cut to
pieces before thy face; and all this done, spurn her
home to her father, who may haply be a little angry
for my so rough usage. (4.1.16-21)

Claiming that he will rape Imogen through “force” and “rough usage,” Cloten brushes aside the
king’s certain anger because his mother will be able to smooth everything over to his benefit.
Not only is he again exhibiting his delusions, but Cloten ignores any worry over potential
punishments or adverse retribution because he believes his elevated status as prince and stepson
of the king provides him some impunity, which would have surely been plausible in
Shakespeare’s world.

Armin’s influence and physical characteristics are also remarkable in The Tempest, in
which Armin was almost certainly given the role of Caliban, the “salvage and deformed slave” as
identified by the Dramatis Personae in Shakespeare’s First Folio. The name Caliban may have
been intended by Shakespeare as a play on the word “cannibal,” and the word “salvage” itself
would have been understood to mean “uncivilized,” and early modern audiences believed that
the uncivilized meant considerably below the civilized in the God-ordained hierarchy. And in the
whelp-mooncalf-fish-tortoise, all derivative names/descriptions ascribed to Caliban in the text,
his hybrid or monstrous appearance and nature is established. Referring to Armin’s frequently
noted unappealing appearance, Crawford explains, “We don’t know the details of Armin’s
physiognomy, but it seems clear that he built his career around his own aura of disability and
atypicality.” Crawford also recognizes the unappealing appearance of Armin as it would have
befitted his appropriation of the character of Caliban: “As the enslaved man-monster Caliban,
Armin made himself comically repulsive, a stinking, sniveling, lecherous, bilious
thing.” Therefore, the physical imperfections and ugliness of Armin as Caliban would have been completely exploited for the amusement and satisfaction of the audience. References to Caliban being a whelp and puppy-headed also identify him with Armin, as mentioned previously.

Furthermore, at the end of the play, Caliban enters in a stolen, assumedly oversized, costume as befits the clown, and at the strange sight, Prospero calls Caliban a “misshapen knave” (5.1.323) and says he is “as disproportioned in his manners / As in his shape” (5.1.347), hinting at the physical deformities brandished by Armin. The role of Caliban also fit Armin’s typical philosopher-fool roles being depicted in the play as “poor and credulous” (2.2.152) since he believes in such things as the man in the moon, seeing wonder in the ordinary, as recognized by Trinculo upon their first meeting: “A most ridiculous monster, to make a wonder / of a poor drunkard” (2.2.171-172). Caliban, however, is not necessarily an ignorant, mentally-deficient fool. He has received extensive education at the hands of Prospero and his daughter Miranda and shows incredible intelligence, and in return he has also educated them concerning the island and its strange, magical inhabitants; he is also the mastermind behind the plot to overthrow Prospero and set up Stephano as the new ruler, a man with no supernatural powers whom Caliban possibly might be able to defeat later when he had had virtually no ability to defeat the supernatural powers of Prospero. Thus, the apparent foolishness of Caliban is questionable and likely betrays a philosopher-fool wisdom that intimates Armin’s desire for social elevation beyond that of mere clown figure.

Though Caliban is depicted as a servant or slave to Prospero, which would definitely comply with the traditional clown role, Caliban’s status is ambiguous because he and his mother were once rulers of the island before Prospero and Miranda came and asserted their dominion. When Caliban first enters the stage, he addresses Prospero and his daughter Miranda, asserting
his original authority as possessor of the island, and he then continues in his speech to lament his gradual decline in status as he relates his descent from ruler to student to groundskeeper to slave:

This island’s mine by Sycorax, my mother,
Which thou tak’st from me. When thou cam’st first,
Thou strok’st me and made much of me, wouldst give me
Water with berries in ‘t, and teach me how
To name the bigger light and how the less,
That burn by day and night. And then I loved thee,
And showed thee all the qualities o’ th’ isle,
The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile.
Cursed be I that did so! All the charms
Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you,
For I am all the subjects that you have,
Which first was mine own king. (1.2.396-409)

Caliban’s status is not that of a lower-class servant or slave like most clowns, but of a deposed king, one who is not humbly servile but rebellious and insolent and determined to regain the island and find himself once more ruler of the land, thereby anticipating return to that elevated status (the high station which Armin also sought), even though it may be only on an island populated by spirits and fairy creatures. Caliban laments that Prospero and Miranda made much fuss over him when they first landed on the island: educating him, and making him love them, and learning from him as well. But things quickly turned awry and they began treating him as inferior. It is only through declaration and appropriation that they are the ones who are now self-proclaimed rulers over the island and masters over Caliban.
Regarding the speech patterns of the traditional clown figure, Trinculo, who is painted as the fool in the play, speaks completely in prose, as did Cloten in the earlier discussion of Cymbeline; whereas, Caliban speaks not in prose as a clown would speak, but in verse as would befit one of an elevated status. After Stephano has gotten him drunk, however, Caliban does change his speech to prose and even kneels to Stephano, offering himself as subject to this “brave god,” but the alteration in speech and attitude must be attributed to the wine and Caliban’s inebriation after partaking of the “celestial liquor” (2.2.121). Caliban’s return to verse at the end of the play indicates that he has reconsidered transfer of his loyalties as he sternly berates himself, saying,

What a thrice-double ass

Was I to take this drunkard for a god,

And worship this dull fool! (5.1.352-354)

Note Caliban’s reference to himself as an “ass,” once again recalling Armin taking on the role of Midsummer Night’s Bottom after Kemp’s departure and further identifying Caliban as Armin’s clown role within The Tempest.

Again, Shakespeare issues the language of rape and violence to Armin’s clown, Caliban. Prospero accuses Caliban of an apparent attempt to “violate / The honor of [his] child” (1.2.417-18), to which Caliban cruelly and callously exclaims,

O ho, O ho! Would ‘t had been done!

Thou didst prevent me. I had peopled else

This isle with Calibans. (1.2.419-421)

Rape is always treated by Shakespeare as the absolute worst punishment that could befall a young lady, while death or suicide remains the only choice after being violated. In Shakespeare’s
poem “The Rape of Lucrece,” for example, Lucrece publicly committed suicide in an attempt to
reclaim her honor after being raped; additionally, in Titus Andronicus, Lavinia submitted gladly
to being sacrificed by her father after she had suffered the same fate. In the romances, the loss of
honor through the threat of rape carries such a strong tragic potential, and it is ironic that
Shakespeare chose the chief comedic player to so blatantly plot that type of violence. Being
raped by Caliban would have been devastating to Miranda, but it also carried an even worse
threat because Prospero claimed that Caliban was “got by the devil himself / Upon [his] wicked
dam” (1.2.382-383). It is possible that Prospero used this claim metaphorically, but if
Shakespeare had intended the claim literally and it were true that Caliban was the son of the
devil, or even of a devil of some sort, the implications for Miranda’s offspring if sired by
Caliban would be disastrous as they would also be seen as abominations, like their father.
Prospero later references Caliban’s accursed parentage again, first condemning his mother as
witch:

This misshapen knave,
    His mother was a witch, and one so strong
    That could control the moon, make flows and ebbs,
    And deal in her command without her power. (5.1.323-326)

Prospero then reiterates the role of the absentee father, identifying Caliban as “this demi-devil /
For he’s a bastard one” (5.1.327-328) and “this thing of darkness” (5.1.330). Had Miranda been
raped by Caliban as threatened, her child, Prospero’s grandchild, would also have been regarded
as bastard demi-devil and product of darkness.

In The Winter’s Tale, though a clown role is mentioned as one of the characters, Armin’s
more likely role was that of Autolycus, a former servant to the prince, a character of low class,
and a dishonest trickster who picks pockets and connives people for a living, “a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles” (4.3.26). Scholars seem to be in agreement with Armin taking on this role, one reason being that Armin often was known to combine his clowning with song, and Autolycus is often singing whenever he is on stage. Later, Autolycus attempts to sell ballads to those who “love a ballad in print” (4.4.261), which, according to Van Es, “mirrors Armin’s status as a popular balladeer.” Van Es then continues to provide evidence for this pairing, recalling historical records that indicate Armin as Autolycus:

A surviving record of the play’s performance at the Globe in May 1611 certainly suggests that Autolycus was played by the diminutive actor. Simon Forman’s diary describes a figure like a “colt-pixie” or fairy who “feigned him sick and to have been robbed of all he had.” This is most likely an eyewitness account of Armin, and if it is, it shows that Shakespeare continued, laughingly, to think of him as a pedlar of print.

Autolycus provides the audience a glimpse of himself as a former courtier in his first lines of song: “I have served Prince Florizel, and in my time wore / three-pile, but now I am out of service” (4.3.13-14). “Three-pile” indicates his costume as the best velvet when he was in the service of the Prince. His song continues to compare himself to a kite, which as mentioned above in the discussion of Cloten, was a bird of prey: “My traffic is sheets; when the kite builds, look to lesser linen” (4.2.23-24). This comparison would have been more comprehensible to an early modern audience who would understand that, when the kite builds a nest, he will snatch linen from households in order to add to his nest. Therefore, within the song, Autolycus is boasting of his abilities to effectively snatch and steal; however, the implication is that he also is a predator, though not shown here in the sexual sense as it was so clearly exhibited with Cloten.
After his apparent fall from court, Autolycus frequently dons disguises and costumes, and he changes his entire persona to fit a situation. During one of these instances of make-believe and pretense, he misrepresents his social position by affecting an air of pompous authority and confirming to the shepherds that he is a courtier, thereby demonstrating both his and Armin’s desire for elevation. He asks senseless questions about his supposed courtly apparel and demeanor to challenge their skepticism, and ends his assertions by confidently declaring his elevated position to give further convincing credibility to his fraud:

   Whether it like me or no, I am a courtier. Seest
   thou not the air of the court in these enfoldings?
   hath not my gait in it the measure of the court?
   receives not thy nose court-odor from me? reflect I
   not on thy baseness court-contempt? Thinkest thou,
   for that I insinuate, or toaze from thee thy
   business, I am therefore no courtier? I am courtier
   cap-a-pe; and one that will either push on or pluck
   back thy business there: whereupon I command thee to
   open thy affair. (4.4.857-866)

Autolycus then firmly establishes his charade by feigning a Pharisaic piety, exclaiming,

   How blessed are we that are not simple men!
   Yet nature might have made me as these are,
   Therefore I will not disdain. (4.4.874-876).

Autolycus also voices on a couple of occasions that he wants “advancement” (4.4.969) and “preferment” (5.2.122), mimicking Armin’s own quest for an elevated social status, and he
concocts a plan toward that end. Though he did not achieve elevation in quite the way that he hoped and planned, Autolycus was finally granted advancement by the shepherds who offered him a position to serve them as courtier once they were made gentlemen by the king.

Incidentally, to give further evidence of Armin’s claim to the role of Autolycus, the Clown character at the end of Act 5, Scene 2, refers to Autolycus with the phrase “tall fellow” five times in nine lines, as if in jest at the diminutive size of Armin, punctuating the phrase over and over to what can only be imagined as hilarious laughter from the audience at the irony. The role of Autolycus has typically been regarded as intended for entertainment purposes and also for satirical commentary on court and rustic life, according to Lee Sheridan Cox, but it is apparent that Autolycus’s quest for social elevation parallels that of Armin and hints at the playacting of both Autolycus and Armin which highlights their desire for advancement, a desire that is also identified by Ronald W. Cooley in his recognition of Autolycus as reflecting Jacobean anxieties concerning social instability.

One difficulty in identifying Armin with the role of Autolycus is that this character, while intensely pursuing an elevation in status as well as singing somewhat bawdy songs, does not exhibit the same sexual lasciviousness and proclivity toward rape and violence that Cloten and Caliban so blatantly voiced. Autolycus is a trickster and a liar, however, embodying the vice character of the earlier mentioned medieval morality plays in his wickedness and sin; it is of particular interest that his first dialogic exchange features the actual named “clown” of the play specifically associating “vice” with Autolycus, though he did not know that he was, in fact, conversing with Autolycus himself. Autolycus then goes on a mock tirade upon his own name and character and the man that is obviously known to be a “rogue” (4.3.101) and a thief. Once the “clown” exits, Autolycus joyfully exclaims that he would be “unrolled,” or struck off the
honorable list of vagabonds, and his “name put in the book of / virtue!” (4.3.125-126). It is also worth observation that this particular character carries a Latin name that is associated with Autolycus of mythology, a clear misdirection from the typical allegorical clown names mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. In Greek mythology, Autolycus was also a cunning thief, trickster, and swindler with the power to disguise himself and metamorphose objects and perhaps himself as well. Within the character of Autolycus, I suggest that, although Shakespeare may be averting the insinuation of sexual threat, he is still reimagining the romance and its transformation of characters and conventions by making the clown a figure of social ambiguity or instability as well as a figure of evil and vice, even at a higher social strata.

While the three roles discussed above have been ascribed to Armin by the majority of scholars, one role has not been so clearly discerned. Armin’s suggested role within Shakespeare’s first romance, Pericles, is not very clear, perhaps because this was Shakespeare’s first attempt at romance and the concept of the clown as hidden villain with strong inclination for social elevation had not been fully considered or established. Armin’s role within Pericles may have been the only clown role in the romances that did not involve a change in social status, instead adhering to the clown’s traditional social status as a lower-class, prose-speaking individual.

Upon close examination of the characters in the play, I believe that Armin would have likely played the character of Bawd, the female keeper of a brothel along with her husband Pander, who is verging on destitution because they only have three working women in their employ who are not bringing in enough money and who carry sexually-transmissible diseases. When Marina is brought to her, Bawd’s primary objective becomes instructing her in the ways of sexuality “that she may not be raw in / her entertainment” (4.2.55-56) so as to make her
profitable to the brothel. Bawd believes that she can capitalize on Marina’s virginity to sell to the highest bidder, acknowledging, “Such a maidenhead were no cheap / thing” (4.2.60-61). The ugly, dwarfish Armin as a female brothel owner who had the responsibility of showing a woman how to be sexual would encourage much laughter and humorous outbursts from the audience as they recognized the farce in the comical exchanges of Bawd and other characters. When Marina, however, refuses to give up her virginity despite all best efforts to persuade her otherwise, Bawd decides that she must be taken by force in order to establish her new role as prostitute and fulfill her obligations to her owners. That strategy has failed, though, because potential customers instead give her sympathy and compassion because of her pleas to her purity and innocence, to which Bawd laments:

We must

Either get her ravished or be rid of her. When she
should do for clients her fitment and do me the
kindness of our profession, she has me her quirks,
her reasons, her master reasons, her prayers, her
knees, that she would make a puritan of the devil if
he should cheapen a kiss of her. (4.6.5-10)

Bawd’s determination to have Marina ravished and her virginity taken so violently once again demonstrates that Shakespeare felt the threat of rape to be so appalling and horrific and devastating, and once again sets up the tragic potential that is inherent in the romances. Therefore, Bawd’s transformation as clown exhibits the same nefarious attitudes and intentions toward Marina that was also displayed in Cloten and Caliban, though never experiencing any social elevation.
While the clown role was a figure from classical comedy rather than a conventional romance character, Shakespeare used the figure of the clown to completely transform the medieval romance genre—not just through the mere inclusion of clown, but also with the transformation of the romance clown from rustic, simple, comedic characters who employed wit for comic persuasion to elite, intelligent, sinister characters who embodied tragic potentiality and socio-sexual threat. Ultimately, under Armin’s influence, the clown role was transformed by Shakespeare, yielding a new clown type who, subversively, was not strictly confined to a lower social status and who regularly uttered threats of horrific acts in order to accelerate the romance’s tragic potential. Armin’s clown roles within the romances focused on the yearning for social elevation and on behaviors and attitudes that were darker and more immoral than would be expected, whether from a clown or comedic character or from a character of noble or gentle status. While Armin’s quest for elevation may have culminated in the clown’s transformation to a more evil persona because of the prominence placed on such a character, the clown’s threats of rape and violence toward women mirrors the threats of incest from the previous chapter, and romance’s tragicomic concern with sexual transgressions serves as metaphor to expand commentary on early modern debates on gender and class. The clown as elite demonstrates that the upper class did not have to be confined to mere romance and gentility; they could be foolish, and they could be nefarious and threatening, especially toward women, and be granted impunity.
CHAPTER FOUR:

“WONDER, AND AMAZEMENT INHABITS HERE”:

THE DEFORMED DEMI-DEVIL AND THE (HIDDEN) MONSTER

All torment, trouble, wonder, and amazement
Inhabits here. Some heavenly power guide us
Out of this fearful country! (5.1.114-16)

When Gonzalo speaks these lines in the final Act of Shakespeare’s The Tempest, he is collectively referring to the many strange sights and events that he and his countrymen have witnessed in the space of three hours. They have been shipwrecked, and yet they have miraculously escaped the sea, to which Gonzalo acknowledges,

But for the miracle—

I mean our preservation—few in millions

Can speak like us. (2.1.6-8)

They have landed on a presumably “[u]ninhitable and almost inaccessible” (2.1.40) island with fresh clothing “rather new-dyed than stained with salt water” (2.1.66-67), which Gonzalo repeatedly insists looks “as fresh as / when we put them on first” (2.1.71-72); and Gonzalo himself has heard the warnings of conspiracy whispered into his dreams by an unseen spirit (Ariel), which he calls a “humming, / And that a strange one too, which did awake me” (2.1.365-66). Furthermore, the group has been entertained with music and a masque by inhabitants of the island who Gonzalo remarks are “of monstrous shape” (3.3.38), and they have just been released from a charm only to be suddenly confronted with the sight of Prospero, whom they presumed
lost or dead long ago. The “wonders and amazements" that inhabit the island, however, have not yet been fully revealed to Gonzalo. In fact, at that point he still was not completely sure that what he was seeing was real.

Although they were made privy to the sight of the spirits’ “monstrous shapes,” Gonzalo and the other newcomers have not yet seen the true monster of the island: Caliban, Prospero’s “salvage and deformed slave,” according to his character description as written in the First Folio. While each of Shakespeare’s previous three romances did not feature a monstrous being as would typically be a common convention in the medieval genre of romance, Caliban in this final Shakespearean romance has been undeniably categorized as Monster. Physically, he is deformed and ugly, “not honored with / A human shape” (1.2.336-337), and he smells horrible. He is animalistic and pictured as an inferior species to the other inhabitants of the island—unsophisticated, uncultured, unsocialized, and uncivilized. Often, he has been regarded in a postcolonial lens, depicting him as an oppressed and subjected native—he once ruled the island, but now he is a vilified servant at the hands of Prospero and his daughter Miranda. As mentioned in a previous chapter, Jason Crawford claims that the portrayal of Caliban by the clown Robert Armin clearly depicted him as a monster and yet also able to convey human qualities that suggested the monster was a sympathetic creature capable of experiencing emotional anguish and struggle:

As the enslaved man-monster Caliban, Armin made himself comically repulsive, a stinking, sniveling, lecherous, bilious thing. But he also hinted at deep currents of memory and longing, whispering of dreams so beautiful that “when I waked / I cried to dream again.” Even as a monster, he evinced a tender and suffering humanity.
Although Caliban has been recognized for his human qualities in recent criticism, the majority of critics have viewed him as monstrous and something fearful and threatening. William Hazlitt, for instance, has described Caliban as “uncontrolled, uncouth, and wild” (90), and Tom Lindsay asserts that Caliban is often read as “represent[ing] evil, incivility, or wild nature” (398). José Antonio Giménez Micó likewise labels Caliban a “complete monstrosity . . . wild and therefore vicious” (79, 83). Additionally, several critics have noted Caliban’s name as an anagram for “cannibal,” which according to Alice Hall Petry, “suggests his basic hostility towards the civilized, human world” (30). Most importantly in recognizing Caliban as monster is his hostility and threatening behaviors toward Miranda, the daughter of the sorcerer who currently governs and controls the island and the only female of human shape, whom Caliban is intent on enforcing sexual relations and multiple pregnancies upon so as to reclaim the island as his own through the possession of the daughter and her offspring. When Prospero reviles him for attempting to violate Miranda, Caliban responds callously by exclaiming,

    O ho, ho! Would ‘t had been done!

    Thou didst prevent me. I had peopled else

    This isle with Calibans. (1.2.419-421)

Caliban’s monstrosity is evident in both his inclinations and threats of rape toward Miranda, but also in his lack of remorse for such a heinous act as rape. Caliban has deluded himself into believing that his behavior and attitude toward the rape and conquest of Miranda is justified since he was once ruler of the island, demonstrating that he is, indeed, a monster to be loathed and feared.

    Miranda is, in fact, another “wonder and amazement” that inhabits the island; in fact, her name comes from the Latin root word *mirandus*, from which the word “miracle” is derived,
along with the word “mirable,” meaning “a wonderful thing; a marvel,” as defined in the Oxford English Dictionary [OED]. When he first sees Miranda on the desolate island, Ferdinand exclaims, “O you wonder—” (1.2.510), the “wonder” referring, according to Pei-Chen Liao, to the meaning of Miranda’s name as well as to the miracle of her physical form (94), with Ferdinand then questioning whether she is in fact a maid or a goddess. The supernatural storm that arose so quickly and forced Ferdinand’s boat to shipwreck has also revealed a surprising, angelic creature on a supposedly deserted island that makes it difficult for Ferdinand to believe as reality and not something ethereal or otherworldly.

Miranda has been largely ignored or marginalized by early critics, but she has been a subject of later critical speculation, often being characterized as the opposite of Caliban: the ultimate symbol of beauty and femininity, sophisticated and cultured and intelligent. In contrast to Caliban’s monstrous appearance, Liao explains that critics primarily emphasize Miranda’s beauty and portray her as “irresistible” (91). Likewise, Sylvia Wynter pictures Miranda as the ideal European beauty: “defined by the philogenetically ‘idealized’ features of straight hair and thin lips’ [Miranda] is canonized as the ‘rational’ object of desire” (360). Along with her beauty, Anna Jameson stresses Miranda’s ideal femininity: “The character of Miranda resolves itself into the very elements of womanhood. She is beautiful, modest, and tender, and she is these only; they comprise her whole being, external and internal” (145). Comparing the common critical commentary concerning Miranda and Caliban and relating their outward appearances to their inward characters, Lorie Jerrell Leininger depicts Miranda

as incomparably beautiful (her external beauty mirroring her inward virtue, in keeping with Neoplatonic idealism), as lovingly educated and gratefully responsive to that education, as chaste (her chastity symbolic of all human virtue),
obedient and, by the end of the play, rewarded with an ideal husband and the inheritance of two dukedoms. Caliban, at the opposite pole, is presented as the reviled offspring of a witch and the Devil, as physically ugly (his ugly exterior mirroring his depraved inner nature), as racially vile, intrinsically uneducable, uncontrollably lustful (a symbol of all vice), rebellious, and, being defined as a slave by nature, as justly enslaved. (286-87)

Thus is the way that most romances end: beauty and virtue are handsomely rewarded, while ugliness and vice are severely punished. Miranda and Caliban at first glance are these two polar opposites, intended to essentially demonstrate good versus evil.

Despite their physical appearances, however, I argue that Miranda has, in fact, much more in common with Caliban than has been recognized by previous scholarship, and further analysis needs to be conducted regarding the two seeming opposites of good and evil. Regardless of her obvious beauty and appealing appearance, Miranda must not be considered mere foil for Caliban, his polar opposite, but she must instead be identified as the hidden monstrosity of Shakespeare’s romance, both she and Caliban possessing striking similarities in origin, behavior, and attitudes. As Shakespeare conceived and penned his fourth and final romance, he chose to finally allow a monstrous being to feature as a main character in his attempts at reinventing and reimagining the genre for his early modern audience. Furthermore, I argue that Shakespeare purposefully employed these similarities to emphasize the difference in perceptions between the colonizer and the colonized, as represented by Miranda and Caliban respectively, and to highlight the gender dynamics implicit in colonialist discourse.

At the time of the writing of the play, approximately 1611, Britain, according to Northrop Frye, was starting “to think in terms of an overseas empire” (183). Set at the precise point in
history when much British thinking was cumulatively focused on that expansion, *The Tempest* has been viewed by a majority of critics as colonialist, defined and explained by Meredith Anne Skura as “the literal resemblance between its plot and certain events and attitudes in English colonial history: Europeans arrive in the New World and assume they can appropriate what properly belongs to the New World Other, who is then ‘erased’” (294). Paul Brown emphasizes that a major function of colonialist discourse is to “produce a disruptive other in order to assert the superiority of the colonizer. Yet that production is itself evidence of a struggle to restrict the other’s disruptiveness to that role” (58). The play portrays Caliban as that “disruptive other”—to the education and the home and the life that he has been given by Prospero, the colonizer who has essentially expropriated the island and its inhabitants for himself in order to “stress his intrinsic superiority” (Brown 58-59). Caliban rebelliously attempts to fight back against the tyranny he believes he is under—to avoid being “erased”—while Miranda begins to also assume that role of colonizer, appropriating the same language and attitudes as her father.

Caliban is often described physically in terms of hybridity, usually something between a man and a fish—and he even smells like one. When Trinculo first discovers Caliban hiding under a cloak, he asks,

> What have we here, a man or a fish? Dead or Alive? A fish, he smells like a fish—a very ancient And fishlike smell, a kind of not-of-the-newest poor-John. A strange fish. (2.2.25-28)

Trinculo continues to expound on the fish theme, commenting that Caliban is “Legged like a man, and his fins like / arms!” (2.2.34-35). He later calls him a “debauched / fish” (3.2.28-29) and “half a fish and half a / monster” (3.2.31-32). When Antonio sees Caliban, he also sees “a
plain fish and no doubt marketable” (5.1.321). Caliban is also sometimes depicted as half dog; for example, Trinculo calls him a “puppy-headed monster” (2.2.160-61), and Prospero says that his mother “litter[ed] here, / A freckled whelp” (1.2.336-37), or a puppy-puppy perhaps alluding to his diminutive size as portrayed by Armin, as has been discussed in a previous chapter. Additionally, it has also been noted that a possible source for his name may come from “Kalebôn,” which is Arabic for “vile dog” (Vaughan and Vaughan 33). Stephano also frequently calls him “mooncalf” (2.2.110), which, according to the OED, could refer to a strange creature in an alien land (as one inhabiting the moon), a fool or a simpleton; or a deformed (or half-formed) animal or monster. Indeed, when he is revealed to the foreigners at the end of the play, Prospero calls Caliban “misshapen” and “disproportioned” (5.1.323, 347). A most apt way to categorize him, which encompasses what Pascale Drouet calls Caliban’s “poly-hybrid” condition, would be, in Stephano’s words, as a “man-monster” (3.2.13).

Caliban’s poly-hybridity is not only related to his physical appearance, however. He is also half intelligent/half ignorant; half slave/half deposed sovereign; half oppressed/half oppressor; half European/half African? (other nationalities have been proposed). His description as “salvage and deformed slave” also insinuates a hybridity as both a wild, uncivilized man and yet also a physically deficient slave; while both could be true at the same time, the two separate designations also suggest that he can claim both of those identities as separate entities, one civilized and one uncivilized, both concepts existing in the same hybrid mindset. One of the characteristics of monstrosity, according to Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, is that the monster is a “harbinger of category crisis,” meaning that the monster defies distinct categorization and instead embraces hybridity as it exists beyond and between easy classification. Giménez Micó claims that hybridity characterizes monsters (79), and he argues that “Caliban’s very ‘monstrous’
(hybrid) condition is precisely (emphatically) what allows him to be at the same time in and out, oneself and someone else, ‘European’ and ‘non-European’” (81). A study of monsters across periods and cultures would also yield the designation of monstrosity to anything that exists in a hybrid condition with medieval manuscripts and images, including texts like Liber Monstorum and The Marvels of the East and other bestiaries, often depicting hybridity as monstrous.

Miranda, too, has the monstrous characteristic of hybridity. She is also half intelligent/half ignorant as both teacher and student of Caliban; half ruler of the island with her father, but also half ruled by her father; half victim, yet half victimizer in her cruelty toward Caliban; and also half nobility by virtue of her father’s former dukedom in Milan, and yet now half banished and ostracized by society because of her father’s fall from grace. George Lamming calls Miranda the “innocent half of Caliban” (15), and the parallelisms between the two would suggest that she is, in fact, very similar to the named monster of the play; however, I suggest that she is not as innocent as Lamming makes her out to be and that her attitudes and behaviors, especially toward Caliban, can be seen as monstrous in themselves—in fact, regardless of their physical appearances, whatever can be classified as monstrous in Caliban could also be attributed to Miranda.

Much of Caliban’s physical hybridity is likely due to his parentage. In summoning Caliban at the beginning of the play, Prospero shouts, “Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself / Upon thy wicked dam, come forth!” (1.1.383-84). Prospero also later calls him a “demi-devil, / For he’s a bastard one” (5.1.327-28). As mentioned in a previous chapter, Caliban’s father could be a devil, or even the devil himself, as claimed by Prospero; alternatively, the strong language Prospero uses here could be intended only to insult and
demean, based on an unknown father as opposed to one that is supernatural. Either way, the implication is that Caliban is bestial, barbaric, and demonic.

Caliban’s mother, on the other hand, is categorically identified as a powerful witch named Sycorax, an exile banished from Algiers “[f]or mischiefs manifold, and sorceries terrible (1.2.317) while she was yet pregnant with Caliban; he even derisively calls Caliban “hag-born” and “hagseed” (1.2.336, 440). Sycorax’s name also denotes a hybridity, a combination of the Greek roots sus, meaning “sow,” and korax, meaning “raven” (Drouet). In recounting Caliban’s origins, Prospero acknowledges,

His mother was a witch, and one so strong
That could control the moon, make flows and ebbs,
And deal in her command without her power. (5.1.324-26).

Additionally, in order to stress his contrasting benevolence, Prospero reminds the spirit Ariel about the witch Sycorax’s powerful magic and the consequences that Ariel suffered because of disobeying her commands:

And for thou wast a spirit too delicate
To act her earthy and abhorred commands,
Refusing her grand hests, she did confine thee,
By help of her more potent ministers
And in her most unmitigable rage,
Into a cloven pine, within which rift
Imprisoned thou didst painfully remain
A dozen years; within which space she died
And left thee there. (1.2.325-33)
Miranda’s father, Prospero, is also a very powerful sorcerer, and he is equally, if not more, powerful than Sycorax. He has proven that he can undo Sycorax’s magic, releasing Ariel from his captivity in the tree, and he also cautions Ariel that he can copy and even outperform that magic by once again imprisoning him, but in a harder wood than Sycorax’s soft pine:

> It was mine art,
> When I arrived and heard thee, that made gape
> The pine and let thee out.

If thou more murmur’st, I will rend an oak
And peg thee in his knotty entrails till
Thou hast howled away twelve winters. (1.2.345-47, 49-51)

Like Ariel, Caliban fears Prospero’s magic and its transformative abilities, worrying that he and his two cohorts, Stephano and Trinculo, will suffer for their scheming:

> We shall lose our time
> And all be turned to barnacles or to apes
> With foreheads villainous low. (4.1.274-76).

Prospero also has the power to control weather conditions, among other things; however, he deliberately minimizes Sycorax’s contribution to mere control of the moon stated very briefly, while he boasts his incomparable power in several lines of vaunted exclamation of self-praise:

> I have bedimmed
> The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous winds,
> And ’twixt the green sea and the azured vault
> Set roaring war; to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire, and rifted Jove’s stout oak
With his own bolt; the strong-based promontory
Have I made shake, and by the spurs plucked up
The pine and cedar; graves at my command
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let ’em forth
By my so potent art. (5.1.42-59)

The “uncommon parentage” (Petry 27) of both Caliban and Miranda are undeniably similar, yet Caliban’s monstrosity hinges on this hybrid condition of being half-witch (and possibly half-devil), while Miranda’s half-sorcerer status is never questioned. A possible reason posed by Jyotsna G. Singh is that “[Sycorax’s] magic is antithetical to [Prospero’s] supposedly beneficent Art because she embodies an aberration of nature, both in terms of her sexuality (her impregnation by an incubus) and her racial identity as a non-European” (215), thereby marking Sycorax as an Other and therefore justifiably abjected and damned. Singh goes on to compare her to Noah’s son Ham, “progenitor of the Canaanite, the Negro and other supposedly bestial and slavish races, . . . an outcast from the world of men, a wanderer beyond bounds and an active promoter of the degeneracy of her ‘vile’ race” (216). Ham was cursed by God because he ridiculed Noah for his nakedness, and many throughout the ages have since believed the tradition that Ham went to Africa after the Great Flood, his descendants naturally becoming a cursed race due to Ham’s lack of respect for his father; therefore, the association between Sycorax and her African origins indicates an antipathy toward anyone who would herald from that continent. Thomas Jeffery also views intention as indicative of this difference in perception. He deems Prospero as having an “ambivalent moral status” in which both positive and negative qualities can be seen: he is “well-intentioned but manipulative . . . he shipwrecks and persecutes but then
suddenly forgives” (40). Either way, Prospero is not ever depicted as a wicked, unredeemable character, while Sycorax is always seen as evil and vile. This ambiguity of Prospero’s morals and deeds, however, only serves to further corroborate Miranda’s hybridity as derived from her father.

Another thing to consider regarding Miranda’s and Caliban’s mutual origins is the fact that both are the progeny of deposed nobility who have lost their kingdoms. Miranda was born a “princess,” the daughter of the Duke of Milan. Caliban, on the other hand, had gained control of his kingdom through his mother, the original ruler of the island before Prospero and Miranda were shipwrecked there, and now he has become enslaved by Prospero along with his “expropriation of the island” (Wynter 358). Citing their parallel prehistories, Petry claims,

In both cases, their parents, although the “rightful” rulers of their respective realms, have been wronged: Prospero’s brother Antonio has usurped the Milanese dukedom, denying Miranda her birthright; Prospero has, in turn, usurped rule of the island from Caliban, denying the “moon-calf” his birthright. (27)

Losing one’s kingdom and position only to regain it at the end of the story is a common meme in romance, but it is noteworthy that only Miranda retains her rightful place, while Caliban’s ending remains uncertain, again stressing the differing perceptions between the two characters.

It is also significant to note that neither Miranda nor Caliban are truly indigenous to the island, despite the length of their inhabitance. Although Caliban was, in fact, born on the island, his mother was from Africa and essentially colonized the island, taking the spirits that inhabited the island as her subjects. Miranda, too, has virtually no memories of life outside of the island, being exiled there with her father at a very young age. Prospero then colonized the island after Sycorax’s death, taking her son along with the spirits for his subjects. Ironically, both parties—
Sycorax and Caliban, Prospero and Miranda—have been exiled and confined to the island through no choice of their own, with the former acting as colonizer originally only to be supplanted later by the latter. Therefore, Miranda and Caliban are shown to be parallel as well as hybrid in their native and yet non-native positions.

Miranda and Caliban also have many of the same behavioral characteristics evidenced in their similar attitudes and language. Jeffery claims that “Caliban’s greatest faults are a lack of culture and sophistication” (39), and that same claim could also be made for Miranda. Much of this naïveté arises from the fact that they have not been provided with any other company than each other. Their ignorance regarding the other sex is one of “limited judgment” (Singh 211), mistaking foreign faces for spirits and gods and other wonders because of their ignorance of humanity. When Caliban encounters Stephano and Trinculo, his first impulse is to cower in fear, crying, “The spirit torments me. O!” (II.ii.65); moreover, when the two provide him with liquor, suggesting that he had probably never tried it before and might benefit from its relaxing qualities, Caliban utters,

> These be fine things, an if they be not sprites. That’s a brave god and bears celestial liquor.

> I will kneel to him. (2.2.120-22).

In Caliban’s naïve thinking, if they are not spirits, they must be gods, or the “man i’ th’ moon” (2.2.144), as Stephano then convinces him, and he must be obeisant to such a wondrous creature, to which Trinculo remarks, “A most poor, credulous monster!” (2.2.152).

Miranda also has delusions of spirits and gods, questioning upon first seeing Ferdinand, “What is ‘t? A spirit?” (1.2.488). When Prospero corrects her and explains that he is human, she refuses to believe it and declares,
I might call him
A thing divine, for nothing natural
I ever saw so noble. (1.2.498-500)

It takes some convincing from Prospero that Ferdinand is indeed human and not supernatural. Miranda’s innocence and naïveté regarding her acquaintance with the outside world is further explained by her opposition to her father’s cruelty toward Ferdinand:

This
Is the third man that e’er I saw, the first
That e’er I sighed for. (1.2.534-536).

This recognition of humanity beyond that of the only other two humans that she has ever seen, or at least ever remembered, prompts Prospero to comment on both Miranda’s and Caliban’s like ignorance:

Thou think’st there is no more such shapes as he,
Having seen but him and Caliban. Foolish wench!
To th’ most of men this is a Caliban,
And they to him are angels. (1.2.582-585)

Although Prospero did not witness Caliban’s error in calling Stephano a spirit and a god, he knows that Caliban’s foolish ideas would naturally lead him in that direction. Miranda alludes to her limited view of humanity again later when she is speaking with Ferdinand,

I do not know
One of my sex, no woman’s face remember,
Save, from my glass, mine own. Nor have I seen
More that I may call men than you, good friend,
And my dear father. (3.1.59-63)

Miranda has not ever seen another woman, let alone any men other than her father and Caliban—and notice that she refrains from mentioning Caliban in this interaction with her beloved, as if she harbors an unspoken acknowledgment of Caliban’s inferiority as a man and as her subject.

At the end of the play, Miranda has a reaction of wonder and utter astonishment when she beholds the sight of so many men/humans, exclaiming,

O wonder!

How many goodly creatures are there here!

How beauteous mankind is! O, brave new world

That has such people in ‘t! (5.1.215-18)

Prospero responds matter-of-factly, “’Tis new to thee” (5.1.19). Miranda and Caliban are both completely unsocialized to anyone other than themselves, allowing an ignorance that appears uncivilized. The perception, however, of their similar naïveté is reflected in their dissimilar approaches to the wonders they encounter. Caliban is portrayed as a simpering fool who is ignorant in a very negative sense, whereas Miranda is portrayed as simplistic and delightfully innocent in her admiration of the newness of the foreigners and the “brave new world” that awaits her.

Keeping those portrayals in mind, Caliban’s unsophisticated innocence, Hazlitt asserts, is “uncramped by any of the meannesses of custom” (90). Caliban’s innocence is most evidenced by his willingness to humiliate himself as servant to Stephano in exchange for his protection and mastery over him, but Caliban’s lack of sophistication and culture make him appear more like a lapdog. He begs Stephano,
I’ll show thee every fertile inch o’ th’ island,
And I will kiss thy foot. I prithee, be my god.”

“...”

“I’ll kiss thy foot. I’ll swear myself thy subject.” (2.2.154-55, 158)

He continues this pattern of mortifying servitude later, saying, “Let me lick thy shoe” (3.2.25); he also urges Stephano to attack Trinculo for mocking him, saying, “Bite him to death, I prithee” (3.2.37).

Miranda shares this lack of awareness of custom since she has no feminine models to emulate, but her deficiency is less of humiliation and more of empowerment. Her “total ignorance of the conventional forms and language of society” (Jameson 147) is most apparent in her relationship with Ferdinand, demonstrating her inadequate understanding of conventional gender roles. When Miranda witnesses Ferdinand burdened with the heavy logs that her father has demanded he carry, Miranda rushes to his aid, telling him, “If you’ll sit down, / I’ll bear your logs the while” (III.i.27-28); when he refuses because of his knowledge of those same gender codes, she responds,

It would become me
As well as it does you, and I should do it
With much more ease. (3.1.34-37)

Miranda’s uncivilized, uncultured action merely prompts Prospero’s fond “Poor worm, thou art infected” (III.i.38), whereas language applied to Caliban would have been much more volatile. Liao argues that since Miranda is “the only ‘other’ sex in her social reality, performative acts for her would conform purely to masculine views and wants” (96). She has no feminine role model and so she is oblivious to her proper social role; she cannot understand that her assigned gender
role must be less “masculine” and more modest and demure and lady-like. Petry claims that this action on Miranda’s part is reflective of her ignorance: “totally unaware of the ‘proper’ conduct of ladies in the real world, Miranda is engaging in what is, by most informed standards, naïve, if not absurd, behavior” (29).

Even more absurd by early modern standards is Miranda’s sexual aggressiveness toward Ferdinand right after volunteering to perform his manual labor for him. She begins by boldly and bluntly asking him, “Do you love me?” (3.1.80). When he responds in the affirmative, her tears and her chastisement of herself—“I am a fool / To weep at what I am glad of” (3.1.87-88)—betray her ignorance of joy sometimes accompanied by tears. Miranda’s sexual aggression becomes more obvious and more defiant of prescribed gender codes when Ferdinand asks her, “Wherefore, / weep you?/”:

At mine unworthiness, that dare not offer
What I desire to give, and much less take
What I shall die to want. But this is trifling,
And all the more it seeks to hide itself,
The bigger bulk it shows. Hence, bashful cunning,
And prompt me, plain and holy innocence.
I am your wife if you will marry me.
If not, I’ll die your maid. To be your fellow
You may deny me, but I’ll be your servant
Whether you will or no. (3.1.94-103)

Miranda’s “bashful cunning” and “plain and holy innocence” are not reflected in this dialogue with Ferdinand; she apparently does not realize her paradoxical language because of her
uncultured and unsophisticated ignorance and naïveté. Rather, Miranda is assertive and bold, adopting the traditional role of the male and proposing marriage to Ferdinand; she then claims that she will serve him whether he would have it or not, demonstrating her aggressiveness and determination. Jameson attributes her boldness to being “ignorant of those usages of society which teach us to dissemble the real passion” (148); in other words, conventional social and gender codes demand that women camouflage their feelings and thoughts while waiting for men to assert themselves. Miranda tenaciously pursues Ferdinand without any regard for socially-accepted feminine diffidence because her only experience with men has been with Caliban and her own father. She has no intention of waiting for Ferdinand to make that first step, and so she sets aside tact and brazenly makes her move, pressing him for a clear, definite answer, “My husband, then?” (3.1.105). Miranda’s sexual desire is also very apparent here as she specifically references what she “desire[s] to give,” namely her body, and what she “die[s] to want,” which is a veiled allusion to sexual arousal with the pun on the small death of sexual orgasm.

Caliban, too, is obviously seen as sexually aggressive since he attempted to rape Miranda in the play’s prehistory, yet his aggression amounts to an implied lasciviousness in the savage, which has crafted his portrayal as the “demonised Other and a potential rapist” (Singh 217). Leininger discusses the “tendency of Western civilization to link African natives, for example, with preconceived concepts of sexuality and vice,” which would implicate Caliban’s sexual aggression with monstrous intentions: “the lower one’s place on the scale of social privilege, the more dangerously lustful one is perceived as being” (288). On the other hand, however, Jessica Slights asserts that critics have periodically depicted this sexual aggression as reflective of “an uncorrupted innocent destined to follow his own uncontrollable instinctual urges” (359), which would make his sexuality similar to that of Miranda. Unfamiliar with those same social and
gender codes that require consensual agreement between men and women, Caliban tries to force himself on Miranda, presumably not for sexual gratification but, in his own words, so that he could have “peopled else / This isle with Calibans” (1.2.420-21), taking back his island with his sons and using the rape as political leverage to subjugate both Miranda and her father. Liao, however, recognizes another possibility: that the rape of Miranda “offers a tempting possibility for the deformed savage, Caliban, to invade the order of the stabilized chain of being and to institute his own system” (90).

Interestingly, however, Caliban’s sexual desire toward Miranda, whether for lust or for political purposes, distinguishes her as a being like himself, his counterpart. He has no desire for the spirits or for Prospero and apparently not for the other men that arrive on the island. The attempted rape of Miranda implies a hybridity that balances on the border between virgin/chaste/innocent and whore/sexually experienced/sexually knowledgeable. She obviously has a strong sexuality, and Petry suggests that the masque Prospero stages may even be more intended to discourage Miranda from her sexual urgencies long enough to make the marriage legal and usher in her re-integration into European society (30). Miranda’s sexual aggression that emerges when she meets Ferdinand may stem from the fact that she is emotionally scarred by the monstrous attempt to completely possess her against her will, yet she now retains sexual experience and knowledge—residual effects of the attempted rape. Miranda’s resistance to the rape could also be seen as the stimulus that allows her a voice, a boldness to speak her mind and gain agency over her own destiny and over men who attempt to control her. Her bold initiative, especially regarding sexual politics, and her resistance to social order, however, are substantial characteristics that would identify her as monstrous.
In contrast to Miranda’s aggressive sexual desire, Ferdinand bases his love for Miranda entirely on the “wonder” that he has experienced in light of his miraculous preservation from shipwreck and death:

Admired Miranda!

Indeed the top of admiration, worth
What’s dearest to the world! Full many a lady
I have eyed with best regard, and many a time
Th’ harmony of their tongues hath into bondage
Brought my too diligent ear. For several virtues
Have I liked several women, never any
With so full soul but some defect in her
Did quarrel with the noblest grace she owed,
And put it to the foil. But you, O you,
So perfect and so peerless, are created
Of every creature’s best. (3.1.47-59)

Ferdinand acknowledges that he has been captivated by many women, yet each one always had some defect in her that he could not overlook. The fact that he is now so enamored by Miranda says more about her monstrosity than about her idealized beauty. Liao argues that Miranda’s beauty and perfection set her apart from other women and also from others on the island:

The social reality of the male beholders barely sees Miranda’s identity beyond the myth of beauty and the illusion of perfection. Because the society hardly sees her true nature and constitutes conventions simply to prescribe her, Miranda as the only present female “other” in the play becomes invisible, even to herself. (97)
Miranda’s being the only female automatically targets her as Other, but her idealized beauty and perfection obscure the perceptions of those around her. Ferdinand is so blinded by the “wonder” and “amazement” of Miranda that he fails to see her Otherness and the reality of what marriage would mean to them. She is so admired by Ferdinand because she is not a typical woman, and that atypical characteristic is precisely what makes her Other, and therefore monstrous.

The marriage that Miranda and Ferdinand choose to enter will not be in any way a conventional marriage. Miranda would have an inability to connect to Milanese/European identity because of her long estrangement from society and cultural norms while confined to the island. Similar to the catastrophe that would occur were Caliban to travel to Milan, Miranda has an uncivilized ignorance, along with an overly zealous feminism, that would undermine her place within proper society and would prove disastrous both for herself and for her husband. She has no memory of her father’s kingdom in Milan, and she has been relegated to the margins of the world, as most monsters are. She has assumed a hybridity as a civilized being in an uncivilized world, yet her return to Milanese society would transform her into an uncivilized being in a civilized world. She has adopted monstrous characteristics attributed to her life on the island and her association with Caliban that will be a major deterrent in any attempts at social conformity. Her anticipated return to society will be hampered by the bestial and savage impulses that she has learned throughout her life, including Caliban’s attempted rape, which will not permit her to reclaim any position that could be construed as civilized and socially-acceptable. No matter what she does, she will always be seen as Other.

Both Miranda and Caliban have been entirely unsocialized. Although Prospero played the schoolmaster to tutor them, they both have a limited intellect and knowledge about the world based solely on their interests. Caliban’s knowledge lies in the natural world around him, in the
flora and fauna of the island itself, and Slights confirms that most critics view him as “an unregenerate brute, naturally resistant to his master’s attempts to educate and civilize him” (359). Miranda’s knowledge is a more scholastic “book knowledge” (Petry 31). The resulting differences in the outcomes of their education then give further insight into the perceptions between the colonized and the colonizer. At one point, there was no bad blood between Caliban and Prospero, and Caliban admits that he has tried in the past to repay Prospero’s tutelage and kindness by teaching him about the island, but that has failed or at least has not been as fruitful as Caliban had hoped. Miranda, on the other hand, has taken on the typical colonizer, especially female colonizer, view of education, learning about life and the world through books. In discussing Miranda’s more privileged education at the hands of her father, Lindsay claims, “Given the solicitude and pedagogical rigor Prospero has shown Miranda, it is not surprising that she should manifest the combination of submissiveness and assertiveness that early modern education sought to inculcate in students” (409).

Much of what Caliban has learned from Prospero and Miranda is their language, and he speaks it quite fluently. He defiantly remarks, however, that the only good it did for him was to teach him how to curse, a practice he engages in rather frequently, especially in his myriad threats of plagues he wishes heaped upon Prospero, although his words can do absolutely nothing. As the oppressed, he can do nothing but shout curses while he continues to fetch their wood, tend their fire, and do their dishes. Miranda has also appropriated the colonialist language and ideology of the oppressor, demeaning and dismissing Caliban as a villain and a monster. In her first words spoken to him in the play, she launches into a tirade, calling him “Abhorred slave,” “savage,” “brutish,” and “vile” (1.2.22, 27, 29, 30). Additionally, Singh acknowledges, “Like a typical colonizer, she also reveals her civilising impulses toward Caliban” (213), first
proudly asserting her superiority over him as his teacher and then maliciously assaulting him and proclaiming what she felt he rightly deserved for his behavior toward her:

I pitied thee,

Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour

One thing or other….

Therefore was thou

Deservedly confined into this rock,

Who hadst deserved more than a prison. (1.2.424-427, 434-436).

Lindsay asserts that Miranda essentially “co-opts the hierarchical language and ideas” of Prospero (409) in her language and attitudes toward her friend who is now her slave. Stephen Greenblatt has dismissed Miranda’s vehemence here as “disturbingly indelicate” (qtd. in Pesta 138); however, Petry uses much stronger terminology, attributing Miranda’s language to a “verbal nastiness” that would render her a “Calibanesque ‘freak’ by most standards of civilized Italian society” (30, 32). Miranda becomes savage in her brutality toward the conquered Caliban and in her claimed superiority over him. She is positively remorseless in her treatment of Caliban and in her blatant aversion and repulsion toward him.

As I have shown, the similarities between Caliban and Miranda are multiple and diverse. Many of the parallels are negative, and it must be conceded that if Caliban were identified as monstrous because of these negative qualities, then it only stands to reason that Miranda must receive the same identification. I argue that these parallels are too frequent and too similar to avoid seeing them as deliberate intentions on the part of Shakespeare to set Miranda up as foil to Caliban and allow the audience to see her as monstrous. The significance of this characterization,
which I argue was intentional on Shakespeare’s part, is that the perceptions of the colonizer Miranda and the colonized Caliban differ based solely on the roles they are given and the way that they are portrayed on stage and in text.

Shakespeare’s transformation of the medieval romance by bringing it to an early modern audience and culture might have considered monsters and supernatural wonders to be too fantastical to be believable. However, by showcasing the literal monster Caliban within this final romance play, and ensconcing the hidden monster Miranda to accompany him, Shakespeare opened up debates and controversies regarding colonization concerns during this critical period in history and thereby transformed the medieval romance genre to make it contemporary and use it to facilitate discussions on the subject.

The “wonders and amazements” that inhabit the island stretch beyond the events and circumstances surrounding the shipwreck, and it must be recognized that anyone who comes in contact with the island is dramatically effected and forever changed—even more so if that person spends more than three hours there, as both Caliban and Miranda have, let alone a lifetime.
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