OPEN ACCESS Article

Deciphering the crime: riddle-solving, incest, and perilous interpretation in Shakespeare's *Pericles* and the ancient *Story of Apollonius*

Vichi Eugenia Ciocani
Department of Classical Philology, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania
vichi-eugenia.ciocani@lls.unibuc.ro

Abstract: This article examines the representation of concealed crime and dangerous interpretation in William Shakespeare and George Wilkins's *Pericles* and the late-antique *Story of Apollonius, King of Tyre*. Beginning from the play's corrupted marriage test at Antioch, it argues that Antiochus's riddle is dangerous not because it is impossible to solve but because successful interpretation cannot produce the social outcome the contest promises. Drawing on J.L. Austin's account of linguistic felicity, the article distinguishes between semantic success and pragmatic failure: Pericles and Apollonius understand the riddle correctly, but the ruler who establishes the interpretive procedure also controls the consequences of answering it. Interpretation therefore becomes accusation, and knowledge (of the crime perpetrated by the king) becomes politically dangerous. Read together, the two works suggest that restoring familial bonds after their criminal distortion, and preventing further criminality, depend not simply on recovering hidden truth, but on re-creating the conditions under which truth can be spoken and on constituting an audience properly disposed to recognize and act on it.

Keywords: *crime; incest; riddles; performative language; Shakespeare*, Pericles; The Story of Apollonius, King of Tyre.

University of Bucharest Review. Literary and Cultural Studies Series
https://ubr.rev.unibuc.ro/
Volume 16 | Issue 1 | 2026 |

EDITURA UNIVERSITĂȚII DIN BUCUREȘTI
BUCHAREST UNIVERSITY PRESS

https://doi.org/10.31178/UBR.16.1.12
ISSN 2069–8658 (Print) | 2734–5963 (Online)
© The Author(s) 2026

Published by Bucharest University Press. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Introduction

At the beginning of Shakespeare's *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, interpretation is potentially fatal. Antiochus offers his unnamed daughter in marriage to the suitor who can solve a riddle, and failure is punishable by death. The arrangement seems to reproduce a familiar suitor test, in which a prospective husband proves his worth by completing a task whose successful completion grants him access to the bride. Yet the contest at Antioch is deceitful from the outset: it purports to select a husband, but actually aims to keep the daughter from ever marrying. Since Antiochus himself occupies the sexual position that should belong to the successful suitor, no answer can produce the result the test promises. Failure entails death, but successful interpretation is hardly safer, since the correct answer exposes the incest that the king must prevent from being openly articulated.

The episode belongs to the long Apollonius tradition, best represented in the late-antique Latin *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* (*The Story of Apollonius, King of Tyre*; hereafter *Story of Apollonius*) and transmitted to early modern England through, among other versions, John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and Laurence Twine's *The Patterne of Painefull Aduentures*. This comparison between the *Story of Apollonius* and *Pericles* does not assume the play directly depends on the surviving Latin text. Rather, the two works preserve, at widely separated moments in the transmission of the story, the same remarkable narrative structure: an incestuous ruler encodes his transgression as a riddle, requires an outsider to interpret it, and threatens the interpreter once its meaning has been recovered; the very fact that this initial interpretative encounter remains unresolved gives rise to a larger narrative in which the interpreter undergoes a series of trials at the end of which he recovers his long-lost wife and daughter. Reading the two versions together makes visible not only the persistence of that structure but also significant transformation in the ways riddling or enigmatic speech is used from *Story of Apollonius* to *Pericles* in the two sets of corresponding situations: in the case of Antiochus, to conceal and perpetuate an incestuous crime, in that of Tarsia/Marina, to bring about paternal recognition and dispel an erotically charged situation carrying the possibility of unwitting incest.

The peculiar difficulty of Antiochus's riddle therefore lies less in its semantic obscurity than in the consequences of understanding it. As Simone Beta (2026) puts it, "all riddles contain a trap in some way or another because the point of a riddle is to stump the answerer by making a very simple solution seem complex" (*Riddles* 15). In Antiochus's case, however, the trap lies not in making the solution difficult to discover but in making it dangerous to articulate. The riddle thereby enables both the incestuous relationship and the potentially endless execution of the suitors to continue. In his recent study of the late antique *Story of Apollonius*, David Townsend (2023) underscores the complex rhetorical strategies through which the crime is concealed: preterition, which marks the silencing of illicit sexual activity, and the paradoxical riddle, which serves as "both an incitement to name his crime and a fearsome prohibition" ("The Deadly Play" 78). Thus, in both versions, the narrator employs the riddle's capacity to enforce silence even after it has been solved to underscore the extreme shamefulness of the coercive incestuous sexual act it conceals. At the same time, the burden of interpretation shifts to the reader, who, as in an inverted detective story *avant la lettre*, must follow the interpreters' footsteps within the

narrative, reconstruct the characters' motivations, and recognize situations in which similar criminal acts threaten to recur.

Riddling in *Pericles* has long attracted critical attention. In her foundational study "Puzzle and Artifice: The Riddle as Metapoetry in *Pericles*" (1976), Phyllis Gorfain treats Antiochus's challenge within the folkloric tradition of marriage riddles and argues more broadly that the riddle provides a formal and metapoetic model for the play's movement from disorder toward restored order (11–15). Crucial to the present argument is Gorfain's recognition that Antiochus has perverted the ordinary function of the marriage test. A successful marriage riddle should distinguish between unsuccessful and successful suitors and let the latter pass from test to marriage; Antiochus instead constructs a situation in which no solution can free the daughter from paternal possession. Gorfain also observes that "incest" is not strictly the answer to the Shakespearean riddle but its subject: the riddle's first-person speaker directs interpretation toward the daughter herself. Gorfain's reading can be extended further: the Shakespearean version develops more fully an ambiguity inherited from Greek and Latin usage and already present in the *Story of Apollonius*, between untying a riddle and untying the knot of the girl's virginity.[1] The promised bride is thus simultaneously the identity concealed by the riddle, the *locus* of the transgression, and the elusive prize of the contest.

Gorfain's structural account can therefore be extended by asking not only what the riddle represents or how its contradictions are solved, but what the act of solving it does. This question matters because the enigma itself is not false. In the *Story of Apollonius*, Apollonius responds to Antiochus with the striking "you have not lied" before directing him to look at himself[2]. The linguistic puzzle accurately describes the reality it conceals; the deceit lies in the situation in which that truth is uttered. The king invites an interpretation he cannot acknowledge without exposing both his crime and the falsity of the marital procedure he has instituted. However, unlike in *Pericles*, the interpreter must identify not the daughter, but her father. Thus, in seeking to become a husband and father, Apollonius looks into the mirror of Antiochus's riddle to find a perverted image of the familial roles he naively expected to occupy. For Susan Frye (2002), the riddle reveals the desire for authority underlying Pericles's search for a family: in Lacanian terms, his search for a mate is simultaneously a search for a lost symbolic father, while Antiochus and his daughter (whom Shakespeare renders comparatively complicit) convert their incestuous union into an exclusionary structure that dooms every outsider ("Incest and Authority" 39; 43–47).

J.L. Austin's account of linguistic action offers a useful vocabulary for describing this divergence between language and criminal acts. I do not mean that Antiochus's riddle should itself be classified straightforwardly as a performative utterance in Austin's narrow sense. More useful is Austin's insistence that conventional linguistic procedures depend

[1] All translations from the Latin are my own. The metaphor is already explicit in Recension A of the Latin narrative. Antiochus, "driven by the frenzy of lust, tore the knot of virginity from his daughter, who had long resisted him" [*stimulante furore libidinis diu repugnanti filiae suae nodum virginitatis eripuit*] (*HA* RA 1). The same language later describes riddling when Tarsia tells Apollonius, "For if you untie the knots of my riddles, I shall leave" [*Si enim parabolarum mearum nodos absolveris, vadam*] (*HA* RA 41).

[2] *Non es mentitus... nec et hoc mentitus es* (*HA* RA 4).

upon conditions governing the appropriate participants and circumstances, their correct and complete execution, and, where relevant, the intentions and subsequent conduct of those who participate in them. When these conditions fail, the procedure becomes "unhappy" or infelicitous rather than simply false (14–5). Antiochus's contest is particularly revealing because several levels of the exchange function perfectly well. The challenge is understood, the riddle can be interpreted, and both Apollonius and Pericles achieve what Austin would call *uptake*. What fails is the relation between successful interpretation and the conventional consequence supposedly attached to it – not for accidental reasons but on account of the king's deliberate choice not to honour the rules of the contest.

This emphasis on the consequences of knowledge intersects with, but differs from, recent work on "secrecy" in the play. Sophie Battell (2022) shows that secrecy in *Pericles* cannot be reduced to a simple opposition between concealment and revelation: secrets shape sexuality, familial relations, and social power, and can be both destructive and curative ("Pericles and the Secret" 432–3). The Antiochian riddle offers an especially concentrated example of this complexity. Its effectiveness does not depend on keeping the secret wholly hidden; Antiochus himself puts the knowledge needed to expose him into circulation. Instead, what must be controlled is the social consequence of knowing. His riddle permits recognition while making *overt* recognition dangerous. The problem is therefore not simply whether the family secret can be decoded, but who may convert interpretation into authorized speech.

The comparison with the *Story of Apollonius* also places the problem within a broader concern with learning, cognition and interpretive competence. Elizabeth Archibald shows that education in the Apollonius tradition is unusually functional: Tarsia's learning, eloquence, music, and riddling help her preserve her chastity and later earn her father's recognition ("Deep Clerks" 298–301). *Pericles* retains the learned daughter but alters the pattern significantly, removing the explicit riddle contest from the final recognition. This difference matters when we compare the two endings.

The term 'crime' requires some qualification here, since neither the *Story of Apollonius* nor *Pericles* operate with a modern juridical taxonomy. Both texts, however, insist on the transgressive character of Antiochus's conduct: in the *Story of Apollonius* the daughter describes the crime she has been subjected to as sexual violence, "having been violated through a savage crime" (*saevo scelere violatam*), and the Latin riddle begins "I am borne along by crime" (*scelere vehor*), while *Pericles* underscores the incest rather than rape, repeatedly invoking sin and corruption. Both narratives condemn Dionyza for ordering the murder of Tarsia/Marina and in the end represent her punishment as deserved. The Mytilene brothel episode similarly associates prostitution with illicit, violent conduct: in *Pericles*, the Bawd and Boult jokingly mention child prostitution, diseased women and dead clients, while the *Story of Apollonius* highlights a profound moral inversion where the brothel owners commodify the sexual assault of a virgin *(virginem violare),* perversely offering it up as a prize. I therefore use "crime" not as a precise legal category, but to designate conduct that the narratives themselves construct as gravely transgressive and associate with violence, concealment, or coercion.

The corrupted marriage test: riddling, marriage, and paternal control

Pericles defines the problem posed by Antiochus's riddle before the riddle itself is spoken. In Gower's opening narration, the king's incestuous possession of his daughter is directly connected with his attempt to prevent her marriage. Her beauty attracts princes who come "to seek her as a bedfellow;" "which to prevent," Antiochus "made a law / To keep her still and men in awe" (*Pericles* 1.0.33–36): any man who asks for her as his wife and fails to solve the riddle loses his life. The test thus seems less like a genuine way to choose a husband and more like a device to keep the daughter unavailable to anyone.

The dramatic scene that follows makes this contradiction still more visible. Antiochus orders his daughter to be brought in "clothed like a bride" (1.1.7) while Pericles announces his wish to become "son to great Antiochus" (1.1.27). Marriage would normally transform the relations among the three characters: the daughter would become Pericles's wife, Pericles Antiochus's son-in-law, and Antiochus would relinquish his daughter's sexual future to another man. Yet the spectacle that confronts Pericles already reveals that this transition has repeatedly failed. As he watches the princess, Pericles composes a blazon describing "her face the book of praises where is read / nothing but curious pleasures" (1.1.13–25); the blazon is inadvertently interpretative, since it presents the daughter's body as a text *to be read* before Pericles is formally required to interpret her riddle. As Suzanne Gossett observes *ad loc.*, the ambiguous epithet "curious" anticipates the riddle itself, whose subject (and answer) is the girl herself (Notes to *Pericles* 179). Shortly after Pericles expresses his ardent desire "to taste the fruit of yon celestial tree" (1.1.22), Antiochus responds with the same image, presenting his daughter with a "fair Hesperides, / With golden fruit, but dangerous to be touched" (1.1.28–29). The mythological allusion evokes both the garden of golden apple trees and the dragon that guards it. Antiochus continues his ambivalent speech by pointing to the severed heads of the previous suitors, which act as "speechless tongues," warning him to cease his quest (1.1.28–41). From her first appearance, the unnamed daughter is an embodied enigma, a spectacle that arouses desire only to make its pursuit fatal.

In this context, Gorfain's account of Antiochus's challenge as a corrupted marriage riddle becomes particularly useful ("Puzzle and Artifice" 13–5). The sense of a marriage test depends on a distinction between failure and success: the suitor is tested precisely because success should make a change in social status possible, from outsider to husband. Antiochus retains the outward form of such a procedure but removes its proper conclusion. The test ostensibly asks which man deserves the daughter, but its real purpose is to ensure no man can have her. His incest has already placed the father in the position that the successful suitor ought to occupy.

This contradiction becomes especially clear when *Pericles* is read alongside the casket scene in *The Merchant of Venice*, another of Shakespeare's marriage tests. Portia's dead father has stipulated in his will that she must marry the suitor who chooses correctly among three caskets (gold, silver, and lead), while an unsuccessful candidate must depart and renounce marriage altogether. Each casket bears an inscription requiring interpretation, but only the lead casket contains Portia's portrait and therefore confers Portia herself upon its chooser. Bound by her father's will and unable either to select or refuse a husband, Portia

accordingly identifies herself with the concealed object: she tells Bassanio, "I am locked in one of them. / If you do love me, you will find me out" (3.2.40–41). Bassanio correctly interprets the caskets, finds Portia's portrait, and receives the marriage the test promised. Antiochus's procedure operates in precisely the opposite direction. His daughter is likewise concealed within an interpretative problem, but discovering the truth about her makes marriage impossible rather than possible. In Austin's terms, the casket test is coercive but *felicitous* in producing its promised outcome, while the riddle test is *infelicitous*, since it exposes the impossibility of transfer.

Shakespeare relies on dramatic portrayal to convey what *The Story of Apollonius* explains overtly. Before introducing the riddle, the Latin narrator contrasts Antiochus's public performance as father with his private sexual role: "Before his citizens he pretended to be a dutiful father, while within the walls of his house he gloried in being his daughter's husband."[3]

The riddle follows directly from this contradiction. To keep enjoying the "unholy bed" (*impius torus*), Antiochus devises a riddle "to drive away the suitors."[4] The procedure is therefore already deceitful before anyone attempts to solve it: the man who publicly acts as the father responsible for arranging his daughter's marriage privately refuses the distinction between father and husband upon which that marriage depends. The Latin text also states the contest's conditions with contractual clarity: "Whoever among you finds the solution to the question I have posed will receive my daughter in marriage; whoever does not find it will be beheaded."[5]

The apparent alternatives are unambiguous: solution results in marriage; failure results in death. However, the narrator immediately cancels the difference. If anyone should discover the answer through "literary learning" (*prudentia litterarum*), he is nevertheless beheaded "as though he had said nothing" (*HA* RA 3) and his head is displayed above the gate. Knowledge that formally satisfies the condition of the test is treated as though it were never spoken, and its speaker becomes the mutilated spectacle of a head displayed for everyone to see. The silenced bodies still communicate, as the "speechless tongues" in *Pericles* convey the king's warning to desist from his pursuit (and thus from undertaking the riddle test) and provide evidence of the king's violent suppression of the previous interpreters.

Unlike an information-seeking question, the riddle presupposes an asymmetry of knowledge: as Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj observes, the asker already possesses the knowledge with which the respondent is tested and retains the authority to determine whether an offered answer is acceptable ("Riddles and Their Use" 25–6). The riddle is not an open inquiry but a teleological question constructed from an answer that already precedes it. As Don Handelman puts it, the answer is hidden within the question and subsequently made explicit by its solution ("Traps of Trans-formation" 42–3; 47–8).

---

[3] *simulata mente ostendebat se civibus suis pium genitorem, intra domesticos vero parietes maritum se filiae gloriabatur* (*HA* RA 3).

[4] *ad expellendos nuptiarum petitores* (*HA* RA 3).

[5] *Quicumque vestrum quaestionis meae propositae solutionem invenerit, accipiet filiam meam in matrimonium; qui autem non invenerit, decollabitur* (*HA* RA 3).

This is also why the riddle belongs so closely to the problem of paternal *control* over marriage. In a conventional suitor test, the father's authority sets conditions for the daughter's transfer into another household; however restrictive the test may be, its successful completion requires the father eventually to relinquish her. Antiochus's authority is used not to regulate the transition from daughter to wife but to prevent it, because incest has already collapsed the distinction between paternal and marital possession. The corrupted marriage test is therefore not simply the narrative setting for the riddle. It is the social form of the same confusion that the riddle will express linguistically.

Naming the unspeakable: kinship, interpretation, and accusation

The difficulty of Antiochus's riddle in *Pericles* lies less in concealing the nature of the relationship it describes. On the contrary, its first lines make the incest remarkably easy to identify:

> I am no viper, yet I feed
> On mother's flesh which did me breed.
> I sought a husband, in which labour
> I found that kindness in a father.
> He's father, son, and husband mild;
> I mother, wife, and yet his child.
> How they may be, and yet in two,
> As you will live, resolve it you. (*Pericles* 1.1.65–72)

As Gossett observes, the apparent contradictions in "father, son, and husband" and "mother, wife, and yet his child" can be rationalized by supplying in-law relationships, but the linguistic confusion itself matters: "the dreamlike riddle confounds meaning as incest confounds kin-relations" (Notes to *Pericles* 133). Terms that normally map a larger kinship network compress into a single dyad ("yet in two"), so each person represents the other's parent, spouse, and child. The sexual transgression is therefore represented as a disturbance of *naming*. At the same time, the concessive *yet* in the line "I am no viper, yet I feed" makes the sexual act analogous to feeding and the incestuous crime to bestial consumption.

This disruption of naming also helps explain why, as Gorfain stresses, "incest" is *not* in itself the answer to the riddle. The incestuous relation is already stated with sufficient clarity. What remains hidden is the identity of the first-person speaker. Solving the riddle means determining who the "I" is, and Gorfain argues that the solution is not the abstract concept of incest but Antiochus's unnamed daughter ("Puzzle and Artifice" 14). This alteration matters because Pericles departs from earlier versions of the story by making the daughter, rather than Antiochus, the riddle's grammatical speaker. Shakespeare and Wilkins thus place the woman whom the contest ostensibly offers as its prize at the centre of the interpretive problem. She is at once the desired bride and prize, the compromised victim of the concealed crime, and the metonymic embodiment of the crime.

There is an additional paradox here. The daughter is grammatically given a voice, but her father controls the text through which that voice reaches Pericles. The first-person "I"

does not amount to autonomous testimony of the kind Marina will later be able to give. Antiochus hands Pericles a written riddle that turns his daughter's identity into an object of interpretation. Her personal name is never supplied; instead, a collection of mutually incompatible kinship roles speaks. Gorfain's observation that the answer is Antiochus's "nameless daughter" is therefore particularly significant: the solver can identify what has happened to her only by working through the family names that the incest has confused.

The earlier *Story of Apollonius* makes this destruction of names still more explicit. Before Antiochus ever poses his formal riddle to the suitors, his daughter already speaks enigmatically about what has happened to her. After the rape, she tells her nurse, "just now, in this room two noble names have perished."[6] When the nurse urges her to tell her father, the girl replies with the riddle-like question, "And where is my father?"[7] before explaining: "the name of father has perished in me."[8] Andrew Laird treats this conversation as an initial riddling exchange and emphasizes its ethical dimension: impiety (*impietas*), the violation of familial and religious norms, generates the girl's enigmatic language and explains it ("Metaphor" 226–7).

The formulation "the name of father has perished in me" is especially revealing when read back through *Pericles*. What has "perished" is not the biological relationship itself: Antiochus remains the girl's father. What has become impossible is that the name "father" (pater) can adequately describe a man who has assumed another, incompatible relation to her. Incest thus produces a crisis not because kinship terminology is insufficiently precise but because the act forces terms that ought to remain separate into the same person. The *Story of Apollonius* turns that crisis into a statement about language before it becomes a formal riddle. Shakespeare expands on this in "He's father, son, and husband mild; / I mother, wife, and yet his child" (1.1.65-66), what the Latin narrative has already anticipated in the daughter's recognition that the name "father" can no longer be used as it should.

The difference between the Latin and Shakespearean riddles is therefore instructive. In the *Story of Apollonius*, Antiochus speaks in the first person: "I am borne along by crime; I feed on a mother's flesh,"[9] and the solver must identify the ruler behind the figurative statements. In *Pericles*, the shift from first person to daughter produces what Gossett calls a "tangle" of relational positions (Notes to *Pericles* 185). The alteration increases the pressure on kinship terminology: it is no longer only Antiochus's conduct that must be decoded, but the daughter's impossible position within the family he has created.

In his interpretation of the riddle in the *Story of Apollonius*, Étienne Wolff links Antiochus's riddle to the Oedipal tradition, suggesting that its genealogical formulation may rework material about Oedipus and his sons and that the *Story of Apollonius* as a whole functions as a counterpart to the Oedipus story ("The role of the riddle" 281; 287–8). Such a view would explain why Apollonius needs extensive learning to solve the riddle: "literary

[6] *modo in hoc cubiculo duo nobilia perierunt nomina* (*HA* RA 2).
[7] *et ubi est pater?* (*HA* RA 2).
[8] *periit in me nomen patris* (*HA* RA 2).
[9] *scelere vehor, materna carne vescor* (*HA* RA 4).

learning,"[10] "he was searching wisely,"[11] "And, having opened his bookcase, he investigated all the questions of the authors, the disputations of almost all the philosophers, and even those of all the Chaldeans."[12] To interpret Antiochus's riddle, one must draw on this body of textual and philosophical knowledge to understand it and map it correctly onto Antiochus's present circumstances.

Yet the most important problem begins only after solving this linguistic puzzle. Pericles's first response makes clear that recognition has already occurred: "If this be true, which makes me pale to read it?" (1.1.76). His pallor is significant: nothing in the scene suggests prolonged intellectual uncertainty about the meaning of the riddle. Instead, he tries to manage the consequences of what he now knows. Addressing the daughter, Pericles conveys his understanding through an inverted blazon. She is now a "glorious casket stored with ill"; more elaborately, she is a "fair viol" that, if played lawfully, might produce heavenly music but has been "played upon before [her] time," so that "Hell only danceth at so harsh a chime" (1.1.78–86). The metaphors disclose the sexual violation without yet naming its perpetrator.

Antiochus then makes explicit the political conditions governing Pericles's response: "Either expound now, or receive your sentence" (1.1.91). Pericles is ordered not merely to understand but *to expound*: interpretation must become public speech. Moreover, the language of "law" and "sentence" places that speech within a process controlled by the person whom the answer would incriminate. Antiochus thus appears simultaneously as the object of judgment and as the legal authority who determines the consequences of judging correctly.

Pericles therefore needs to evade the directness of the command:

> Great king,
> Few love to hear the sins they love to act.
> 'Twould braid yourself too near for me to tell it.
> Who has a book of all that monarchs do,
> He's more secure to keep it shut than shown. (1.1.92–96)

Gossett glosses braid as "upbraid" and tells it as "answer the riddle" (Notes to *Pericles* 187). Pericles's aphoristic language lets him signal his knowledge without naming Antiochus directly: "Kings are earth's gods; in vice their law's their will; / And, if Jove stray, who dares say Jove doth ill?" (1.1.104–05). His evasiveness reflects not interpretative uncertainty but an accurate assessment of the conditions under which interpretation must be voiced. As Battell observes, "the solution itself becomes another problem" (434). More precisely, the problem is no longer hermeneutic but pragmatic: because the riddle refers to Antiochus and his daughter, expounding it necessarily performs a public accusation of the king.

---

[10] *prudentia litterarum* (*HA* RA 3).
[11] *sapienter scrutaretur* (*HA* RA 4).
[12] *Et aperto scrinio codicum suorum inquirit omnes quaestiones auctorum omniumque pene philosophorum disputationes omniumque etiam Chaldaeorum* (*HA* RA 6).

Austin's account of linguistic action clarifies why Antiochus's procedure fails. Its rules are understood and therefore secure "uptake": Pericles recognizes that he is required to interpret the riddle and does so correctly (*How to Do* 14–5; 116–8). Nevertheless, the answer should distinguish success from failure, but Antiochus cannot acknowledge a correct answer without identifying himself as the criminal it describes. He therefore demands a correct *exposition* while making its consequences indistinguishable from those of failure. Unwilling to surrender his daughter, he also violates Austin's requirement that participants subsequently act in accordance with the procedure they have invoked.

Here the *Story of Apollonius* again makes explicit what *Pericles* dramatizes more obliquely. Apollonius gives Antiochus the direct answer that Pericles avoids: "When you said 'I am borne along by crime,' you did not lie: look at yourself. And when you said 'I feed on a mother's flesh,' in this too you did not lie: look at your daughter."[13] The imperatives "look at yourself" and "look at your daughter" turn interpretation unambiguously into accusation. Moreover, as Laird underscores, the *Story of Apollonius* presents the act of solving in markedly intellectual terms ("Metaphor" 229). The problem, again, is not that he may have misunderstood.

Antiochus's response makes this clear. He publicly declares Apollonius mistaken, but his subsequent conduct shows that he knows the answer is correct. In the Latin narrative, he sends an assassin after him because Apollonius has "found the solution to my question."[14] Apollonius himself later formulates the contradiction succinctly: "You solved the king's riddle; you did not receive his daughter; instead, you were granted a reprieve only so that you may be killed."[15]

Thus, an important difference between the two versions is that Apollonius answers the semantic question directly and only afterwards discovers that the rules of the exchange offer him no protection, while Pericles seems to grasp the two problems almost simultaneously. He solves the riddle and immediately recognizes the danger of becoming its explicit interpreter. His circumlocution is therefore not simply rhetorical ornament or timidity but pragmatic intelligence: he understands both what the text means and what saying it would do.

Pericles's response grimly reverses Aristotle's account of the pleasure of riddling. In *Rhetoric* 3.10–11, Aristotle associates metaphor and riddles with the pleasure of "quick learning": "Good riddles are pleasing for the same reason; for there is learning, and they are spoken in metaphor" (3.11.6, 1412a). At Antioch, however, recognition produces pallor and withdrawal. The unexpected relation that makes the riddle intelligible is itself horrifying: "father," "husband," "daughter," and "wife" can be reconciled only by recognizing a sexual arrangement that has destroyed the distinctions those terms ordinarily express. Only in the final recognition scene, when Marina's enigmatic speech leads Pericles to recognize his daughter, does the pleasure of learning described by Aristotle coincide with the successful resolution of an interpretive problem. The *Story of Apollonius* develops

---

[13] *Quod dixisti: "scelere vehor", non es mentitus; te respice. et quod dixisti: "materna carne vescor", et hoc non es mentitus; filiam tuam intuere* (*HA* RA 4).
[14] *quia Tyrius Apollonius invenit quaestionis meae solutionem* (*HA* RA 6).
[15] *Quaestionem regis solvisti, filiam eius non accepisti, sed ideo dilatus es, ut neceris* (*HA* RA 6).

this association even further: near the end of the narrative, before either recognizes the other, Tarsia attempts to console her grieving father by posing a long series of riddles drawn from the *Aenigmata*, a collection traditionally attributed to Symphosius (Kortekaas 74, 84).

Further irony appears in the image of "physic." At the beginning of Shakespeare's play, interpretation functions as "sharp physic": knowledge wounds the interpreter even as it reveals the *sickness* of Antiochus's household. At the end, Marina will be brought to the silent, grieving Pericles because her own speech is expected to function as "sacred physic," capable of restoring him to life (5.1.64–67). As Gossett observes, Marina's "sacred physic" grants her father "another life" ("Introduction" 86). Kent Lehnhof similarly locates the play's ethical movement in a shift from exploitative modes of seeing to receptiveness to voices previously silenced or ignored; Marina's voice, in particular, becomes the principal agent of regeneration ("Seeing and Speaking" 95–127). The verbal echo marks the play's larger movement from knowledge that exposes a corrupt familial relation and places the knower under threat of death to speech that makes a lost familial relation knowable again and produces recognition, recovery, and healing.

False texts and criminal concealment: Dionyza's epitaph

The problem of dangerous interpretation introduced at Antioch does not disappear when Pericles escapes the king's court. In Act 4, it returns in a different form. This time, no one needs to solve a riddle or answer a ruler's demand. Instead, Pericles encounters a text that seems to require no interpretation: the funerary inscription erected for Marina. Yet the epitaph's apparent clarity is itself deceptive. Where Antiochus encodes a true crime in enigmatic language, Dionyza uses the authority of a public memorial to turn a false account of violence into accepted truth. The two episodes therefore offer complementary examples of the relation between crime and textual representation: the first makes truth dangerous to articulate, while the second makes falsehood dangerously easy to believe.

The epitaph comes at the end of a sequence in which Dionyza has tried to remove Marina and then control the account of what happened to her. Gower introduces the inscription with unusual directness:

> The epitaph is for Marina writ
> By wicked Dionyza.
> The fairest, sweetest and best lies here,
> Who withered in her spring of year.
> She was of Tyrus the King's daughter
> On whom foul death hath made this slaughter.
> Marina was she called, and at her birth
> Thetis being proud swallowed some part o'th' earth.
> Therefore the earth, fearing to be o'erflowed,
> Hath Thetis' birth-child on the heavens bestowed;
> Wherefore she does, and swears she'll never stint,
> Make raging battery upon shores of flint. (*Pericles* 4.4.32–43)

The inscription is not a riddle in the strict sense, but nevertheless repeats several features of the earlier enigmatic text. Once again, an absent or silenced daughter becomes the subject of a highly constructed discourse controlled by the person responsible for violence against her; once again, Pericles must encounter that daughter through words before he can encounter her as a person. But the direction of concealment has been reversed. Antiochus's riddle tells the truth in a form that requires decoding. Dionyza's epitaph presents a lie in a form designed to discourage further inquiry.

Its most conspicuous falsehood is of course its first assertion: Marina "lies here." The monument gives material permanence to an absence and asks its reader to treat that absence as a corpse. Yet the deception operates more subtly than a simple false statement. The epitaph also removes Dionyza entirely from the causal chain. Marina has not been attacked through the jealousy and plotting of her foster mother; instead, "foul death hath made this slaughter" (*Pericles* 4.4.37). The language names violence – "slaughter" is a surprisingly strong term – but transfers agency to the abstraction "death." The lines that follow displace causality still further into mythological narrative: Thetis, proud of Marina's birth at sea, has disturbed the balance between water and earth, and the earth has consequently sent Marina to heaven. A planned murder is thus rewritten as cosmological necessity.

The elaborate explanation is important precisely because it seems unnecessary. If an epitaph's purpose is simply to record Marina's death, the extended fiction involving Thetis and the earth adds little factual information; instead, it functions rhetorically. Thus, the inscription replaces the circumstances that must remain hidden with a more attractive story about nature, divinity, and heavenly translation. The crime disappears behind the language of memorial praise. Gower immediately makes the mechanism explicit: "No vizor does become black villainy / So well as soft and tender flattery" (*Pericles* 4.4.44–45). "Vizor" aptly describes the epitaph's function. The written memorial does not merely fail to disclose the crime; it gives that crime another face. Its "soft and tender" language turns attempted murder into elegy. Dionyza's inscription thus reverses the logic of Antiochus's riddle. The opening enigma tells a disturbing truth in a form that makes its successful interpretation dangerous; the epitaph presents a falsehood in a form designed to be accepted as fact. At Antioch, Pericles suffers because he reads correctly; at Tarsus, he suffers because he believes a deceptive text. In both cases, the force of language lies not only in truth or falsity but in the consequences produced by its reception.

The earlier *Story of Apollonius* contains the same narrative structure, although the difference between the Latin version and *Pericles* is revealing. Dionyza explicitly deliberates "how she might *conceal* the deed"[16] and proposes that she and Stranguillio put on mourning clothes and claim, "with false tears"[17] that Tarsia has died suddenly. The deception then takes public material form: Dionyza and her daughter dress in mourning, the citizens accept the story, and they erect an empty funerary monument for Tarsia. As Erkki Sironen notes, its "posthumous" inscription appears twice in the narrative, in slightly different forms: first when the monument is erected and later when Apollonius reads it and accepts the false death it commemorates (293).

[16] *quomodo posset facinus illud celare* (*HA* RA 31).
[17] *falsis lacrimis* (*HA* RA 32).

However, an important distinction separates the deception from the inscription in the *Story of Apollonius*. Dionyza originates the false story and provides the empty tomb, but the citizens themselves erect the public monument out of gratitude for Apollonius's earlier benefactions. The inscription consequently gains authority precisely because its makers are innocent of the deception. Thus, private crime becomes communal memory, and the monumental text, far from sounding like a murderer's speech, reads as the city's testimony.

In *Pericles*, however, Gower announces that "the epitaph is for Marina writ / By wicked Dionyza," bringing the criminal agent and the memorial text into much closer relation. The inscription is also more elaborate than the comparatively formal commemorative text of the *Story of Apollonius*. It does not merely mark a supposedly dead daughter but invents an explanatory narrative for her death. Shakespeare thus emphasize the capacity of literary language itself to beautify and disguise violence.

Gorfain places the episode within the play's larger concern with artifice: pretended grief becomes a material monument, letting falsehood take on the outward marks of public truth ("Puzzle and Artifice" 19-20). The epitaph is particularly effective because it combines accurate details such as Marina's name, parentage, and birth at sea with the false proposition that she is dead. It thus closes interpretation down by presenting a deceptive account as already complete. The parallel with Antiochus is therefore precise. Both corrupt parental figures seek to control the representation of violence against a daughter. Antiochus controls the conditions under which his crime may be interpreted; Dionyza controls the narrative through which her crime will be remembered. In neither case does the daughter initially control the account imposed upon her. Recognition will require that imposed account to be contradicted by the living daughter herself. The narrative therefore turns from texts that fix women as objects of interpretation toward the forms of learning, narrative skill, and speech through which Tarsia and Marina recover linguistic agency.

The wise maiden (*prudens puella*): learning, sexual economy, and linguistic agency

The movement away from the destructive texts of Antioch and Tarsus begins with the daughter's recovery of control over speech. In *Pericles*, Marina enters the brothel as an object to be bought, displayed, and sexually consumed, but repeatedly frustrates the roles imposed upon her by transforming encounters that should be commercial and sexual into *verbal* exchanges. The language of the brothel insists upon her exchange value: she is a "creature of sale," the Bawd expects Lysimachus to "line [her] apron with gold," and Boult is eventually ordered to "crack the glass of her virginity" and make her "malleable" (*Pericles* 4.5.63–149). As Nona Fienberg argues, however, Marina escapes the "contract of prostitution" by "creating a market for her discourse": she does not withdraw entirely from the system of exchange but substitutes her speech and accomplishments for the sexual use of her body (274–75). Speech thereby interrupts and transforms the economic transaction. What should culminate in the purchase of Marina's body instead ends with her prospective clients listening to her and paying her without consuming the commodity they were promised.

Her encounter with Lysimachus makes this reversal particularly clear. At first, he

assumes his political authority and her location in the brothel determine the meaning of their exchange. Marina instead questions the connection between his rank and his conduct:

> "Do you know this house to be a place of such
> resort, and will come into't? I hear say you're of
> honourable parts, and are the governor of this place.
> [...]
> If you were born to honour, show it now." (*Pericles* 4.5.84–96)

Gossett notes that Lysimachus is disturbed when he realizes Marina already knows who he is: that knowledge shifts the balance of the conversation and gives Marina greater power (Notes to *Pericles* 354). Her speech does not merely preserve her chastity by pleading for sympathy, but requires Lysimachus to interpret his own identity differently. "Honour" ceases to denote the rank that allows him to enter the brothel with impunity and becomes a standard against which his conduct can be judged. In that sense Marina reverses the situation at Antioch. Pericles understood a ruler's wrongdoing but could not safely turn that knowledge into an accusation; Marina, with far less formal authority, openly asks a governor to make his actions match the name and office he claims.

The brothel workers' comic response registers the effectiveness of this speech. Boult complains that Marina has spoken "holy words" to Lysimachus and that she makes their profession "stink afore the face of the gods" (*Pericles* 4.5.138–41). Her linguistic agency is therefore presented as practical, rather than ornamental: words alter the behaviour of the men who approach her and frustrate the economic purpose for which she has been purchased. As Elizabeth Archibald observes, Shakespeare expands this moral and persuasive dimension of Marina's speech even while reducing the more explicitly intellectual accomplishments attached to Tarsia in earlier versions. Marina may be said to "dumb deep clerks," but the play never stages her defeating learned men in intellectual competition; it immediately surrounds the assertion with references to singing, dancing, and needlework (298).

This differs significantly from the *Story of Apollonius*. Tarsia's education is made both explicit and indispensable to her survival. Having preserved her virginity initially by recounting her misfortunes, she tells the brothel servant with confidence: "I have the benefit of the liberal arts; I am fully educated."[18] She proposes to substitute intellectual and artistic performance for the sexual labour expected of her: she can speak eloquently, play the lyre, and, in some recensions, solve whatever riddles are proposed to her. The plan succeeds. Her performances attract the citizens of Mytilene, generate money for the brothel keeper, and allow her to remain a virgin. Archibald emphasizes how unusual this is: Tarsia's learning is not a decorative attribute but something "functional, not to say crucial" to the plot ("Deep Clerks" 292).

The contrast with the sexual economy of the brothel is sharp. Tarsia is supposed to generate value through sexual availability, but she finds another means of producing the money demanded by her owner: learning and eloquence replace sexual service. This is not

[18] *Habeo auxilium studiorum liberalium; perfecte erudita sum* (*HA* RA 36).

complete liberation, since she still earns money for her owner, but education gives her a limited form of agency within a structure designed to deprive her of it.

The distinction between education and practical wisdom is useful here. Tarsia is explicitly "well educated," "learned" (*erudita*) (*HA* RA 36), but when she later approaches Apollonius she is the "wise girl" (*prudens puella*) (*HA* RA 41): learning has become judgment exercised in circumstances. She understands what the brothel keeper values and finds another way to provide it; she recognizes that ordinary consolation cannot reach the grieving stranger and changes her method; and she uses riddling to draw him into an exchange he has refused with everyone else.

This practical use of language offers a pointed contrast with Antiochus's daughter. The unnamed daughter at the beginning of the *Story of Apollonius* experiences sexual violence as a crisis of language: "the name of father has perished in me."[19] Tarsia is likewise threatened by male sexual possession, but her response is the opposite. She preserves herself through narrative, persuasion, learned performance, and eventually riddling. One daughter's sexual violation makes familial language fail; the other daughter's command of language helps preserve both her bodily integrity and, eventually, her family identity.

Pericles retains this basic opposition while changing its terms. Gower asserts Marina's educational achievements but dramatizes them less fully: Gower tells us that "Deep clerks she dumbs," yet the audience witnesses above all her ability to speak morally and persuasively in situations of sexual danger. Archibald notes that Shakespeare simultaneously magnifies Marina's rhetorical power and plays down the more explicitly scholarly character of Tarsia's accomplishments (298). What survives most forcefully, therefore, is not learned display for its own sake but the practical efficacy of a daughter's speech.

Restoring communication: Tarsia's riddles and recognition

Tarsia's riddling becomes clearest when viewed through Shakespeare's omission of it. Archibald has shown that Pericles makes the encounter between Marina and her father "much less intellectual" than the corresponding scene in earlier versions: there is no contest of riddles, no demand that the father prove his intelligence, and no sustained display of the daughter's learning. Instead, Pericles questions Marina and gradually elicits the story that reveals her identity (Archibald 298). The very element removed by Shakespeare is therefore unusually prominent in the *Story of Apollonius*: before Tarsia can tell Apollonius who she is, she first persuades him to become an interpreter again.

The situation deliberately recalls the beginning of the narrative, but under altered conditions. Apollonius has withdrawn into the darkness of his ship because he believes both wife and daughter dead and no longer wishes to live; he is consumed by the guilt of being the cause for these losses, in a manner parallel to Antiochus's simultaneous destruction of daughter and wife. Athenagoras summons Tarsia precisely because her *learning* may succeed where ordinary consolation has failed: "here your skill in learning is

[19] *periit in me nomen patris* (*HA* RA 2).

needed."[20] Tarsia initially tries song and consolation, but Apollonius pays her and asks to be left alone. She then returns the money and proposes a different form of exchange: "If you untie the knots of my riddles, I shall go; otherwise, I shall return your money and leave."[21] Apollonius accepts partly because he does not want to appear to reclaim his payment, but also "because he wishes to hear the wise girl speak."[22] The exchange therefore begins with something absent from the Antiochian contest: mutual consent to its terms. The riddler proposes a condition, the respondent accepts it, and both understand what successful performance is supposed to accomplish. Tarsia challenges Apollonius to prove the "wisdom" (*prudentia*) appropriate to a king, and he responds by solving a sequence of riddles while increasingly admiring the intelligence of so young a girl. The exchange is competitive without being coercive: its purpose is to sustain conversation, not to make failure fatal or success impossible.

Archibald emphasizes that Tarsia's education is therefore crucial for the second time: the learning that protected her in the brothel now helps produce reunion with her father. The contrast with Antioch is simple. Apollonius's competence as interpreter places him in danger; here, the same willingness to interpret begins to bring him back to life. The first riddle made successful understanding socially useless, "as though the solver had said nothing,"[23] whereas Tarsia's riddles reopen communication with a man who has withdrawn from speech. Tarsia's riddles do not bring about recognition themselves; they prepare the way for it. The transition from enigmatic exchange to autobiographical testimony is precipitated by a brief scene of violence. When Tarsia returns Apollonius's money and attempts to draw him toward the light, he pushes her away, causing her to fall and bleed from the nose (*HA* RA 44). The incident repeats in miniature the paternal violence at Antioch: once again, a father injures his daughter, although Apollonius does so unwittingly. Here, however, violence does not silence the daughter. Tarsia's fall and injury prompt her lament for the calamities she has suffered since infancy, and that lament develops into the story of her life: her birth during a storm, the apparent death of her mother, her abandonment with Stranguillio and Dionyza, the attempt upon her life, her abduction by pirates, and her sale into the brothel. As Tarsia recounts these events, Apollonius realizes that she is his daughter. In Recension A, he exclaims, "You are my daughter!"[24] Tarsia replies, "If you are looking for Tarsia, I am she."[25] Apollonius's words directly reverse Antiochus's daughter's earlier declaration that "the name of father has perished in me."[26] The movement from riddle to recognition therefore culminates not in a more difficult enigma but in restoring the simplest relational names: father and daughter.

That ending gives the scene a structural force that is easy to miss if the riddles are treated merely as entertainment. The narrative that began with the destruction of kinship names

[20] *hic est enim ars studiorum tuorum necessaria* (*HA* RA 40).
[21] *Si enim parabolarum mearum nodos absolveris, vadam; sin aliud, refundam tibi pecuniam tuam et abscedam* (*HA* RA 41).
[22] *cupiens a prudenti puella audire sermonem* (*HA* RA 41).
[23] *quasi nihil dixisset* (*HA* RA 3).
[24] *tu es filia mea!* (*HA* RA 45).
[25] *si Tharsiam quaeris, ego sum* (*HA* RA 45).
[26] *periit in me nomen patris* (*HA* RA 2).

has now reached recognition when the relational name can once again be spoken truthfully. At Antioch, father and husband had become disastrously confused; at Mytilene, "father" once again denotes a father and "daughter" a daughter.

There is also a striking reversal in the daughter's position. Antiochus's daughter becomes the object of a riddle controlled by her father and, in *Pericles*, becomes its grammatical voice without gaining control of the communicative situation. Tarsia, by contrast, is the riddler herself. She chooses the form of exchange, proposes its conditions, and determines the questions, even though her authority is not coercive. She does not punish failure and has no interest in making success impossible. Her superior position within the riddle game creates communication rather than foreclosing it.

The recognition scene consequently corrects both the sexual economy of the brothel and the corrupted marriage test with which the story began. There the daughter's body was the promised reward for interpretation; here a daughter initiates an intellectual exchange whose object is continued speech. The first riddle converts knowledge into danger, while the later riddles convert isolation into relation.

This restoration is specific to the *Story of Apollonius*. Shakespeare preserves the movement from hidden identity to recognition but removes the explicit father-daughter riddle contest. Marina also draws her father out of silence, but through a different kind of speech.

Beyond the riddle: Marina and the language of recognition

The recognition between Marina and Pericles is therefore not simply a shortened version of Tarsia's riddle contest. It reorganizes the relation among speaker, interpreter, and truth. Pericles has withdrawn from speech after accepting the false report of Marina's death; Marina approaches him first through song and then through an account of herself. Unlike Antiochus's daughter, whose first-person voice is embedded in a text controlled by her father, Marina speaks in her own presence and progressively supplies the information by which her words can be tested (*Pericles* 5.1.93–200).

Pericles notices a physical resemblance before he knows her identity: his lost wife "was like this maid," and his daughter "might have been" such a woman (*Pericles* 5.1.97–104). He then shifts from physical resemblance to questions of origin, name, and parentage. Marina's answer, "No, nor of any shores," already resists easy geographical classification (5.1.93–96); her name explains that she was born at sea, adding a biographical fact that connects the stranger before him with the child he believes dead. Recognition emerges through accumulation rather than through a single deciphered answer.

This gradual procedure recalls what Terence Cave calls the epistemological work of anagnorisis: recognition moves from not knowing to knowing as previously scattered signs acquire intelligibility. In his discussion of the Marina scene, Cave stresses the extended process by which Pericles responds to her story, "asks questions," fills in its gaps, and demands "names and proofs" before finally knowing that the girl beside him is his daughter (*Recognitions* 288–9). Even after Marina's history makes recognition increasingly likely, Pericles keeps seeking confirmation: "What was thy mother's name? Tell me but that, / For truth can never be confirmed enough" (*Pericles* 5.1.190–92). The scene therefore does not

replace interpretation with immediate belief, but replaces Antiochus's rigged interpretive conditions with a reciprocal process in which evidence may accumulate, and truth may be checked without threatening the speaker.

The importance of naming becomes especially clear against the earlier episodes. Antiochus's daughter is unnamed and represented through incompatible kinship roles; Dionyza's epitaph names Marina accurately but fixes that name within the false statement of her death. At Mytilene, Marina can instead say who she is, where she was born, and from whom she descends (*Pericles* 5.1.145–70). Her identity is no longer supplied by a father who has violated her or by a foster mother who has attempted to erase her. The daughter becomes the principal witness to her own history.

Archibald observes that the Shakespearean recognition is "much less intellectual" than its predecessors: the riddle contest disappears, and Marina's responses are strikingly brief and literal (298). This alteration is not merely evidence that *Pericles* reduces the intellectual dimension of the source tradition; it also has a structural effect. The *Story of Apollonius* rehabilitates riddling by staging a second, reciprocal riddle exchange, whereas Pericles moves instead from the encrypted truth of Antiochus's riddle and the fabricated truth of Dionyza's epitaph toward a language in which identity can be stated more directly. Gossett's description of the recognition scene as moving from emblematic metaphor to literal statement captures this shift well ("Introduction" 9).

Nonetheless, Marina's speech is restorative not because literal language is intrinsically immune to deception, Dionyza's epitaph has already shown otherwise, but because the communicative relation has changed. Marina is not setting a trap, and Pericles lacks the power to punish her for telling the truth. Question and answer can lead toward confirmation rather than danger. The daughter, repeatedly made the object of other people's texts, becomes, at last, the speaker through whom a false narrative is corrected and a family relation becomes knowable again.

Conclusion: from dangerous interpretation to recognition

Pericles begins with a riddle that can be solved but cannot be answered safely. Antiochus controls both the daughter ostensibly promised by the test and the procedure through which his incest may be exposed: interpretation succeeds semantically but fails in its social consequences. The riddle speaks truthfully about the crime, but the contest makes that truth dangerous to articulate. Incest collapses the distinctions among father, husband, daughter, and wife, just as the corrupted test collapses the distinction between successful and unsuccessful interpretation. In Austin's terms, uptake occurs – Pericles and Apollonius understand – but the criminal retains the power to determine what may count as a legitimate answer and to punish the interpreter who identifies him.

The later narrative repeatedly reworks this conjunction of criminality, distorted kinship, and corrupted speech. Dionyza's epitaph invests a false account with the authority of public memorial, concealing attempted murder beneath the language of commemoration. Tarsia and Marina, by contrast, use speech both to resist further sexual violence and to undo the false representations imposed upon them. The *Story of Apollonius* completes a ring structure in which the "wise girl" answers Antiochus's deadly riddle with restorative

riddles whose terms can be honoured. Shakespeare retains the movement from concealment to recognition but alters its linguistic form: the riddle contest disappears, and Marina's account of her name, birth, and parentage gradually corrects the false narrative of her death.

The movement from Antioch to Mytilene is therefore linguistic, ethical, and familial. At the opening, criminal power controls the terms of truth-telling, and the daughter appears as an unnamed "I" whose kinship positions have been rendered incompatible. At the end, Marina can name herself, prevent the violence threatened against her, and be recognized as a daughter without being punished for the truth she speaks. Recognition depends not merely upon recovering concealed crime but upon restoring the conditions under which truth can be articulated, tested, and believed. As familial relations are recovered, father and husband, daughter and wife, truth and deception, interpretation and accusation become distinguishable once more.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Vichi Eugenia Ciocani *https://orcid.org/0009-0001-1803-6920*

Works Cited:

Archibald, Elizabeth. "'Deep Clerks She Dumbs': The Learned Heroine in *Apollonius of Tyre* and 'Pericles'" in *Comparative Drama*, 22.4, 1988–89: 289–303. *JSTOR*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41153374. Accessed 23 October 2026.

Aristotle. *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*. Translated with introduction, notes, and appendices by George A. Kennedy. 2nd ed. Oxford UP, 2007.

Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things with Words*. 2nd ed. Edited by J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisà, Harvard UP, 1975.

Battell, Sophie Emma. "Pericles and the Secret" in *Shakespeare*, 18.4, 2022: 432–50. https://doi.org/10.1080/17450918.2022.2066166

Beta, Simone. *Riddles, Oracles, and Dreams in Ancient Culture: The Labyrinth of the Word*. Oxford UP, 2026.

Cave, Terence. *Recognitions: A Study in Poetics*. Clarendon Press, 1990. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198151630.001.0001

Fienberg, Nona. "Marina in *Pericles*: Exchange Values and the Art of Moral Discourse" in Ramel Barnes, Dana (ed.) *Shakespearean Criticism*, Vol. 36, 1997: 274–76.

Frye, Susan. "Incest and Authority in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*" in *Incest and the Literary Imagination*. Edited by Elizabeth Barnes, UP of Florida, 2002: 39–58.

Gorfain Phyllis. "Puzzle and Artifice: The Riddle as Metapoetry in *Pericles*" in Muir, K, (ed.) *Shakespeare Survey*. Cambridge University Press; 1976:11-20.

Handelman, Don. "Traps of Trans-formation: Theoretical Convergences between Riddle

and Ritual" in Hasan-Rokem, Galit, Shulman, David (eds.) *Untying the Knot: On Riddles and Other Enigmatic Modes*. Oxford UP, 1996: 37–61.
Kaivola-Bregenhøj, Annikki. "Riddles and Their Use" in Hasan-Rokem, Galit, Shulman, David (eds.) *Untying the Knot: On Riddles and Other Enigmatic Modes*. Oxford UP, 1996: 10–36.
Kortekaas, G. A. A. (ed.) *The Story of Apollonius, King of Tyre: A Study of Its Greek Origin and an Edition of the Two Oldest Latin Recensions.* Mnemosyne Supplements, vol. 253. Brill, 2004.
Laird, Andrew. "Metaphor and the Riddle of Representation in the *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri*" in Harrison, Stephen, Paschalis, Michael and Frangoulidis, Stavros (eds.) *Metaphor and the Ancient Novel*. Eelde: Barkhuis Publishing, 2005: 225–244.
Lehnhof, Kent. "Seeing and Speaking in *Pericles*" in *Voice and Ethics in Shakespeare's Late Plays*, Cambridge UP, 2026: 95–127. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009613897.005
Shakespeare, William. *The Merchant of Venice*. Edited by John Drakakis. Arden Shakespeare, 2010.
Shakespeare, William and George Wilkins. *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*. Edited, with an "Introduction" and notes by Suzanne Gossett. Arden Shakespeare, 2004.
Sironen, Erkki. "The Role of Inscriptions in Greco-Roman Novels" in Panayotakis, Stelios, Zimmerman, Maaike, and Keulen, Wytse (eds.) *The Ancient Novel and Beyond*. Brill, 2003: 289–300.
Townsend, David. "The Deadly Play of Speech and Silence in *Apollonius of Tyre*" in *Queering Medieval Latin Rhetoric: Silence, Subversion, and Sexual Heterodoxy*, Cambridge UP, 2023: 72–94. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009206860.004.
Wolff, Étienne. "Le rôle de l'énigme dans l'*Historia Apollonii regis Tyri*" [The role of the riddle in the Historia Apollonii regis Tyri] in *Revue de philologie, de littérature et d'histoire anciennes*, 73.2, 1999: 279–88.

Notes on Contributor(s)

Vichi-Eugenia Ciocani completed both her BA and MA in Classical Philology at the University of Bucharest. She pursued doctoral studies in the University of Toronto's Department of Classics. Her dissertation (published in 2025) examined virginity in ancient Greek literature, from Homer to the Greek novels. In Canada, she taught a wide range of courses at the University of Toronto, York University, and St. Philip's Seminary. She has published numerous translations from Latin and Greek into Romanian, as well as research articles on ancient Greek and Latin literature. Since 2024, she has been an assistant professor in the Department of Classical Philology at the University of Bucharest.

Citation: Ciocani, V.E. Deciphering the crime: riddle-solving, incest, and perilous interpretation in Shakespeare's *Pericles* and the ancient *Story of Apollonius*. *University of Bucharest Review. Literary and Cultural Studies Series* 16(1), 2026: 180-199. https://doi.org/10.31178/UBR.16.1.12

Received: July 22, 2026 | **Accepted:** October 28, 2026 | **Published:** October 30, 2026