FASHIONING THE GOTHIC: INTERPRETING THE PROTO-GOTHIC MODE IN THOMAS LODGE'S *A MARGARITE OF AMERICA*

by

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**Fashioning the Gothic: Interpreting the Proto-Gothic Mode in Thomas Lodge's *A Margarite of America***

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This thesis contributes to the rising field of Renaissance-Gothic studies, in which scholars have been examining a selection of the early modern period’s literature and theatre from the perspective of Gothic studies. These scholars make links between conventions recognized as characteristic within the Gothic genre, and certain narrative devices, tropes, settings, and character types present in many Renaissance texts. While most of the existing studies focus on drama, a small amount of research exists on other literary genres. My research is significant within this field of study because it will further explore the connections between early modern revenge tragedy and Gothic literature by branching out from drama to prose fiction. This thesis focusses on the proto-Gothic characteristics of Thomas Lodge’s 1596 romance, *A Margarite of America*; I argue that Lodge’s text ought to be included as part of a Gothic trajectory in literature because it exhibits many characteristics that have been identified in early modern texts that align with the development of the Gothic mode. For example, the duplicitous and tyrannical antagonist, the naive and vulnerable maiden-protagonist, the narrative’s thinly veiled critique of its author’s contemporary culture, an emphasis on theatrical or self-conscious personae, and other thematic and generic elements share affinities with eighteenth-century Gothic literature and with those early modern texts that have already been established as proto-Gothic. Lodge’s perversion of the romance genre, his villain’s relentless wickedness and his heroine’s tragic, unquestioning trust (to name three key points of my analysis), position *A Margarite* as Lodge’s ambivalent response to his cultural moment and align the text with Gothic motifs, themes, and subtexts. I compare Lodge’s text to Matthew Lewis’s Gothic novel, *The Monk* (1796) through in-depth analyses of characters, themes, and motifs, which contribute to identifying the proto-Gothic mode in Lodge’s narrative. Finally, Stephen Greenblatt’s concept of “self-fashioning” is
integral to this thesis because it is relevant to scholars’ interpretations of early modern revenge tragedy, essential to the courtly persona that Lodge criticizes, and pertinent to the eighteenth-century Gothic villain’s carefully constructed persona.
LAY SUMMARY

The Gothic genre officially began over 250 years ago with Horace Walpole’s novel, *The Castle of Otranto*. Our cultural fixation on dark narratives featuring horrific displays of violence, revenge, and tragedy has ensured that Gothic narratives, in many varieties, remain popular forms of entertainment. Literature scholars acknowledge that the Gothic is not just a specific genre; rather, it is a particular way of interpreting literature, drama, and other forms of narrative. Because Gothic entertainment remains such a prevalent influence on popular culture, research into the roots of Gothic literature is an active field of study. This thesis links three genres: early modern revenge tragedy, early modern prose romance, and eighteenth-century Gothic literature in order to demonstrate that the Renaissance period’s literature played a part in the Gothic genre’s development.
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**Introduction:**

**An Early Modern Gothic Sensibility**

A cruel prince is betrothed to an innocent princess. He adopts the persona of an honourable and loyal courtier, and she blindly falls in love with him. He hides his ill intentions from the princess and her court while enacting his tragic plots of destruction for the sole purpose of satisfying his hedonistic whims. As his desire for power grows his behaviour escalates until he begins losing control of his facade. His atrocious behaviour spirals without restraint; he tortures his parents and usurps the throne. To celebrate his forcibly acquired power he has an elaborate coronation, during which he falls under the spell of a magic box that sends him into a fit of destructive rage. He has murdered everyone around him, including his own wife and child, when his scorned lover enters and runs to him, despite the surrounding carnage. He drives a sword through her body yet she pursues him until she falls dead of blood loss. This villain, Arsadachus, is pacified with a spell cast by the same magician who enchanted the box; this magician’s revenge costs him the one pure and good thing left in his life—the virtuous princess Margarita.

This description may appear to be derived from an eighteenth-century Gothic romance, in which love, betrayal, and tragedy drive the plot, and which devotes its moral message to anxieties regarding abuses of patriarchal and monarchical power while simultaneously warning its readers against moral, ethical and social transgressions. However, the above summary actually presents in brief the plot of Thomas Lodge’s 1596 prose romance, *A Margarite of America*. To say that an early modern tale incorporating violence, abuse of power, duplicity, deceit, and magic sounds like a Gothic story is an observation that is becoming more common;
however, it is only recently that the topic of an early modern proto-Gothic has been explored in depth.

Following the lead of studies on proto-Gothic Jacobean drama, this thesis examines Lodge’s *A Margarite of America* in light of the relationship between Gothic conventions and select Renaissance texts which has emerged in recent criticism. The Renaissance scholars who have been increasingly interested in examining much of the period’s literature and theatre from the perspective of Gothic studies have made links between conventions recognized as characteristic within the Gothic genre and certain narrative devices, tropes, settings, and character types present in many Renaissance texts. This type of study is unusual because the Gothic was not identified as a literary genre until the mid-eighteenth century. Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) is considered the first Gothic novel, and its publication commences a succession of Gothic prose, poetry, and drama. In his preface to the second edition, Walpole explains that “Shakespeare was the model [he] copied” (44) for the unfolding of his plot. His novel is furthermore characterized as Gothic by its setting in a faraway place, in the past, and in a large, haunted castle, which is comparable to Shakespearean settings in plays like *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. In fact, it is through Shakespearean criticism that the Gothic has entered Renaissance studies. Within the past decade two seminal edited collections have been published on that topic: John Drakakis and Dale Townshend’s *Gothic Shakespeares* (2008) and Christy Desmet and Anne Williams’s *Shakespearean Gothic* (2009). These studies examine the ways in which Shakespeare’s legacy has affected Gothic narratives from eighteenth-century literature to contemporary fiction. In the introduction to *Gothic Shakespeares*, Drakakis addresses the “timeless and universal anxieties” which are pulled from Shakespeare into Gothic literature and “refashion[ed] . . . to represent a complex series of preoccupations and attitudes in the eighteenth
The chapters within *Gothic Shakespeares* examine how the Gothic is indebted to Shakespearean drama for the development of the themes, motifs, and tropes that we now associate with Gothic texts. Similarly, *Shakespearean Gothic* endeavours to trace “a genealogy for [the] Shakespearean Gothic” with essays that focus on the “shadow cast by Shakespeare” (Desmet and Williams 10, 5). Shakespeare’s shadow manifests in the Gothic’s obsession with “family romances” and the “occult dimensions” of Shakespeare’s plots (10, 6).

The more recent publications on Gothic elements in Renaissance literature, such as the studies I cite below, are indebted to these texts for paving the way for early modern scholars to make further comparisons between Gothic and Renaissance literature. It is peculiar, though, that it has taken so many years for these connections to the Renaissance to be examined in detail, even though scholars such as Williams, David Punter, and Fred Botting have commented on the Gothic’s debt to much literature that precedes it. For instance, in the introduction to his 1996 book *Gothic*, Botting acknowledges the loosely defined “Gothic tradition, [which] possesses . . . a broad, if strange, continuity in the way it draws inspiration, plots and techniques from medieval romances and poetry, from ballads and folklore, from Renaissance writing, especially Shakespearean drama and Spenserian poetry, as well as from various seventeenth and eighteenth century prose forms” (15-16). This casual remark provides an interesting starting point for scholars in the nascent field of Renaissance-Gothic studies. And in her 1995 monograph, Williams asserts that “many scenes and episodes in canonical literature belong to a kind of quasi-“Gothic” tradition that may be traced from *Beowulf* . . . through several episodes of *The Faerie Queene*, certain scenes from Shakespeare, [and] much of Jacobean drama” (13). These observations call attention to the Gothic’s roots in earlier periods. Furthermore, these reflections
highlight the development of the Gothic as an eclectic and flexible mode of writing—a mode through which a common sensibility is threaded, and which binds these various texts together.

As these studies show, the Gothic as we know it today is indebted to a legacy of literature that engages with themes, subjects, and motifs which existed long before becoming encompassed within the term “Gothic.” A number of critics have remarked on the affinity between Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy and Gothic themes, but do not go into depth on the subject. Perhaps the most detailed early discussion of the relationship between Renaissance England and Gothic literature is made by Williams in *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*. Williams summarizes King Henry VIII’s reign “in fairy tale fashion” in order to demonstrate “its affinities with the kinds of stories we usually call ‘Gothic’” (28-29). She goes on to discuss the importance of the patriarchal family for shaping “English political history” and dictating the expectations and laws which came to be represented by “The Law of the Father” (29)—a theoretical viewpoint that has been instrumental in interpretations of power and sexuality in many types of literary works, including early modern revenge tragedy, prose romance, and Gothic fiction. Significantly, Williams elucidates, “[i]f Gothic romance is family romance, then we may begin to see why “Gothic” authors felt a kinship with Renaissance tragedy, especially Shakespeare’s” (32). It follows that the seminal studies in this area focus on Shakespeare’s influence on the Gothic. Susanne Gruss refers to Williams’s discussion of Henry VIII’s life when she observes that it is “surprising” that many scholars have noticed the debt to Shakespeare in Gothic fiction, but “ignore Shakespeare’s equally popular contemporaries almost entirely” (37). Gruss mentions a few instances when critics have briefly acknowledged the connection between Jacobean texts and Gothic texts, such as Charles Butler’s short entry on “Jacobean Tragedy” in *The Handbook*
to Gothic Literature, and Punter’s observation in Gothic Pathologies “that Gothic is ‘a ghost haunted by another ghost, almost as eighteenth-century Gothic was haunted by Jacobean tragedy, and Jacobean tragedy haunted by the horrors of Greek drama’” (Punter, qtd. in Gruss 38). Gruss is among the first critics to take these observations further, and make a claim for a “Jacobean Gothic.” Jeaneen Kish’s “Pre-Gothic Goths: Shakespeare’s Usage of the Goths as Gothic Monsters in Titus Andronicus” analyzes the political and ideological reasons for reading this canonical play in consideration of sixteenth-century anxieties still relevant to the British at the advent of Gothic literature. In other words, Kish reads Titus Andronicus “as if it were a Gothic work” (Kish 19), and by linking early modern ideological and political anxieties to similar issues in the eighteenth century, she broadens our understandings of Gothic literature’s beginnings.

Most of the revenge tragedies that have been discussed as proto-Gothic or as having affinities to Gothic literature are Jacobean texts such as Thomas Middleton’s The Revenger’s Tragedy (1606-07), John Webster’s The Duchess of Malfi (1612-13), and Phillip Massinger’s The Duke of Milan (1623). Shakespeare’s Titus Andronicus (1594) is probably the earliest revenge tragedy to be discussed in a Gothic light, with a publication date within the Elizabethan period. Notably, Thomas Kyd’s The Spanish Tragedy (circa 1587) bears strong similarities to revenge tragedies such as Titus Andronicus and Hamlet (circa 1602), both of which are analyzed for their relationship to the Gothic in recent criticism. Revenge tragedies were popular on the English stage for decades, and the reasons for their prevalence are similar to the reasons that Gothic

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1 Butler explains that “[d]eath, sin, exotic vices in exotic settings, vengeful ghosts, torture and imprisonment, madness, murder, and a not-so-sweet excess in all things . . . are regular features of” Jacobean tragedy. The entry goes on to provide examples of these features in John Webster’s The Duchess of Malfi (c. 1614), which Gruss accepts as a proto-Gothic revenge tragedy.

2 This date is contested, but 1594 is the date Kish uses based on Claire Asquith’s observation that 1594 is the date the play was marked as “new” in playhouse records (Kish 19n1).

3 See, for example, Yacoubou Alou’s 2017 article, “The Relationship between Kyd’s The Spanish Tragedy and Shakespeare’s Hamlet and Titus Andronicus”. Discussions of Hamlet in a Gothic light are found in Gothic Shakespeares and Shakespearean Gothic.
literature exploded in popularity in the eighteenth century. While I save the details for Chapter One, it will suffice here to say that these types of stories fed audiences’ appetites for drama, tyrannical patriarchs, ghostly or magical occurrences, and sensational violence.

Although literature often responds to cultural concerns of the moment, there are specific links between the concerns of the Elizabethan period and the mid to late eighteenth century, when Gothic literature emerged. Morality, legitimacy, and invasion were significant concerns in both these periods; appropriately, critics of Elizabethan literature and of Gothic literature often focus their analyses on these areas. I address the contexts of these concerns below, but briefly, Elizabethan concerns about legitimacy involve anxieties over competing claims to legitimate monarchal authority and the religious friction between English Catholics and the established Protestant Church. Anxieties regarding invasion are related to a challenge to the physical boundaries of the empire as well as a concern over hostile Others infiltrating a homologous culture or society. Scholars of the Gothic have continually demonstrated that Gothic authors are critical of their culture and in turn respond to those concerns through literature. If we consider Kelly Hurley’s take on Terry Eagleton’s assertion that a “new artistic mode, or a ‘significant development in literary form,’ may evolve out of a ‘collective psychological demand’ having its roots in some massive social or ideological shift within a culture” (Hurley 4-5), then it follows that Gothic literature could function as a response to the social and ideological anxieties of its readers. Importantly, Hurley asserts that an undeniable feature of Gothic fiction is that it is an “instrumental genre, reemerging cyclically, at periods of cultural stress, to negotiate the anxieties that accompany social and epistemological transformations and crises” (5). Additionally, critics

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4 While this thesis does not address invasion directly, the Renaissance tyrant and the Gothic villain are, effectively, invaders of the narrative settings and reflect fears of enemies permeating their respective societies. The duality and moral degeneration associated with self-fashioning (introduced in the next paragraph) implies a concern about invasive Others.
Elisabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier assert that “as moments of cultural transition, both [English Renaissance literature and Gothic literature] define themselves by looking back at the prior historical moment from which they developed” (4). Accordingly, the Gothic is always looking back at something archaic, dark, terrifying, yet familiar. This familiarity stems from the cyclic nature of social and ideological change and of archetypal stories. The Gothic’s familiar stories thus reflect a “double backward gaze” that Bronfen and Neumeier assert is central to the connections between an early modern and a Gothic sensibility (4). Williams’s point about the Gothic “family romance” being closely linked to Renaissance tragedy is pertinent here (32), because within early modern narratives we can identify anxieties that are easily traced to the political fears brought about by tyrannical rulers such as Henry VIII and Mary I. Kish draws on this history when she points out that English “cultural memory” was essentially traumatized by Bloody Mary’s five-year reign, when she declared England to be a Catholic country again and violently persecuted Protestant citizens (20). Significantly, as the end of the sixteenth century approached and Elizabeth I had no heir, there was “a great deal of fear about another Catholic taking the throne in England” (Kish 20). While Kish’s discussion about religious anxiety expressed in Titus Andronicus is not directly related to my analysis, it is significant because Lodge was similarly influenced by the anxieties of his era. Lodge, as an author with strong opinions and Catholic loyalties in a Protestant country, produced texts that “critique the [Protestant] religious rhetoric” within the patriotic works of his contemporaries such as Edmund Spenser and Walter Ralegh (Linton 42). But Lodge’s ideological differences do not necessarily place his concerns in opposition to the mainstream concerns of his peers; in fact, his works show him to be sensitive to his culture’s anxieties, specifically fears regarding the dangers of tyranny, moral degradation, and matters of individual and national identity.
In the context of these anxieties, Stephen Greenblatt’s theory of self-fashioning, popularized by his 1980 book, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, becomes highly relevant. The term “self-fashioning” describes the “shaping of one’s own identity, the experience of being moulded by forces outside one’s control, the attempt to fashion other selves” (Greenblatt 3; my emphasis). Furthermore, it is inherently connected to “manners or demeanor, particularly that of the elite; it may suggest hypocrisy or deception, an adherence to mere outward ceremony” (3). My focus on the hypocrisy and duality involved in self-fashioning emphasizes an anxiety over moral degeneration that stems from the elite early modern culture’s encouragement of deception and self-interested values. When considering these “other selves” then, one’s inner self and outward behaviour do not form a cohesive individual identity, and the variance between individuals’ morality and behaviour signals a duality that is the locus of much anxiety toward identity in a society that is continually concerned with trying to position oneself against an “other.” In either case, England’s sixteenth-century romance authors and eighteenth-century Gothic authors were concerned with “the formation . . . of a national identity” (Williams 32). To bring this discussion back to Williams’s discussion of the Gothic’s debt to Renaissance literature, any attempt to define a national identity “requires an ‘other’ or ground against which the borders may be discerned” (32). Self-fashioning also requires an “other” against which an individual defines him or herself. In the context of narrative, the “other” is the antagonist against which the protagonist is defined, and which clarifies the position of each for the audience. Greenblatt outlines the “governing conditions” of authors’ self-fashioning, whether fashioning themselves or fashioning their characters (9). A key point is that “[s]elf-fashioning is achieved in relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile. This threatening Other . . . must be discovered or invented in order to be attacked and destroyed. . . . [And] the alien is always constructed as a
distorted image of authority” (Greenblatt 9). As I argue in Chapter One, this “Other” or “alien” in *A Margarite* is the deceptive villain, Prince Arsadachus, who disturbs the peace and order of the neighbouring empire, Mosco, when he is welcomed into Mosco’s court as the future husband of Margarita, as well as future ruler of Mosco and of his father’s empire, Cusco. The portrayal of Arsadachus offers a distorted image of political authority; although Arsadachus is the rightful heir of Cusco and on the cusp of becoming the heir of Mosco, he abuses his position by subverting the expectations of honour and integrity placed on him and by making tyrannical decisions that serve his hedonistic desires. Arsadachus’s characterization is Lodge’s way of transforming the image of the idealized courtier into the image of the ultimate—and othered—tyrant. In other words, Lodge addresses a self-fashioned persona from a negative perspective because he uses Arsadachus’s self-fashioning to highlight the hypocrisy behind a contrived courtly persona. In doing so Lodge considers Elizabethans’ lingering anxieties about tyrant-rulers and addresses his own concerns about morality and honour among aristocratic gentlemen. Thus, while it might initially seem an unexpected comparison to suggest that the story of a Renaissance king reflects anxieties found in Gothic narratives as Williams proposes in relation to Henry VIII, or to suggest that the people of early modern England would be concerned with social and political issues that remain relevant in the eighteenth century, these connections are not far-fetched.

Studying the proto-Gothic qualities of Renaissance texts is intriguing because of observations like those made by Botting and Williams in the 1990s—observations that, like seeds, have developed into a growing branch of criticism, ripe with potential. Two recent collections of essays, *Gothic Renaissance: A Reassessment* (2014), edited by Bronfen and Neumeier and *Gothic Transgressions* (2015), edited by Ellen Redling and Christian Schneider,
explore these growing connections between Renaissance and Gothic studies. Bronfen and Neumeier seek to expand this field of study by focusing on a Gothic sensibility as identified mainly in Renaissance drama and poetry. Highly important to my study is their claim that discussions of “Gothic as a ‘hybrid genre’, ‘literature of subversion’ and ‘transgressive mode of writing’ must be situated historically” (3), which is precisely what Bronfen and Neumeier do in their introduction to the essays that build a case for a Renaissance Gothic. Their introduction explains that the widespread recognition of Gothic as a versatile mode “has necessarily reopened questions about the implicit historical onset of Gothic sensibility, aesthetics and textuality” (1). This sensibility addressed in *Gothic Renaissance* involves the tone and subject matter of the literature, as well as a particular emotional response from the reader. Furthermore, they point out that the Gothic sensibility encompasses “both an intellectual and an affective approach to the world” (2) which conditions Gothic literature’s approach to “power structures, psychic dispositions, and aesthetic representations of these” (2). The contrast between the intellectual and emotional in Gothic narratives is indeed the focus of much critical analysis. This contrast is particularly important when we consider the Gothic’s popularity in the eighteenth century and some readers’ ambivalence toward Gothic texts. Clive Bloom describes one reader’s experience who “reread *Vathek* and *The Castle of Otranto* at intervals . . . and complained that though he ‘ought not to have begun’ them, he couldn’t put them down” (19), to exemplify how the Gothic’s eighteenth-century readers “were fascinated by the fashion for thrills” (19). When Bloom discusses the history of the Gothic he describes the Gothic sensibility as “a ‘feeling’ expressed by certain formulas which have been readily expanded upon ever since the publication . . . of Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*. . . . These gothic feelings took shape in architecture, poetry, novels, short stories, pornography, romance and painting [and] they had political and
ecclesiastical ramifications” (2). Bloom shows how the Gothic found its place in different textual genres, confronted societal concerns, and became more of an adaptable mode than a genre. Accordingly, while many students and scholars tend to think of the Gothic genre as incipient from 1764 onward, I take the perspective of recent critics who evaluate a proto-Gothic mode dating back to the plots and themes of early modern literature. The foundational Gothic critics I have cited above and the more recent Renaissance-Gothic critics have provided me with the rationale to look to Elizabethan prose romance for a proto-Gothic sensibility and proto-Gothic conventions.

Ambivalence is one of the central characteristics of a trans-historical Gothic sensibility. This ambivalence occupies the border of Gothic and continually challenges its limits. Redling and Schneider assert that “the transgressive nature of the Gothic brings with it an essential ambivalence” (14). They acknowledge the inherent relationship between limits and transgressions because the Gothic simultaneously regards ideological, social or political “borders and breaches them, creating a grey area of uncertainty, which is at the same time the main source of its vibrant energy and allure” (14). Furthermore, in accordance with notions of Gothic affect, Bronfen and Neumeier explain that “the fear, surprise and awe called forth by a foregrounding of the fragility of human existence, the presence of death in the midst of life, and the delimitation of human freedom which the laws of morality dictate” are all essential to the Gothic text’s sensibility (2). These “complex emotional responses” evoked by the Gothic illuminate the intricate “intellectual and . . . affective” methods by which we make meaning from texts (Bronfen and Neumeier 2), whether as authors or readers. Thus, the ambivalence that is widely associated with Gothic literature is found in the subject matter and the reader’s response. Botting explains that “[t]he emotions most associated with Gothic fiction are . . . ambivalent: objects of
terror and horror not only provoke repugnance, disgust and recoil, but also engage readers’ interests, fascinating and attracting them” (9). For example, readers can be drawn into a particularly disturbing scene through their reaction to the violence, or threat thereof, which satisfies their desires for the visceral response they experience from sensational content. But the same readers can be simultaneously repulsed by the villain’s morally reprehensible behaviour. In Botting’s terms, “the fascination with transgression and the anxiety over cultural limits and boundaries . . . continue to produce ambivalent emotions and meanings in . . . tales of darkness, desire and power” (2). This anxiety in regard to boundaries can focus on symbolic boundaries as a route to addressing actual physical boundaries that are altered or threatened with the project of imperial expansion and war. However, it can also address figurative boundaries such as cultural limits and expectations. For instance, Bronfen and Neumeier highlight the Gothic’s emphasis on various expressions of “boundary blurrings” such as transgressions within the social order, or within “an individual’s identity” (2). This emphasis is often an ambivalent one, as readers are often unsure how to view the moral implications of these transgressions, but the fact remains that this ambivalence characterizes the Gothic’s liminality, both as a literature that addresses various borders and a form that defies classification itself. Sue Chaplin examines the “question of the legitimacy and stability of borders, a question which is begged not only of the legal theorists, but also of the literary critic approaching the marginal, hybrid ‘formless form’ that is the Gothic”

5 Botting’s introductory chapter to Gothic (1st edition), “Gothic Excess and Transgression” strongly connects the transgressions featured in Gothic literature to ambivalence. This ambivalence affects many scholars’ interpretations of transgression and excess in Gothic literature. The corporeal horror portrayed throughout A Margarite is one example of an excess which evokes the reader’s ambivalence. Another topic Botting discusses, and which arises later in this thesis, is the emphasis on the moral degradation featured in the Gothic villain’s behaviour. Although the moral crimes of the villain are meant to set a “restitution of acceptable limits” (8) by reaffirming morally acceptable behaviour, readers and critics were concerned that the focus on the villain’s transgressions would have the opposite effect on the reader by narrativizing immoral or transgressive behaviour. Interestingly, this critique holds true for the early modern stage tyrant’s transgressions, and I return to this point in Chapter One.
Chaplin agrees that Gothic is “more than a literary ‘genre’: it is a cultural, aesthetic and philosophical mode” (2). Recognizing the Gothic mode involves acknowledging that a certain sensibility threads through these texts identified as Gothic or proto-Gothic. Hence, the questions of morality, legitimacy, and borders with which the Gothic form is so preoccupied take many forms themselves—through revenge tragedy, prose romance, Gothic theatre, Gothic novels, and others. Thus, this Gothic sensibility, in many ways, is at the centre of this thesis; the ambivalence with which the Gothic author imbues his or her text, the emphasis on the villain’s duality, the preoccupation with bodily horror and death: these elements are all essential to my interpretation of Gothic sensibility in Lodge’s narrative, as is the emphasis on the looming threat of tyranny—a warning with a moral and a political message.

As I have noted above, studying the foundations of Gothic literature as they are identified in Renaissance revenge tragedy is a fairly new field. Any preliminary examination of this field reveals that the connections are strong, but the Gothic has been stretched across such numerous modes and media recently that readers may wonder where to draw the line. Redling and Schneider accept that “[t]ime and experience have shown the Gothic to be an enormously adaptable concept” (1). Importantly, the Gothic’s ability to manifest in numerous genres and mediums is essential to these new critical visions, and its “border crossings suggest that both the existence and appeal of Gothic works go beyond any boundaries pertaining to time, nation, medium, or mode” (Redling and Schneider 4). The Gothic sensibility Redling and Schneider acknowledge thus involves the potential of, and challenges to, the “limitless” possibilities for

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6 One concern of the Gothic mode is law and legitimacy, which connects the tyranny with which revenge tragedy is occupied to the tyranny within eighteenth century Gothic literature. The connections here to a common sensibility within this mode involve Gothic’s “representations of . . . juridical authority . . . [that] frequently expos[e] its hidden violence” (Chaplin 2), and proto-Gothic literature’s preoccupation with the tyrant’s impulsive enforcement of his power.
Gothic cultural expressions. It is important, though, to acknowledge the drawbacks of that “limitless Gothic” (1); scholars must certainly take care not to overuse the Gothic label. Gruss points out that on the surface, it “seems almost too easy” to include Jacobean tragedy in the Gothic tradition because of several thematic and diegetic similarities. She notes:

the plays are set in foreign countries, . . . ghosts and other supernatural visitations are stereotypical ingredients of the revenge play, as are the plays’ notorious depictions of excessive violence and the descent of the revenger figure into madness; anti-Catholicism, latent social criticism and the anxiety about fluctuating and changing gender roles drive the plots of many Jacobean tragedies. (Gruss 38)

These thematic and diegetic similarities between early modern tragedy and Gothic literature could be critiqued as shallow; however, if we return to the connections Williams makes we can see that there is substance behind the superficial. Whether approaching this analysis with an open mind or not, readers cannot deny that

if the Gothic conventions that emerged toward the end of the eighteenth century are crucially concerned with exploring the “rules” of patriarchy, such as the relative powers and qualities of the masculine and the feminine and the interrelated and mutually supportive social structures like the family, the monarchy and the church, then the superficial affinities between Gothic conventions and English Renaissance drama, particularly revenge tragedy, appear in a new light. (Williams 35)

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7 Redling and Schneider explain that the theme of the 2011 conference from which their collection arose was the “difficulty in defining or delimiting the limitless Gothic” (1).
While Williams focuses on the relationship between the fictional and the real which influences the depiction of “inherent conflict” that “patriarchal principles” are sure to manifest (37), Gruss highlights the thematic similarities—features that came to be generic markers—which spoke to the anxieties of the early modern English people and came to represent the archaisms authors of Gothic fiction draw upon in the eighteenth century to respond to the anxieties of their readership. And to consider the short but significant comments about the Gothic sensibility I have cited above, it is a positive development in the field of Gothic studies to remove the restrictions of conventional categories that, says Williams, “are not necessarily useful” as they divide literature into its genres and consequently limit our perspectives (36).

Similarly, to limit studies of proto-Gothic literature in the Renaissance period to revenge tragedies restricts our perspective within this emerging field of study. Considering that this field began with studies of Shakespeare, it makes sense that as the field grows it branches into other theatre, mainly from the Jacobean period; but proto-Gothic expressions were not confined to the stage nor to the Jacobean playwrights, and the criticism developing in this field recognizes the need to widen the lens. Bronfen and Neumeier’s book expands into other textual genres of the period, such as verse and popular press, and they assert that “it is precisely this widening of the focus that enables a careful historical investigation which avoids a dehistoricized and inflationary use of the term Gothic” (1). When we consider these insights along with the broadened notion of Gothic as a versatile mode rather than a formulaic genre, the nuances of a consistent sensibility become key in interpreting the trajectory toward the emergence of Gothic conventions in eighteenth-century literature.

Further links between Lodge’s narrative, revenge tragedy, and Gothic literature involve details I do not wish to overlook. Lodge’s text imitates the violence of Senecan and Elizabethan
revenge tragedy that is later emulated by the authors responsible for the Jacobean revenge
tragedies discussed in proto-Gothic Renaissance criticism. This feature of Lodge’s narrative is
as essential to my study as is the tyrant ruler’s illegitimate power. The villain’s conniving, and at
times uninhibited, violence is so essential to the proto-Gothicity of Lodge’s text that it is
reasonable to overlook the lack of hauntings, general gloominess, and a plot that centres upon
supernatural events.\(^8\) With that said, the text does involve a degree of gloom and magic. Lodge
establishes a dark and foreboding tone early in the story, which helps foreshadow the tragedy to
come. The picturesque setting of the palace of Arsinous, loyal friend to Protomachus, Emperor
of Mosco, is characterized by “huge expense” and a “delicious garden” filled with flowers, birds,
and a “bubbling fountain” (Lodge 80). Protomachus’s chamber there is adorned with gemstones,
intricate carvings, and a poem entitled *Humanae Miseriae discursus*,\(^9\) which is a pessimistic
description of man’s nature and accomplishments that contrasts the peaceful beauty of the setting
(80-82). That gloomy tone is also set up in contrast to the emphasis on virtue; Margarita’s
chamber is “fashioned to her affections” (82), with virtue idealized in depictions of the goddess
of chastity, cupids, and “all the chaste ladies of the world” (83). This idealization of virtue sets
up the impossible purity of her character, and indeed, Margarita is doomed to destruction. There
is another curious element which invites a Gothic reading, a magical box which pushes
Arsadachus over the edge of sanity. The magical box has been enchanted by Arsinous, the father
of Arsadachus’s first victim Philenia. He has turned to the black arts in an effort to get revenge
on Arsadachus and he crafts the box as a gift for Margarita to give to Arsadachus. Its

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\(^8\) Kish makes an observation that supports my claim here. She asserts: “What may arguably separate [*Titus
Andronicus*] from a work of Gothic fiction is its lack of the traditional tropes. It does not have the castles, the
supernatural, the medieval setting, but so many contemporary Gothic works lack those elements as well” (30).

\(^9\) The editorial note translates this Latin title as “a discourse on human misery” (Janzen 80).
enchantment will reveal Arsadachus’s true character when he opens it, which ultimately triggers the carnage that unfolds in the text’s climax.

Essentially, the core of my argument is that like eighteenth-century Gothic, *A Margarite* is a distinct response to a set of ideological and social anxieties having to do with the dangers of tyranny, abuses of power, and the undermining of hegemonic systems and hierarchies. This analysis will demonstrate that it is practical to extend the term proto-Gothic to include early modern literature beyond Jacobean revenge tragedy. I will explore the social and ideological issues that affected Lodge, and which compare to issues with which Gothic literature is concerned. Chapter One will discuss the factors that affected Lodge’s narrative choices. This chapter additionally makes connections between Lodge’s prose narrative, revenge tragedy, and the proto-Gothic mode, while addressing the importance of identity and persona to these types of texts. Chapter Two develops these connections, but turns to character analyses to examine the contrasts between virtue and corruption, blindness and vision, and the veiled faces and motivations that sustain Gothic plots. This chapter examines the Gothic implications of Margarita’s purity in opposition to Arsadachus’s corruption and uses the popular Gothic novel, Mathew Lewis’s *The Monk*, to situate *A Margarite of America* in the context of Gothic themes and plots. *The Monk* is a suitable novel for this analysis because within its pages are many opportunities for comparisons of the two texts’ treatments of virtue and vice and of the victims’ and villains’ characterizations. Finally, I explore the relationship between Arsadachus’s character and the early-Gothic villain. My Conclusion offers some observations on identity and tyranny in revenge tragedy and in the Gothic and suggests potential approaches to additional research in Renaissance-Gothic studies.
Chapter One:

Romance, Revenge, Tyranny, and Subversion

This chapter addresses the relationship between *A Margarite of America*, early modern revenge tragedy, and Gothic literature. I will examine how Lodge articulates Elizabethan anxieties through his politically framed narrative, and aligns his text with the destruction and profound pessimism of revenge tragedy. His experience on the Cavendish expedition of 1591-1593\(^\text{10}\) is key to my interpretation because it provides the backdrop for Lodge’s cynicism about and disillusionment with his society. The gentleman explorer’s moral integrity comes into question when we put *A Margarite* in context with the disastrous voyage on which he began writing his final piece of narrative fiction. Although Lodge never left any letters or commentary directly addressing his part in the voyage, in *A Margarite*’s dedications he connects the voyage to his motivations for writing. This connection implies that the issues of moral integrity that pervade his narrative are aimed at his privateering peers. Lodge’s pessimistic and gruesome narrative explores the kind of dark subject matter that has come to be associated with Gothic literature and it is as much a part of proto-Gothic Renaissance literature as are the Jacobean tragedies that have already been established in this area of study.

Lodge’s Ambivalence and Subversion

The contradictory tones of Lodge’s two dedications to his readers suggest an ambivalence in his perception of the failed Cavendish voyage he claims inspired his writing. One of these dedications is to the Lady Russell, and the other is to his gentlemen readers. The dedication to

\(^{10}\) Although historians date Cavendish’s final voyage as 1591-1592, the ships that survived the voyage did not actually arrive home until 1593. According to historical records, David Beers Quinn notes that the *Desire*, one of Cavendish’s fleet, entered the port of Berehaven, County Cork, Ireland on June 11 1593 (Quinn 38), and on March 14 1593 is “the first evidence that the *Galleon Leicester* and the *Roebuck* were back in England with news of Cavendish’s death” (39). Perhaps we refer to the voyage as 1591-1592 because Cavendish’s journal ends toward the end of 1592, when he dies at sea, but nevertheless, the surviving ships had not returned until early 1593.
the Lady Russell, and by extension to his lady readers, seeks the ladies’ approval, and perhaps sympathy: “as there was great wonder in the place wherein I writ this, so likewise might it be marvelled that in such scanty fare, such causes of fear, so mighty discouragements, and many crosses, I should deserve or eternize anything” (Lodge 73). His tone throughout the ladies’ dedication emphasizes the excitement of his perilous journey, perhaps because romanticizing the experience would increase their interest in his narrative. In contrast, his dedication “To the Gentlemen Readers” emphasizes the danger he felt from the other men on board: “I rather observed men’s hands lest they should strike me, than curious reason of men to condemn me” (75). In other words, he was too wary of violence to dwell on why they would want to harm him. It appears he was concerned for his life, as he expresses doubt that “hope should acquaint her with me, or any but misery should hear mine ending” (75). Lodge’s despondency indicates that he despaired for his future well-being. The romanticized tone of the ladies’ dedication in contrast with the hopelessness of the gentlemen’s dedication illustrates the duality of his perspectives on his experience, and sets the keen reader up to anticipate Lodge’s critique of the underside of privateering culture in *A Margarite*. Wilson’s analysis points out that these dedications are “one of the most contradictory pairs of prefaces in Elizabethan fiction” (158). This observation is significant because a discernible contradiction structures the narrative in Lodge’s manipulation of romance conventions for both parodic and tragic ends. Regarding the closing of Lodge’s message to his gentlemen readers, “who lives in this world let him wink in the world; for either men prove too blind in seeing too little, or too presumptuous in condemning that they should not” (Lodge 75), Katharine Wilson argues that its “extended metaphor of

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11 That Lodge questions whether he “should deserve or eternize anything” suggests a self-fashioned humility through which he sought to encourage the Lady Russell’s patronage. For early modern readers and authors, the verb “eternize” signalled an author’s desire for their text to be regarded as important enough to be immortalized.
blindness and sight” could apply to Lodge’s female audience too: “Women readers who fail to read the dedication to the gentlemen are in danger of being as blind to its message as Margarita,” who fails to see Arsadachus’s falsity (Wilson 158-59). While this observation is apt, it is the connotation of humankind’s duality that is emphasized by this focus on blindness and sight that I find significant. To address critically the duality and hypocrisy that so troubles him, Lodge applies this metaphor throughout his text by giving romance traditions—such as overindulgent courtly ceremony—and revenge tragedy conventions—such as excessive depravity—equal attention. The ambivalence that this gesture engenders doubles back to the dual images he presents in the dedications regarding his inspiration to write on the voyage.

These dedications foreground Lodge’s ambivalence toward the court’s values and imperialist ideology that he writes into the entire narrative—specifically, an ambivalence toward the romanticizing of privateering ventures. Wilson and Joan Pong Linton agree that A Margarite is Lodge’s Catholic response to Spenser’s The Faerie Queene, which Linton calls a “Protestant romance of gold and empire” (42). Wilson echoes Linton’s position with her observation that A Margarite invites the interpretation of being “Lodge’s (Catholic) Faerie Queene, in which the Roman church wreaks revenge on Protestant duplicity” (141). While I do not take such an approach here, I find this perspective significant to my research because of my assertion that Lodge’s narrative is subversive within his social context. Linton’s analysis is integral to my point that the ambivalence with which Lodge imbues his text is indicative of his unconventional attitude toward imperial ambition in Elizabethan England and I agree that the text “mocks the conventions of romance through subversive imitation” (Linton 52), which I will demonstrate below in my analysis of how Lodge undermines romance tradition. Linton furthermore focuses on Lodge’s “critique of the values and motives” of Protestant imperial ventures by juxtaposing A
Margarite with Edmund Spenser’s The Faerie Queene and Walter Ralegh’s Discovery of Guiana (Linton 53). Linton’s analysis of A Margarite as a “veiled critique of empire” (51) supports my position regarding Lodge’s covert critique of the English gentleman privateer’s moral character.

In a preliminary discussion of transgression within Gothic fiction, Botting addresses the significance of “limits and boundaries” and the stark contrast between good and evil in Gothic fiction, which reaffirms “proper limits and values” by applying a “moral resolution” to the tale (8). The Gothic’s emphasis on these “limits” that “distinguish good from evil, reason from passion, virtue from vice and self from other” (8) also means that Gothic narratives feature sensational immorality and depravity in order to emphasize the “good” and moral side of these binaries. Because of this emphasis on transgression, Gothic novels themselves came to be seen as transgressive. Horner explains that “Gothic romances . . . have in the past been castigated as morally corrupting, since their plots incorporate deeds which transgress normal social codes of morality” (Horner 287). Like the social issues addressed by Gothic literature and early modern revenge tragedy, the demarcations of a character’s behaviour are not arbitrarily created within the fiction, but reflect upon real contested areas of morality in a given cultural setting. The Renaissance emphasis on self-fashioning furthermore complicates Lodge’s characterizations because of his unfavourable views on duplicity within the courtier’s (and by extension the gentleman privateer’s) identity. In fact, the following statement about Gothic fiction could be extended to the Elizabethan explorers’ behaviour: “the line between transgression and a restitution of acceptable limits remained a difficult one to discern” (Botting 8). As the next section discusses, the behaviour of Cavendish and his men treaded the line between acceptable and disgraceful. Lodge’s impression of Cavendish and the other voyagers certainly influenced the ambivalent tone of his narrative, the nature of which celebrates courtly culture while
simultaneously condemning it; by extension, the idealized notion of privateering is damaged by
the transgressive, violent reality. Moreover, in the larger context of his society, the grey area of
explorers’ behaviour is a product of the hypocrisy and corruption that troubled Lodge. In fact, if
we view the voyage as traumatic and inspiring, as he suggests in his dedications, Lodge may
have seen the ship’s social structure as a microcosm of English society and a magnifier for the
evils of human nature.

The Cavendish Voyage and Lodge’s Narrative Choices

When Lodge claims in his dedications that the hardships of the Cavendish voyage fuelled
his writing, he associates his story with the violence of Cavendish’s expedition and
acknowledges that he sees the gentlemen explorers’ behaviour as hypocritical and transgressive.
That he draws his readers into what they think is a romance of “humanitie and courtesy” (Lodge
74) and changes it into a tale of devastation and destruction of purity and honour is significant to
his experience as a writer who becomes disillusioned by the treachery and duality of his
colleagues. By veiling his message in the sort of sensational violence that was increasingly
popular in Elizabethan drama, he distracts readers from his subversive reflections on privateering
culture and the Protestant values that surrounded it. Nevertheless, his story is not about the
gentlemen privateers; it is a critique of the larger court culture—a culture that encouraged
privateering and all that it entailed. Importantly, a similar method is at work in Gothic literature,
which turns to humanity’s duality and capacity for treachery, murder, and other transgressions in
order to mediate concerns about shifting identities, as well as cultural and political tension.
Lodge’s biographer traces his emerging interest in writing moral fiction, which invites a closer
look at what influenced the shift to darkness in his writing. Wesley D. Rae shows that as early as
1584, Lodge’s writing has “a moral tone” (31), and in the latter half of the 1580s he wrote a
drama, *A Looking Glass for London and England* (circa 1587), which has “strong biblical tones” (43) and features a “strong moral message directed to the court” (44). Toward the end of the 1580s, and before he sailed with Cavendish in 1591, Lodge continued to write moral romances, but by his tone it is apparent that “Lodge is bitter” (Rae 47) and his verse employs “the gloomiest of malcontent tones” (53).12 If his writing indicates he was wavering about the integrity of society before the Cavendish voyage, the pessimism of *A Margarite*, and that it was his last piece of fiction, indicates that his experience on that voyage was enough to turn him away from romance. I will examine below how the horrific violence portrayed in the narrative reflects Lodge’s traumatic experience with Cavendish.

Crews of Elizabethan privateering ships committed atrocities, implicitly sanctioned and excused by the culturally celebrated project of imperial and mercantile expansion. Less than admirable conduct was common on the open seas; the accounts we have of privateering in the Renaissance period tell of deeply self-interested behaviour, mutiny, and murder. For example, in *Elizabethan Privateering 1585-1603* Kenneth R. Andrews indicates that “[d]runkenness and disorder aboard ship became common, uncontrolled violence and lawlessness at sea developed by the end of the war into a general menace to commerce, and attempts to impose discipline met with mutiny” (41). During England’s war with Spain (1585-1604), privateering became a popular activity for gentlemen looking for adventure and wealth. The Crown encouraged such voyages because they brought riches into the country and challenged Spain’s naval dominance. In a 1588 letter to one of the queen’s Privy Council, Cavendish brags about his successful

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12 For more information on Lodge’s moral writing see chapters 2 and 3 of Rae’s biography *Thomas Lodge*. With regard to his bitter tone, Rae notes that the dedication Lodge includes at the start of *Scillaes Metamorphosis* (1589) gives insight into his “discontented thoughts” (47), and his gloomy tone throughout the *Glaucus Complaint*, a poem “appended to the *Metamorphosis*” shows that Lodge was shifting toward “the urbane, satiric vein which would culminate . . . in prose with *A Margarite of America***” (52, 54).
circuitnavigation of the globe: “I burnt and sunk nineteen sails of ships small and great. All the
villages and towns that I ever landed at, I burnt and spoiled” (Edwards 50). It follows that
Cavendish’s second voyage employed the same tactics. This kind of behaviour defined the
English privateer’s identity, as well as the professional seaman’s identity, and affected the
Elizabethan era’s national identity at large. For example, while the privateer-author Walter
Ralegh undertook all his explorations under the guise of romance and adventure, critics today
acknowledge that “with these dreams came a violence and suffering that make a mockery of any
altruistic motives” (Vitkus 107). Linton comments that “[d]ivergent accounts of the [Cavendish]
voyage, each attempting to vindicate one party and cast blame on another, all present the same
picture of a violent world in which greed and necessity overtake any pretension to spiritual ideals
or knightly goals” (49). Her comment reflects the image of the Elizabethan explorers that is
available through contemporary accounts and historians’ interpretations.

Lodge’s experience on the voyage is significant to his narrative choices because the
evidence we have indicates that Cavendish ruled over his fleet tyrannically. Other than Lodge’s
fiction inspired by the voyage, there are four narratives written by key participants: Cavendish,13
John Davis, John Jane, and Anthony Knivet. Cavendish’s histrionic narrative blames John
Davis, captain of the Desire, for the expedition’s failure in an attempt to rid himself of any
blame. Davis’s account aims to justify himself against the late Cavendish’s accusations. Jane
focuses his account on vindicating his good friend Davis. Knivet’s narrative is the most neutral

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13 In The Last Voyage of Thomas Cavendish 1591-1592 David Beers Quinn published a facsimile edition and
transcription of the “holograph manuscript of Thomas Cavendish’s personal testament and account of his last
voyage, written at the end of 1592” (1). Quinn transcribes the somewhat damaged facsimile as accurately as
possible, and it is from this text that more recent historians, such as Kenneth R. Andrews whom I cite within,
retrieve their references to Cavendish’s account of his final voyage.
report of Cavendish’s tactics during the turbulent period that led to the voyage’s downfall.\footnote{In Last Voyages Edwards includes an introduction in which he briefly offers his interpretation of the conditions shaping these explorers’ narratives. His insightful comments reinforce the connections between romance and exploration that critics such as Linton and Vitkus make, while also touching on matters of identity that my research connects to the Gothic. But altogether, Edwards aims to keep the commentary neutral and allow the original narratives to speak for themselves, which provides interesting connections to the literary self-fashioning discussed in my chapter below.} Regardless of the individual perspectives, all four narratives speak of betrayal, violence, and tragedy. Cavendish glosses over much of the violence by his hand that the others tell of, and emphasizes how unreasonable his men often were when it came to following his orders. He writes things such as, “I confess I was much moved and gave them some bitter words” (Edwards 68), or “they were all such as neither respected me nor anything that I commanded” (63). There is one instance he mentions when he strangled a “bold companion” whose “faction” opposed Cavendish’s plans: “with my own hands [I] put a rope about his neck, meaning resolutely to strangle him, for weapons about me I had none” (Edwards 75). He does write that he did not kill that man, but this example shows that he used intimidation and violence to get his way. Generally, his account shows that his men “murmured at [his] intentions” behind his back (75), and he at times “feared a most extreme mutiny” (65). Interestingly, Edwards points out how carefully constructed Cavendish’s account of the voyage is. At one point Cavendish explains that a Portuguese pilot, whose name according to Knivet was Jasper Jorge (84), swore “upon his life” that the water was deep enough for the ship to pass through (66), but it was not, and so the ship could not enter that port where they were to find many goods to plunder. Edwards’s note comments that “Cavendish omits to say at this point he had [the pilot] hanged” (68 n56). Knivet’s narrative, after explaining the unfortunate events that had occurred, explains that “General [Cavendish] thinking that the Portugal [Jasper Jorge] would have betrayed us, without any trial caused him to be hanged, the which was done in a trice” (92). This example of the
discrepancy between Cavendish’s and Knivet’s versions of the event speaks to the power of rhetoric that is integral to the culture of self-fashioning that developed among the explorer-authors of the Elizabethan period. Rhetoric “offered men the power to shape their worlds . . . and it implied that human character itself could be similarly fashioned, with an eye to audience and effect” (Greenblatt 162). Cavendish shaped his rhetoric to remove blame from himself and moral culpability from his actions by omitting the worst of his tyrannies and emphasizing the misfortunes beyond his control. Lodge, who witnessed Cavendish’s behaviour,15 evidently acknowledges Cavendish’s actions as transgressions if we read A Margarite as a response to his experience with Cavendish and crew. And he was evidently traumatized by the extensive violence he encountered if the amount of violence in his text reflects the voyage’s circumstances. Ultimately, the episode of Jasper Jorge provides a reliable example of Cavendish’s tyrannical rule because the man was hanged on the command of the temperamental Cavendish.

The ambivalence that permeates Lodge’s narrative has to do with the national identity attached to privateering. In Trade, Plunder and Settlement Andrews discusses the motivations of explorers such as Ralegh, Cavendish, and many other gentlemen and aristocrats who took part in voyages (31). While they were clearly motivated by the “pursuit of riches,” their desire for treasures was inseparable from their “insatiable thirst for fame and honour” that drove them to extreme actions (Andrews 31). Their greed caused explorers “to undertake actions they deemed noble, however sordid their conduct and foolish their posturings may appear in the eyes of a different generation” (31). Interestingly, the term “posturings” points to a self-consciously constructed identity, in this case one which seeks to convey an identity of importance and

15 As there were five ships in the fleet, the question has arisen of which ship Lodge sailed in. Edwards agrees with E.A. Tenney, who asserted in 1935 that Lodge sailed in the Leicester with Cavendish because Lodge wrote that he was “at sea with M. Cavendish”. The word “with” is the key here, as it implies he was in the same ship as Cavendish. Edwards provides more details to support this claim (Edwards 49).
authority, and seeks to justify contemptuous behaviour as honourable. This element of self-
fashioning also meant that they behaved hypocritically and presented an unstable English
identity. The gentleman, whether as courtier or explorer, “prizes honor, in defence of which a
man may lawfully fight, and if need be, kill” (Greenblatt 163). Brian Lockey points out,
however, that “the moral foundations used to justify aggression are malleable tools and can
eventually be turned on the conquerors or at least their apologists” (35-36). Lodge, as the
socially critical author that he was, saw the hypocrisy in the gentleman explorers’ posturings and
sought to share his opinions implicitly, which is, in part, where the textual ambivalence
discussed above plays into this argument.

Critics who have discussed A Margarite usually find it significant that the disastrous
Cavendish voyage was Lodge’s environment when he wrote his sensationally violent, tragic
romance. For instance, Josephine Roberts believes that Lodge “composed A Margarite of
America as a witness of his bitter disappointment with the promise offered by the New World”
(413).¹⁶ However, I find it significant, as does Daniel Vitkus, that it is not until five years after
he returned from the Cavendish voyage that he published A Margarite, yet he claims he found
the original story in South America. Roberts’s article examines the text as revealing Lodge’s
dismay with the “overwhelming corruption of humanity” that he encountered on that voyage
(408). According to Roberts, the message Lodge sends to his readers is that the seemingly
idyllic New World is already corrupted—that pastoral dreamlands really are just a dream, and
villains actually dominate the scene. Lodge’s message is somewhat oversimplified by Roberts’s
claim that he endeavoured to “debate an issue which was of great concern to his Elizabethan

¹⁶ Anne Falke agrees with Roberts on this point, but adds that she “believe[s] those feelings may have extended to
his feelings regarding the Old World as well” (152). Falke’s observation coincides with my argument here that
Lodge was troubled by his colleagues’ behaviour and values at home as well as overseas.
readers: was the recently discovered territory a second Eden, or rather a vast uncivilized land already tainted with evil?” (408). I question if the text can rightfully be reduced to this aim. The story clearly addresses the contrast between ideals and evils within any given society, but the corruption that is central to the plot of *A Margarite* is not necessarily found in the New World; corrupt behaviour affected his fellow countrymen, who could present a sophisticated image of themselves at home, while engaging in undignified and immoral behaviour while at sea. Vitkus argues that *A Margarite* is a direct reflection of Lodge’s disastrous journey with Cavendish, focusing on how Lodge’s opinion about privateering ventures is woven into his tragic romance. He examines “the tale’s treatment of passionate violence ending in multiple murders, and the violent passions and actions of Cavendish and his men as they followed a course of action that met with dire misfortune” (100). Like Roberts, Vitkus acknowledges that Lodge was disturbed by the hatred and destruction he encountered, but Vitkus does not attempt to connect the text to the “New World” itself, or make any profound connections to Elizabethan literary culture, as does Linton. The critics I have addressed in this paragraph are integral to my point that Lodge was dismayed with the immoral behaviour he saw and appalled by the overwhelming contradiction between Elizabethan imperial values and an honourable national identity.

**Lodge Confronts Genre: Romance Gone Awry**

The sensational violence and depravity that drive the narrative’s conflict speak not only to Lodge’s negative impression of this experience, but also to social and political anxieties we know the Elizabethans were facing towards the end of the century. In fact, Beecher questions if the horrific closure to the story can be “made to stand as an emblem for the mood of an age or the temperament of the author?” (Lodge 18). This question relates to why Lodge would want to pretend the story was not his original work. He claims that the story is a translation of a romance
he found “in the library of the Jesuits in Sanctum” (Lodge 75), which he liked enough to copy. While he may simply have been “using an old, conventional device” (Rae 94), he also may have chosen to disguise the work as a found narrative because he thought it would add intrigue to the text. Alternatively, perhaps his motive aligns with Walpole’s rationale for originally claiming Otranto was a translation—because he had written something vastly different from the popular literature the public was used to, and he was unsure how they would respond to it.

Nonetheless, the dissimulation in his dedication suggests that Lodge wanted to hide his critique of the gentleman explorer’s ruthlessness and false righteousness behind his claim that the work was a translation. In his remarks, Lodge does not directly address the political or religious fears of his time but he still communicates a socially significant anxiety about the consequences of abusing power. Beecher points out that while the “political overtones” of the story are not central and specific enough to point directly to Elizabethan politics, the “events with high political consequences” in A Margarite would have resonated with Elizabethan readers because they would recognize in Arsadachus’s behaviour “all that had been fixed in their minds concerning political instability caused by wayward and ambitious princes” (12). While the fiction is not a direct allegory for specific Elizabethan political troubles, it does reflect “preoccupations in the forefront of the Tudor mind concerning succession, the instruction of princes, civil war, and tyranny” (Beecher 12). Therefore, by framing his tale as a revenge narrative within a romance, Lodge could create some distance from the issues which he raises throughout the text.

17 Lodge refers to Santos here, the city Cavendish plundered and occupied for several weeks.
18 In the preface to the first edition Walpole apologizes for the anonymous author’s subject matter and the story’s “air of the miraculous” (40).
Despite his previous success with his prose romance *Rosalynde* (1590), Lodge’s next work of fiction challenges the genre of romance with *A Margarite of America*, which distorts romance conventions in order to comment on the pervasive corruption and hypocrisy he saw in his own society. With *A Margarite*, Lodge combines romance and revenge tragedy in a story that highlights the dichotomy between the two genres and iterates the consequences of both virtue and transgression in a world where nothing is certain. Wilson explains that Lodge was in a dialogue with contemporary authors concerning stylistic and conventional elements of romance (139-41). She also suggests that he may have crossed a line with his narrative distortions, as she refers to *A Margarite* as “possibly the goriest, the most allusive, and the most ironic of Elizabethan novels” (158). Beecher echoes this statement when he acknowledges the narrative’s “egregious manifestations of violence and carnage” (15), but he also points out that Lodge “was clearly in tune with the times in adapting the formulae of revenge tragedy to prose fiction” (13).¹⁹ The Senecan inspired revenge tragedies that were popular during Lodge’s period featured tyrants and backstabbers, and relied on corruption, melodrama, violence, and gore to captivate audiences. While Lodge took advantage of that trend with *A Margarite*, this narrative did not measure up to the success of his *Rosalynde*. *Rosalynde* was Lodge’s most well-loved work, with which he was able to achieve great popularity, but in the six years between *Rosalynde* and *A Margarite* his tone and creative motivation changed dramatically. In short, he rejected *Rosalynde*’s sincere evocation of the pastoral and exchanged it for *A Margarite*’s cynical emphasis on corrupt ambition. Lodge published *Rosalynde* after his first foray into privateering,

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¹⁹ Rae comments that the “Senecan bloodiness at the end is dramatic reality that Elizabethans were demanding on the stage” (95). Additionally, Wilson notes that the “theme which dominates Lodge’s works in the 1590s is the apprehension of evil in the world” (157). These observations complement Lodge’s choice to write such a shockingly violent text.
which was “probably the voyage [Captain] Clarke undertook in 1585” (Wilson 144), and wrote *A Margarite* during his second trip overseas, when he sailed with Cavendish on his final voyage. while the Clarke voyage inspired the conventional romance *Rosalynde,* the Cavendish voyage inspired the antithesis in the “romance-turned-revenge-tragedy,” *A Margarite.* Lodge’s text not only perverts romance conventions, but also exploits his experience on the Cavendish voyage. *A Margarite* allows him to express his subversive opinion about corruption and hypocrisy among the genteel adventurers of Elizabethan England. He evokes the exciting and dangerous setting in which he wrote *A Margarite* in his dedications to his readers, and composes his “romance” narrative in the violent and melodramatic tradition of revenge tragedy by which he could expect his readers to be intrigued. Below, I will demonstrate with a brief look at Lodge’s writing style previous to *A Margarite* that he satirizes romance ideals and exploits revenge tragedy in an effort to express his concerns about the privateering culture he experienced firsthand.

**The Role of Chivalric Conventions in *A Margarite of America***

Lodge’s depiction of courtly and chivalric conventions serves as a medium for indirectly addressing his concern with hypocrisy and corruption among his peers. In short, by undermining romance conventions with the destructive elements of revenge tragedy, Lodge uses the courtly, pastoral setting of *A Margarite* ironically to voice his disdain. Indeed, Lodge’s writing communicates his anxiety about the dualities of gentleman privateers’ behaviour and more so, about notions of morals and honour, which are social concerns addressed in both Renaissance and Gothic literature. Codes of honour in the early modern period were strongly influenced by

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20 Rae refers to the Clarke voyage as Lodge’s “successful voyage to the Canaries” and notes that his dedication in *Rosalynde* “spills over with . . . confidence and self assurance” (58).

21 I must credit Beecher here, as this phrase is how he describes the genre of Lodge’s “composite work” (11).
the chivalric codes of the medieval period. Lockey explains in Law and Empire in English Renaissance Literature that there were “three conventions” in the “typical romance of the period” that the major writers mobilized: “the chivalric code, the pastoral, and the ‘mirror for princes’ tradition” (7). The period’s writers employed these conventions to address issues concerning honour. Importantly, by the Renaissance period, people had internalized notions of morality and honour as “a naturalized and universalized notion of courtesy/civility” (Lockey 36). Lockey’s summary of the history of chivalry and courtesy explains that medieval literature portrayed the chivalric code as something that “transcends national and religious boundaries” (31), so that an author need not take a particular side, religious or otherwise, when addressing honour in a romance narrative. It is important to consider what this emphasis on honour meant in the world of imperial expansion, because the actions of imperial conquerors very often contradicted the true spirit of chivalry or honour that these men were supposed to value (35).

Lockey asks if we should “treat the early modern appeals to chivalry and courtesy as . . . window dressing, ultimately concealing and enabling a more vicious reality” (35). This question suggests a level of hypocrisy at work in the culture of chivalry and courtesy, which my research demonstrates Lodge recognizes. Addressing perceptions of chivalry and courtesy that have such an integral place in the genteel masculine identity of the early modern period poses questions, which I will explore, about the contradictions of gentleman privateers’ identities and behaviour in the new and changing contexts of international exploration in the sixteenth century.

The notion of early modern fiction evoking chivalry and courtesy to disguise “a more vicious reality” (Lockey 35) is certainly at work in A Margarite of America because Lodge deploys the romance genre to write not just a tale of deceit and destruction—there is, of course, plenty of both in early modern romance—but a tale of deceit and destruction linked to horrific
violence enabled by individual and cultural duality. This particular kind of deceit and
destruction is a central link to the Gothic in Lodge’s narrative because of the emphasis on duality
and the menace of patriarchal authority in the Gothic. Lodge opens the story with the peaceful
resolution of a long war (77-79), wherein Arsinous pacifies the armies with a speech that
chastises their violence and appeals to their leaders’ sense of honour. He exclaims: “If you will
be held virtuous and monarchies as I wish you should be, desire nothing to the damage of your
common weals, lest in satisfying your own humours ye subvert your subjects’ happiness” (Lodge
78); his dual appeal is clearly successful, since his speech ends the fighting. Immediately
following this opening scene Lodge positions his story in the pastoral mode, with an emphasis on
honour and virtue. He focuses on the courtly lovers Minecius and Philenia, while emphasizing
their virtues of chastity and piety in a pastoral setting. Philenia is Margarita’s closest friend and
a “chaste maid to attend her in love” (83). (In this context, “maid” refers to a young unmarried
woman rather than a servant). Minecius, who sometimes would don a “pastoral habit” and then
hide “in the groves . . . where the ladies were accustomed to walk” and play love songs (84),
writes passionate verses for Philenia; the examples Lodge includes are both entitled “Pietati”
which translates as “for duty/piety” (85-88). As Margarita observes this courtship she imagines
“her Arsadachus” courting herself, “and by perceiving the true heart of one, supposed the perfect
habit of the other” (84). Thus, by observing Minecius’s true love for Philenia, she presumes
Arsadachus is true as well because he would “make signs of great devotion toward Margarita,”
but all the while his courteous behaviour serves to “delude her with most hateful doubleness”
(92). Margarita’s assumption exemplifies how corruption is easily masked behind courteous
pretences because Arsadachus will manipulate her based on the general expectations related to
courtly lovers’ behaviour. Beecher’s mention of the “compromised pastoral interludes” of the
supposedly safe pastoral spaces, which Lodge uses to “underscore the hypocrisy and eventual horror” (36) is relevant here. The pastoral elements in the text are linked to the culture of chivalry because early modern readers readily connected romance and the pastoral. Arsadachus’s corruption and destruction of the court’s blissfulness contradict the pastoral expressions of courtesy and love; this point is made especially clear later in the text when Arsadachus uses a lover’s demeanour to manipulate Margarita into unwittingly helping him commit murder. The narrator explains that Arsadachus, “[f]or knowing that Margarita dearly loved him, . . . began anew to cloak with her, . . . he found her alone walking in the privy garden in her meditations, . . . where nighing her with a courtly salute, he thus found her affection” (106). In the privacy of Margarita’s garden, Arsadachus exploits her trust and devotion and she, aiming to please him, promises “to do whatsoever him best liked” (106), which is lying to her father about dreaming of his murder by a trusted courtier, Thebion (110). Related to this discussion is Vitkus’s observation that in A Margarite “the typical romance concerns, including courtly love, chivalric rhetoric, and aristocratic display, serve not to ennoble or to celebrate virtue, but to manipulate and deceive” (101). Lodge includes many indications in his narrative that he was engaging with the chivalric tradition, such as the jousting tournament midway through the tale, wherein, ironically enough, Arsadachus is triumphant (118-20), and the discussion of love among the guests that follows, during a party, wherein Arsadachus convinces Margarita that he truly loves her (126-32). Lodge’s male protagonist, however, is a deceitful tyrant, whose exaggerated, atrocious behaviour leads to Arsadachus’s annihilation of his own bloodline and that of the innocent Margarita. Importantly, he is a perversion of the popularized

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22 Beecher addresses this “questioni d’amore” scene and reminds readers that “this “polite” game can be traced back to the medieval love courts where courtiers and their ladies discussed the fine points of chivalric courtesy and honour” (37).
image of the courtier. His character is fashioned by his family to fulfill an important duty and fashioned by the author to represent a great hypocrisy; yet he also represents the anxieties of identity that give rise to and are reflected by the self-fashioning of the Renaissance period. Self-fashioning is highly significant to Elizabethan courtly culture. According to Greenblatt, “manuals of behaviour” taught courtiers how to behave in high society and, importantly, how to delude others into perceiving them favourably (162). A crucial point here is that “[d]issimulation and feigning are an important part of the instructions given by almost every court manual” (163). It follows that Arsadachus’s deceptive identity is representative of a nightmare version of the early modern courtier’s self-fashioned persona. Arsadachus veils his corruption behind courtly virtues, and because he is in a position of political influence, his behaviour has drastic consequences. The “vicious reality” in A Margarite lies in the duality of the evil protagonist Arsadachus, and furthermore, in the hypocrisy represented in this text which seems to celebrate virtue and honour, but actually thrives on the emptiness and destruction of these qualities.

It is clear to critics today that corruption, violence, and hopelessness undermine the romance genre and pastoral themes in A Margarite. The critical discussions that help inform this element of my analysis examine the various sources and contemporary influences that characterize Lodge’s writing style. Lodge’s generic distortions in A Margarite are most effectively highlighted by looking at the overall pessimism of his narrative. Critics such as Claudette Pollack, Wilson, Linton, and Vitkus all focus on the ways Lodge’s pastoral and chivalric elements highlight falsity and corruption. Pollack’s discussion of the “medley” of sources Lodge uses highlights the “elements of Spenserian pastoral, the violence of the novella, the questioni d’amore of the courtesy books, the combats of the romances of chivalry, and . . . a
bit of poetry, original and translated” (1). Her analysis facilitates connections between the ambitious courtier and the Gothic hero-villain that I examine in Chapter Two, but here I use her study to point out how Lodge uses Arsadachus’s lack of moral integrity to undermine courtly conventions. Pollack points out that “[a]s a Prince, Arsadachus cleverly uses his courtly charms for malevolent ends. As a courtier he leads his King away from virtue. Lacking all conscience, he can be neither courageous, just, nor wise” (4). Arsadachus’s appearance of virtue points to the hypocrisy within the ruling classes, because the moral codes that should be internalized within the culture of chivalry and courtesy are violated. This perspective is significant, because if the reader can recognize that Arsadachus is corrupt and identify his behaviour as immoral and dishonourable, then the connections that Lodge makes in his dedications between this text and his experiences imply by analogy a link between Arsadachus’s behaviour and that of other courtiers, especially those whom Lodge knew well, such as Cavendish, the other gentlemen on the voyage, and, by extension, the behaviour of imperial explorers at large. Pollack does not make this connection, but Linton forms a similar argument. Linton’s discussion of Lodge’s use of satire makes overt connections to imperial and religions tensions in the Elizabethan era. She asserts that Spenser and Ralegh used “Protestant chivalry [as] the quintessential expression of English pride” (47). After elucidating how Spenser and Ralegh used the romance genre as, essentially, imperial Protestant propaganda, she explains how Lodge’s use of doubleness “mocks the conventions of romance through subversive imitation” (52). This point indicates that his use of doubleness has a dual aim: he emphasizes the emptiness of the values of chivalry and honour perpetuated by the ruling classes and positions himself (a Catholic) in opposition to the hegemonic values of a Protestant-ruled society. This veiled attack on mainstream Elizabethan

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23This comment is also significant to my discussion in chapter 2 regarding Castiglione’s courtier and Machiavellian characteristics Lodge wrote into Arsadachus’s character.
culture subverts the hopeful themes of conventional romance narratives. Wilson notices that when Lodge wrote *Rosalynde* he “was playing games with pastoral conventions” (147), and when she shifts her discussion to *A Margarite*, she implies that he continues to play games with the romance genre’s conventions, although without the positive resolution allowed in *Rosalynde*. For example, Wilson acknowledges that *Rosalynde*’s hopeful ending is “full of reconciliations, between men as well as couples” (145), but in contrast, she notes that Lodge’s resolution to *A Margarite* demonstrates that “[r]omance, like Margarita, is too fragile to survive in a perverted world” (159). Significantly, Wilson acknowledges that “Lodge turned to revenge tragedy for a moral conclusion to his work” (160), and that he chose to use romance as a “distorting mirror” (162) for privateering and courtly culture with which he had become disillusioned. Importantly, Lodge’s distortion of romance interlaced with revenge indicates his disillusionment within a society that privileges one’s image of integrity over true honour; Elizabethans are familiar with this courtly duality in the context of the behaviour manuals, but rather than celebrating this highly constructed behaviour, Lodge mocks it.

**The Tyrant and his Transgressions**

As I mentioned in the introduction, this thesis refers frequently to revenge tragedy because Lodge imitated that genre’s subject matter and violence in his narrative. A crucial connection between Lodge’s distorted romance narrative, early modern revenge tragedies, and Gothic literature revolves around the tyrant’s transgressions and the destruction that results from his crimes. When a fictional ruler or patriarch is also a villain in a revenge story, we enter the grounds that encompass discussions of tyranny, whether discussing sixteenth-century or eighteenth-century texts, because tyranny involves an illegitimate and immoral exercise of
power. Here, I examine the role of the tyrannical revenger when he participates in the self-fashioning designed to mask his moral flaws and transgressive impulses.

Stories of tyrant rulers, betrayal, and deceit were common on the Elizabethan stage, because they helped to mediate people’s political concerns and provided a sort of mirror for the social behaviour of the aristocracy. Lockey explains that the role of the “mirror for princes” tradition in Renaissance romance was to instruct “political leaders on how to govern according to Christian morality and Roman and Greek political ideals” (42). Erasmus and Machiavelli were the two most influential writers within the “mirror genre” (42). It is important to acknowledge that this tradition did not solely benefit political leaders; the didactic effect of these texts reached other readers. When Lodge uses courtly conventions to highlight deceit and subvert the romance genre, he also subverts aristocratic society by turning the mirror to them and reflecting the faults of his target audience back onto themselves. In other words, he highlights the constructedness of aristocratic identity and the dangerous dualities of the ambitious and morally corrupt gentleman.

Given the highly constructed and social role of literature in any setting, readers can understand that the Renaissance, as a period characterized by the renewal and redefinition of classical models, would be preoccupied with discovery and cultural growth. Because literature plays a crucial role in social change, it follows that the literature of this period was a product of a “culture whose works were conditioned by the social, political, and religious forces with which they participated, which they reflected, and to which they in turn contributed” (Kinney 6). In this context, the effects of drama and print narrative differed for each audience, and an author’s choice to write in either medium is telling.

So why does Lodge take such influence from drama, but compose a prose narrative? Linton argues that Lodge’s “choice of narrative reflects his distance from the specific dispute
surrounding the [Cavendish] voyage and, more importantly, his sense of the connection between the romance and privateering” (49). As I interpret it, that narrative distance is crucial to Lodge’s subversive position because he must veil his critique of privateering culture for his text to be popular among the aristocracy. While Lodge’s narrative certainly provides distance with its foreign setting and euphuistic style—which is a distinctive and elaborate style originated by author John Lyly and employed by Lodge “in all of his later prose” (Rae 23)—there is more to his choice. By situating *A Margarite*’s conditions of authorship on the voyage, Lodge associates his text with the voyage’s brutality and failure, but he distances his critique of Cavendish by creating a revenge villain in the popular Machiavellian style. Thereby, he is able to gesture toward the “mirror for princes” tradition that allows him to shape his tyrant-prince in accordance with self-fashioning. Within the “mirror for princes” trope he can fashion a dualistic tyrant that no one should seek to emulate and make it apparent that a carefully fashioned and postured persona represents corruption. Greenblatt discusses Thomas Wyatt’s literary identity that is “defined by its rejection of the doubleness that in a corrupt world assures sexual and political success” (160). Lodge also rejects this doubleness, which is apparent with his characterization of the dissembler Arsadachus who is ultimately destroyed by the magnitude of his duality. To return to the question of Lodge’s choice of narrative, by choosing prose over drama he could construct the story and characters in such a way that the reader would be affected by the consequences of hypocrisy, self-interested behaviour, and corruption on Lodge’s own terms rather than the director and actors, in a performative (theatrical) setting, imposing their own interpretations on the performance. In other words, Lodge’s diction emphasizes excess and courtly ceremony in an ironic way, to mock rather than celebrate, and his intrusive narrator makes it clear that morality and justice should be the centre of the reader’s attention.
Early modern depictions of tyrants were not always consistent. Rebecca Bushnell begins her *Tragedies of Tyrants* by contextualizing the purpose of the tyrant on the early modern stage and the background of theatrical tyranny in the Greek dramas that so influenced Renaissance revenge tragedy. She explains that the familiar interpretation of tyranny in Renaissance theatre is “that by offering a prince the mirror of tyranny, tragedy persuades him to rule well; further, in showing a tyrant his own image, tragedy brings him to shame” (1). This comment complements the notion that romance texts employ the “mirror for princes” tradition because it encourages the audience to recognize the characters’ moral weaknesses as faults. Her subsequent discussion describes how dramatic depictions of tyrants were influenced by both the Platonic and Aristotelian tyrant. The most significant difference between the two philosophical theories of leadership is what makes one a just and fair king as opposed to a corrupt and unforgivable tyrant. Importantly, the contrast between a legitimate ruler and a tyrant is not always clear in revenge tragedy, because political writers of the sixteenth century often had difficulty differentiating between the “moral character” of a (rational) ruler and that of an (irrational) tyrant (38). This contrast is likely the outcome of the influence of both branches of philosophy. For example, “the influential psychological and moral model for tyranny, [which opposes] the irrational tyrant to the rational king” comes mainly from Plato’s philosophy (10), while Aristotle “does not generate moral antitheses between kingship and tyranny, because [he] . . . acknowledges quite freely that a ruler can at once be both ‘tyrant’ and ‘monarch’” (Bushnell 26). This may seem obvious given that a legitimate monarch may also be a tyrant, but nevertheless, this ambiguity could be troubling to fictional depictions regarding what characteristics make for a just king or a cruel tyrant. In a revenge tragedy, whose behaviours can be supported? Who is the true villain, if multiple leading characters commit tyrannical revenge? What is moral and / or just can be
subjective depending on whose perspective is taken; the tyrant believes he is seeking justice but the moral lens of the audience or reader can see otherwise. Bushnell notes that the literature that so influenced revenge tragedy in the sixteenth century “is startlingly consistent in stressing the prince’s moral virtue and the tyrant’s corruption” (40). Morals, or lack thereof, is what ultimately divides the king (or other legitimate ruler) from the tyrant in sixteenth-century dramatic representations. Generally speaking, the law aims to uphold moral standards, and the tyrant’s blatant disregard for these standards highlights the illegitimacy of his or her power. But there is another reason the distinction between just king and unjust tyrant was difficult to discern; Bushnell points out that “tyrannos meant ‘monarch’ in the Archaic period and gained a negative political denotation only gradually. . . . [I]t occurs interchangeably with the word basileus [king] up through the fifth century” (10). This point is important because as writers attempted to define the difference between a tyrant and a king, the etymology of “tyrant” continually subverted endeavours to determine a clear distinction between these two types of leadership (Bushnell 42). It was not until well into the seventeenth century that a clear distinction was made in the definitions of the king and the tyrant; a king could have loose morals, “for what made a tyrant was not his moral bearing but rather his depriving the people of their liberty and property” (Bushnell 38). The late sixteenth-century fictional tyrant, however, was a figure bred of moral anxiety—one who could thus simultaneously be a legitimate king and a cruel tyrant. While this may be an overt observation, because some historical monarchs were tyrants, it remained a troubled distinction. The writers of the time “had seen that kings easily slip into being tyrants and that it is too often impossible to distinguish between them; at the same time . . . writers were anxious to keep the names of king and tyrant apart” (42). Nevertheless, fictional representations of monarchs and tyrants often remained ambiguous, and this trend is apparent in *A Margarite*. 
Both Protomachus (Emperor of Mosco) and Artosogon (Emperor of Cusco) are portrayed as forgiving and prudent, albeit power hungry, when they agree to make peace at the beginning of the narrative. It is only when Artosogon’s son, Arsadachus, upsets this peace and order that we see that all rulers in the tale are capable of tyranny. For example, early in the plot Arsadachus convinces Protomachus, Margarita’s father, that one of his courtiers, Thebion, is conspiring to have him (Protomachus) murdered. In response, Protomachus orders the suspected conspirators to be “tyrannously executed” without any chance to defend themselves (Lodge 112-13). The Emperor of Cusco similarly engages in this kind of casual brutality, when Arsadachus betrays Artosogon’s trust by marrying Diana instead of Margarita. Artosogon is as brutal as Protomachus, because Artosogon orders Diana’s father, Argias, to be “torn in pieces at the tails of four wild horses . . . [and] he [sends the remains] to Diana in a present, vowing to serve her in the same sauce her father had tasted” (146). Artosogon’s act of hyperbolic and tyrannical revenge perpetuates further extremes of violence. As these events unfold it becomes clear how Arsadachus became the vengeful man he is, given the behaviour of the man who raised him and the culture of tyranny around him. Although Artosogon advises Arsadachus before he goes to Mosco to restrain his excessive, destructive, corrupt behaviour (Lodge 89-91), when it comes time to practice the restraint he advocates in his instructive speech, he shows that he also solves his problems with violence. Interestingly, he closes his speech to his son with these words: “have respect unto my counsels, lest thou grieve me; for better is a son lost in the cradle than lewd and dissolute in the kingdom” (Lodge 91). In effect, Artosogon has told his son

24Initially, Protomachus is disappointed in Arsadachus for hastily killing one supposed conspirator, “saying that it was inconvenient for a subject to be punished before he were convicted” (112). This points out the hypocrisy of the tyrant, because he immediately resorts to the same hasty and unjust punishment for the other supposed conspirators, as explained here. This is yet another example of Lodge bringing in questions of justice among privileged hypocrites within the hierarchy.
to take the advice seriously because his experience as Emperor and father of a corrupt prince has made him wary of Arsadachus’s “natural follies” (91). Nevertheless, the sensible advice he gives his son is empty, since he shows with his vengeful behaviour (described above) that he does not rule his kingdom rationally. In Lodge’s text, there are no rulers whom any reader should aspire to imitate.

The tyrant’s dedication to passion rather than reason is a main characteristic of the rulers in revenge tragedies, and is featured throughout A Margarite. Although Arsadachus is not a true revenger because he is not driven by a sense of justice but by his lust and hedonism, he can still be discussed in relation to revenger-villains: after all, he believes his tyrannous behaviour is revenge. Arsadachus’s vengeful and hedonistic character aligns with qualities that Bushnell evaluates as belonging to the early modern stage tyrant. The influential model of the tyrant depicted in the sixteenth century, adapted from Plato’s definition, “is a man who gives free rein to desire . . . and is filled with forms of madness. . . . [D]ominated by passion, [he is] driven to terrorize others” (Bushnell 13). This tyrant is, furthermore, consumed with the “need to do ill . . . and the illusion of absolute power is sought to gratify that compulsion” (13). This compulsion of Arsadachus is made apparent when he reciprocates Artosogon’s violent revenge inflicted upon Diana’s father. A prince guided by reason may have considered more carefully his revenge, but Arsadachus, driven by his rage, “vow[ed] in his mind such a revenge on his father, as all the world should wonder to hear the sequel” (146); he then storms into his father’s castle with an army and violently usurps the throne (Lodge 146-48). Arsadachus takes the path of passion rather than that of reason like a true king would, according to the Platonic definition. Rather than waiting for his imminent coronation to take the throne lawfully, he chooses to inflict horrific violence and devastation on the court he inherits.
For the purpose of satisfying his desires, Arsadachus hides his truly transgressive character. Of interest here is how the tyrant’s desire supersedes all conception of lawfulness or honour. Courtesy is a hollow pretence that Arsadachus only uses to further his murderous plots and lustful urges, and he acts on his desires in a calculating and deceitful way. Although he is aware of the codes of honour and morality that guide his role as a prince, he ignores them to fulfill his needs. Throughout much of the plot he is able to maintain the appearance of a rational and even ideal prince, which implies a Machiavellian element to his character. Lodge uses a common trope of Renaissance tragedy by making Arsadachus a Machiavellian villain. The Aristotelian conception of the tyrant emerged in Machiavelli’s works, and in the Aristotelian theory of leadership, “the issue of moral character [is subordinated] to the interests of maintaining the ruler’s absolute power” (Bushnell 29). Absolute power is what Arsadachus will have once he does what is expected of him; as he is the prince and heir, Arsadachus will control two wealthy kingdoms if he marries Margarita, but he must maintain his false image to keep what is promised to him. His amoral character ultimately obstructs him because he pursues absolute power through deceit and tyranny, and thereby achieves it illegitimately. In Aristotle’s philosophy, the tyrant “should avoid letting his debaucheries be seen. . . . [T]o maintain his rule, the tyrant must appear to his subjects to be kinglike” (Bushnell 27). To this end, of hiding his transgressions, Arsadachus plots his actions carefully and poses as a strong and loyal leader. However, he loses control over that facade when he gives into his deranged impulses and disfigures his father (Lodge 146-48). This scene of usurpation demonstrates his loss of control

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25 Beecher acknowledges that within the text Arsadachus is said to be carrying 'Machevil’s prince in his bosom,’” but argues that there is “no compelling evidence that Arsadachus was created directly out of the writings of Machiavelli” (Beecher 12). However, considering Bushnell’s comment that “[l]ike the tyrant, Machiavelli was the scapegoat for the truth of European politics, the Thrasymachus for a Renaissance Plato” (55), it makes sense that Lodge would shape Arsadachus after popular Machiavellian characteristics.
and depicts where Arsadachus departs from the calculating Aristotelian / Machiavellian tyrant and the Platonic tyrant reappears. Bushnell explains that the “Platonic tradition describes the tyrant as giving into excessive desire, which unseats the sovereignty of reason. The tyrannical revolution of desire is associated, in turn, with the fragmenting and multiplying of the tyrant’s self” (9). The tyrant’s fragmented identity is worth noting here because Arsadachus’s desires drive him to escalating debauchery in order to fulfill those impulses, which amounts to him losing control of his facade. Like the classical tyrant, “the Renaissance representation of the tyrant brings into question the fixity and coherence of the sovereign self” (Bushnell 58). Because his veiled character has no fixed and consistent identity “on which moral or political characters can be grounded” he, like typical Renaissance revenge tyrants, indicates that authors of Renaissance revenge tragedy were preoccupied with a “considerable anxiety about the fixity of the male self” (58). Arsadachus’s lack of integrity and desire-driven motivations make him a corrupt and selfish prince. The division of his character between the calculating Machiavellian and the passionate (Platonic) tyrant, furthermore, perpetuates anxieties regarding the discrepancies between a ruler’s private and public identities. As I discuss in Chapter Two, Gothic villains are usually tyrants whose dual identities and penchants for deceitful, immoral behaviour align with the revenge tragedy tyrant’s characterization.

Arsadachus’s spiral into madness results from his excessive desires and disregard of the social order to get what he wants. In fact, getting what he wants, ironically, leads him into madness because when he is at the peak of his excess and debauchery and finally free of Margarita, he remembers her parting gift to him and “called for his box, merrily jesting with Diana and saying that the empress of Mosco deserved so small a remembrance” (162). The magic box that Arsinous had enchanted for Margarita to give to Arsadachus is meant to reveal
his true state of mind upon opening: “if Arsadachus was constant to [Margarita], it would increase his affection; if false, it would procure madness” (164). When he opens the box to mock Margarita, the enchantment releases a “hideous odour [that] so bestraught Arsadachus of his senses that, thrusting the tables from him and overthrowing whatsoever encountered him, he brake out from his seat, cursing the heavens” (163). He then proceeds to massacre his friends and family in a scene that is “unrivaled in Elizabethan literature” for its gruesomeness (Beecher 14). This scene bears many similarities to Senecan tragedy, and is also quite comparable to the contemporary revenge tragedies for its emphasis on sensational corporeal horror.26 Arsadachus’s deranged behaviour in this final scene is comparable to the madness of the villains within early modern revenge tragedies, and connects to the instability of the patriarchal-sovereign identity that troubled early modern England from the Tudor period through the Jacobean period. Thus, the magic box reinforces the anxiety about individuals’ tenuous grasp on order and identity and reinforces the relationship between desire and madness.

The magic box is an interesting device in terms of the text’s relationship to the Gothic. It functions as a plot device that effects justice through magic rather than reason or law. The box is also a probative device, as its enchantment exposes Arsadachus’s truly vile nature. With the introduction of the box as a deus ex machina, Lodge’s text positions Arsinous as the agent of justice, since he enchanted the box to the effect of revealing Arsadachus’s falsity and exacting his revenge for the deaths of his daughter and son-in-law. Early in the plot Arsinous turns to magic after Philenia and Minecius are murdered by Arsadachus. Thus, the presence of this enchanted box is one of only two instances of magic in the text (the other being when Arsinous

26 See Beecher, pages 21-25 for a description of A Margarite’s similarities to Senecan revenge tragedy. Herein Beecher also discusses the text’s similarities to revenge tragedies such as Kyd’s The Spanish Tragedy, Shakespeare’s Titus Andronicus, and Webster’s Duchess of Malfi.
conjures Arsadachus’s image for Margarita on pages 158-59). However, that its task is central to the restoration of order that concludes the plot is integral to the proto-Gothicity of *A Margarite*. Early modern revenge tragedy relies on either the law or private redress to bring about justice. Both practices are vindictive and often violent, but the justice sought through law is at least a rationally based justice (Dunne).27 *A Margarite* insists that none of the story’s rulers are capable of accomplishing rational justice because both emperors are impulsive tyrants who practice passionate revenge. The only non-tyrannical authority figure is the wise Arsinous, but he effectuates his revenge through magic rather than a juridical method. Derek Dunne reminds readers that the relationship between revenge and justice “is more complicated than any simple binary that sees revenge as antithesis of law” (15). Thus, while Arsinous, the rational agent of justice, effects justice through his vengeful use of magic, readers do not interpret his redress as an unlawful revenge. The insistence within the text that justice is achieved through magic aligns with Gothic plots because of the Gothic’s typical application of the supernatural. In their discussion of Gothic sensibility, Bronfen and Neumeier refer to “the awareness of a sustained presence of magical thinking within a conception of the world increasingly ruled by the law of scientific rationality” (2). However, this “magical thinking” is more than a sensibility: it is a central motif of Gothic texts. Ultimately, the box’s role in the plot strengthens *A Margarite*’s connections to the Gothic because only magic can effect justice in Lodge’s narrative.

**Power, Morality, and the Gothic**

When considering Elizabethan anxieties regarding the unstable distinction between a legitimate ruler and a tyrant, it is essential to recall that the sixteenth century was rife with

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27 See Dunne’s *Shakespeare, Revenge Tragedy and Early Modern Law: Vindictive Justice*, particularly the Introduction and first chapter, for a discussion of vindictive justice and the law in the early modern period’s developing juridical system and the period’s revenge tragedies.
political violence. The religious and political upheaval of the often tyrannical Henry VIII remained in early modern England’s cultural memory, and Mary I, known as Bloody Mary, was also unforgettable. Further anxiety stemmed from the confinement and execution of Elizabeth I’s cousin, Mary Queen of Scots. This Scottish, Catholic queen was executed to remove the threat she posed to the English Protestant queen. By the 1590s Elizabeth’s lack of a direct heir left the throne susceptible to a shift in power that could put a Catholic heir in her place. Notably, Elizabeth was seen as a strong and virtuous ruler, but Catholics had no place in Protestant England and her government “isolat[ed] those who remained loyal to Rome by legislation and official pressure which turned them into a harassed minority among the gentry and nobility” (MacCullouch 100). Lodge, who by 1596 had “openly profess[ed] Catholicism” (Linton 48), “attempt[ed] to settle moral and religious questions” (Rae 76) with his later writings. Obviously, Lodge’s role in Protestant England was precarious. His religious identity “added to his ill-success as a writer and as an adventurer” (Rae 76), and the despondency that resulted from his failures and oppressed religious identity undoubtedly affected his attitude toward the Protestant and patriotic culture of English voyages of exploration.28 While Catholics and Catholic sympathizers were troubled by their status and safety in Elizabethan England, the Protestants were likewise concerned about the Catholics among them. Jeaneen Kish identifies this concern in Shakespeare’s Titus Andronicus, which she addresses within the context of the Gothic. Her

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28 Rae makes it clear throughout his biography that Lodge’s continual disappointments frustrated him, and that his religious loyalties made him somewhat of an outcast. Lodge expected success with his well-received Scillaes Metamorphosis and Rosalynde. In fact, Rae explains that “[t]hese two productions ought to have assured his future as a writer [but] they did not” (45). And later, as he embarked on the Cavendish voyage, it appeared to Lodge that “his fortunes were on the upswing; but characteristically, all the ventures . . . ended without success” (67). After that voyage, the “half successes and half failures of his publications were beginning to gall” (59). The bitterness that culminates after the Cavendish voyage is exacerbated by the fact that throughout Lodge’s various texts, his “variety failed to please the Elizabethan reader” (75). By 1596 Lodge was “openly a Roman Catholic” and “Catholicism in Elizabethan England, [in addition to] his ill-success as a writer and as an adventurer, results in nothing but despair” (100, 76).
analysis, “Pre-Gothic Goths: Shakespeare’s usage of the Gothic as Gothic Monsters in *Titus Andronicus*,” examines how the Goths’ atrocious behaviour in the play reflects fears of the cruel persecution of Protestants that happened under Mary (19). The chapter analyzes the Catholic other as monster, and links the play to anxieties about Catholics. Religious differences were a source of anxiety for the Elizabethans because the enemy was often an English citizen, and “not always a clearly demarcated foreign element” (Kish 22). The prospect of an enemy hiding among us, disguised as a friend and threatening the social order, is a concern that transcends time periods, societies, settings, and genres. Significantly, Kish acknowledges that a central concern “of Gothic literature is that many Gothic authors wish to show that what one should fear the most is what is inside of one” (22). In the context of *Titus Andronicus*, the focus of that fear is the Goths as the monstrous outsiders who infect Titus’s kingdom with their barbarity. In the context of Elizabethan England, that fear is focused upon the “terroristic” Catholics that Protestants feared would “[take] over from within” (Kish 22, 21); and in the context of revenge tragedy in general, the tyrant-ruler is the monstrous other—the “political enemy” who “will be defeated” (22). In other words, the tyrant-ruler-revenger figure conflates the ruler and the enemy, and blurs the demarcations of order and national identity.

As research into the Gothic and into revenge tragedy shows, anxieties about order and identity are deeply affected by who holds the power and whose law is in place. These connections also provide concrete reasons for reading sixteenth-century revenge tragedy in the context of eighteenth-century Gothic criticism. By setting out these connections between the periods’ anxieties about the demarcations of law, Susanne Gruss demonstrates that it is practical “to read both Jacobean tragedies and the Gothic as forms of literature that develop from a shared concern of the early modern age and the late eighteenth century to deal with anxieties that stem
from an evolvement of the hierarchical structure of patriarchy” (43). While Gruss focuses closely on the “evolvement of the legal system” and the “eventual conflation of the revenger figure as tyrant” (43, 36), I am more interested in the tyrant ruler’s corruption as a feature of patriarchal hierarchy in proto-Gothic, Elizabethan texts. Furthermore, while this discussion shows that I agree that law is a locus of anxiety for early modern tragedy and the Gothic, I use this framework to emphasize the difference between honourable, virtuous leaders and illegitimate, corrupt leaders, such as the contrast that is made ambiguous in Lodge’s narrative.

The topic of tyranny continues to be pertinent here because the tyrant’s illegitimate application of power undermines justice and morality. The law’s workings in revenge tragedy and Gothic literature link the two genres in critical discussions and gestures toward the element of moral instruction. As Gruss discusses, there is a strong link between Jacobean Gothic, conventional Gothic, and the law; I extend that link to include Lodge’s aberration of romance narrative and, by association, Elizabethan revenge tragedy. This comparison emphasizes the discursive relationship between the law and the ruler. Jacobean tragedy’s and the Gothic’s “shared obsession with the law” (Gruss 40) is a meaningful link, because I identify the authority figures’ tyrannous behaviour as a key theme within early modern tragedy, Lodge’s Elizabethan prose, and Gothic literature. This literature’s preoccupation with tyranny is directly connected to the law’s failures and hypocrisy, because the tyrant as the patriarchal head is acting in the name of the law. Gruss’s analysis acknowledges that the “early modern age can be seen as a period of transition—or crisis—in the development of a national jurisdiction in England” (41).

Comparatively, she notes the eighteenth century legal system’s “still precarious status” and also cites Punter’s observation that “eighteenth century Gothic is obsessed with the law” (42). The contradiction is that the law fails to deliver justice if the revenger is the tyrant ruler.
Accordingly, Lodge comments on justice through his depiction of a tyrant who instigates “revenge” for a slight to his masculinity. Philenia rejects Arsadachus’s sexual advances, which is what initiates his violent behaviour (Lodge 94-95). His blatantly evil behaviour makes it clear to the reader that he is immoral and that his actions are driven by his desires and sense of entitlement, rather than being driven by morality and reason like a just leader should be. Lodge’s use of Arsinous and the narrator as voices of morality and reason provide the strongest indications of the narrative’s moral lesson. When seeking retribution for his slain daughter, the wise Arsinous says: “Plato saith that the chiepest gift that the gods have bestowed on man is justice” (114). And furthermore, the narrator philosophizes, “for whereas justice sleepeth being overborne with tyranny, the most secure have cause to fear” (113). And after the carnage of the story’s climax, Arsinous gives a speech about Arsadachus’s tyrannies and comments, “for certain, it is such as practice open wrong live not long, for the gods yield them shortest life that have the wickedest ways” (165). This comment is a morally loaded statement, and resonates with Lodge’s moral judgement of the tragedy of Cavendish’s voyage, which the reader finds thinly veiled within Lodge’s dedication “To the Gentleman Readers” when he comments on “M. Candish, whose memory if I repent not, I lament not,” and mentions that he feared for his life daily (Lodge 75). Arsinous and the narrator’s comments imply that justice is the remedy to the crimes of tyranny; however, the justice that is achieved at the end of the text is at the cost of Margarita’s life, the last emblem of purity remaining in that narrative world.

There are interesting connections to the treatment of justice in Gothic literature. Leslie J. Moran examines the equity that jurisprudence is supposed to defend and carry out. The notion of Law as haunting and corrupting the “straight path of rule and reason” (87) provides an interesting perspective when we consider the tyrant’s abuse of his power. Citing William
Beckford’s *Vathek*, Moran shows that “the constitutional institutions of monarchy and sovereignty . . . are presented as corruption and evil institutionalized” in Vathek’s character (87). This notion of a sovereign in a Gothic novel representing the corruption festering under the name of “Law” correlates with the representation of the tyrant ruler in early modern revenge tragedy. In line with Bushnell’s depiction of the English stage tyrant’s significance to the populace, Moran concurs that “corrupt sovereign power takes the form of passion, sensuality, pleasure” (87). The political tyrant of revenge tragedy is not far removed from the corrupt patriarch of early Gothic romance, where the flaws in patriarchy and codes of honour are made glaringly apparent. When a Gothic novel or revenge tragedy depicts a ruler’s corruption, licentiousness, impulsive cruelty, or other such transgressions, that text is also pointing to the inability of the juridical system to uphold the morals crucial to a strong national identity. Of course, this identity implies united interests and values of those benefiting from the system; however, what is moral—or right, and immoral—or wrong, differs between religions, political loyalties, and other ideologies. In turn, the anxiety that justice for one may not be justice for all is an element of the focus on law in the Gothic and revenge tragedy alike. In this way we can see how justice is at the heart of revenge tragedy and Gothic, because it is always being sought whether or not that justice is actually found. In effect, law, together with its failures or contradictions, is the locus of anxiety for Gothic and revenge tragedy, evidence of which we can identify in Lodge’s narrative as a participant in this developing proto-Gothic mode.

Related is Botting’s remark that “[u]ncertainties about the nature of power, law, society, family and sexuality dominate Gothic fiction. They are linked to wider threats of disintegration manifested most forcefully in political revolution” (5). In other words, Gothic plots reflect anxieties about the political and social changes that threaten identity and the normal and
comfortable order of things. I return here to the “Gothic plot” of Henry VIII’s life that Williams uses to illustrate the connections between the Renaissance and Gothic romance because we can see how such changes influenced the future anxieties of the nation. This king changed England’s religious affiliations because he wanted absolute power. His split from the Roman church altered the course of English religious identity and was instrumental to a reform that contributed to the tension between the Protestants and Catholics in the following several decades. In other words, this real-life tyrant changed the law to suit his desires, with far reaching repercussions for the nation’s identity. But his own identity was also affected by his behaviours—he is after all remembered for his tyranny along with his courtly talents, “for Henry VIII was a musician, composer, and lyricist” (Walker 180). History’s depictions of Henry VIII emphasize his duality, and the Tudor period saw the development of the revenge tragedy genre that we are now connecting to long-lasting anxieties about patriarchy, power, law, and identity as mediated through the Gothic mode.

Whereas the Gothic developed in the eighteenth century to mediate those anxieties concerning the stability of boundaries and identity, the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century turned to revenge tragedy to confront similar anxieties. The most notable change in the eighteenth century that evoked fear in the English population was the French Revolution, which aroused uncertainties and terror in the minds of the British people as the possibility of rebellion and civil war on British soil became a visceral anxiety. While the Gothic officially began decades before the French revolution (1789), that war and the American Revolution (1765-1783) influenced anxieties about British identity. As the Empire’s borders changed from the west, and their sovereign authority was threatened from the east, the British identity crisis manifested itself in Gothic literature. During the latter decades of the sixteenth century, England competed for
power with Spain, sought mercantile profits, and explored new territories around the world. This exploration meant changing borders and changing identities for the English voyagers as they expanded England’s knowledge, wealth, and empire.

Exploration during the sixteenth century was unpredictable and to an extent, uncontrollable; it sought new trade destinations and new territories for England around the globe, it created new identities for the explorers who took part, and it was a pivotal point in the imperial identity that England would earn in the near future. The destabilizing sensation of this global project was mirrored in literary culture. Vitkus notes Constance Relihan’s argument that the “imaginative geography of prose romance allowed for the exploration of new identities” (106) and this is not always a positive realization. Notably, new and changing identities are an anxiety recognized in Gothic fiction. Questions of order and power were crucial to the era of the French Revolution in which Gothic literature thrived. The Gothic rose as an ambivalent and subversive genre which functioned to mediate the anxieties of its moment. The discussion of how Lodge breaks generic conventions in *A Margarite* remains important because he legitimizes his story with the setting and context of composition, but at the same time he grapples with ideological anxieties through his distortion of romance. I maintain that *A Margarite* is really a subversive gesture made by an emergent Catholic, disillusioned with the romance of exploration and anxious about the state of society, which he has realized is entirely postured and hypocritical. Ironically, he chose romance as the form within which to interrogate these issues, and this choice contributes to the subversive and ambivalent nature of his narrative. Furthermore, if the project of exploration was seen by the Crown as a proud and patriotic venture, but the reality was the opposite of glorious, noble, and virtuous, then Lodge’s story is also commenting on his disapproval of mainstream English values. Lodge, who was numbered among the English who
were Catholic, could have been reaching out to a readership that needed to ameliorate their moral and ideological anxieties. The next chapter strengthens connections to the Gothic mode and examines how Lodge uses his main characters to illuminate the dualities and deceptions inherent to the culture of courtly self-fashioning.
Chapter Two:

Lodge’s Proto-Gothic Characters

This chapter examines the main characters of *A Margarite*, the innocent, naive Margarita and the corrupt, tyrannous Arsadachus, as proto-Gothic characters. I identify the elements of these characters’ descriptions and behaviours that most clearly connect them to two main characters in Mathew Lewis’s 1796 Gothic novel *The Monk*: the victimized maiden Antonia and the lustful monk Ambrosio. Margarita and Antonia are chaste, naive, trusting, beautiful, and hopelessly doomed from the beginning. In contrast, Arsadachus embodies cruelty, lust, and treason, and these qualities connect Lodge’s villain to Lewis’s monstrous monk. Additionally, I examine the trope of the veil in relation to the dichotomy between virtue and vice in both texts. Whether it is the literal veil worn by the maidens or the figurative veil of the villains’ personae, the image of the veil highlights the opposition between surface and interior, and between virtue and vice. As with many tragic romances and Gothic tales alike, the contrast between the heroines and villains has much to do with virtue, or lack of it. The innocent maidens are endangered by the corrupt villains, who use their respected status and persuasion skills to mask their true intentions. Arsadachus presents himself as the ideal courtier—whom Lodge fashions partially after Castiglione’s ideal gentleman from his *Book of the Courtier*—but Arsadachus is actually corrupt and lacks the internal virtues associated with this ideal (Pollack 1-2). Pollack also observes that within this characterization are elements of Machiavelli’s ideal ruler outlined in his treatises *The Prince* and *The Discourses*. Lodge’s depiction of Arsadachus as outwardly virtuous and inwardly corrupt highlights the duality of this character, which I will relate to the Gothic figure of the hero-villain—another two-sided and often hypocritical figure. The moral implications attached to this characterization give significance to the power dynamics between
the villains and the heroines. Lodge highlights the dualities and deceptions underlying courtly culture as distinct from its idealization of purity and honour as epitomized in romance narratives. In this context, the veil, whether figurative or literal, emphasizes the performative nature of early modern court-culture, and adds a pessimistic element to the practice of self-fashioning that was so normalized within aristocratic social-circles. Furthermore, as the conflict of Gothic texts involves questions of power, boundaries, and transgression, there are strong connections between the anxieties of Lodge’s and Lewis’s contemporary societies. A shared textual feature that addresses anxieties regarding the abuse of authority is that the rising action revolves around the villain’s depraved behaviour, achieved through a deceitful and tyrannical exercise of power, in which the consequences are tragic and the social order is jeopardized.  

Tragically Naive Heroine-martyrs

The contrast between Arsadachus and Margarita is depicted early in the narrative, as is the juxtaposition between corruption and virtue represented by these characters. In fact, the plot of *A Margarite* is driven by this juxtaposition, which is comparable to the dynamic between the main characters in *The Monk*. Lodge’s plot begins with the betrothal of these two incompatible youths to end a war between their fathers’ empires. When Arsadachus is introduced, he is immediately depicted as innately corrupt. The reader learns that “Arsadachus . . . fed himself with his own natural follies; and . . . his lewd thoughts aimed at nothing but wickedness were the evident signs of his sinister behaviour. For being well shaped by nature, there was not any man more estranged from nurture” (Lodge 91). In contrast, Margarita is virtuous, naive, trusting, and

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29 I remind the reader here that Lodge’s narrative engages with similar themes and issues as the revenge tragedies of his contemporaries, which have been identified as proto-Gothic texts. These analyses provide connections between abuses of power in early modern proto-Gothic revenge tragedies and similar concerns in the eighteenth century Gothic literature (Gruss, Kish.). I argue that Lodge’s text shares concerns with Gothic literature, thereby making an appropriate connection between the two eras’ ideological concerns.
beautiful; in fact, she is “the chiefest, fairest, and chastest” maiden in the empire (79). When her father tells her of the marriage contract, her “blushes at first showed her modesty, and with obedience [she] at last consented to his mind” (79). Margarita is dutifully willing to marry, and she idealizes love while remaining reserved in her courtship behaviour. Importantly, Margarita and Arsadachus never actually marry, and she remains a virgin throughout the narrative.

Margarita’s modesty, obedience, and chastity represent the virtuous ideal for women in the early modern period. Moreover, these values continue to be the feminine ideal in the eighteenth century as well. Studies of aristocratic ideals in early modern England show that while “court ladies were expected to be visible, affable, [and] endearing to men of their rank or higher . . . the desirable woman also had to be modest in demeanour and emotionally reticent” (Armstrong and Tennenhouse 7). Because her purpose was to be desirable to men of her class and to ensure her husband’s bloodline remained pure, “it was also necessary that an aristocratic woman appear [and be] chaste” (7). Suzanne Hull points out that women’s guidebooks in the early modern period had “different emphases” concerning what exactly constituted the ideal woman, but it is clear that “[h]onor and virtue were vital” (33-34). Hull’s study also highlights the tone of women’s literature, which focused on developing the values of chastity and modesty from a young age (65). Furthermore, she notes that women were discouraged from reading romance or other potentially corrupting stories (Hull 16, 59, 72), which, of course, was meant to keep women ignorant of sexuality and protected from vice. It follows that we value the maiden’s naivety, because it represents her innocence and purity, traits which correspond with her chastity (and female virtue in general). These traits constitute conventional ideals, and a woman’s
chastity and innocence were just as valued in the sixteenth century as they were in the eighteenth, when the Gothic genre emerged.30

Fatefully, Margarita’s hopelessly naive and trusting personality dooms her from the beginning. Lodge’s narrator informs readers that “Margarita, thinking all that gold which glistered . . . trusted so long until she perished in her trust, wholly ignorant that love is like the sea star, which whatsoever it toucheth, it burneth” (92). Because the narrator has established that Margarita’s innocence, manifested here as naivety, opposes Arsadachus’s depraved, deceitful nature, the information that “she perished in her trust” foreshadows that her blind, dutiful love for him will cause her demise. The heroine’s naivety is a key parallel between the sixteenth-century romance heroine and the eighteenth-century Gothic heroine. The Gothic heroine is continually faced with dangers, commonly from within the home or another place of perceived safety; moreover, the threat to her virtue is a direct result of her naivety and purity. For example, Ambrosio desires Antonia all the more because she is wholly innocent,31 and Arsadachus’s lust for Margarita’s virtuous friend, Philenia, is increased because she is betrothed to another and is unattainable. As Avril Horner explains, “Portrayed usually in relation to contemporary notions of the proper lady, the heroine demonstrates a passive courage in the face of such danger” (115-16). This juxtaposition between purity and corruption fuels the action and drives the Gothic narrative, because the villain is motivated by his impulse toward transgression and destruction (both power-seeking behaviours), and the heroine’s purity and passivity tempt him every step of

30 Margarita and Gothic heroines are characterized in this way so that their virtues can be in direct opposition to their male antagonists’ corruption. In fact, the plot of The Castle of Otranto begins with the virtuous princess Isabella fleeing from the tyrannical Manfred, who intends to force himself on her. While Otranto establishes this opposition between victim and villain in the Gothic mode, this plot structure is clearly not a Gothic invention.
31 Lewis’s depiction of the conflict between rectitude and sexual desire begins with Ambrosio’s relationship with Matilda, who is disguised as the young monk, Rosario, and gives rise to critical discussions of the homoerotic in Lewis’s novel. However, this thesis focuses on the parallels of the villain/victim relationship between Ambrosio and Antonia compared to Lodge’s Arsadachus and Margarita.
the way. On the one hand, the heroine’s virtues provide her with the strength to endure, but on
the other hand, they are also what make her so precariously vulnerable, because they fuel the
villain’s impulse to destroy virtue and thus assert his masculine power.

Antonia’s and Margarita’s appearances are essential to their depictions as virtuous and
naive, because their purity and inexperience are portrayed through their apparel. A comparison
between the descriptions of these two heroines’ idealized qualities illustrates Margarita’s role as
a proto-Gothic heroine. *The Monk* introduces Antonia as elegant, modest, beautiful, and wholly
innocent. *Innocence* here is equated with ignorance of sexuality, wickedness, and deceit, and, as
with Margarita, Antonia’s chastity and naivety are essential to her beauty. As Agnieszka
Lowczanin points out, Antonia’s beauty is inseparable from her virtue, because elements of
physical female beauty “are mentioned along with qualities which are to stand for innocence, and
that in turn is to be read as a chastity, moral and physical, necessary to complete beauty”
(Lowczanin 129). The elements of beauty to which Lowczanin refers are in the context of
eighteenth-century notions of “perceiving beauty in symmetry” (129), but this point—that beauty
is equated with chastity and naivety—is certainly not limited to eighteenth-century ideals. In
fact, Paul Langford argues that it is a “classical tradition” which had weighty influence over
perceptions of beauty “since the Renaissance” (Langford, qtd. in Lowczanin 127). Lowczanin’s
discussion highlights the importance of what Antonia’s clothing indicates about her virtue. In
the opening scene of *The Monk* Antonia’s potential suitor, Lorenzo, surveys her physical
qualities, and the description given is as much of her clothing as of her features:

> Her features were hidden by a thick veil; but struggling through the crowd had
deranged it sufficiently to discover a neck which for symmetry and beauty
might have vied with the Medicean Venus. . . . Her bosom was carefully
veiled. Her dress was white; it was fastened by a blue sash, and just permitted
to peep out from under it a little foot of the most delicate proportions. (Lewis
41)

Antonia’s description focuses on how her clothing reflects her purity and inexperience, because
her white dress and thick, black veil hide her features, and glimpses of her hair, neck, and a foot,
are visible under her dress (Lewis 40-1). The parts of her body which are veiled or otherwise
covered reveal much about her character by revealing so little. The visible parts of her body can
be perceived as beautiful without inappropriately sexualizing the chaste maiden, and thereby
connect her virtuous disposition to her physical beauty. And, as Lowczanin points out, Lewis’s
terms highlight “symmetry” and “proportion,” and thus connect her beauty to the chaste ideal for
women (128). Lowczanin concludes that Antonia, “through her body, is perceived as beautiful,
and by extension modest, innocent, and good” (128). However, she is not merely perceived as
innocent “through her body” but, importantly, through her veil. Eve Kosofsky-Sedgwick argues
that in Gothic novels, the veil functions as an archetypal symbol of purity. However, the veil is
capable of sexualizing the wearer’s innocence “by the same gesture” as it “conceals” her body
(Sedgwick 143), so that the act of concealment itself sexualizes the woman’s purity. The veil is
significant, Sedgwick argues, because it both signifies the maidens’ innocence and highlights
their latent sexuality.

For Margarita, the veil serves primarily to depict her beauty and innocence according to
the ideal for chaste femininity discussed above in relation to Antonia’s introduction at the
beginning of The Monk. Although I argue below that Margarita is not sexualized by the veil, she
is objectified. She is veiled and made an emblem of purity, placed literally on a pedestal, “a high
arch of triumph covered with a cloth of gold” (Lodge 119), on which she is displayed as the
prize, won by Arsadachus in the jousting tournament. While not sexualizing her as Sedgwick’s theory suggests, Margarita’s veil nevertheless accentuates her beauty by highlighting her virtue. In Sedgwick’s summary of her argument about the veil’s role in Gothic novels, she points out that “individual identity, including sexual identity, is social and relational rather than original or private; it is established only ex post facto, by recognition” (142). This observation acknowledges the performative nature of social identity and asserts that one’s status is only established after the fact of others’ recognition. In other words, it implies that if a character is not recognized as a sexual object, she can avoid becoming the focus of sexual desire. As for Margarita, she is never made an object of sexual desire, but she is recognized as an emblem of purity, as my discussion here indicates. Importantly, she is thrust into her role as a political pawn, as her impending marriage to Arsadachus will unite the empires and resolve their conflict. Arsadachus “endorses the politic necessity of courting Margarita” (Beecher 21), and abuses his position as her suitor. He easily deludes her “with a false love” (Beecher 21), which allows him to use her trust to advance his schemes, because she is oblivious to his deception. Even though Arsadachus does not pose a sexual threat to Margarita, his role in her life is equally menacing because he uses her naivety and love to deceive her. The veil she wears at the jousting tournament signals to the reader that she needs protection from an external threat, but its protection is ineffective because Margarita is too naive to know that she must guard herself against Arsadachus’s deception.

Just as Lewis uses a reference to the Venus de Medici to emphasize Antonia’s idealized chastity and beauty, so Lodge gestures to the classical goddess of chastity, Diana, to idealize

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32 On pages 41 and 239 of *The Monk* Lewis refers to Venus to describe Antonia’s modest charm. In Lewis’s period the Venus de Medici statue, which depicts the naked Venus coyly covering her body with her hands, was well known as “an especially notable and beautiful representation of the goddess of love and beauty” (Coffin 173). It is
Margarita’s purity. When illustrating her extravagant dress at the above mentioned tournament the narrator describes her as “like a second Diana, having her goldilocks tied up with loose chains of gold and diamonds, her body apparelled in cloths of silver, over which she had cast a veil of black and gold tinsel through which her beauty appeared as doth the bright Phoebus in a summer’s morning” (Lodge 118-19). Here, Margarita’s beauty is accentuated by her clothing, and she appears more radiant than usual through the veil that covers her face. Multiple descriptions throughout the narrative that associate her with Diana or idealize her chastity reinforce her identity within this cultural ideal. In this scene Margarita is presented primarily as a prize for Arsadachus, whose only interest in her is strategic. Ultimately, Arsadachus’s rejection of her love ensures she is never recognized as a sexual object, and she remains a political pawn.

These heroines’ innocence is essential to their victimization because their naivety positions them as ideal targets. Margarita’s innocence affects her impression of Arsadachus, which demonstrates that she is too trusting for her own good. She loves Arsadachus and cannot comprehend that he could be deceiving her because she cannot comprehend dishonesty. In fact, Margarita, “assisted by the virtuous, constant, and unspotted simplicity of her nature, . . .

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also worth noting the dual meaning of this representation of Venus, because this figure was simultaneously modest and sexualized. So there is another parallel between the authors’ use of Venus and Diana because Lodge uses the goddess of chastity later in the text as an idolatrous costume for a woman Arsadachus desires, who is actually named Diana.

33 The text’s editor notes the classical association between the Greek goddess Diana and depictions of virginity (Janzen 185n84).

34 That Margarita cannot comprehend dishonesty may suggest that she is too naive to even comprehend love. However, Lodge’s narrator informs readers that Margarita has learned about love through observing the courtship between Philenia and Minecius: “The interchange of which affections was so conformable to the fancies of the princess that she . . . learned by them and their manners the true method of the same; for when Minecius courted his Philenia, Margarita [imagined] her Arsadachus” (Lodge 84). While the narrative provides insufficient insight into her thoughts to know that she truly loves him, and is not just emulating the performance of love, the information the reader does get is enough to infer that she has in fact fallen in love with him throughout their stunted social interactions.
seemed not to suspect whatever she saw, nor to count it wrong howsoever she endured” (92). Likewise, *The Monk’s* reader learns that Antonia is incorruptible because “[e]xtreme simplicity prevented her from perceiving the aim to which the monk’s insinuations intended” (Lewis 228-29). In other words, she is entirely naive concerning sexuality and does not understand the suggestive nature of some of their conversations, whereas the narration makes clear that Ambrosio attempts continually to corrupt her mind. Both maidens have many opportunities to see that their antagonists are corrupt and deceptive, but their “simplicity” helps the villains to disguise their true intentions. This remark reflects the dichotomy between simple maidens and dualistic villains that is part of the patriarchal ideology in the Gothic. Antonia’s potential suitor, Lorenzo, indicates in a statement that foreshadows her demise: “Artless yourself you suspect not others of deceit; and viewing the world through the medium of your own truth and innocence, you fancy all who surround you to deserve your confidence and esteem. . . . What a pity that you must soon discover the baseness of mankind, and guard against your fellow-creatures as against your foes” (Lewis 49). While Lodge strategically illustrates that Margarita naively trusts Arsadachus, Lewis pointedly describes how Antonia wholeheartedly trusts everyone. In both these texts, the heroines are the victims of the evil hidden behind the honourable personae that Ambrosio and Arsadachus project. In other words, the heroines take honesty for granted, and the hero-villains benefit from their mask of honour that conceals their inherent corruption. Williams’s analysis of patriarchy’s danger to women in Gothic narratives can shed some light on this convention shared by eighteenth-century Gothic romance and Lodge’s proto-Gothic revenge narrative. While Williams’s focus differs from mine, she also maintains that “the patriarchal

35 In her chapter ”The House of Bluebeard” Williams shows how the physical spaces of the Gothic manor communicate patriarchal power and affect the women within them.
power structure” reproduced in Gothic novels requires women to be “expendable” (43). In short, Gothic romance finds women “set on a collision course with the demands of patriarchal culture” (120). While this culture values chastity and encourages naivety, it also has certain expectations for female characters, expectations which are informed by a central trope of early modern revenge tragedy: “evil completely overcomes the forces of virtue” (Roberts 413). *The Monk* demonstrates that this trope is shared by eighteenth-century Gothic narratives. In fact, Ambrosio’s persona is largely shaped by this trope, as I will show below. Another way to perceive this shared narrative device is that revenge tragedy and Gothic romance turn “virgin heroines into virgin martyrs” (Beecher 17). My point, then, is that the purity of both Margarita’s and Antonia’s natures leads them to their fates as victims of the villains. This discussion demonstrates that Lewis’s Gothic and Lodge’s early modern proto-Gothic narrative both construct innocence as inherently problematic within the patriarchal power structure. The painfully simple female characters are hyperbolic representations of transparent innocence, which allows their unequivocally corrupt antagonists to fool them with their hypocritical personae.

The image of the veil associated with these two heroines suggests that these “simple” maidens need protection, and that naivety, while valued and idealized, is also a weakness, because the characters’ identification with virtue dooms them as victims. It is worth acknowledging, however, that in Lodge’s narrative purity can also protect its possessor. For instance, Margarita’s purity preserves her when she and her attendant, Fawnita, come across a lion in the forest. The lion dismembers Fawnita because she “had tasted too much of fleshy love” (Lodge 156), but gently cuddles with the virtuous Margarita, who, in her despair, is ready to welcome her own slaughter (157). This is an odd moment in the text because it prompts the
reader to consider the contrast between purity and impurity that Lodge emphasizes with the actions of this “probative lion” (Beecher 29, 30). Through the lion’s actions, Lodge hyperbolizes Margarita’s innocence independently from the veil’s image. However, while this lion represents truth, neither truth nor the tenuous protection of the veil can shield Margarita when she again comes face-to-face with the real predator in the text—Arsadachus. As such, while feminine virtue is a culturally valued trait, the virtuous maiden remains imperilled because the archetypal enemy of virtue—corruption—is destined to destroy her in revenge tragedy and Gothic romance alike. Thus, the veil and the innocence it signifies simultaneously shields and endangers women. The veil also reinforces and thus connotes the wearer’s naivety because to veil something is to obscure it—to protect the wearer from what is on the other side. Lowczanin’s interpretation of how the veil functions in the Gothic aligns with Sedgwick’s theory. As Lowczanin aptly states, for readers of the Gothic “veiling of a female body stands for preserving innocence, warding off sinful carnality, and protecting against temptation: it denotes chastity and becomes a trademark of virtue” (132). However, the figurative protection the veil offers is superficial and ineffective because it puts the wearer in the vulnerable position of not suspecting others’ intentions to harm her. To quote Williams, “The Monk implies that a good woman is entirely defined by her sexual honour, so that she must literally die when that honour is reft from her” (116). This point refers to Antonia’s murder, inflicted by Ambrosio in a frantic move to prevent her from escaping the crypts (Lewis 326). While Antonia is stabbed as she flees from her antagonist, Margarita is stabbed after she runs toward Arsadachus (Lodge 164). A blade is an appropriately phallic weapon of destruction for these chaste heroines (or, rather, “virgin martyrs” to quote Beecher again). Antonia is a victim of Ambrosio’s depraved sexuality and her undoing is sexualized from the outset of the narrative. Comparatively, Margarita is a victim of Arsadachus’s deceit
because while he pretends to love her (to fulfill his performative identity as a courtier and prince), he is actually repulsed by her. He hides from her his desire for other women, and when he stabs her to death it is the ultimate unveiling: all pretences of love, courtesy, and honour are reft from their dynamic, as she becomes a victim of the depraved tyrant she blindly and tragically trusts.

**Virtue Inverted: A Veiled Temptress**

The veil’s centrality continues when we shift our focus to the corrupt characters. Lodge’s text mobilizes representations of the goddess Diana to juxtapose virtue and vice. As noted above, this goddess is invoked early in the text to represent Margarita’s purity, but there is a second Diana figure in the plot—a character actually named Diana—with whom Arsadachus becomes infatuated, and who embodies, for him, Margarita’s opposite. This Diana, whom Josephine Roberts actually calls a “worthless prostitute” (411), is a temptress; she is “trained . . . to the lure and taught her lesson with great cunning” (Lodge 140). Arsadachus is so obsessed with her that he worships her as a goddess (150). Lodge takes Margarita’s idealized virtues and inverts them, then projects them onto the impure Diana through the representation of this goddess of chastity, which the veil has come to denote. As Roberts succinctly states, “The values of innocence and purity which Margarita represented are supplanted by the evil of this second Diana” (412). Arsadachus rejects Margarita because she stands for everything he is not; her virtue stands in opposition to his corruption from the start. However, Arsadachus idolizes the new Diana, dressing her up in the likeness of the goddess, and “causing his subjects to erect a shrine and to sacrifice unto her (Lodge 150). His worship of this corrupt Diana dressed as her namesake, the goddess of chastity, shows that Arsadachus eschews actual purity, but he adulates the likeness of purity; while Diana resembles a pure, virtuous maiden, the reader understands that
this representation is empty. The impure Diana’s costume functions as her figurative veil, which in this instance becomes the performative surface onto which Arsadachus projects an image of purity, even though it is false. This Diana’s characterization provides a look into the hypocritical element of self-fashioning with which Lodge is concerned; her costume represents purity, but the representation is empty. In this figurative sense, the veil need not be directly involved with sexual desire. Sedgwick’s analysis of veils as surfaces imbued with meaning examines a moment within The Monk’s secondary romantic plot, featuring the young lovers Agnes and Raymond, wherein the veil functions outside of erotic sexuality. The ghost of the Bleeding Nun has taken Agnes’s place, and when she lifts her veil, Raymond is horrified to find the Bleeding Nun’s pale and hollow visage (Lewis 155). The veil in this instance “hides Nothing, or death,” but Sedgwick also asserts that the veil “very often . . . means absence and substitution” (146). In this case the “Nothing” or “absence” behind the veil illustrates the absence of the love and sexual freedom Raymond expects to find with Agnes. Thus, the two sides of the veil represent the juxtaposition of two opposing concepts or identities. If we consider that “the veil is the locus of the substitution of one person for another” (Sedgwick 149), and adapt this discussion to Margarita and the corrupt Diana, who both embody the classical representation of Diana, it follows that the purity the veil represents gets transferred onto the second Diana, who is actually devoid of virtue. Like the “Nothing” behind the Bleeding Nun’s veil, Diana has nothing but corruption behind the facade of virtue which attracts Arsadachus to her. As a result, it is the meaning suffused onto the surface of the costume that is alluring for Arsadachus; the representation of Diana is significant because it is merely the representation of chastity, not
chastity itself, that is sexually enticing; the virtuous character behind the representation is not attractive to Arsadachus.\textsuperscript{36}

Before shifting to close analysis of the villains I will return to the core point of my character analysis. The dualities that I highlight within and between characters drive the conflict and address the cultural identity crisis Lodge highlights with his subversive message about the horrific side of the Elizabethan privateering culture and the hypocrisy of those who encouraged such activities in the name of honour, progress, and country. The conflict between virtue and vice that I continue analyzing below serves a culturally performative role in itself, because as the reader or audience recognizes their society’s values and norms echoed in the text, they recognize the connections and comments the author makes about their shared culture. Therefore, for Lodge’s readers, the conflict within and between characters becomes a meaningful device to mediate concerns about authenticity and hypocrisy in the Elizabethan court and its privateering culture. Moreover, an unstable or cloaked identity in proto-Gothic texts is part of the sensibility that connects Lodge’s text (and the revenge tragedies of Lodge’s era) to the fully formed Gothic narrative. These comparisons between Lodge’s early modern romance and Lewis’s Gothic novel illustrate that \textit{A Margarite} anticipates the Gothic not merely by way of consistencies in theme and character, but also through the works’ shared moralistic tone. Whereas Lodge sought “to present himself as a moral author” (Wilson 141), Lewis takes up questions of identity and illegitimacy in a mode which aimed to “vindicate morality, virtue and reason” (Botting 46). At the same time, eighteenth-century criticism of Gothic literature often questioned its moral aims and expressed “some degree of anxiety” about whether Gothic texts “could produce antisocial effects and lead to social disintegration” (45, 46). This digression is relevant here, because the

\textsuperscript{36} It is worth noting another irony here: that Arsadachus is only attracted to Diana’s false persona of purity highlights Lodge’s comments on hypocrisy within courtly ideals.
point circles back to issues of identity; contrasts between morality and corruption are inherent to any society and are essential to much narrative conflict. Thus, to consider the instructive elements of moralistic fiction is to acknowledge the influence of its immoral content, whether that influence on the reader is positive or negative. Miles reminds us that “the parts we assume, as ourselves, may already be fashioned for us in language, but there is scope within the part for self-dramatization” (94). Thus the tension between morality and immorality, or virtue and vice, in proto-Gothic and Gothic fiction is crucial to the texts’ cultural relevancy, because readers will interpret the text through the values of their own culturally- and self-fashioned identities.

**The Courtly Tyrant of the “Romance-turned-revenge-tragedy”**

A crucial element of Gothic sensibility in *A Margarite* is Arsadachus’s duality—his identity as an internally monstrous and dangerous outsider who is enmeshed within a delicate social order is central to the plot. A useful perspective for addressing Arsadachus’s duality is to focus on his hypocrisy and the false appearance he projects to his society. As I argue in Chapter One, Arsadachus has two very different sides to his character; he pretends to be sensitive and respectful when he needs to manipulate people, but his behaviour is entirely insincere. For instance, to initiate the first of his deplorable schemes, (which is to rape Philenia and murder her husband on their wedding night), he “counterfeit[s] marvellous melancholy, having his coat suitable to his conceit” and delivers a mournful poem that is meant to distract Philenia from his licentious intentions and convince her that he is gloomy not because he is corrupt, but because he feels “shame, repulse, disgrace” for having tried to tempt her (Lodge 96-97). Margarita mistakes this duplicitous poem as Arsadachus’s “melancholy report of his pretty, wanton discourse with her” (97). While Philenia is not fooled, Margarita misinterprets this poem as Arsadachus’s guilt over his immodest courting behaviour. Throughout the text, Arsadachus repeatedly, and
successfully, employs this technique to distract others from his depravity. In short, “how demurely he would look when he thought most devilishly” (97-98). In his duality, Arsadachus represents the dangerous potential of masculine self-fashioning to undermine rather than uphold social order. The charade of self-fashioned courtesy that dramatic tradition perpetuates, which I discuss in Chapter One, remains central to this element of my argument. Accordingly, I return here to Sedgwick’s discussion of the veil because she approaches her analysis through the frame of examining surfaces.

Arsadachus’s behaviour is interesting within the context of the veil, because he is veiling his true identity. For this theory to help here I must shift the context of the veil toward a more figurative meaning, as a surface onto which identity can be projected. Sedgwick argues that in *The Monk* “the attributes of veil and of flesh are transferrable and interchangeable” (145). The veil is, furthermore, “the place of any voided expectation” (147), which means when the veil is lifted, the contents are not what the surface promises. Sedgwick’s emphasis on skin and the face behind the veil takes “surface” quite literally, but what happens when we consider the figurative surface of one’s persona and the “veiling” of truth on this surface that is one’s appearance? In this sense the veil—the surface, or appearance—becomes a mask which disguises the character’s negative traits, and his virtuous appearance is inauthentic as the character behind the figurative veil does not embody the virtue he projects, and thus fails to fulfil the expectations associated with his persona. In other words, this theory points to a failure of appearances to portray truth; a strong dichotomy is apparent in the opposition between Arsadachus’s virtuous persona and his corrupt character.

Deceptive appearances require a careful construction of one’s social self; Lewis and Lodge both demonstrate they are aware of the self-division necessary for the social persona to
flourish. I return to *The Monk* here because Lewis effectively illustrates “a world in which everyone is playing a part, adopting a persona, which may or may not reveal the truth behind it” (Kilgour 146). What Kilgour refers to here is the emphasis on “theatrical illusion” throughout the text (145). Kilgour elucidates:

The theatrical metaphors used through the text, from the opening scene in which the Church is set up as a spectacle and Ambrosio its star, suggest a world in which characters are actors playing roles that the public demands of them, but whose real, less socially acceptable, identities lurk under the surface of appearances. (145)

The theatricality of Lewis’s setting is strikingly similar to the self-consciousness required for one’s fashioning of themselves within the context of Greenblatt’s theory. He explains that “in the sixteenth century there appears to be an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process” (Greenblatt 2). Furthermore, self-fashioning implies “the achievement of . . . a distinctive personality, a characteristic address to the world, a consistent mode of perceiving and behaving” (2). Thus, in Greenblatt’s theory and Kilgour’s discussion of theatrical self-division in *The Monk* both interpret the public self as a persona which veils one’s true, inner self. I furthermore liken this illusion to a veil, but one which ceremonially hides sin and malign intentions in an inversion of the veil’s traditional purpose. Lodge’s manipulation of duplicity and the veil emphasizes the tenuous boundary between one’s identity and the performance of identity that so preoccupied the early modern gentry. Arsadachus’s persona coincides with the ideal courtier, but behind the mask, his energies are devoted to scheming for power and fulfilling his forbidden sexual desires. Clearly, the surface of his character is markedly different than the contents, which is a common trait for the villains or
hero-villains of Gothic narratives. As the following analysis will demonstrate, there are strong similarities between Arsadachus and a quintessential Gothic hero-villain, Ambrosio. A discussion of the details and consequences of deceptive appearances is essential to uncovering the connections between Lodge’s revenge-tragedy villain and the Gothic villain.

While Arsadachus is not directly comparable to Ambrosio, they do share a proclivity toward corrupt, licentious, tyrannical behaviour. An important distinction is that Ambrosio was not born corrupt, but was made corrupt through his “unnatural education” by the monks who took him in as a child, as Kilgour illustrates in her discussion of repression and self-division in *The Monk* (144). The “internal opposition” created by his education thus engenders the corruption that later engulfs his strong disposition, as Ambrosio’s external self is created for him by the monks, and his internal, natural self is suppressed (144). So while there is a distinct division in both villains between the corrupt internal and honourable external characteristics, Kilgour asserts that “Ambrosio’s self-division seems therefore to be a product of social conditioning that demands a repression of nature” (144). The void that this repression creates leads Ambrosio toward dishonourable choices as he begins to socialize with the world outside the monastery. Even though Ambrosio and Arsadachus arrive at corruption differently, both characters continually deceive those around them by conveying the appearance of virtue, while hiding their truly transgressive dispositions. This hypocrisy in Lodge’s text reflects his critique of genteel cultural ideals that encourage falsity. Arsadachus’s character is presented concisely in the following description: “His cruelty he shadowed with a kind of courtly severity, his lust under the title of love, his treasons under the pretext of true meaning” (Lodge 91). Here, the narrator illustrates succinctly how deceit is involved in the majority of his interests. These three primary aspects of Arsadachus’s villainy—cruelty in the form of brutal violence, lust fulfilled
through licentious behaviour, and treason against the monarch—bespeak his lack of virtue and
his disregard for the rules governing social order. Ambrosio’s descent into monstrosity also
displays these qualities. He initially appears to be the epitome of virtue, but the reader soon
learns, through his treatment of a nun who has violated her vow of chastity, that he is actually
cruel and unmerciful. The young nun, Agnes, pleads with him for mercy from the “most severe
and cruel” punishment that will be her fate, but he decides that “[m]ercy here would be criminal”
and he reveals her to the corrupt Prioress (70-1). Soon after, Ambrosio is exposed to the reader
as a hypocrite when he violates monastic law by breaking his own vows and giving into his lust
for a woman; this transgression is the first of the Monk’s treasons. His monstrous cruelty
reaches its height when he drugs and violently rapes the virtuous Antonia (321). Lodge’s villain
does not successfully rape his intended victim, Philenia, but instead, murders her and her
husband Minecius in a scene which is the first illustration of the violence of which Arsadachus is
capable (99-103). After this instance he increasingly defies the rules of acceptable conduct for a
prince and courtier while appearing to remain virtuous and loyal, for which evidence is provided
in Chapter One. This distinction shows that regardless of how the villain becomes corrupt,
hypocrisy lies behind his insincere public persona.

The Courtly Tyrant: Virtue and Vice

The juxtaposition between virtue and vice plays a significant role in both these narratives,
because it is through the heroines’ trust that the villains’ corruption prospers. It is important to
acknowledge that while Arsadachus is “prone by nature to do ill” (Lodge 93), Ambrosio is
initially lauded for his integrity; in fact, he is introduced as “The Man of Holiness” (Lewis 46).
These two characters wear figurative veils. The persona Arsadachus projects masks his cruel
intentions; he has been taught that this courtly persona will ensure his success. Ambrosio’s veil
is the screen on which he displays his performative, social self while disguising his underlying sinful nature. Considering that Ambrosio has lived “the whole of his life within the walls of a convent” (Lewis 50), he has not been given the opportunity to be corrupted until he reaches adulthood, and the sheltered monk is initially unaware of the falsity of his character. Early in *The Monk*, the novel’s hero, Lorenzo, discusses how even though Ambrosio is admired as an exceedingly virtuous, devout, learned, charismatic individual, now that he is exposed to the world, he will be tested by temptation, and “even the talents with which nature has endowed him will contribute to his ruin, by facilitating the means of obtaining his object” (50). Lorenzo is correct that Ambrosio’s faith, intelligence, and charm will help him toward his downfall, because once the Monk gives into his lust and descends into a spiral of transgression, he uses his virtuous persona to deceive everyone. The reader learns that “what [Ambrosio] wanted in purity of heart, he supplied by exterior sanctity . . . and never appeared more devoted to heaven than since he had broken through his engagements” (206), which indicates that his transgressions feed his piety and self-aggrandizement. As he spends time with Antonia he earns her trust because in her naivety she cannot see the corruption behind his veil of virtue. Antonia sees only the surface onto which Ambrosio projects benevolence; she does not see through his veil, which allows him to manipulate her. This point demonstrates how the villain’s constructed virtuous persona provides the screen for the vile behaviour that drives the plot.

Similarly, Arsadachus preys on Margarita, but rather than desiring her sexually, he manipulates her trust to further his immoral schemes. “[H]aving with sweet words trained her to his lure” (Lodge 106), Arsadachus manipulates her so that she will unwittingly help him to kill a rival courtier, Thebion, whom he says is going to kill her father. She questions his accusations, saying “Can favour possibly be requited with such falsehood?” Arsadachus’s reply ironically
highlights his own duality: “Why, Madam, where is greater treason than there where is least mistrust? . . . [U]nder the green leaf the greedy serpent, and in fairest bosoms are falsest hearts” (107). This is one of Arsadachus’s repeated hints to Margarita that he is morally depraved, but she is blind to his corruption and in her tragic naivety, she continues trusting him. Arsadachus’s mind-games are an element of how he objectifies Margarita because he uses her as a pawn in his sadistic, self-centred schemes. The constant tension, then, between virtue and vice characterizes both these texts at a fundamental level. The villain’s wickedness—his need to transgress—is increased by the heroine’s virtue. For Ambrosio his central vice is a licentious passion; he goes to great lengths to possess Antonia’s pure body. However, for Arsadachus, the more Margarita reaches out to him, the more vehemently he rejects her. Shortly before he leaves Protomachus’s kingdom for his own father’s palace, Margarita implores him to show her some affection. She asks Arsadachus, “Why does not Arsadachus smile on me? . . . Why hath he not courted me these five months?” (Lodge 123). Her bold pleas for him to return her love show that the tension between their characters is growing; the strain between her virtue and his vice grows as the world around them tries to thrust them together. Soon after this confrontation he and Margarita are formally “betrothed . . . in the presence of the nobility” and a marriage date is set (134). Of course, Arsadachus does not want this marriage to occur and, as Lodge’s narrator reminds readers, “it must needly follow that, since Arsadachus was so fraught with corrupt thought, he should practice and perform no less ungracious, corrupt, and ungodly actions . . . [and] he presently began to imagine how to break off his nuptials” (134). This pattern of Margarita pursuing and Arsadachus retreating and scheming is consistent throughout the text. However, the inverse is true in The Monk because Arsadachus’s interest in purity is qualitatively different than Ambrosio’s. As I have discussed above, Arsadachus is interested in Margarita’s purity
insofar as it allows him to use her naivety to his advantage. Ambrosio’s interest in purity is for his sexual satisfaction. While there are differences between their uses for the pure heroine, both villains successfully manipulate her. The defiant, conniving, cruel quest for absolute power that drives Arsadachus’s actions is in line with the Gothic villain’s transgressions, such as “betrayal and murder . . . violent executions of selfish ambition and voracious passion” (Botting 6). This key attribute of Arsadachus’s character must be accounted for when considering the Gothic sensibility of this narrative, because it is shared not only by Gothic villains, but also by the revenge tragedy tyrants discussed in Chapter One. These qualities furthermore bring Lodge’s work in line with the other texts noted in recent scholarship, and allow a rereading of A Margarite as a proto-Gothic fiction.

Arsadachus’s character traits indicate that Lodge was strongly influenced by contemporary depictions of powerful men. For instance, Beecher observes how Arsadachus appears to have been shaped by the Senecan villain and by Elizabethan revenge tragedy. A genre that experienced a revival in the latter half of the sixteenth century, Senecan revenge tragedies feature “sensational revenge plots” as well as “inventive cruelty, [and] butchery and mutilations” (Beecher 22, 23). Although there is a distinct difference in the styles—for example such actions occur offstage in Senecan tragedy and Lodge narrates the graphic mutilations in his text—the plot of A Margarite undoubtedly shares these gruesome elements.37 Furthermore, Beecher explains that by connecting the “hyperbolic ‘Machiavel’ to the Senecan protagonist . . . Lodge and his contemporaries found a prototype for the malign hero” (14). (Below, I will

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37 Beecher observes that Arsadachus “is another manifestation of the popularized “Machiavellian” tyrant then stalking the Elizabethan stage” (12). The trend of violent revenge tragedy, influenced by the Senecan style, in the Elizabethan period included Kyd’s The Spanish Tragedy and Shakespeare’s Titus Andronicus (21-22). Importantly, the similarities to Senecan drama identified in Lodge and in Shakespeare show that these two authors were both “selecting related narrative and thematic parts from a general cupboard of common elements particularly proper to the milieu of sensational revenge plots” (22).
discuss how this “malign hero” connects to the Gothic hero-villain). Pollack discusses this Machiavellian characterization as well; she highlights Lodge’s combination of Machiavelli’s advice for an efficient ruler with the attributes of the ideal courtier that Castiglione’s *The Courtier* illustrates. Arsadachus’s father, Artosogon, has taught him skills that measure up to Castiglione’s depiction of the ideal courtier, and while he has the appearance of this ideal, he lacks the virtue that is supposed to coincide with these traits. Pollack explains that Lodge clearly engaged with *The Courtier* when he created Arsadachus because the speech Artosogon gives to Arsadachus before he leaves for the court of Mosco is composed of advice that “reflects some of the most important debates in *The Courtier*,” such as “moderation in speech, behaviour, apparel, and courage” (Pollack 3). Because Artosogon knows that Arsadachus’s “inclination is corrupt” (Lodge 89), he advises him to follow the model for the courtier and conceal his corruption through self-fashioning. Artosogon’s farewell speech to his son acknowledges that Arsadachus lacks good judgement, and the gist of his advice, as follows, is that he must mask his true nature to deceive everyone into thinking he is an agreeable, moderate, honourable, wise prince: “seek in all things to follow [Protomachus in] his humour, for opinion is the chief step to preferment. . . . In thy speech, be deliberate without bashfulness; in thy behaviour courtly without pride; in thy apparel princely without excess; in thy revenges bold but not too bloody; in thy love be courteous and not troublesome” (90). Arsadachus follows this advice only to the extent that he is able to fool Protomachus, Margarita, and the majority of Mosco’s court into believing that he is indeed the ideal, virtuous courtier he appears to be. The most important element of the ideal courtier’s values is virtue, or rather, honour; all of the courtier’s qualities “should be subsidiary to a true knowledge of virtue” (Pollack 3), which is something that Arsadachus clearly lacks. Pollack explains that “Arsadachus appears to be a perfect example of the potentially ideal
courtier gone wrong—a basically evil man who uses his courtly attributes for villainous ends” (1-2). It follows that his relationship to the Machiavellian villain is supported by his “dissembling nature” (Lodge 155). In his lack of honour, however, Arsadachus departs from the Machiavellian image. While Machiavelli supports dishonesty and underhanded motives—he asserts that “it is necessary to know how to . . . be a great pretender and dissembler” (Machiavelli 94)—he also makes it clear that power does not go far without honour, or virtue, because “one cannot call it virtue to kill one’s fellow citizens, to betray one’s friends, to be without faith, without compassion. . . . These modes may be used to acquire rule but not glory” (Machiavelli 66). Because Arsadachus is skilled in deception he is able to get quite far into his scheming and vile deeds before he suffers the consequences for his transgressions; he achieves the rule of the empire, but falls to the repercussions of his corruption and dishonour.38 Arsadachus’s Machiavellian qualities crumble under his lack of “virtue” because he betrays his friends and followers by scheming against them (Lodge 95-96, 106, 107-9), ignores Margarita’s suffering when he abandons her before their wedding (137-38), worships his mistress as a false idol (150), and treats his inner circle as ruthlessly as he would his enemies: after all, he tortures and mocks his parents (148-50), and murders his loyal attendants and family (163). In accordance with my discussion of power and morality in Chapter One, Arsadachus rebels against the patriarchal expectations and enacts his own version of justice. This behaviour coupled with his inherent corruption is a formula for adverse consequences, and his destruction reflects the Gothic’s

38 Lewis’s monk is comparable on this point because he also exhibits the appearance and behaviour of an ideal figure of authority whose very presence demands respect and admiration, but internally he lacks the virtuous qualities which would protect him from becoming corrupted by lustful desires and stop him from using his power and position to deceive Antonia and further his illicit crimes.
attitude toward transgression.\textsuperscript{39} Interestingly, Miles states that “male Gothic,” a term I explore immediately below, “has largely been defined . . . as the son’s conflict with authority” (96). This definition is indeed accurate in Arsadachus’s case, as he violently rejects his father’s expectations and plans for his future. No reason is given for his rebellion other than that his “inclination is corrupt” (89), and he privileges his lust, hedonism, and other passions over the honour expected by Castiglione’s and Machiavelli’s popular descriptions of a courtier’s or prince’s behaviour.

\textbf{Arsadachus as a Proto-Gothic Villain}

Arsadachus’s relationship to the early-Gothic villain suggests that the Gothic villain’s development follows a trajectory that has its roots in Renaissance characterizations. The malign-hero of revenge tragedy addressed above resembles the hero-villain of the Gothic. Discussions of Gothic villains are occasionally divided into “male Gothic” and “female Gothic,” and the villains from the two camps are compared and contrasted based on their roles in normative patriarchal settings, their motivations, their parts as “hero-villain” types, and the villains’ relationship to the Byronic hero. The Gothic villain does not refer to one clearly defined character type. In the same vein, the “hero-villain” figure characteristic of early Gothic texts has a somewhat complicated past, and the term has varied and sometimes contradictory meanings and connotations. Critics such as Peter Thorslev and Williams do agree that he is a moody, dual, and othered figure—one often prone to deception and transgression—but the contradictions begin when, from text to text, the hero-villain is sometimes a love interest, sometimes

\textsuperscript{39} Transgression and its consequences are commonly addressed by scholars of the Gothic. For example, “the Gothic appears to be a transgressive rebellion against norms which yet ends up reinstating them” (Kilgour 8). For discussions of transgression in Gothic literature see Kilgour’s “Part I: The Nature of Gothic,” the introduction to Botting’s \textit{Gothic}, Williams’s \textit{Art of Darkness}, Punter’s \textit{Gothic Pathologies} for an examination of transgression and the Law, and Kenneth W. Graham’s \textit{Gothic Fictions: Prohibitions / Transgressions}, particularly the essays by Ann McWhir and Coral Ann Howels.
malevolent but remorseful, and sometimes simply an evil protagonist. To understand where Arsadachus belongs as a proto-Gothic villain, it is important to differentiate between these character types and their functions in male Gothic and female Gothic. This discussion seeks to demonstrate how the hero-villain as an evil protagonist, at least in a male Gothic context, bears a flexible connection to the male protagonists in Renaissance revenge tragedy. Arsadachus is an ideal character for this undertaking, because, as Chapter One elucidates, he is comparable to the revenge tragedy villains in texts already considered proto-Gothic.

Discussions of the Gothic hero-villain often end up involving the Byronic hero, even though there are distinct differences between these two character types. Peter Thorslev suggests that the “sentimentalized Gothic Villain” of the early nineteenth-century Gothic dramas had a “profound” influence on the Byronic Hero (6), but in spite of this influence, he highlights the overt distinctions between Radcliffe’s and Lewis’s villains, and Byron’s heroes. Essential to this difference are the characters’ dishonourable intentions and treatment of women. Thorslev’s study, while dated, is useful, because it distinguishes clearly the difference between the Byronic hero and the Gothic villains popularized by Radcliffe and Lewis. Using Radcliffe’s villains Montoni and Schedoni as examples, Thorslev explains that Gothic villains “are personifications of evil, entirely unsympathetic and quite unbelievable” which contrasts the sensitivity and depth attributed to the Byronic hero, whose “crimes” do not “involve unnecessary cruelty, as do the crimes of the Gothic villain” (8). Importantly, the Gothic villain’s crimes are about power; he goes to deplorable lengths to assert his patriarchal power over those within his reach and further his hedonistic pleasures. It is worth noting here that the term “hero-villain” may take on dual

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40 Thorslev refers to the “dramatic villain’s remorseful repentance” through which “he became sufficiently sympathetic to appear as a peculiar hybrid “hero-villain” or villainous hero” (6). He cites the influence of this type of hero on Lord Byron’s dramatic poem Manfred, in which the mournful title character “stands as the culmination of a long tradition of heroes” (Thorslev 167).
meanings because the words *hero* and *villain* are contradictory. Furthermore, the term may also be linked to the Byronic Hero, because he is usually a fatal and morose outsider. However, Thorslev has aptly pointed out that “although the Gothic Villain is the protagonist of the novels in which he appears in the sense that he is the major character, he is nevertheless always a villain, not a Romantic rebel-hero” (53). Thus, the term “hero-villain” is accurate in that Arsadachus is central to the plot, but the plot centres upon his machinations rather than the rise, fall, and resolution of a comic or romantic plot. Another crucial distinction is that the Gothic hero-villain is without remorse. Although he may express regret for his actions when he is on the brink of destruction—as Ambrosio does when he realizes that he will live in eternal damnation—the Gothic hero-villain “acknowledges the moral codes of society and his own wickedness in violating those codes, and he therefore never engages our sympathies with his rebellion” (Thorslev 53). When Arsadachus comes to his senses after his murderous rampage he acknowledges his violations of moral codes and the consequence he must face:

“I have sinned, O ye heavens, first in beguiling this chaste Margarita with hope, in wronging my dear parents in their age, in slaughtering this poor infant with his mother. . . .

I see with mine inward eyes the ghosts of these poor slaughtered souls calling for justice at my hands; stay me not therefore from death, but assist me to die, for by this means you shall rid your country of a plague, the world of a monster.” (Lodge 168-69)

Arsadachus clearly admits to his crimes here, but he does not seek repentance; he only asks for death. The regretful yet unsympathetic tone of Arsadachus’s final moments is comparable to Thorslev’s description above, which, along with his similarities to the Gothic hero-villain,
certainly demonstrates the direction in which Lodge’s revenge tragedy villain was moving.

The distinctions between these character types continue. According to Williams, the hero-villain in female Gothic is often a misunderstood misanthrope, an outsider who is ultimately “driven by erotic love” and whose role is integral to the “comic ending” of the female Gothic plot (Williams 144).41 Williams implies that the sympathetic role of the female Gothic’s hero-villain is an essential element of his perceived connection to the Byronic hero; however, she also concludes that the two figures should not be aligned (145). When Williams discusses the hero-villain’s similarity to the Byronic hero she acknowledges the physical similarities between characters of this type, and asserts that “[m]ost insistent, however, is this figure’s duality—the perceived incongruity of inner and outer, present and past, his paradoxical, deceptively mixed nature” 143). Williams makes this comment about the Byronic hero, but when we consider the deception this duality requires, it is clear that this disparity between the inner character and outer persona also applies to the hero-villain. Lewis’s hero-villain is deliberately deceptive; the side of his character that he hides from the public is his villainous side. Likewise, Arsadachus’s appearance and public behaviour is incongruous to his true motivations and desires. He is dual insofar as that duality hides his transgressive impulses and behaviours. A hero-villain himself, Arsadachus embodies qualities that will become essential to the Gothic villain’s characterizations in the eighteenth century. He has a “forceful and ingenious mind” (Thorslev 54), with which he executes continual manipulations and cruelties, and his recurrent disobedience and malevolent plotting demonstrate that he is “cursed by a rebellious impulse to test and transgress human social and ethical constraints” (Stoddart 113), as is the Gothic hero-villain. It is important, then, not to conflate the sympathetic Byronic hero with the hero-villain because while both are moody,

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41 For example, Rochester of Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*, or Valancourt of Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. 
dual and powerful, the Gothic hero-villain is not a sympathetic character. This chapter has conducted an analysis that shows the close connections between proto-Gothic characterizations and Gothic character types in Lodge’s narrative and Lewis’s Gothic novel.
Conclusion:

Fashioning New Perspectives

A thesis in a new and growing field such as Renaissance-Gothic studies has many angles that are open for exploration. My research into this field explores *A Margarite of America’s* relationship to early modern revenge tragedy. In particular, this thesis identifies the connections between Lodge’s text and the revenge tragedies already recognized as proto-Gothic, and conducts a character study that shows key similarities between Lodge’s characters and the main characters from the quintessential Gothic novel, *The Monk*. I demonstrate how both texts depict a respected authority figure who abuses his position to instigate his deplorable schemes, which centre on his lustful and hedonistic desires. Chapter One illustrates how Lodge draws his readers into a courtly romance, but then thrusts them into a revenge tragedy; this method allows Lodge to highlight the hypocrisy among courtly culture and privateers’ behaviour. Lodge’s moral texts confirm his disdain for the immoral, hypocritical, or unethical behaviour displayed by some of his peers. Both Lodge’s and Lewis’s characters are calculating dissemblers, working in a world in which they are encouraged to adopt a persona, or fashion a public self. My research highlights how Greenblatt’s concept of self-fashioning provides an unexpected link between early modern revenge tragedy and early-Gothic literature. The image of the tyrant extends from Renaissance revenge tragedy to eighteenth-century Gothic villains because of the literary tyrant’s immorality, disregard for the law, and duplicity. Moreover, in both these texts the literal and figurative image of the veil is central to my character analyses, which I conduct in Chapter Two. The veil illustrates the virtuous maidens’ innocence and vulnerability yet it is also a metaphor for the persona through which the villains disguise their true intentions. Additional elements of my character analyses discuss the centrality of Lodge’s and Lewis’s juxtapositions between their
heroines’ virtue and villains’ corruption, and the qualities of the eighteenth-century Gothic villain that are comparable to Lodge’s early modern fictional villain, Arsadachus. *A Margarite*’s tone, its tyrannical villain and virtuous maiden, the villain’s defiant abuse of his power, and the climax of carnage, madness, and absolute destruction of that narrative’s social structure as well as patriarchal norms all contribute to the text’s anticipation of a genre that would become so influential that it has ultimately gone beyond a single genre and is now often discussed as a mode for its influence in multiple genres. My research demonstrates that Lodge’s *A Margarite* aligns with the ideological concerns of early modern England’s proto-Gothic revenge tragedies, and that Lodge’s text deserves to be included as a precursor to the Gothic narrative.

Because there is so much potential in this field for further research, unexplored areas leave room for development in future studies of *A Margarite* and other proto-Gothic Renaissance literature. My interest in *A Margarite* began in an undergraduate English course, and will extend into my future studies. When I first read *A Margarite* I immediately saw the Gothic elements of the text. In the early stages of research I identified the relationship to Gothic themes and plot lines, and I saw that the text lacked the reconciliation of romance that Gothic novels also offer at their conclusions. At that stage, I identified the text’s relationship to political anxieties and illegitimate power, because the focus on identity and hegemonic power within Renaissance literature and Gothic literature creates strong connections between the two periods’ ideological concerns. There is much to be said about the thematic connections between notions of identity and power in early modern revenge tragedy and eighteenth-century Gothic literature. As such, additional research could focus on depictions of identity in Gothic and proto-Gothic fiction; connections exist here because of England’s imperial growth in the sixteenth century and the challenge to the British empire’s continued strength in the eighteenth century. This endeavour
would extend my consideration of the Gothic villain’s relationship to the Renaissance tyrant. The differentiation between the Platonic and the Aristotelian tyrant I discuss in Chapter One is pertinent here because the “Platonic tradition describes the tyrant as giving into excessive desire, which unseats the sovereignty of reason” and leads to “the fragmenting and multiplying of the tyrant’s self” (Bushnell 9). In turn, the fragmented tyrant becomes feminized because his “love of pleasure, . . . his improper sovereignty” and his duplicitous nature are associated with negative female traits. In effect, the villain is feminized by the power women have over him because he indulges passion over reason. Williams reminds us that “in Aristotle’s paradigm, unity is associated with the male, duality or multiplicity with the female” (144). Thus, the self-fashioned tyrant effectually undermines his own quest for absolute power through his division of internal and external self.

The challenge to proper, rational patriarchal authority that the Renaissance tyrant poses connects to the Gothic villain’s role. Bronfen and Neumeier identify the varied connections between Renaissance and Gothic literature in their introductory essay. Their collection illuminates the “distinct but interrelated links between the early modern cultural imagery and Gothic sensibility” (11). Significantly, the literature of both periods play out “a troubling of hegemonic order” wherein crucial juxtapositions take place such as “the irrational against the rational, femininity against patriarchal authority, bestiality against the human” (11). This line of reasoning leads to a number of binaries being set out to drive the narrative’s conflict so that the “composite figure” of the villain represents that society’s cultural, political, or ideological anxieties (11). Each villain’s downfall occurs because he indulges his desire; that desire

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42 See Bushnell’s section on “Effeminacy,” pp 63-69, for more information on how the passionate tyrant is associated with the pleasure driven and manipulative woman in ancient literature, and how this association carries through to the Renaissance tyrants.
feminizes him because it is considered a weakness. That desire furthermore leads to his madness or loss of control featuring sensational horror in the text’s climax. These issues tie into the Senecan influences in Elizabethan revenge tragedy, and because Senecan violence relies on bodily horror to evoke a sensational reaction from the audience, potential exists here, too, for an analysis which employs Julia Kristeva’s abjection theory. In fact, Williams agrees that the “particular gruesomeness and violence that characterizes revenge tragedy . . . might also be understood in terms of Julia Kristeva’s theory of ‘the abject’” (34). The numerous acts of gruesome violence in Lodge’s text, such as stabbings, tongues carved out, hands chopped off, someone drawn and quartered by horses, and brains bashed in, certainly provide enough material for one to connect *A Margarite* to the genre of Senecan revenge tragedy, to the early modern revenge tragedies that have already been recognized as proto-Gothic, and to test abjection theory in the context of Senecan horror. In fact, there has recently been a renewed interest in Senecan drama, which may help to fuel future studies of Senecan horror’s relationship to Gothic horror. Given these perspectives, multiple possibilities exist here for analysis into the monstrous, desire-driven aspects of proto-Gothic villains. These areas could be explored in order to deepen scholars’ understanding of the connections between the violence of early modern revenge tragedy and the bodily horror of the Gothic.

Ultimately, my research in the developing field of Renaissance-Gothic studies has taught me that the connections between Lodge’s prose “romance,” early modern revenge tragedy, and Gothic literature are stronger and broader than I had originally expected. Early modern revenge

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43 Susan Zimmerman’s chapter in *Discontinuities: New Essays on Renaissance Literature and Criticism* examines the relationship between desire and death in the horror of Renaissance drama, and would be a suitable source in an analysis of madness, bodily horror, and sexuality on the Renaissance stage.

44 See, for example, vol. 40 no. 1 of the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* (2013) for an edition devoted to a “re-evaluation of Seneca’s drama” (Fleming and Grant).
tragedy’s connection to self-fashioning is reflected in the recent emergence of Greenblatt’s theory in Gothic criticism, particularly when the Gothic is being connected to the early modern period’s literature or ideological concerns. A fairly small number of texts exist which conduct analyses into Renaissance-Gothic texts, and this thesis extends the work begun in *Gothic Renaissance* by identifying proto-Gothic themes and sensibilities in early modern prose instead of drama.
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