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Monsters and Medicine: The Evolution of a Warning in Gothic Literature

Parolles' Word Problem in *All's Well That Ends Well*

by

Lisa Joy Bertrand

Starred Papers

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree

Master of Arts in

English Studies

December, 2017

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Monsters and Medicine: The Evolution of a Warning in Gothic Literature

A preliminary definition of the complex term “monster” comes from *The Oxford English Dictionary*, which states that this word derives from the Latin *monere*, meaning “to warn.” An invaluable text for defining and understanding monstrous beings is Gilmore’s *Monsters: Evil Beings, Mythical Beasts, and All Manner of Imaginary Terrors*. Gilmore’s authoritative text on monsters operates with the understanding that monsters are “supernatural, mythical, or magical products of the imagination” (6). The supernatural monsters present in Gothic fiction who have endured in popularity so much so that they continue to remain relevant hundreds of years later each seem to bear multiple meaningful warnings. The most famous monsters in English Gothic literature are Frankenstein's monster, Dr. Jekyll's alternate personality Mr. Hyde, and Dracula, and each of these monsters bears a similar, common warning.

The Gothic monster fiction of Shelley, Stevenson, and Stoker, the stories that made these monsters famous, all prominently feature doctors and scientific medicine¹. The time when Gothic monster fiction began to enjoy popularity was also a time of significant scientific and medical advancements. Davies writes that before the time of these Gothic monster stories, “It was not evident that medicine or science had improved any aspect of life at the start of the 18th century” (33). However, as medicine evolved during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the medicine that professional medical practitioners at that time practiced was something entirely foreign to the public who could neither understand nor wanted to understand these medical and scientific advancements. In fact, people often viewed scientific medicine and its practitioners

¹ The phrase “scientific medicine” will intentionally appear in this research rather than simply “medicine” to distinguish this form of medicine from both earlier, more primitive forms of medicine prior to this time of scientific medical advancements as well as the holistic medicine that remains popular today. As well, this paper will refer to practitioners of scientific medicine to include not just physicians and surgeons and traditional doctors, not only because official medical degrees are not necessary for scientific medical practice but also to encompass the wide variety of people in literature and history who could and did practice scientific medicine in various scholarly and practical forms.

somewhat with fear and awe. Not until the “19th century is the historical moment when scientific medicine takes hold” (Huelman 816), becoming an acceptable, necessary, respectable part of life more than it had been prior to this time. What made Gothic monster fiction an appropriate place to address the public's ambivalent feelings towards scientific medicine and its practitioners was that during the nineteenth century, the Gothic allowed “the expression of fear and anxiety in the face of medical or scientific advances” (Horner and Zlosnik 331). Not only were medical advances rather overwhelming for the average person, but medical practitioners themselves were also formidable in the eyes of the public. Gothic monster fiction expressed some of the public's unease and fear regarding scientific medical advancements and its practitioners.

Gothic monster fiction reflects the fact that both scientific medicine and its practitioners became increasingly powerful during the nineteenth century. According to Harrison, “The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the rise of the medical practitioner as a coherent and powerful professional class” (54). One example of the public's reaction to this rise is that people often called surgeons such derogatory terms like "sawbones" (as in Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, for example) to both communicate their intimidation and doubt regarding the nature of medical practice and attempt to limit the ever-increasing power medical practitioners wielded. Harrison also writes,

Accounts by medical historians, including Roy Porter and M. Jeanne Peterson, of the growth of the medical professional's influence in the mid- to late-Victorian period points to key legislation that formalised the profession's rapidly developing cohesion and its authority within the lay community with reference to its increasing power over patients whose 'sins' and aberrant behaviours they redefined as medical conditions, which doctors alone could cure. (54-55)

For the public, then, the power of scientific medicine and medical practitioners grew so that their power apparently knew no bounds, neither religiously nor legally. During the nineteenth century, the power of medical practitioners grew to match more closely the fearsome, awesome

authority of religious leaders. Medical practitioners had the ability to improve people's lives, but they could and did often also use that power in ways that completely mystified both their patients and the public at large, neither always, obviously, nor irrefutably for improving a person's quality of life. Gothic monster fiction shows that the work of nineteenth century medical practitioners encompassed not just healing but also (and significantly) scientific experimentation, sometimes on patients who may not have had a need for medical care. The fear and trepidation of the public regarding scientific medicine and its practitioners manifests itself in the monsters of the following three pieces of Gothic fiction.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* provide a deeper understanding of people's concerns regarding scientific medicine and its practitioners during the nineteenth century, visible in the interactions of and between monsters and medicine in their fiction. Gothic monster fiction is especially useful in a study of the interaction between scientific medicine and monsters because, as Bishop points out, "Monster is a term with real and tragic meaning as a medical definition" ("2" 753). Medicine and monstrosity have long had a relationship famous for its complexity. In fact, as Marcus writes, "Irresponsible medicine . . . turns the scientist-physician and the patient as well, both of them, into isolates and monsters" (199). Focusing on the interaction of and between monsters and scientific medicine can illustrate what these monsters communicate about nineteenth century scientific medicine and its practitioners. In a chronological progression through their fiction, the relationship of and between monsters and scientific medicine and its practitioners demonstrates a grudgingly increasing recognition of and appreciation for scientific medical advancements and practitioners, so long as their work lies primarily within healing rather than experimentation.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Out of Control Scientific Medical Experimentation

First of these monster fiction case studies is Shelley's *Frankenstein*, originally published in 1818. Borne out of a ghost story writing challenge, the most enduring of that challenge's products continues to captivate audiences to this day. Before examining this monster's warnings, it is necessary to acknowledge that to call Frankenstein's creature a monster can be potentially contestable because some arguments do exist in favor of eliminating "monster" as the most appropriate title for Frankenstein's creation. These arguments bear a degree of validity; however, there exists significant support in both popular and scholarly opinion to permit labeling his creation a "monster."

Knowing monsters in literature provide abundant opportunity for literary critics to discern fears and the associated warnings of the time during which the author lived and wrote, readers will find that Victor Frankenstein's monster bears multiple warnings. One famous example of these warning found in *Frankenstein* concerns the ways that a motherless child will struggle throughout his or her life due to lack of a maternal influence. Another traditional monster warning in *Frankenstein* regards exploring the questions of human nature and divine entities, suggesting that human beings who dare to meddle in affairs more appropriately suited for higher powers will create and hasten their own tragic demises.

More specifically related to the scope of this research, some scholars have studied the medical aspects of *Frankenstein*. Their studies usually note that though Frankenstein is certainly a scholar of science, he is not a doctor of any kind, much less a medical doctor. These readings are correct in noting this detail; however, significant evidence nevertheless exists regarding the influence and presence of medicine in the novel, even if (and perhaps more specifically because) the novel's character lacks official medical certification or credentials. A review of some of the

literature containing such medical references will further justify the inclusion of *Frankenstein* in this study.

Frankenstein's readers agree that because of her connections, medical knowledge was something to which Shelley had greater exposure than the average person. As a child, Shelley experienced an early induction into circles that included prominent and well-respected medical practitioners. Shelley's father Godwin

encouraged [the children] to meet the many distinguished writers, artists, scientists, and medical men - such as Anthony Carlisle, Coleridge, [and] Humphry Davy . . . who visited him at home. The Godwin household thus provided Mary Shelley with an unusually wide-ranging education, in which different forms of knowledge, scientific as well as literary, were equally available as intellectual and literary resources. (Clemit 29)

Before the age of nineteen Shelley met and mingled with some of the finest minds of her time, learning from medical pioneers who had significant impact in the field of scientific medicine. Such knowledge of science and medicine enabled Shelley to infuse her own novel with medicine by way of an accurate and intentional portrayal that realistically reflected the scientific attitudes and medical advancements of her time.

As a young adult, Shelley's friendships with men including Dr. John William Polidori² furthered her diverse education. Cementing the relevance of scientific medicine to *Frankenstein*, Self notes that "it is not outlandish to claim that Polidori's medical knowledge contributed to Shelley's 'hideous, transgressive experiments'" (61-2) in *Frankenstein*. Self succinctly asserts, "The influence of science and medical literature is very apparent in *Frankenstein*" (1). Not only is it a prominently influential force on Shelley in writing *Frankenstein*, but medical science is also an essential element of the novel's plot.

² Though Polidori's work is not within the scope of this research, it is interesting to note that the medical doctor's work included a vampire tale, which he wrote for the same ghost challenge prompt that inspired Shelley to write *Frankenstein*, offering yet another connection between medicine and Gothic monster fiction in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Self writes about medicine beyond author Shelley's life within the novel itself, recognizing that *Frankenstein* explores "medical and scientific based questions" (62). Bishop further acknowledges that *Frankenstein's* medical tale

should be taken seriously, for it seems very likely that transplant and eugenic aspects of medical research and surgical practice will forever be associated in the popular press with her novel *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*.

For medicine to be linked with this fine work, which Shelley published in 1818, is by itself no problem. ("1" 749)

Bishop's articles on *Frankenstein* and medicine recognize Shelley's medical knowledge as not merely accurate but actually, and further, advanced for her time. His work also points out the relevance of the questions *Frankenstein* raises for medicine, science, and technology that still almost 200 years later in scientific and medical advancements yet lack satisfactory answers.

Davies recognizes that "whatever her ultimate reasons and personal beliefs, Mary Shelley provides us with a novel that explores the problems consequent upon medical experimentation" (35). In other words, *Frankenstein* requires its readers to consider medicine as an important and meaningful factor of her Gothic tale.

Accepting the influence of medicine on Shelley's novel as well as its importance to the plot itself, the monster's interactions with medicine within the story illustrate for Shelley's readers the monster's warning about medicine in her novel *Frankenstein*. Frankenstein's desire to create a living being stems from his medical and biological scholarly interests. In his studies, Frankenstein acknowledges that he is "determined thenceforth to apply [himself] more particularly to those branches of natural philosophy which relate to physiology" (Shelley 30). The earlier death of Frankenstein's mother in the novel encourages in young Frankenstein an obsession with death; his studies of living things derive from this heartbreak and lead him "[t]o examine the causes of life" (30). As was the case for eighteenth-century students of medicine,

Frankenstein's self-directed course of study also requires him to spend time in "vaults and charnel houses" (30) to collect specimens.

For Frankenstein, the danger of this scientific medical experimentation lies in the startling lack of humanity Frankenstein perceives in the being he will create from once-animated body parts. An example of his reprehensible attitude is present in his description of a graveyard, which to Frankenstein is "merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life" (Shelley 30).

Frankenstein's comment suggests that to him, what is important to humankind as well as what defines it is not humanity itself but rather animation or the lack thereof. In other words, for Frankenstein a corpse ceases to bear any relationship with or similarity to humanity.

Frankenstein further demonstrates his carelessness through his experimentation and after his success. He discovers "the cause of generation and life; nay, more, [becomes himself] capable of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter" (30); unsurprisingly, Frankenstein's dangerous experimentation will become more sinister than even it is thus far.

It is reasonable to guess that Frankenstein, who suffered the utterly devastating loss of his mother, would attempt to gain the ability to restore life to a deceased person. This loss has been a primary motivating factor in Frankenstein's life. However, once he determines to use his medical knowledge, Frankenstein begins not the restoration of life to a deceased person but rather "the creation of a human being" (Shelley 31). At no time during his work in his laboratory does he give any thought to the humanity of this experimental creature he builds from vault and charnel house and graveyard spoils. In fact, he refers to his medical experiment with decidedly dehumanizing terms. Frankenstein mentions "collecting and arranging materials" (32) but neglects to identify that these materials once belonged to living human beings or how they will contribute to a new human being for whom Frankenstein will necessarily bear responsibility.

The only thought Frankenstein gives to the intellect of his creation is to dream that his medical experiment would "bless [him] as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to [him]" (Shelley 32). Notable are Frankenstein's pronouns in this process. Instead of gendered pronouns that would humanize his medical experiment of assembling a new creature out of human body parts, "it" and "the creature" are Frankenstein's words of choice for his creation. At this moment readers see what Stubber acknowledges: "Frankenstein represents science and medicine in a form that contains no checks and balances" (133). In his self-directed course of study, so secret that he does not even tell family or friends about his experimentation unless they independently learn of the creature and require explanation, no one is present to serve either as educational guidance or moral compass. Part of Frankenstein's monster's warning, therefore, is evident in his lack of control over and accountability for his medical scientific experimentation and its implications.

Frankenstein continues to err regarding his scientific medical experimentation in his reception of his own creation, the monster. Frankenstein's work horrifies him during the process, and then upon the monster's awakening, the inevitable result of his experiment, Frankenstein rushes "out of the room, and continue[s] a long-time traversing [his] bed-chamber, unable to compose [his] mind to sleep" (Shelley 34). Though he has sacrificed time and his own mental and physical health for this experiment, the medical success of creating life only inspires in Frankenstein cowardly, negligent flight and attempted unconsciousness (which Frankenstein desired to achieve through sleep). Such a reaction is problematic, to say the least. As Stubber says,

Although Frankenstein labels his own creature a 'miserable monster' his failure to adhere to any moral or ethical standards in both the creation and then abandonment of the Creature is clearly the monstrous act. (25)

Frankenstein's rejection of the monster shows more of the problem with Frankenstein's medical power: he is unwilling to face negative consequences or assume responsibility for his own actions.

Further, Marcus recognizes the issues that arise from Frankenstein's conduct specifically regarding medical issues:

Because the creature is a being for whom Frankenstein must (as his creator) assume some *responsibility*, but from whom, at the same time, he feels the necessity or has the overriding impulse to withhold whatever ameliorating resources are available, the novel contemplates very early on the model of medical care. (197)

Frankenstein's failure to acknowledge his responsibility to and for the monster, his own scientific medical creation, shows that he does not appropriately utilize his medical knowledge in practice, justifying Shelley's audience's fear of scientific medicine and its practitioners. Marcus further writes that "it is Frankenstein's refusal to take personal responsibility for what he has as a natural or biological scientist created and brought into being that connects him with certain problems of medical science and practice" (197). Scholars who treat the topic of medicine in their analyses of Shelley's novel agree that Frankenstein abuses his medical power. Frankenstein deliberately creates life with no thought to potential consequences, and then as his monster devotes his efforts to ruining his creator's life, Frankenstein spends the rest of the novel unreasonably mourning and bemoaning his own tragic, victimized fate. He gives no genuine, heartfelt consideration, medical or otherwise, to the monster for which he is fully responsible.

If any can exist, the only character trait which at best partially vindicates Frankenstein is his refusal to share his sinister life-giving secrets with anyone else. On some level, Frankenstein is aware that this animating information should only be in the hands of someone who can responsibly deploy these ideas, unlike himself as he discovers.

The idea that *Frankenstein* serves as a warning applicable even today to certain extents in multiple ways for the field of medicine is generally an accepted idea, as research shows. For example, Chin-Yee writes that *Frankenstein* “reveals a prescient reflection on science’s social dimension, with important lessons for medical technology” (42). Huelman sums up *Frankenstein* by noting that the novel “was and remains a touchstone for conversations about scientific and medical ethics” (816). The monster in *Frankenstein* is the requisite vehicle for the novel’s warnings about medical technology and ethics. Had Frankenstein engaged in any other scientific study, his experimentation probably would have been much more innocuous than the devastation his monster wreaks. Even had Frankenstein chosen to carry out his medical exploration differently – reanimating someone instead of creating an entirely unique creature, for example – the novel could have had a completely different meaning. Through creation of the monster and subsequent conversations in which the monster makes Frankenstein aware of the monster’s perspective, both Frankenstein and Shelley’s readers must grapple with Frankenstein’s responsibility (and assumed lack thereof) for his medical experimentation, something Shelley’s audience feared could become a factor of their own lives.

The monster’s warning in *Frankenstein*’s case is against the abuse of the power of medicine. Clearly, the ability to affect the quality of life (especially regarding creating or facilitating life) is a fantastic power that comes with weighty responsibilities. Through his interactions with his monster, Frankenstein proves unworthy for the task. Frankenstein is a selfish creator who pays no mind to the consequences of his actions. He has significant medical power and abuses that power without regard for the possible consequences before his experimentation or after. *Frankenstein*’s monster provides a clear warning for those who have a medical inclination to recognize the magnitude of the power they desire to wield and understand

the responsibilities that accompany such power, even (maybe especially) today. As Butler acknowledges, *Frankenstein* “does after all have historical implications, for it can be read as an allegorical account of the progress of mankind over aeons of time” (309). While Shelley’s audience could draw meager comfort that dangerous abuse of scientific medical experimentation was not extensive then, the existence of any abuse at all instilled in Shelley’s contemporary audiences fear of scientific medical advancements and practitioners. Frankenstein’s medically affiliated monster illustrates the existence of significant concerns regarding scientific medicine and its practitioners in this period, a theme that later authors consider in their own Gothic fiction.

Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and the Continued Abuse of Scientific Medicine by Its Practitioners

In this scope of this research on famous Gothic monster fiction, next is Stevenson’s novella *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, first available to readers in 1886. Just as *Frankenstein* today enjoys universal recognition, so, too, is the story of this scientist with an evil alter ego enormously famous. Based on Stevenson’s story, scholars have produced various readings of Jekyll’s other half Mr. Hyde: alternately they find that he is the tragic result of manipulating human nature; he is addiction incarnate; he is concentrated, personified evil. These interpretations are valid, meaningful, and useful but incomplete in that they do not fully address medicine (significantly the profession of multiple characters in this story) in relation to Mr. Hyde.

Because Hyde is not a monster in some traditional senses, it may be best to first prove his monstrosity. Unlike Frankenstein’s monster, a quasi-human murderous creature with superhuman intellectual abilities and strength, or Dracula, a blood-sucking, Un-Dead vampire, Hyde is a mere human, the result of a potion’s effect on another mere human, Jekyll. To

understand how Hyde belongs in this research, Gilmore's text again proves useful. In this text, not only does he offer the category of "shape-shifters" for monsters such as Hyde, Gilmore even explicitly identifies Jekyll and Hyde as a definitive example of this type of monster (6). Despite his undeniable humanity (perhaps somewhat because of this aspect of his being), scholars readily accept Hyde as a monster. In fact, Ortiz-Robles and others not only accept Hyde's monstrosity, but they also identify Hyde as a definitive type of monster, pointing out "the monstrosity of Dracula, Jekyll and Hyde, and even Dorian Gray, to name only the most famous monsters in [late Victorian Gothic fiction]" (11). With confirmation of Hyde's monstrosity, the next move in this exploration of medicine in Gothic monster fiction is to understand the significance of the presence of medicine in Stevenson's novella.

The influence of medicine on Stevenson's novella, unlike Hyde's monstrosity, is something upon which scholars do not necessarily agree. Stevenson himself claimed that the inspiration for his timeless story came from a nightmare, but other discussion in scholarship on the origins of this novella suggest differing possible sources as well as varying degrees of scientific medical relevance. Despite the significant status and inextricable role of medicine in the story as both profession and subject for experimentation, many scholars neglect to mention medicine at all in their analyses. Some of the scholars who do recognize the role of medicine in either the creation of this story or within the story itself or both write that Stevenson could have drawn information from medical resources. Many of these scholars note that the form of *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* bears strong resemblance to the nineteenth century case study format. These scholars include Austin, who notes the possibility of reading "*Jekyll and Hyde* as a medical case study to help illustrate, in detail, the interaction between literary texts and medical laws" (50). Stiles continues this line of thinking by writing, "Not only does Robert Louis

Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) resemble Victorian case studies in its form and structure, but its core idea may have also originated from medical literature" (27).

Both the form of the story and its subject matter prove the presence and significance of scientific medicine and its practitioners to and within the novella.

Regarding the content of this scientific medical novella, Stevenson likely drew both from medical knowledge as an author performing research for a story and as an insider with scientific medical information and experience as a patient. According to Morens, Stevenson died of tuberculosis (1853) after "[s]urviving a succession of hemorrhages" (1857) during his lifetime that caused him to leave his home country in search of better climates.

Whether Stevenson intended to write a story specifically regarding medicine, medicine's presence in the creation of the story as well as the story itself is undeniable. Many scholars recognize the role of medicine in this novella in relation to its psychological components, specifically Jekyll's significant addiction, but some scholars have supported the assertion that scientific medicine in a larger sense, more than just a backdrop for psychoanalytic analysis of addiction, is both a present and an important component. Supporting this research is Nabaskues, who points out that in this book "Stevenson explores sarcastically the paradoxes of the scientific world and the power relationships of the medicine of the 19th Century featuring the main character of this story as a powerful doctor, socially important but sick at the same time" (1178). Ultimately, recognizing the presence and role of scientific medicine and its practitioners is crucial to understanding more deeply the novella's warning regarding scientific medicine and its practitioners.

At the beginning of Stevenson's tale, Dr. Jekyll is a well-established and well-respected London physician. Jekyll's credentials include the degrees of doctor of medicine and of civil law

as well as the awards doctor of laws and fellow of the Royal Society (Stevenson 12-13), details in Stevenson's story that leave no room for doubt as to Jekyll's role as medical professional. Further proof of Jekyll's scientific medical practice is his position as "colleague and old school-companion" to fellow medical professional Dr. Hastie Lanyon (41). Though Jekyll seems to have reduced if not eliminated his medical practice prior to the opening of Stevenson's story, the word of everyone else in the story establishes that Jekyll has a reputation as an excellent doctor.

Even Lanyon recognizes Jekyll's merits, which is significant because acknowledging Jekyll's adequacies is somewhat at odds with Lanyon's other feelings about his colleague. Though they both work in the same profession and society seems to admire and respect both men, they themselves have serious issues that jeopardize not only their professional respect for each other but, furthermore, also their friendship. According to Lanyon, Jekyll becomes "too fanciful for [him]. He [begins] to go wrong, wrong in mind; and though of course [Lanyon continues] to take an interest in him for old sake's sake as they say, [Lanyon sees and has seen] devilish little of the man. Such unscientific balderdash . . ." (Stevenson 14). Thus, Lanyon trails off in this description of his friend, so overcome by his reaction to merely his own thoughts of Jekyll that his face flushes purple (14). Well-respected and notable physician himself, Lanyon's perspective on Jekyll provides important insight into Jekyll's character. Lanyon makes no secret of the fact that though Jekyll may once have been in Lanyon's estimation a fellow skilled physician, with more skill than the sawbones whose services are necessary to Hyde's young victim's health, he disproves of Jekyll's medical scientific experimentation, and based on the story's conclusion, Lanyon's concerns seem to have been well-founded.

The scope of growth of scientific medical experimentation especially in the nineteenth century is extensive, so some disagreement naturally occurred between medical scholars and

practitioners regarding which branches of study were useful or necessary. Therefore, Lanyon's disagreement with Jekyll's chosen course of study could appear to be simply a difference of taste between colleagues. However, Jekyll himself reveals to readers that rather than performing research for medical benefits for himself or others, he selfishly chooses to focus his abilities and resources instead on experimentation that benefits only him. Unquestionably, Jekyll's focus is not on scientific medical advancements when he claims that "the direction of [his] scientific studies . . . led wholly towards the mystic and the transcendental" (Stevenson 48). Rather than responsibly wield his medical knowledge to improve the general quality of life, he goes beyond the tangible to experiment with issues that concern only him. He entirely and selfishly wants to benefit only himself; therefore, when Jekyll speaks of "the course of [his] scientific discoveries [which] had begun to suggest the most naked possibility of such a miracle" (49), the miracle of which he speaks and plans to achieve through his distillation experimentation is merely to indulge what he knows to be the evil, malignant half of his personality. In a few words, Jekyll has the scientific medical knowledge and abilities to accomplish great achievements, and he does accomplish something great in terms of scope; unfortunately, what he accomplishes is the introduction of the monster of his concentrated evil side, Hyde.

Jekyll's medical exploration could have ended better had his personality and intentions been different. In revealing the true nature of his own personality, Jekyll claims in his account that "man is not one, but truly two" (Stevenson 48) and that a "thorough and primitive duality of man" (49) exists. These ideas at their core are not revolutionary or definitively, inevitably evil, but Jekyll errs in attempting to use his scientific medical connections and skills to split these two sides of his own personality into two essentially separate beings.

Further, once he accomplishes his internal division, Jekyll-as-Hyde wreaks havoc throughout London, giving his evil side full power to do anything and everything he wishes to do. Jekyll has multiple warnings that Hyde is spiraling utterly out of control, from the violence Hyde inflicts on London to the increasing lack of control Jekyll can exert over both his personalities. Noteworthy is that though Jekyll does recognize how untenable his situation is, he seems more upset about the lack of control he has, in that “when the virtue of the medicine wore off, [he] would leap almost without transition” (60), than he is upset about the magnitude of his crimes. Rather than be more upset with the villainous, horrendous nature of his crimes, he is at best equally upset at his own loss of control over his scientific medical powers if not less upset by this than by what he does through his alter ego. By the time Jekyll attempts to stop Hyde, however, Jekyll’s window of reassuming control has closed. Only Hyde’s subsequent suicide can end the reign of terror that both sides of Jekyll’s personality have brought to London, willingly or otherwise.

Though shorter than Shelley’s and Stoker’s works, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* bears no less significant a warning through its monster. Hyde’s monstrous warning is to reveal the need for the responsible use of medicine, the significant and weighty power of medicinal knowledge and ability, and the absolute necessity of restricting medical experimentation to only appropriate and necessary purposes. McCarthy acknowledges the presence of the monster’s warning: “Suspicion of the doctor and his power over the body expressed itself in writings such as *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*” (74). As a talented physician, Jekyll has powerful scientific medical abilities, especially regarding medicinal substances and practice to improve people’s lives, but he consciously chooses not to responsibly use these

abilities to benefit anyone medically – in fact, his actions significantly harm two individuals and devastate their respective qualities of life, especially for the man Hyde kills.

Jekyll believes every person inherently has two distinct personalities, good and bad, eternally, internally warring within everyone. Rather than try to stifle the bad or even to give bad a more appropriate, less destructive, outlet, Jekyll selfishly uses his scientific medical knowledge and abilities to seek opportunities for himself to give way to his evil impulses without having to atone for his wrongdoings. Jekyll's experiment, which permits him essentially to divide a person by personalities into good and bad, is not one he uses for the elimination of anyone else's evil personality; instead, he uses his scientific medical ability merely to provide himself the chance to misbehave and ignore the consequences. If Lanyon or attorney Gabriel Utterson had tried harder (or maybe at all) to address their concerns with Jekyll upon noticing changes in his behavior or soon after – in other words, providing the necessary checks and balances to ensure the appropriate use of scientific medical knowledge and responsible, ethical practice thereof – perhaps Jekyll would have reflected more on the implications of his experimentation. This does not happen, however.

Maybe both men follow Utterson's style of thinking such as he expresses when he states that he inclines "to Cain's heresy" (7); for whatever reason, neither man does anything about their deep concerns. Instead, Jekyll's friends seem content to gossip with each other about their friend's eccentricities, wring their hands over their concerns, and watch what unfolds, never interfering, and in the case of Lanyon, neglecting his own scientific, medical responsibilities and enabling Jekyll's experimentation. In fact, they both enable Jekyll in their own individual ways. Neither man does anything or even tries to do anything to help or stop Hyde, and the consequences are fatal.

The life of monstrous Hyde warns that though medicine can be good for both physician and for patient, the benefits of medical experimentation are not absolute. Demonstrating scientific medicine's beneficial effects, Lanyon and Jekyll (at least occasionally) enjoy excellent reputations and high qualities of life. On the patient side, the little girl over whom Hyde runs seems to make a full recovery quickly, and even Jekyll's health seems to improve when he intentionally stops transforming into Hyde, proving that both scientific medical practitioners and their patients can derive benefits from its responsible use.

However, though Jekyll can divide a person by natures, such a division seems senseless at best with no appropriate outlet for evil nature and ends up being fatal for Jekyll himself. Like Frankenstein's monster, Hyde offers the warning that as powerful as medicine can be, such power is dangerous in the hands of those who cannot responsibly wield that power. Almost guaranteed is that inappropriate use of scientific medical power will have devastating results for both medical practitioners themselves and the world at large in which they live. For this study, Stevenson's novella offers a second example of Gothic fiction that addresses significant concerns regarding scientific medical advancements in this period. No resolution is present regarding these concerns in either *Frankenstein* or *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; thus, Gothic monster fiction of this period continued to explore these issues in search of some relief for the increasing concerns of the audience of this fiction regarding the ever-growing, unchecked, increasingly out-of-control power of scientific medicine and its practitioners. A glimmer of hope is present in the practitioners of scientific medicine in *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, namely Lanyon, who give audiences some proof that not all such professionals are corrupt, a glimmer of hope to track in later Gothic monster fiction.

**Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Scientific Medicine and its Practitioners,
Finally Under Control**

The final, widely famous Gothic story in the scope of this research that also contains perhaps the most undeniable, significant, and meaningful presence of scientific medicine and its practitioners in multiple aspects is Bram Stoker's 1897 masterpiece *Dracula*. Popular *Dracula* scholarship considers many other aspects of the novel's eponymous vampire, including the experience of victims of racism in addition to Dracula's position as the dangerous "Other" and his psychological capacity as a sexual deviant. Most scholars reach conclusions that largely ignore the presence of medical issues within the text; however, some *Dracula* scholars have extensively researched and documented the presence of medicine in the life of the author, the creation of the story, and the content of the story itself. This research will briefly review some of the capacious scholarship on scientific medicine and its practitioners regarding the author and his novel, beginning with the presence of medical knowledge in Stoker's own life.

Extensive scholarship establishes the presence of scientific medicine and its practitioners in Stoker's own personal life. A scholar who especially examines this aspect of Stoker's life is Mulvey-Roberts, who writes in detail about the different ways Stoker's knowledge in this field grew, beginning with his childhood:

Stoker certainly knew about ill health first-hand, having suffered a prolonged life-threatening childhood illness that prevented him from standing upright until about the age of seven. The precise nature of his ailment remains mysterious, but it might have contributed towards his abiding interest in medicine. (93)

Not only did Stoker himself have experience with scientific medicine and its practitioners as a patient, he also knew many of the foremost doctors of his time, including the surgeon Sir William Wilde (117). Additionally, Stoker's immediate family was full of physicians, renowned ones who held prominent places in medicine and, thus, polite society. In a review of

the scientific elements present in some of Stoker's works, Senf mentions that Stoker's writing contains "references to medicine in *Dracula*, details that can be partially explained by Stoker's close relationship with his family" ("*Dracula and The Lair of the White Worm: Bram Stoker's Commentary on Victorian Science*" 218). Mulvey-Roberts more fully details a list of the medical members of Stoker's clan:

Stoker came from a medical family, going back generations. His uncle Edward Alexander Stoker, whose five sons all became doctors, was a surgeon and chief examiner for the Royal College of Surgeons, Ireland. The physician, medical reformer and writer, Dr William Stoker, who was a professor of surgery at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, was a more distant relative whose three brothers, father and grandfather had all been physicians. William Stoker published on the value of therapeutic phlebotomy and had Bram read his work, it might have supplied him with an indirect source for the vampiric bleeding and blood transfusions taking place in *Dracula*. Three of Bram's four brothers were doctors. The eldest, Sir William Thornley Stoker, was a celebrated surgeon. (93)

Because of what seems to have been the family profession, Stoker enjoyed access to extensive scientific medical knowledge, expertise, and authorities through relation to many of its nineteenth century practitioners. Scientific medical information and its practitioners were directly and easily available to Stoker and likely affected, if not outright inspired in part, his most famous story. Mulvey-Roberts further proves this assertion:

Stoker is likely to have had insider knowledge since three out of the five Stoker brothers were surgeons. In 1874, he went to live with his older brother William Thornley at 16 Harcourt Street, where he stayed for the next three years. Thornley was a celebrated physician who was knighted in 1895 for his services to medicine. He was a surgeon in a string of Dublin hospitals in the 1879s [sic] the Whitworth, Hardwicke and the Richmond, where he worked with his friend William Thomson, who became Surgeon-in-Ordinary to Queen Victoria in Ireland. Thomson's research into blood and arteries may have been of interest to Stoker, in view of the preoccupations of his most famous fictional character. (117)

In other words, Stoker's friends and family provided a significant source of scientific medical knowledge and practitioners, especially during the time when Stoker and his brother lived together. This brother / roommate of Stoker likely directly helped him with his *Dracula*

manuscript to ensure accuracy in his medical descriptions (97). In fact, some scholars believe that this brother William Thornley, a doctor both of medicine and of literature, may have served as inspiration for the character Van Helsing (118). Other scholars such as Schaffer see links between Stoker's brother Thornley and the novel's other physician. Schaffer writes that "Seward's medical activities link him to Thornley Stoker, knighted for his surgical skills" (409). What further enables *Dracula* to be a novel of scientific medicine and its practitioners as Mulvey-Roberts claims is not merely the knowledge and experiences of author Stoker but also the undeniable presence of the topics of scientific medicine and its practitioners in this landmark Gothic vampire novel (94).

Regarding the story's content, *Dracula's* plot centers largely on the topic of scientific medicine and its practitioners. Scholars such as Davison recognize the presence of advanced scientific medical terminology in *Dracula* (like Shelley incorporated into *Frankenstein*):

Stoker's detailed research for *Dracula* in areas such as Transylvanian history and folklore, and his incredible knowledge of everything from Shakespeare's plays (Stoker's boss Henry Irving was regarded by many as the best Shakespearean actor of his day) to British regional dialects and medical terminology require astute notation. (357)

Two of the novel's most important characters are practitioners of scientific medicine, as Grace points out in noting that the story contains "trained and professional experts in the fields of medicine (Van Helsing) [and] psychiatry (Seward)" (181). The noble, commendable Dr. John Seward and the legendary, fabled professor Dr. Abraham Van Helsing are physicians with significant, necessary scientific medical knowledge that constitutes a vital part of the plot.

Early in the novel, Seward first appears as one of the suitors Lucy Westenra regrettably rejects. Not merely part of the story as jilted lover, Seward further figures in to the plot through his operation of a mental-health facility conveniently near the location of the house Dracula later inhabits as part of his plan to establish himself in London and enlarge his hunting grounds by

providing him the necessary security. One of the patients in Seward's facility is R. M. Renfield, an odd person whose quirks increasingly seem connected to the bloodthirsty Dracula. Both through his interpersonal relationships and his medical profession, Seward is a crucial character to *Dracula's* plot.

Equally important as Seward to *Dracula's* plot is Van Helsing, the famous scholar who utilizes the knowledge of superstition, legend, and lore he has gained in the process of conducting his extensive scientific medical research to defeat Dracula. Van Helsing's scientific medical knowledge is Lucy's only chance of survival while she is alive, and though ultimately unsuccessful in saving her life, Van Helsing still enables Lucy's lovers to make her not Un-Dead but dead, removing the threat she later poses as the vampiric "bloofer lady" who prowls London at night. As well, Van Helsing collaborates with Seward and the others to disrupt Dracula's plans, finally forcing him to flee to his home base in Transylvania. Van Helsing has the requisite knowledge to both care for the vampirically infected Mina Harker and to enable her to use her supernatural scar connection to Dracula's mind to see where he is and help Van Helsing and crew adjust their plans accordingly. Ultimately, Van Helsing's scientific medical knowledge is key to knowing exactly what to do with Un-Dead Dracula, leading the other characters in their total defeat of Dracula. Scientific medicine and its practitioners in *Dracula* are unquestionably present and necessary to the plot, but the significance or deeper meaning of scientific medicine and its practitioners to Stoker's novel requires further analysis, especially as these elements create monstrous Dracula's warning. In *Dracula*, scientific medicine is present both through the practicing physicians as well as the story's elaborate scientific medical experimentation and practice.

The first time its practitioners use scientific medicine to fight the monsters is in the battle to save Lucy. Scholarship accepts Van Helsing's treatment of Lucy as scientific medicine, as Senf writes: Lucy "had endured Van Helsing's medical treatment" ("Dracula': Stoker's Response to the New Woman" 44). Despite his referring to the garlic as medicine, though he incorporates the elements of superstitious lore to ward off Dracula, Van Helsing understands garlic and crucifixes constitute only minor medicine and temporary defense for Lucy (Stoker 138). Van Helsing may refer to the garlic as medicine because garlic will keep Dracula away from his victim to enable the actual scientific medicinal practice of transfusing human blood to effect Lucy's best chance at survival. No matter how much garlic Van Helsing puts into the room, no matter how many guards he posts, and no matter how many windows he closes, only the scientific medicine of transfusions, blood restored to Lucy to replace that which Dracula consumes from her veins, can rescue her. Van Helsing stresses this idea to Seward on multiple occasions:

She will die for sheer want of blood to keep the heart's action as it should be. There must be transfusion of blood at once. Is it you or me? (130)

All our work is undone; we must begin anew. There is no young Arthur here now; I have to call on you yourself this time, friend John. (136)

To-day you must operate. I shall provide. You are weakened already. (143)

We must have another transfusion of blood, and that soon, or that poor girl's life won't be worth an hour's purchase. (156)

Four times Van Helsing performs transfusions from himself and Lucy's lovers in attempts to rescue Lucy, and had chance not negated the transfusions' effects, Lucy would at least have had an increased chance of survival and might have even made a full recovery under the scientific medical care of Van Helsing and crew. Thanks to Stoker's connections and experiences, his novel includes accurate portrayal of the medical treatment impressive for its time and still in practice today, though ultimately scientific medicine does not beat chance to save Lucy's life

from the monster Dracula. Despite this loss, the battle between scientific medicine and its practitioners versus chance has not ended but merely changed, and both sides, along with chance, have another and greater struggle to come.

Later, when Lucy is Un-Dead and “playing” with children as the famous “bloofer lady” (Stoker 183-201), the practice of another scientific medical procedure once again provides the best and only chance of defeating the now-monstrous Lucy. A sort of surgical treatment is necessary to overcome the monster in this case. Lucy’s fiancé, Arthur Holmwood, Lord Godalming, definitively ends the existence of the woman he once loved when he places “the point over the heart” and strikes “with all his might . . . driving deeper and deeper the mercy-bearing stake,” after which Van Helsing cuts off the head of who was once Lucy (222). Only after this procedure do the men eliminate the threat Lucy has posed. Even the monster’s defeat in this case requires chance for the success of the practice of scientific medicine.

Before this second visit to Lucy’s grave, Van Helsing and Lucy’s lovers find earlier in their first examination of the situation an empty, Lucy-less coffin (215), preventing them from at that time performing the scientific medical procedure on the monster. It is only chance that they happen to locate Un-Dead Lucy upon her return from that evening’s exploration and further that she returns to her tomb instead of fleeing the cemetery. Moreover, even the fact of the putty’s effectiveness as tomb sealant illustrates the presence of chance, considering the garlic which was to protect Lucy during her life like the putty the men now use is something anyone else could manipulate, intentionally or otherwise, and destroy its potential effect. In fact, Seward’s description of their final visit to Lucy’s tomb contains no mention of the putty anywhere in his account of their entrance to prove the putty is still present or has been effective. Scientific

medicine triumphs in the elimination of the threat monstrous Un-Dead Lucy poses, but chance is a requisite element of this victory.

The next notable instance of the battle between scientific medicine and its practice versus the monster Dracula occurs in the vampire's double attack on Renfield, Seward's mental-health patient. Though Renfield does not seem to be one of Dracula's victims in the same way as Lucy and Mina, Renfield certainly suffers from encountering the monster because of the head wound Dracula inflicts. Here as well, only scientific medicine provides any hope of overcoming the ill effects the monster wreaks, and in Seward's description of the process he and Van Helsing perform, the scientific medical knowledge author Stoker has available to him again becomes apparent in his novel. Van Helsing tells Seward that "we must trephine at once" (Stoker 282), which refers to the medical procedure of trepanning. Mulvey-Roberts writes that Stoker's brother and roommate "Thornley was an acclaimed pioneer in brain surgery in Ireland and, in 1888, published an article, 'On a Case of Subcranial Haemorrhage Treated by Secondary Trephining'" (119).

Beyond supplying information regarding scientific medical procedures, the Stoker physicians also provide author Stoker with advanced information regarding complicated injuries. Thornley "was an expert on neurosurgery and trepanning [and] provided his younger brother with a memo and illustration, detailing the effects of an injury to the side of the head" (94). Not only is he able to utilize his own scientific medical knowledge in his novel's plot regarding Dracula's injury to Renfield, Stoker can do so in a way which makes it impossible to deny the roles of scientific medicine and its practice and their value to and in *Dracula*.

Though Renfield dies from this encounter, resulting in another loss for scientific medicine and its practitioners in the scope of its great battle with monsters in Stoker's novel, as

happens earlier in Lucy's fight for life, the fact that Renfield sustains a brain injury still seems to indicate the idea that chance is an important factor as well. Even without significant scientific medical knowledge, any person can recognize that head injuries are rarely textbook situations. In other words, two people could sustain the exact same injury, and yet one may live when the other dies. As seems to be the case for head injuries in the nineteenth century through to today still, multiple factors come into play, one of which is chance, which determine the patient's fate. In this instance Renfield's death is a draw in the overall battle. Scientific medicine and its practitioners cannot save Renfield's life, but neither can Dracula count the death of either a potential subject to serve as tool or food source of the blood vital to his survival to be a victory for him, either. Chance still factors into the battle between scientific medicine and its practitioners and the opposing monsters.

The final and most important encounter between a monster and medicine occurs in the final scene of *Dracula*. Bignell describes this scene, noting that the novel's main figures have been "travelling on the new pan-European rail networks and using modern medical science" (2) in their quest to defeat Dracula. Van Helsing and crew have tracked Dracula all over the European continent with their extensive scientific medical knowledge and resources as its practitioners. However, they have yet been unsuccessful in defeating the monstrous vampire. Mina's supernatural connection to Dracula through the scar he gives her enables Dracula to change his course of action and thwart Van Helsing and crew. The final battle in the novel consists by and large of a confluence of chance-driven factors which enable scientific medicine and its practitioners to effect Dracula's demise. For the wolves to manage to corner Van Helsing and Mina at just the right spot both where they can see the river on which Jonathan Harker and

Holmwood are traveling and where Seward and Quincey Morris can catch up to the peasants transporting Dracula home seems to bear a tinge of chance.

Chance is further crucial to the success of the scientific medical procedure used to eliminate entirely the Un-Dead Dracula. The procedure itself is successful when its practitioners can make use of their scientific medicine, as Van Helsing, Holmwood, and Seward's earlier destruction of Un-Dead Lucy demonstrates. However, a new factor in this situation occurs in the form of the gypsies. They prove a formidable force in attempting to hold off Morris and Seward, ultimately so successful that Morris later dies from the wound he sustains in the scuffle. Chance is what prevents the gypsies from defeating all four of these men, enabling Jonathan and Morris to utilize scientific medical knowledge and procedures to destroy Dracula. Ultimately, stemming from chance circumstances, the scientific medical procedure of the sort of surgery its practitioners perform a second time defeats Dracula, this time ultimately eliminating the monstrous threat.³

Scientific medicine does ultimately triumph over the monsters in *Dracula*, but the battle is long, drawn-out, and usually seemingly more in the monsters' favor than in the favor of their eventual vanquishers. Scientific medicine and its practitioners and monsters have power, and so does chance in each of the encounters between monsters and the scientific medicine and its practice that Van Helsing and his crew use to battle the monsters. No sustained success for or defeat of either scientific medicine and its practitioners or the monsters occurs until the end of the story, and even the end of the story bears literature's potential for multiple interpretations as

³ It is worth noting that multiple scholars and writers, to include Stoker's own ancestor Dacre Stoker, note that Dracula's blood yet lives on through Mina, who receives her infection before she gives birth to her son Quincey. If Dracula's blood still has any potency in young Quincey Harker, such potency in later generations would seem to somewhat potentially negate Dracula's ultimate defeat. Because Stoker never created a sequel novel which definitively addresses this point, the belief that Dracula's defeat is ultimate is sufficient for the scope of this research.

to either side's success after the close of the novel. What the ambiguity of the novel's ending allows for is the illustration that neither scientific medicine and its practitioners nor monsters have ultimate, inevitable success without the role chance plays.

Because chance is so prevalent in the monster-medicine encounters in *Dracula*, interpreting this monster's warning requires taking chance into consideration. Scientific medicine and its practitioners on their own would enjoy guaranteed success in *Dracula*, but chance negates the success of scientific medicine and its practitioners on at least two occasions. Therefore, Dracula's warning is twofold. On one hand, the fact that scientific medicine and its practitioners do not always defeat the monster can intimate to readers then and today that Dracula the monster's message is that regardless of its potential efficacy, scientific medicine and its practitioners do not hold ultimate, absolute power. Other factors necessitate consideration in situations that require scientific medicine and its practitioners besides just these two elements, and sometimes the best of each of these will nevertheless prove ultimately ineffective in complicated situations, such as brain injuries that still today mystify medical practitioners.

Further, Dracula's experiences with scientific medicine and its practitioners also indicate that by the time of Stoker's writing, the public seems to have settled into a mindset in which medical practitioners have learned to wield medical knowledge both appropriately and consistently enough to earn the public's grudging respect, trust, and appreciation. In other words, the monster's second warning is that only noble-intentioned practitioners of scientific medicine can achieve beneficial result. In *Dracula*, then, we see that the monstrous vampire's warnings about medicine illustrate an evolution throughout the nineteenth century from what they were for Frankenstein's monster and Mr. Hyde. Had Seward or Van Helsing and their crew considered experimentation on the monsters and victims rather than healing them and negating

future potential problems, Dracula likely would have triumphed, and perhaps this story would have ended as bleakly as Shelley's and Stevenson's Gothic monster fiction.

Conclusion

If monsters in literature exist to warn, then the undeniable presence of scientific medicine and its practitioners in Gothic fiction is no coincidence but rather directly related to the warning each monster of Gothic fiction bears. Scientific medicine grows increasingly powerful from *Frankenstein* to *Dracula* in these pieces of literature and beyond, and in the wrong hands, as Victor Frankenstein and Dr. Henry Jekyll illustrate, its use can be disastrous and fatal, especially for the scientific medical practitioners who misuse its power. In particular, *Frankenstein* revealed to readers that practitioners of scientific medicine who abuse their powers and desired to control human life will create monsters. Further, the monster as product of an abuse of scientific medicine by its practitioner ends up ruining the life of the practitioner himself, wreaking havoc on the lives of innocent others as well.

In *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the fear of scientific medicine and its practitioners does not seem to abate. Dr. Jekyll's misuse of his scientific medical knowledge and skill brings him great pleasure and satisfaction at first; later, the abuse of his knowledge brings about crimes from whose punishment he cannot escape, and neither can his monster. The ill effects Mr. Hyde brings may not be as wide-ranging as the damage Frankenstein's monster brings about, but the warning to readers still clearly indicates that scientific medicine is too powerful for unchecked use. Fortunately, the sawbones and Lanyon demonstrate that not all practitioners of scientific medicine create monsters, giving minor comfort to Stevenson's readers.

By the time of *Dracula*, though the power of scientific medicine continues to increase with no foreseeable lessening, a growing awareness arises that scientific medicine and its practitioners, if chance permits, can have great benefit for the public so long as those practitioners use their skills and abilities and resources specifically not for unnecessary experimentation but instead for beneficial purposes. Van Helsing and Seward, along with the rest of their crew, can defeat every form of the monster they encounter, but necessary to their success is both their responsible use of the abilities of the practitioners of scientific medicine as well as chance.

Ultimately, medicine and monstrosity, two inextricably intertwined realms in Gothic fiction, help readers understand more clearly the general reaction of the public to scientific medicine and its practitioners as that reaction evolved from *Frankenstein*'s publication through to *Dracula*'s publication and beyond. Marcus describes the role of scientific medicine and its practitioners regarding monsters: "Science . . . or medicine . . . can produce monsters . . . and without the guidance of a humane and consciously responsible will can itself become monstrous" (199). In the defeat of monsters and monstrosity, Bishop writes, "It is not by the making, but in the un-making of monsters, that the profession of medicine distinguishes itself" ("2" 751), as readers can finally and satisfactorily see happen in *Dracula*.

Medicine proves its power in Gothic monster fiction by the "un-making of monsters," but defeating monsters requires appropriate use of scientific medicine by its practitioners, along with chance. *Frankenstein* shows readers that scientific medicine can create monsters who can outlive their creators, and Dr. Hyde is an example of an unsustainable scientific medically created monster who eventually self-destructs. In both cases, though medicine is necessary to its practitioners for their respective creations, scientific medicine in the wrong hands cannot defeat

the monsters they have created. Rather, acknowledging scientific medicine's role in its practitioners' creations and learning from these mistakes to prevent the creation of future monsters seems to be the best possible outcome. Even when scientific medicine is successful in defeating monsters, as in the case of *Dracula*, chance is also necessary to the success of the practitioners of scientific medicine.

The power of both scientific medicine and its practitioners tended to overwhelm people at the time of publication of these three pieces of Gothic monster fiction. Though their benefits were eventually undeniable to the public, those benefits were not always the results patients and their practitioners achieved, and on many occasions scientific medicine and its practitioners seemed less focused on health benefits than scientific experimentation, regardless of such practice's effects.

Today, we tend to view both scientific medicine and monstrosity differently in comparison to previous generations. We can be more hesitant to and deliberate in naming something monstrous, and we recognize both our role in their creation and the weighty implications of identifying anything as such. We also tend to more eagerly embrace scientific medical experimentation, viewing such practice less with fear and trepidation than those who lived before us but rather seeing hope and the potential for a better quality of life for more people through such noble experimentation. Even though today we view scientific medicine and monsters differently, something that has not changed is the power we see inherent even today in both realms. Monsters are still powerful beings and still sources of fascination and instruction for readers and audiences today both in scholarly and popular culture. Even more powerful now than in the past and more powerful than the monsters it can defeat when chance factors in, scientific medicine is can seem to be of supreme potency— some might say too much so, just as

people may have believed it was during the time of publication of these three pieces of Gothic monster fiction. The power of scientific medicine and its practitioners, beginning in the time of *Frankenstein*, yet increases to this day, but the public can now even more than they could after *Dracula* take comfort that the benefits of scientific medicine continue in counter, and its practitioners by and large seem intent on nobly spreading those benefits.

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Parolles' Word Problem in *All's Well That Ends Well*

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Parolles' Word Problem in *All's Well That Ends Well*

Today, a person with very little knowledge of a movie's plot can make an educated guess as to the moral nature of the movie's recognizable characters simply by recognizing the actors who play those characters. This sort of typecasting enables audiences to establish foundational knowledge of the play's narrative even before they view the movie. Thus, audiences can develop expectations for movie plots based upon casting decisions, sometimes regardless of the movies' plots themselves. Their understanding of the plot will then proceed based on that knowledge, sometimes even if what they assume about the movie does not match the movie's reality.

An understanding of typecasting as it occurs in today's media can perhaps offer a potential solution to a longstanding problem present in the Shakespearean play *All's Well That Ends Well*. This play's other characters and audiences alike seem to take for granted Parolles' villainy. Despite the villainous status most everyone seems to assign to Parolles, the play itself offers little evidentiary support for the existence of Parolles' alleged sins. Critical response today to Parolles generally tends to support negative perceptions of Parolles, even taking for granted his villainy, though some critics instead offer what they characterize as a (somehow necessary) defense of this problematic character. With a historicized understanding of *All's Well That Ends Well* performances, along with a close reading of the play itself containing a character analysis, Parolles will prove to be neither a villainous character nor a character in need of defense but rather, simply, a truly well-developed human character.

The Word on Parolles in Shakespeare's Lifetime

Typecasting is not new; rather, typecasting has been a common practice at least since the days of Shakespeare. As actors do now, characters played roles that were like other roles they

had played before and would play in the future, enabling audience members to recognize certain characters as good or evil simply by the actor playing that character, prior to any action or word. Typecasting is therefore what gave audiences foreknowledge of the plays, rather than actual knowledge of the play itself. Thus, the common practice readers use today with Shakespeare's plays and with stage and film productions in general, reading the characters as if they were each an individual person with motivation and personality and a life beyond the play's action, or basic character analysis in other words, is very different philosophically from the realities of casting to tell a story back in Shakespeare's day.

To explain, Taylor references the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery, a 1789-1805 London exhibition of engravings depicting some of Shakespeare's characters. Prior to these visual depictions of Shakespeare's characters themselves, rather than images of the actors who portrayed these roles, audience members primarily viewed characters in relation to the actors who played them. More specifically, Taylor writes that

the imagining of characters as independent of performers moves in the direction of 'novelization'. Instead of characters being regarded as mouthpieces for poetic oratory or vehicles for plot points, they are perceived to have offstage biographies and interior psychologies of their own. (35)

In other words, Shakespeare's characters during his lifetime were not independent characters; instead, audience members would recognize by the actors and their acting the historical figures and well-known figures from popular histories, comedies, and drama. This is different from each of these roles' having a fuller identity than just what appears on stage.

Thanks to inconsistent Elizabethan stage record-keeping, definitive information about which of the actors in Shakespeare's troupe played which roles is usually unavailable; more often scholars rely upon the typecasting that troupes used to assign each role to each player to form educated guesses as to which troupe member likely played which part. As is often the case

in Shakespearean scholarship, no absolute agreement exists as to who of Shakespeare's troupe likely played Parolles. This particular lack of information in Shakespearean scholarship is in large part because *All's Well That Ends Well* did not appear in print until the First Folio, and that edition did not include any casting information. Further frustrating with *All's Well That Ends Well* productions is that no record of performance exists for any performance earlier than the mid-eighteenth century, long after Shakespeare's time, as Weinberg reminds us.

Scholars generally agree that William Kemp was the one in Shakespeare's troupe who would have played clown-like figures such as Parolles; Robert Armin was another actor who often took such parts. The only scholar who specifically names which actor might have played Parolles seems to be Wells, who believes Armin is the likely actor: "Other roles written after Armin joined the company which seem likely to have been played by the company clown, even if they were not tailor-made for Armin, include . . . Parolles in *All's Well That Ends Well*" (28). Conversely, other scholars such as Weinberg suggest that Armin more likely played the clown Lavatch, not Parolles, in *All's Well That Ends Well*. In any case, no definitive information is available today as to who would have enacted this role; therefore, denying modern analysis the opportunity to understand Parolles' alleged villainy through typecasting.

Regardless, likely is that in Shakespeare's time, audiences would have recognized the actor who played Parolles, either Armin or Kemp or someone else, and formed assumptions as to Parolles' nature as a comedic fool and maybe even a villain, at any rate a character at whom to laugh and scorn. Due to the lack of any information regarding who would have played Parolles, we cannot know how Parolles appeared villainous simply through typecasting. Whoever played Parolles, however, would have assuredly led the audience to form assumptions as to Parolles' moral character. Their assumptions would have found support in the play's structure: every

character in the play who speaks of or to Parolles treats him as if he were a lying, ill-intentioned villain, so audiences would find evidence to support their assumptions regarding Parolles.

Shakespeare's audiences today are different from his contemporary audiences. Not until publication of the First Folio were so-called authoritative versions of each play available in print form to audiences, and even then, the high cost of the folio combined with low literacy rates means that those who knew Shakespeare's plays most likely knew the plays from seeing them performed on stage instead of having studied the scripts, today's more common form of exposure to Shakespeare's plays. With this in mind, we can forgive Shakespeare's contemporary audiences for failing to question the villainy in Parolles that his audiences and fellow characters seemed to take for granted, but the access audiences have today not only to multiple stage and film adaptations but also easy access to the script itself places a more pressing responsibility on today's audience members to check their assumptions against more than just typecasting.

Parolles: A Character of Words

Before moving into a close reading of *All's Well That Ends Well* to analyze Parolles, a basic character analysis is useful for establishing Parolles' identity. Little is present in the text of the play, even less that is unbiased, that delineates Parolles' character without bias. It is useful to note that Parolles' name is French for "words," a crucial and defining aspect of his character. The *dramatis personae* introduces Parolles as "a parasitical follower of Bertram." Though we know Parolles to be male, the text offers no specific information regarding his age. We can guess that Parolles is not married by the lack of mention of a wife, but again, no concrete facts are present; neither is any information on Parolles' background or educational level. Parolles is a follower of Bertram, which tells us that he is in what would have been the Elizabethan middle

class, not part of the landed and titled gentry or nobility, yet for the most part not so low as to never interact with the landed and titled gentry and nobility.

A close reading of this play will reveal that Parolles' objective is simple and universally understandable: he wants to survive. He uses his namesake words as his best weapon and tool of survival. Everything he says is either to maintain his relationship with Bertram, to achieve and maintain his highest possible quality of life, or to simply save himself when he believes his life is in danger. Further, this close reading of the play will reveal what audience members in Shakespeare's time may have missed and that today's audiences have a responsibility to acknowledge: the labels and ill treatment the play thrusts upon Parolles is undeserved. In no way is he the play's villain, as both the play's characters and many critics state. Because he is not the villain, he needs neither the defense or justification that other scholarly critics feel necessary. The accusations the play levels at Parolles and the degradation the critics echo are all baseless. Simply put, Parolles uses his words for self-maintenance and preservation, as a close reading of the play will reveal.

Parolles, in the Words of Scholarship

Plenty of scholars have studied Parolles to produce a sizeable body of analysis, interpretation, and opinions. In Parolles, Richard and Scott-Warren recognize Shakespeare's use of the *miles gloriosus* character stereotype, the swaggering, vainglorious soldier found in Shakespeare's source material for *All's Well That Ends Well* (Richard 146; Scott-Warren 79, fn 47). The label of *miles gloriosus* braggart soldier is rather innocuous for Parolles; while the label is not complimentary, this title is not inherently insulting and in fact fits rather well. Worth noting is that other Shakespearean characters to fall into this commedia dell'arte stereotype are not always the play's clowns – Petruchio from *The Taming of the Shrew*, for example, is

arguably one of the play's heroes despite his definite role as a *miles gloriosus* character. Most scholars do not stop at this neutral label, though, instead aligning with the cruelty of the play's characters in their own descriptions of Parolles.

Most commonly, scholars who include Parolles in their work refer to the character in significantly more insulting terms. Almost all scholars refer to Parolles as liar, fool, and coward (taking Shakespeare's words directly from the play's lines I.i.100-01). Whether they deride him for the barely concealed sexually-tinged banter he exchanges with Helena or condemn him in his friendship with Bertram, most scholars agree that at best, Parolles is a fool, and usually, they take their name-calling further.

More than one scholar goes beyond the rather innocuous labels to label Parolles the much more insulting villain. One of the first scholars to specifically focus on Parolles, Lawrence spares no vitriol in his interpretation of the character. For Lawrence, Parolles is "a most unsavory fellow; generally accounted a kind of degraded Falstaff, without the fat knight's wit and charm" (419). Lawrence also notes that Parolles is "one of the least agreeable of all the people in the play," "so despicable a rascal," "a cad, through and through" (457), and a "bragging coward" (465). For Lawrence, Parolles is exactly as the rest of the characters in *All's Well That Ends Well* perceive him to be: irredeemably awful.

Fifty years or so after Lawrence, scholars continue this degradation. For Rothman, though he notes that Falstaff is "another, and worse" version of the *All's Well That Ends Well* character, Parolles is still "a genuine Vice, malevolent and odious" (183). Rothman sees Parolles as a negative influence throughout the play, like many other scholars do. Even in a pseudo-defense of Parolles, which is simultaneously unnecessary and ineffective, St. Clair still writes that "Parolles never actively misleads Bertram, [which] makes him less the villain and more of a

hero than first seems possible for such an outrageous liar” (92). In other words, despite the so-called outrageous lies she baselessly attributes to the character, St. Clair believes he may have some redeeming qualities nevertheless.

Godshalk reclaims the villain label for Parolles, finding no redemptive nature in this character. According to Godshalk, Parolles is “hollow” (62) and “selfish” (66) and of “weak moral fibre” (69). Godshalk’s choice of insult as “hollow” is particularly interesting in that reading *All’s Well That Ends Well* with an eye towards empty characters would be more likely to produce readings of the besotted Helena or sulky Bertram as empty, especially in contrast to the human desires of Parolles. For long as scholars have written about *All’s Well That Ends Well*, they have admired Parolles’ fellow characters and largely found nothing good in Parolles himself. Even as recently as 2011, Pierce views Parolles as a villainous character, referring to him as a scoundrel who exploits the romantic sensibility of other characters (120).

Of Shakespeare’s characters, even before close analysis one can see Parolles is not the most villainous. He does not vow revenge for pranks others play on him, such as Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, nor he does not attempt to force himself onto one character to defeat another, such as Caliban in *The Tempest*. Never does he commit any undeniable crime, unlike many others of Shakespeare’s characters, villain or otherwise. In fact, some scholars including Friedman acknowledge that rather than the instigator of wrongdoing, Parolles often ends up the scapegoat of such situations. If Parolles has no crimes attributable to him, as this analysis will prove, then why do some scholars consider Parolles not only a negative character but commonly a villain? For reference, this study will use the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* definition of “villain” to prove how poorly this term describes Parolles:

[o]riginally, a low-born base-minded rustic; a man of ignoble ideas or instincts; in later use, an unprincipled or depraved scoundrel; a man naturally disposed to base or criminal

actions, or deeply involved in the commission of disgraceful crimes . . . [u]sed as a term of opprobrious address.

From ignoble and dishonorable to criminal and depraved, no part of this word's definition appropriately applies to this Shakespearean character.

The only crime of which Parolles may be guilty, if crime it be, is speaking in his own self-interest. A perfect example of a believable human character in Shakespeare's plays (in comparison with the dramatic character stereotypes Shakespeare frequently uses and even uses in foundation for this character), Parolles uses his words for the logical purpose of protecting himself. A close reading of *All's Well That Ends Well*, focusing on Parolles' words and actions, will prove not only his total lack of villainy but also and further his utter humanity.

Parolles' Own Words

Parolles is an important part of *All's Well That Ends Well*, beginning with his presence in the play's first scene. Parolles appears on-stage during this first scene, but it is not his lines that first describe him. Instead, Helena introduces Parolles to the audience. Helena's commentary sets the stage, so to speak, in establishing Parolles as the play's characters perceive him, focusing on his moral character. Helena says Parolles is

One that goes with [Bertram]. I love [Parolles] for [Bertram's] sake,
And yet I know [Parolles] a notorious liar,
Think him a great way fool, soly a coward;
Yet these fix'd evils sit so fit in him,
That they take place when virtue's steely bones
Looks bleak i' th' cold wind. Withal, full oft we see
Cold wisdom waiting on superfluous folly. (I.i.99-105)

Before Parolles himself utters a word, the undeniably-biased Helena denounces Parolles as “a notorious liar,” “a fool,” and “a coward.” She further notes that these labels fit him well, though she fails to provide the audience at this point or anywhere else in rest of the play with any justification for these titles with irrefutable proof.

Not only does Helena insult Parolles' moral character, but she also finds fault even with his clothing and uses that as further so-called evidence of his villainy. The footnotes to the previously-quoted lines of the *Riverside Shakespeare* edition of *All's Well That Ends Well* note that it is possible to interpret "[c]old wisdom waiting on superfluous folly" as meaning unprovided wisdom enjoying superabundance, or more to the point, naked wisdom overdressed. For Helena to point out that Parolles has an evil character is insufficient insult for her; she further claims that he is both without wisdom and yet apparently offers so-called wisdom in abundance. She even suggests that something is wrong with his clothing in the metaphor of "naked wisdom overdressed," continuing a theme of both scholarship on the play as well as the play itself. From the first mention of Parolles, audiences hear that he has both an awful moral character and that he gives unsolicited, foolish wisdom, or dresses too flashily, or perhaps both.

Tragically for Parolles, this early description seems to be the axiomatic perspective of every other character in the play regarding Parolles. Not only do critical scholars accept Helena's assertions as unquestionable fact, even encyclopedia articles take for granted that Parolles is a "dissolute companion" marked by "essential cowardice and disloyalty . . . exposed by his fellow soldiers to the young count who had trusted him" ("*All's Well That Ends Well: Analysis of Major Characters*"). Knowing Helena's bias, it is reasonable to surmise that Helena simply dislikes Parolles because he enjoys Bertram's favor and Helena is jealous because she knows she does not. Because of her obsession with Bertram, in the rest of the play to come she will exhibit much more extreme behaviors than merely insulting his friend. Her behavior in the play proves her to be hardly the most reliable source of information about either her adored Bertram, or Parolles, according to her the undeserving friend of the attention besotted Helena desires for herself. In short, audiences need to consider the source when it comes to this

perception of Parolles, recognize that Helena has significant bias, and be skeptical of her claims thusly in the rest of the play.

After her insulting aside, Helena and Parolles greet each other with typical courtly formalities, both calling each other by gracious titles. Worth noting is that just as Helena rejects “fair queen” as inappropriately regal for herself, so, too, does Parolles reject “monarch” for himself (I.i.106-09). Here and throughout Shakespeare’s play, Parolles does not try to claim an unsuitable title for himself. Parolles knows he occupies the in-between area of society, not a member of the landed gentry and nobility, yet not so low in the class system as to never interact with the upper class. He does not put on false airs. Whether for humility or as part of the word game in which he and Helena will engage each other, Parolles does not allow Helena to ascribe to him an inappropriately lofty title.

Continuing the typical courtly interaction, Parolles and Helena engage in a conversation bawdily regarding the topic of Helena’s virginity. Scholars point out that this conversation is evidence of Parolles’ inappropriate nature, and though Parolles does not behave in a fashion above reproach here, audiences must take care in analyzing this interaction. If critics condemn Parolles for his role in this conversation, critics must also question Helena’s participation in this conversation as well (perhaps in addition to her taste in men, if Bertram to her is the ideal man and Parolles a liar and fool and coward). Would not an elegant countess (as Helena aspires to be through her desire to marry Bertram) reject such conversation as obviously inappropriate? In *All’s Well That Ends Well*, no other lady participates in such crude conversation; in fact, later in the play, the ladies in Italy outright reject such language despite being of a much lower socioeconomic status and in a situation that lends itself rather well to such topics.

Therefore, to excuse Helena for this conversation and condemn Parolles is unfair, and because most scholars praise Helena here and throughout the play, rather than condemn her, we must also find Parolles innocent of any fault in this conversation. Because scholars generally accept Helena's behavior without criticism, we must view Parolles the same way. Nothing in this first scene merits even the label of fool, much less the crueler distinction of villain. Therefore, Parolles' words bear no offence to any other character or audience member in this first scene; if he is to prove to be a villain, he does not do so in Act I.

Parolles next speaks in Act II, when Bertram is moping about the court, jealous of the other lords who have the king's blessing to fight in the Italian war, a silly war because it appears to have no real purpose other than occupation for bored soldiers. In this scene, Parolles encourages Bertram to do what Bertram thinks is best, which is to flout the king's commands and go to war. Though Parolles' rule-breaking words here directly violate the king's orders, they are necessary for Parolles to maintain the favor of his more direct liege. Parolles' words throughout the whole play serve to protect himself, and this scene contains nothing different. Not only does Parolles believe Bertram to be his friend, but also in their respective roles in French society, the landed and titled Bertram is superior to Parolles, who of course is apparently the parasitical follower from the *dramatis personae*. If Parolles wishes to maintain his place in Bertram's favor and to be welcome at French court, then logic dictates that Parolles would unquestioningly pay attention to Bertram's desires and encourage his friend to break the king's rules because Parolles wants his friend and superior Bertram to know that Parolles is loyal and supports him. Parolles' words are rule-breaking, but they are friendship-maintaining, and they are justifiable, hardly villainous, in context.

Further, Parolles goes beyond just encouraging youthful stubbornness to help his friend build his reputation. Once he has supported Bertram in his resolve to go to war, then Parolles instructs Bertram to

[u]se a more spacious ceremony to the noble lords; you have restrain'd yourself within the list of too cold an adieu. Be more expressive to them, for they wear themselves in the cap of the time, there do muster true gait; eat, speak, and move under the influence of the most receiv'd star, and though the devil lead the measure, such are to be follow'd. After them, and take a more dilated farewell. (II.i.50-57)

Parolles looks out for the reputation of not only Bertram as count but also Bertram as his friend. He knows that Bertram needs to appear to be good and appreciative of the work of others to remain a count in favor, even if Bertram seems to have no real concern for his own reputation, and so in this case Parolles uses his words not for his own good but rather for the good of his friend. What may seem like empty, meaningless advice is necessary for Parolles to give both to help Bertram police his own behavior as well as prove Parolles' loyalty and devotion to his friend. If Parolles can use his words to prove himself useful and valuable to his friend and superior Bertram, he will go far in reaching his goal of self-preservation and maintenance. True, one could argue that Parolles gives Bertram poor advice in suggesting he play courtly games of meaningless gestures, silly though they are, but even such an argument does not cast Parolles in a negative light. Again, Parolles' words are innocuous, even less blameless than they were in his bawdy conversation with besotted Helena, and still not at all villainous.

During his next appearance, Parolles is discussing with old Lord Lafew the king's miraculous recovery of health. At this point, Parolles speaks nothing inappropriately; he merely agrees with Lafew how wonderful the king's recovery truly is. Nothing of Parolles' speech here is worthy of contempt or judgment. The only oath he speaks at this point, "*Mort du vinaigre!*" (II.iii.44, literally "death of the vinegar"), is comical in its meaning, not cruel. Whereas oaths are

usually profanity or inappropriate thoughts, Parolles' words seem more like those of a child who speaks meaningless words to show his feelings rather than any actually offensive or inappropriate language. This oath expresses his surprise at finding at court Helena, the lady also of low socioeconomic status who participated with him in earlier lewd discussion of her virginity. Such surprise is certainly reasonable, logically unaware as he is of the role she has played in restoring the king's health.

Parolles' crime later in this scene seems to be not the content of what he says but that he has ceased to unquestioningly agree with Lafew. In their discussion of the king's betrothal of Helena to Bertram, Parolles reasonably takes the side of his friend once again, just as he did with Bertram's desires to go to war earlier in the play. Parolles knows Bertram's feelings on the subject after listening to Bertram's multiple (and senselessly cruel) rejections of Helena earlier in this scene, so the fact that Parolles would support his friend's position in not wanting this marriage is reasonable, certainly not anything villainous or evil. Parolles does call Lafew "old" (II.iii.196ff), but even though he uses the adjective while restraining himself from physically quarreling with Lafew over the suitability of the marriage, such a comment can hardly be thought evil or villainous. Plus, Lafew is old as even the *dramatis personae* describes; Parolles is merely stating facts, not being villainous in any way

Even Parolles' subsequent vows to fight Lafew are understandable. Parolles is obviously hot-headed and takes offense more easily than he should, but his reaction is understandable, as Parolles himself later begs Lafew to understand. Indeed, Parolles is not the only one to be unreasonable. Lafew responds to Parolles' apology by further dressing Parolles down, utterly denying Parolles any opportunity to save face through use of his words in self-defense and protection. In his remarks to Parolles, Lafew identifies some of Parolles' alleged sins: dressing

in a way that offends Lafew and being “saucy” (II.iii.249-64). This instance provides another example of the baseless accusations this play’s other characters level against Parolles. Lafew cannot explicitly or objectively name any actual crime here or after, and the audience has yet to see Parolles commit any true wrongdoing.

Perhaps a fault that could belong to Parolles, if one must exist, could be his ostentatious style of dress, though how such a sin is villainous finds no sufficient explanation within the play or beyond in the scholarship. However inappropriate Parolles’ garb, his clothing cannot be so offensive as to merit Lafew’s outrage. Other scholars have noticed as well that one of Parolles’ significant flaws appears to be his style of dress. Huston makes several comments about this so-called sin, including that the “fashion-minded courtier” is “a curious mixture of the corrupt and the commendable” (431). Huston also writes that “[s]o long as he depends for his impressiveness upon a false art that covers rotten materials with a surface coating of bright color, Parolles is, beneath the fashionable clothes and rhetoric, a general offense” (437). Another Huston observation is that “[i]t is wrong, for example, for Parolles to assume the dress of a courtier-soldier” (437). Rothman also points out that “Parolles should be dressed to fit the description of a ‘snipt-taffeta fellow’, a ‘jackanapes with scarfs . . . in *villainous* saffron” (191, emphasis mine). Taking another equally insulting perspective, Doyle suggests that Parolles’ deception comes by “disguising himself physically in ‘the scarfs and the bannerets’ [ii.iii.201] of costly apparel” (207-08). Scholars interpret Parolles’ style of dress to be differently offensive, but all seem to agree that his dress is offensive.

Perhaps in their futile attempts to locate irrefutable evidence of Parolles’ alleged crimes, these scholars and others may refer to Elizabethan sumptuary laws to illustrate how Parolles’ dress may have been illegal; however, as McDonald acknowledges, “Tudor authorities

occasionally sought to enforce the codes regulating dress, known as sumptuary laws, that had been on the books for decades but were *only intermittently observed*' (233, emphasis mine). Whether Parolles actually wore illegal clothing, this would have been neither a rare crime nor one with consistent punishment. Therefore, the apparent offense present in his dress only seems to meld together with Parolles' other perceived offenses to make Parolles the character everyone loves to hate despite his having committed no real sin of his own.

Richard bears some insight in his useful suggestion that Lafew in this scene is not even upset with Parolles directly but rather is "vexed at the man for the faults of the master" (151). If blame were necessary to ascribe to someone, a man who plans to go to war to avoid an unwanted wife seems at least as equally guilty as the friend who wishes to defend that man, if not more so for overreacting and rebelling as Bertram does. As Richard logically argues, no reason is present to find Parolles at fault here.

Parolles' conversation with Bertram upon his return to the stage mirrors their earlier interaction. Just as Bertram earlier wanted nothing more than for Parolles to approve and justify his own desire to go to war, so now, too, does Bertram want an unquestioning supporter instead of a thoughtful advisor with any wisdom of his own regarding Bertram's unwanted marriage. Parolles knows the always-pouting Bertram does not want advice or comfort. Bertram wants someone to tell him that he is correct to do as he pleases, and Parolles, as a good friend and subject and, more importantly, one interested in self-preservation and maintenance, supplies this service. Perhaps the more honorable thing to do would be to follow Lafew's example and lecture Bertram on doing what is right and noble, but to do so could jeopardize Parolles' friendship with Bertram as well as potentially endanger his favor with others at court, now shakier thanks to his disagreement with Lafew just before this point in the play.

Parolles may not be a perfect person, but he is eminently human, looking out for his own best interests, hardly a villainous behavior. Parolles constantly uses his words in acts of self-protection. To berate Bertram for his childish and cruel temper tantrum would be the right thing to do for someone secure in his position, like Lafew, but not for Parolles. If Bertram can be as upset as he is with the king, the man in whose hands Bertram's fate rests as does an entire country subject to its king, how much more would he likely overreact if someone of lower socioeconomic status were to attempt to bring him to task? If he wishes to remain Bertram's friend or at least in Bertram's good graces, Parolles has no choice but to affirm whatever Bertram says.

Parolles continues to take care of himself by doing Bertram's bidding. Before he can even complete this task, however, Parolles must cross word-swords with the clown Lavatch. In this conversation, Parolles ends up being rather successful:

PAROLLES. Go to, thou art a witty fool, I have found thee.

CLOWN. Did you find me in yourself, sir, or were you taught to find me? The search, sir, was profitable, and much fool may you find in you, even to the world's pleasure and the increase of laughter.

PAROLLES. A good knave, i' faith, and well fed. (II.iv.32-38)

Most of Shakespeare's characters who cross paths with one of his fools end up looking much more foolish in contrast to the unexpectedly wise fools who confuse and frustrate the allegedly-not-foolish characters. In this encounter, Lavatch and Parolles seem to have a mutual understanding, perhaps even a respect, that stops Lavatch from making any of the frustrating commentary he inflicts on other characters like the countess in this play. Considering in Shakespeare's plays that other characters often lose verbal battles to the fools who engage them in witty badinage, Parolles' not-defeat, more like a draw, in this exchange is commendable, certainly not villainous.

Later, when Parolles speaks with Helena to dismiss her to the Countess Rossillion at Bertram's request after his verbal duel with Lavatch, he is little more than Bertram's mouthpiece speaking Bertram's will. If Parolles were to say anything inappropriate or villainous, which he does not, such words would still not be entirely (if at all) the fault of Parolles himself when he is little more than messenger in this instance. Throughout the first two acts of *All's Well That Ends Well*, it seems that even in questionable situations that make others of the play's characters appear to be foolish or even villainous, Parolles is neither of these adjectives.

In Act III when the countess and Helena bemoan Bertram's behavior, Parolles' character suffers once again an unjust attack based solely on his friendship with and alleged influence on the count. The countess and a lord in conversation agree that Parolles is "[a] very tainted fellow, and full of wickedness. / My son corrupts a well-derived nature / With his inducement" (III.ii.87-89). Interestingly, the countess here blames "tainted, wicked, and corrupting" Parolles for her own son Bertram's egregiously poor behavior. Richard seconds the countess' contention, writing that "Parolles has clearly corrupted Bertram" (151), an often-appearing theme in Parolles scholarship. She neglects to remember at this point that of the two men, her son has the upper hand in class and power, therefore a greater responsibility. Even if Parolles deserved such adjectives as the countess assigns him (which still are yet unsupported), Bertram should be perfectly capable of making his own decisions for which he should be held responsible. Increasingly, it seems that Parolles' alleged sins only come from everyone else's ill views of him.

It is in this scene perhaps that Parolles' nature as innocent, involuntary scapegoat begins to make itself most indisputably known. As Doyle points out,

This "doubling" of the scapegoat with a social superior is reiterated in *All's Well That Ends Well* where the unwilling manservant Parolles is accused of poisoning the mind of

another “foolish idle boy”, (IV.iii.199) the willingly transgressive Bertram, Count of Rousillon. The inferior is scapegoated for the superior’s injustices. (200)

Doyle’s use of the scapegoat as literary device helps to illustrate the injustice of the play’s characters’ tendency to find Parolles guilty of Bertram’s sins. If Parolles is to truly be the villainous character almost everyone believes him to be, he must commit a crime of his own to illustrate evil, wicked behavior, yet so far, the only sins for which anyone desires to hold Parolles accountable belong not to Parolles himself but rather to Bertram. Doyle’s work not only usefully provides the scapegoat literary device as a way to understand the play’s own misunderstandings and audience’s subsequent misunderstandings of Parolles’ behavior, but the author also finds another interesting parallel in that “the dramatic life of the scapegoat is a *parole* in the Saussurean sense” (207). Without delving into the larger implications present in Doyle’s argument, the fact that Doyle connects the scapegoat’s experience to the French word that serves as basis for Parolles’ name further strengthens the connection between the scapegoated character and his name.

Further frustrating about the unmerited cruelty present in Bertram’s mother’s assessment of her son’s friend and its timing. Countess Rossillion, like other characters in the play, disparages Parolles at a time when he both seems undeserving of such judgment as the wrongful target and also is unable to defend himself. Parolles uses his words for self-preservation and defense, but he may not do so when he is not present to speak. Also guilty of attacking the defenseless Parolles in a situation that permits him no real recourse, in the first appearance of the Italian ladies, they speak of the French forces that accompany the Florentine army, including Bertram and Parolles:

WIDOW. I have told my neighbor how you have been solicited by a gentleman
[Bertram’s] companion.

MARIANA. I know that knave, hang him! One Parolles, a filthy officer he is in those suggestions for the young earl. Beware of them, Diana; their promises, enticements, oaths, tokens, and all these engines of lust, are not the things they go under. (III.v.14-20)

Though once more characters on stage refer to behavior, in this case “filthy” behavior, the audience lacks any direct proof of such behavior. They haven’t seen the behavior these ladies mention, just as they haven’t seen any bad behavior at all. The only proof the audience can have of the inappropriate behavior these ladies reference is what they say, and the audience has no reason to trust the word of these ladies over the word of Parolles.

Audiences who have yet to see any inappropriate behavior on the part of Parolles must evaluate with some skepticism any claims the Italian ladies make regarding Parolles’ behavior. It would be ignorant to forget Parolles’ lewd conversation with Helena; certainly possible is that what these ladies say could bear some degree of truth. It is possible that Parolles did himself make untoward advances towards these Italian women and encouraged others to do the same, but it is worth noting that Parolles is but one of the men of whom Mariana speaks, and no irrefutable evidence exists in the play to demonstrate Parolles’ inappropriate behavior, in contrast to the direct proof the audience does receive later regarding Bertram’s own misbehavior.

Immediately following her identification of Parolles, tellingly, Mariana switches pronouns from the singular “he” to the plural “their” and uses that word throughout the rest of her warnings. If Parolles were remarkably worse than any of these other men attempting to take advantage of these women, these ladies would be able to explicitly identify Parolles’ evildoings. They do not. As well, worth noting is that earlier in the play the French king says,

Those girls of Italy, take heed of them.
They say our French lack language to deny
If they demand. Beware of being captives
Before you serve. (II.i.19-22)

If any Frenchman, Parolles included, is guilty of the sin of assuming the Italian women to be willing participants in illicit rendezvous, such an assumption originates with the highest earthly authority Parolles serves. To single out Parolles for this attitude is unfair as well as baseless. Also worth noting is that the only evidence that Parolles has behaved inappropriately are the words of these women, one of whom later willingly engages in the bed-trick, so the source of these allegations requires the audience to evaluate all the information they have in determining Parolles' behavior to be inappropriate and to remember that Parolles, unlike others, uses no false words to set traps. His actions, if somehow not totally blameless, are at worst no more worthy of condemnation than any other of the play's characters.

Parolles' reputation continues to suffer attacks, continuously and especially when he is not present to mount any sort of defense through the use of words that is necessary to him for his self-preservation and protection. Later in Act III when she meets the Italian women, Diana tells Helena that Parolles (who is absent from the stage at this point and therefore unable to defend himself or tell his own side) speaks poorly of Bertram's wife, not knowing to whom she speaks. This comment probably bears a reasonable degree of truth, since the audience has earlier witnessed Parolles' attempt to further ingratiate himself with Bertram by agreeing about the unfairness of the undesired nuptials. Nevertheless, without having witnessed such comment in this case, the audience has no substantial idea of the nature, content, or veracity of these alleged words. Diana's obvious bias against Parolles further leads her to tell Helena about

[y]ond [...] same
 knave that leads [Bertram] to these places. Were I his lady,
 I would poison that vile rascal[,]

...
 That jack-an-apes with scarfs. (III.v.82-86)

Diana apparently feels that Parolles has so offended her that she vows were she married to him, she would kill him. Diana and Parolles have yet to interact directly in front of the audience, so whatever could bring about such vitriol is not apparent at this point and never surfaces. Because the audience has yet to witness any interaction between these two characters that could explain either Diana's vitriol toward the defenseless Parolles, or, better for those who see Parolles as villain, provide irrefutable proof of Parolles' sins, audiences can and should question the veracity of Diana's claims.

Most scholars who label Parolles a villain concur that his crowning failure begins with Parolles' falling into the soldiers' trap. At this point Parolles makes the empty vow regarding the drum: "It is to be recover'd. But that the merit of service is seldom attributed to the true and exact performer, I would have that drum or another, or *hic jacet*" (III.vi.60-63). Parolles is aware of the futility of such a vow, as are the other men in this scene. Such a promise can only result in failure: Parolles will not be able to recover the drum, as everyone knows. He will either have to find another drum and lie, or make himself look valiantly wounded to prove his attempt, another sort of lie.

Further devastating regarding Parolles' promise is the drum's status as symbol of honor. Morris points out that "historically [drums] would have been a symbol and rallying point as we now rally round a flag and national anthem. When the French drum is taken, it's far more than a drum." Parolles' plan to reclaim the drum is, in other words, Parolles' plan to regain the honor of the drum for his side and, more importantly for himself. In a war that seems more a game for men than a battle over any real issue, with men who choose fighting in this war as a chance to avoid the wives they did not want in the first place, honor seems long gone; therefore, what

would be an impossible task under normal circumstances becomes even more farfetched in this situation.

In fact, scholars who cite Parolles' empty promise as the beginning of his failure have yet to describe any possible alternative for Parolles in this situation. What else can he do but vow to fix this problem presently facing the Florentine army? To remain silent would make him look weak and ineffective, unthinkable for a soldier even in this apparently meaningless war. If Parolles sees his friendship with Bertram once again at stake, as Pearce sensibly suggests in these circumstances, it makes sense that "Parolles pretends to undertake a hazardous quest to win honor and deserve Bertram's love (hazarding his life and honor to recover a drum). Parolles' ambition is only to seem to deserve well" (80). The men testing Parolles believe the trial they plan for him is still to come, but by even putting him into this situation, they have already begun an impossible test for Parolles to pass successfully. To refuse to go after the drum would condemn Parolles just as much as his vow does.

Parolles' most enigmatic line occurs when he leaves this scene: "I love not many words" (Shakespeare III.v.84), important both for its own meaning and for the response it inspires. Especially from Parolles, a character whose name literally means "words," this is a puzzling sentiment. The ambiguity in this line is a prime example of a feature of the English language: emphasizing different words in the same phrase or sentence changes the meaning entirely. Is Parolles saying that he does not love as many words as other people may? Is he saying he does not love but only likes words? Does "not many" mean that he loves only a few words? Or should the emphasis be on "words" to mean a preference for actions instead? Rather than attempt a conclusive definition for this ambiguous statement, the important task is to note this example of Parolles' skill with words, borne out of their role as his only and best mode of

protection. His comment causes one quick-witted lord to respond, “No more than a fish loves water” (III.v.85), but if this lord means to insult Parolles, the speaker has failed. Fish live in water, necessarily so. In other words, just as a fish loves that which is part of its life-sustaining environment, of course so, too, does Parolles value words as part of his own life-sustaining environment. It may even be that Parolles says this line anticipating the lord’s response, which gives him the justification that proves language is Parolles’ skill and protection. Not only does this line demonstrate the value of words for Parolles, even if this line lacks a straightforward and indisputable meaning, but it also belies the fact that Parolles’ words will save his life later in the play.

Parolles’ alleged treachery continues throughout his capture. Once again, even before Parolles enters the scene, other characters are denigrating him with no hard evidence as usual. Bemoaning his fate and trying to decide the best way to save face, honor, and his life, of course Parolles stumbles literally and figuratively into the trap his so-called friend Bertram has permitted other soldiers to set for him. As Parolles’ captors spy on his self-preserving bumbling, they note that Parolles says that he finds his “tongue is too foolhardy, but [his] heart hath the fear of Mars before it, and of his creatures, not daring the reports of [his] tongue” (IV.i.28-31), to which one of his captors says that this is “the first truth that e’er [Parolles’] own tongue was guilty of” (IV.i.32-33). If this captor spoke truly, that Parolles has never spoken truth before this line, the audience should be able to recall at least one other of Parolles’ lies. As this close reading has so far demonstrated, they will not be able to, because Parolles has yet to lie or even utter anything approaching falsehood. In fact, the “foolhardy” nature of his tongue that Parolles references may preview Parolles’ biggest flaw yet, not as a liar but rather as someone who dares to utter unpopular truth.

In this scene Parolles struggles not because of the physical bindings but because of the verbal bindings that his captors use. He only has one person with whom he can verbally spar (his preferred mode of self-preservation and protection), and he allows himself to be so vulnerable that he reveals the true import of words for him: “I shall lose my life for want of language” (IV.i.70). At this moment Parolles’ weakness is apparent to his captors, thus enabling them to see the best way to further ensnare Parolles in their trap and to unnecessarily humiliate the soldier who at least partially was attempting to preserve the honor of this ridiculous army in his quest for the stolen drum. Like Parolles says and will demonstrate, he needs language to survive.

To deny Parolles language is the only sure way to defeat him, knowledge the captors use.

To protect himself, Parolles says, even

all the secrets of our camp I’ll show,
 Their force, their purpose; nay, I’ll speak that
 Which you will wonder at.

...

If I do not, damn me. (IV.i.84-87).

If “damn me” means “kill me” or something equivalent, then the audience can see that Parolles’ focus is not necessarily on revealing the secrets the captors want to hear to finally lend some credibility to the unfair mischaracterization everyone thrusts upon Parolles. Instead, this comment prefacing the rest of the confessions indicates that everything he says from this point forward comes from the mouth of one who fears for his life. Just as a coerced confession is invalid in legal proceedings today, so, too, should we remember that the words Parolles says during his capture are the words of a man who seeks to use language as self-preservation and protection. He will say whatever necessary, regardless of anything, to save his life. Parolles seems to be guilty in this case of the betrayal of his friend and fellow soldiers, and indeed he

appears to accurately divulge every bit of information he has, but does he have an alternative in this situation? Words are all Parolles has and the best of what he has, so of course he will plead for the chance to use those words and save himself. Perhaps he could lie in this confession and avoid betrayal, but the consequences that could follow such lies would be mere speculation, and further, Parolles has not lied prior to this point, so expecting him to lie now is not necessarily reasonable or logical.

Parolles' alleged villainy peaks during his coerced confession, according to characters within the play and the play's scholarly critics. Because he truthfully admits everything he knows about the Florentine army, Parolles offends Bertram and the other lords and loses their respect. The wrong Parolles commits at this point comes not from wicked lies but rather from Parolles' ability to use language in such a way that reveals to characters, especially Bertram, what their moral character looks like in contrast to how each character idealizes himself. Interestingly, Calderwood suggests that Parolles' villainy stems from his desperate lies in this scene (75) just as Doyle takes for granted that Parolles is deceptive throughout the whole play (207), but both scholars fail to explicitly name any of these lies. Though some scholars point to this scene as evidence of his lies, Parolles not only tells everything but also tells everything so truthfully that his captors feel compelled to comment on his accuracy. Therefore, Parolles cannot be a villain due to a counterfeit nature as Bertram claims (IV.iii.99). Instead, for Bertram, Parolles' so-called villainy comes from telling the truth, despicable as it is. As well, audiences know that the lords think lowly of Parolles from the very beginning because they have earlier called him a liar. This should always be in the mind of audiences, reminding them of the bias of the lords present in their views of Parolles.

While the lords' poor opinion of Parolles is not a surprise, Parolles and Bertram have appeared before this point to be friends, at least as well as people of different socioeconomic status in the play's setting can be. Therefore, Bertram's unwarranted reaction to Parolles appears to stem not from outrage at lies but rather from an offended reaction to Parolles' honesty. At this moment, Parolles lifts any remaining veil off Bertram's character to reveal within the play and beyond who this count truly is:

“Dian, the Count's a fool, and full of gold— . . .
 “When he swears oaths, bid him drop gold, and take it;
 After he scores, he never pays the score.
 Half won is match well made; match, and well make it;
 He ne'er pays after-debts, take it before,
 And say a soldier, Dian, told thee this:
 Men are to mell with, boys are not to kiss;
 For count of this, the Count's a fool, I know it,
 Who pays before, but not when he does owe it.” (IV.iii.211-230)

Reading the letter he planned to send to Diana, the woman Bertram plans to bed, Parolles lies not once. He notes that Bertram is a fool, full of gold, who believes that he can dangle his money to entice people without needing to settle his debts. Further, Parolles recognizes the childish character Bertram fails to see in himself, calling his friend a boy, not a brave soldier. Of course, Bertram does not like this description, much less so because it happens in front of the soldiers with whom Bertram believed he would watch Parolles' humiliation unfold, not his own.

Bertram appears to want sympathy from the other lords. He wants someone else to notice Parolles' alleged treachery; unfortunately for Bertram, Parolles has revealed to everyone Bertram's true moral character, and the lords do not respond as Bertram wishes they would. Bertram is frustrated by Parolles' revelation, but the other lords seem almost impressed at Parolles' audacity. The man whom they believed to be a liar turns out to be perhaps the most truthful character in this scene, and the lords seem to agree with Parolles' commentary, lessening

Parolles' poor reputation in their minds if not eliminating it all together. The real reason Bertram thinks Parolles is a villain (the reason scholars universally seem to ignore) is that Parolles dares not to lie but, rather, to tell the truths he knows. He speaks the truth. He uses his words, recognizing in this case that revealing the truth is what he needs to do to enable himself the chance to speak long enough to save his neck. It is this honesty that seems to be what earns him his bad reputation, not the lies or wickedness of which others in the play and beyond baselessly accuse this character.

Had this situation actually been one of a captive prisoner confessing all, Parolles' honesty could appear to be treachery in his traitorous tell-all. After all, he reveals details that would greatly benefit an opposing army. Parolles knows he is the braggart soldier Shakespeare uses in this character's creation; his willingness to reveal all he knows seems to be in direct contrast to what a soldier should do. Divulging this privileged information is entirely inappropriate for a soldier, and so any criticism of Parolles as braggart soldier, *miles gloriosus*, does find some justification, though such evidence of his flaws does not constitute the lies and wickedness he has failed to display. Furthermore, such confession is entirely logical from a man who wants nothing more than to save his life and knows the only way he can do so is through language, a perfect description of Parolles.

In fact, in contrast to Richard who suggests that "Parolles' fatal aspect is his inability to recognize or define himself in his language" (152), Parolles knows exactly who and what he is, just as the entry on Parolles in the *Salem Press Encyclopedia of Literature* states: he "has no illusions about his own character" ("All's Well That Ends Well: Analysis of Major Characters"). Doyle affirms this idea, writing that Parolles revels in the confidence he possesses as "the thing that I am" (216). An example of Parolles' self-awareness occurs when he says, "If ye pinch me

like a pasty, I can say no more” (IV.iii.123). Though the nobler behavior in such circumstances probably would be to keep one’s mouth shut and deny the captors the information they seek, though other characters call him such, Parolles never claims to be noble.⁴

Later, Parolles acknowledges the inevitability of his confession: “Who cannot be crush’d with a plot?” (IV.iii.325). Despite calling him a villain, even Richard acknowledges the truth of Parolles’ statement here, noting that “all is rigged against” Parolles (153). As his behavior demonstrates, Parolles is a man who only wants to live and utilizes language as his best chance to do so. Scholars who interpret Parolles as villain, especially in this scene, do so at the significant danger of reading shallowly and forgetting Parolles’ status as character, not merely the stock character from which Shakespeare drew or a typecast fool or clown. Parolles contains a basic personhood and very human desires, and a basic character analysis of any merit will not neglect these details in interpreting Parolles.

Back in France and shamed, looking markedly bedraggled, Parolles next appears in an interaction with Lafew. In this scene, when Lafew finally recognizes Parolles, he seems to have totally forgiven Parolles for the so-called crimes of which he accused Parolles earlier. Lafew says, “Cox my passion! give me your hand. . . inquire further after me. I had talk of you last night; though you are a fool and a knave, you shall eat” (V.ii.40-54). It appears that Parolles’ main sin (toward Lafew at least) lay less in what he said or how he acted but, rather, how he looked.

Now that Parolles looks humble and worn, rather than flashy or ostentatious, Lafew finds no fault with this character, even though Parolles never apologizes for any other offense Lafew

⁴ One lord calls Parolles “noble” at II.i.46; though in jest, later Bertram and another lord call Parolles noble at IV.iii.314-16. Parolles himself refuses all such complimentary titles for himself, from “monarch” earlier to “noble” here.

earlier described. Once Parolles' demeanor and appearance has changed such that Lafew does not recognize the man, he appears willing to not only forgive Parolles but even pities the man. All it takes for Parolles to return to Lafew's good favor is a pitiable aspect. Therefore, Parolles could never have been such an offending and lying villain earlier in the play if Lafew now uses no stronger oath than "knave" or "fool" even though nothing else has changed about Parolles besides his clothing, save, perhaps, a defeated mien coming from his newly likely friendless state. A need to speak the truth even if someone else would prefer it stay secret and a creative style of dress appear to be Parolles' chief sins, and as he has now fallen far thanks to the trap his so-called friend set for him, his changed dress is all that is necessary to earn Lafew's forgiveness in light of Parolles' newly lowered social status and appearance.

In the final scene, the king demands Parolles reveal his knowledge of Bertram's behavior, an ironic request considering both the reception of such truth-telling earlier in the play and even more so everyone's apparent perception of Parolles as wicked, evil liar. In this scene he equivocates often, saying one thing and then contradicting himself the very next line. Such questionable use of language shows that honest Parolles now is aware that the words he uses to protect himself are what others use as ammunition against him. Nevertheless, words are all Parolles can use in this situation to protect and preserve himself, necessary for clarification in a confusing situation thanks to Bertram's lies.

Though before the play's characters have spoken insultingly of Parolles, they now need his word, the word of an accused liar, to reveal the truth. Worth pointing out is that if Parolles earlier had been able to use his words to the fullest, in getting his letter to the intended recipient, then at least one character in this scene would have even greater need to reevaluate her misconceptions. Diana, the Italian woman who engaged Bertram in Helena's bed-trick, still

speaks of Parolles in degrading terms: she is “loath . . . to produce / So bad an instrument” (V.iii.201-02). The audience knows she would have a much different perspective of Parolles had she received Parolles’ letter containing the warning of Bertram’s (lack of) moral character. Parolles only appears to be a liar in this play because other characters in the play want him to be a liar, not because he fails to tell or even ever twists the truth. Bertram’s actions have brought the rest of the characters to a point where they need Parolles.

To paraphrase what Richard pointed out, though perhaps “from the mouth of a fool,” Parolles “is telling the truth” (157). Parolles may be somewhat less than honorable, and he cannot be a noble soldier any longer after his capture and loquacious confession; regardless, Parolles is honest, and his word is the necessary piece to definitively trap Bertram and reveal the play’s true villain. Parolles wants to keep his friendship with Bertram (probably because Bertram’s favor could maybe help restore Parolles’ honor, military standing, or social favor), so he says that he does not know the specifics of Bertram’s interactions with Diana, even though he does. Once again, Parolles is a man who wishes to save himself, and in this case, perhaps salvage what he believed to be a friendship. Yet when his king commands him to speak the truth, he reveals the truth of Bertram’s Italian rendezvous because that is what a loyal subject and honest person does. Parolles may not have clear loyalties to any person (save, perhaps, his king), but he has obvious and reasonable loyalty to his own life, evident through his use of language as self-preservation.

By the end of the play, Bertram and Parolles’ friendship seems severely weakened, if their friendship exists at all anymore. Despite all the evidence to the contrary, scholars continue to focus on Parolles as bad influence on Bertram, instead of the more accurate and opposite reality. Bradbrook notes that “Bertram’s ultimate rejection of Parolles” is “well deserved” (301,

fn 3). Huston later celebrates that “Bertram chooses to expunge from his character all traces of that ‘stain of soldier’ which he derived from the companionship of Parolles” (483). Around the same time, Babula outright blames Parolles for Bertram’s flaws, noting that Bertram’s “sexuality is misdirected—the fault, as several characters in the play agree, of Parolles” (96). Almost forty years after Huston, Langis yet refers to “blustering Parolles, Bertram’s foppish friend” (116) and calls Parolles a “vain, dishonorable surrogate” (134). Even more recently, Dessen still blames Parolles as “the instigator of Bertram’s caddish behavior” (37). Though Bertram commits multiple errors of judgment and behavior throughout the play, Parolles is the character on whom everyone places blame, despite significant evidence to the contrary of the effect Parolles has on Bertram. All these scholars take for granted the assumption that nobility is automatically superior to members of the lower class. In doing so, they ignore the truth contained within the play: it is not Parolles who is wicked, evil, or full of lies – it is Bertram, and in fact, Parolles’ influence, if he has one at all, is neutral, certainly not negative.

Calling Parolles a braggart and a coward are not necessarily incorrect, which is good news for scholars like Doyle who do so (183), but these titles are overly reductive. Anyone who views Parolles as worse, a liar or a villain, fails to understand Parolles as a character and see his inherent humanity. Notably, Parolles’ only lines which could bear some degree of dishonesty are only the words he uses to save his friendship. Even then, such lies are more of omission than of dishonesty: Parolles alleges at first that he does not know the exact nature of Bertram’s encounter with Diana (V.iii.238-66). As Shapiro pointed out, Parolles is “the fool without hypocrisy or deceit” (525); even the so-called lies he does tell do not last long because he reveals the truth almost immediately after he attempts to help Bertram. As to Parolles’ alleged villainy, none of his behavior appropriately fits the *OED* criteria for villain. He is no more base-minded

than any other character in the play. He does not lack moral principles, especially in comparison with Bertram; he is neither corrupt nor evil, and if scoundrel he is, such behavior is only in response to the trap set for him and logical, considering the circumstances. He commits no base or criminal actions or crimes. Though other characters speak of him disgracefully, nothing he does during the play truly merits such derision.

Simply, Parolles is a believably human character. He is highborn enough to have some military and class clout, yet lowborn enough that he must still submit to his betters, regretfully including corrupt Bertram. He has very human desires to have friends and have others think well of him, but his primary focus, logically so, is to save his own skin. Parolles uses the words that are his namesake to protect himself. Parolles' honest personality irritates other characters, especially any character unable to view himself or herself accurately. Unlike them, fool though he might be, Parolles unapologetically knows and accepts who he is regardless of what anyone else thinks. He is not a liar, nor is he wicked or evil; he is no villain. He needs no apology; he only needs audiences to give him the fair chance that his fellow characters deny him to prove his honesty and strong moral character, regardless of social status or style of dress.

Unfortunately for Parolles' character, however, it seems as though the stereotyping and typecasting present in Hollywood films today will continue to define Parolles in the play. The overwhelming negative attitude of Parolles' fellow characters within the play as well as the staggering proportion of scholarly critics who equally find Parolles guilty of a myriad of offenses seems to predict that characters taking on this role will have little else in the way of interpretation besides the substantial negative portrayals and conceptions. One can only hope that actors who do take on this role in the future will study Shakespeare's original text closely to understand that the accusations of fellow characters and scholars are baseless and unfair.

Playing Parolles as he is in Shakespeare's words will require actors to note the importance of words to this character, a man ultimately innocent of all alleged crimes who only wishes to save and protect himself.

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