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# DOG-FACED DEFLORES: DISABILITY IN EARLY MODERN LITERATURE

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DOG-FACED DEFLORES: DISABILITY IN EARLY MODERN LITERATURE

By

Rebecca A. Kahl

THESIS

Submitted

to

Northern Michigan University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree

Of

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2013

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## ABSTRACT

### DOG-FACED DEFLORES: DISABILITY IN EARLY MODERN LITERATURE

By

Rebecca A Kahl

Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* features a famously sinister character named Deflores who is stigmatized due to a congenital birth defect to his face. Drawing on Erving Goffman and Lerita Coleman's analysis of stigma, I am interested in how Middleton and Rowley deploy concepts pertaining to disability and deformity in the social context of early modern England, in their exploration of disability's relationship with issues such as morality and social standing, and the way in which the body for these Jacobean dramatists signifies a representation of someone's inner self. To discuss the different ways the body is affected through deformity, I engage the works of theorists such as Sharon Snyder, David Mitchell, and Lennard Davis, in order to examine how the body has been historically critiqued to fit certain established norms, and the consequences for those individuals who do not fit within these norms. Having established our current interpretations of the disabled body, I turn to early modern England to explore how much our understanding of disability in many ways takes its cues from this period.

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This thesis follows the format prescribed by the *Chicago Manual of Style* and the Department of English.

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## INTRODUCTION

Early in the Jacobean tragedy, *The Changeling*, by Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, Beatrice-Joanna, the gorgeous daughter of the noble Duke, Vermandero, spies her servant, Deflores. She calls him “dog-faced” and demands: “thing most loathed, what cause was there in this to bring thee to my sight?” Late in the play, after numerous murders, sexual trysts, and a virginity test, Beatrice -Joanna looks on Deflores again and says: “How heartily he serves me! His face loathes one, but look upon his care, who would not love him? The east is not more beauteous than his service....here’s a man worth loving!” How do we trace the arch of Beatrice-Joanna’s unexplainable hatred for her father’s servant, to end with her proclaiming love for the same man? What happens in the interim? Well, that’s where things get interesting.

Beatrice- Johanna begins this play engaged to a man named Alonzo, but falls suddenly in love with a visiting noble man named Alsemero. Driven by what she believes is love, Beatrice-Johanna stops at nothing to get what she wants, obtaining the help of her father’s servant, Deflores. As his name suggests, Deflores—the deflowerer—, is in love with Beatrice-Joanna, yet his social position, and a deformity of what he calls his “ugly face,” leaves Beatrice-Joanna disgusted at the very thought of him. He agrees to help Beatrice-Joanna for a price which turns out to be darker than she could have imagined, leading to her tragic downfall.



Naomi Baker observes, *The Changeling* is a “play in which the meanings of male ugliness are opaque while female beauty is represented as an artificial cover for a deformity whose moral and physical referents are inextricably linked.”<sup>1</sup> As such, Deflores can be seen in much of the same light as Shakespeare’s *Richard III*. *The Changeling* offers the reader both a representation of real outward deformity through Deflores, but also illustrates the gradual revelation of the inward deformity found within Beatrice-Joanna. Both characters complicate the assumed ties between outward appearance and inward morality.

Deflores provides the audience with a Jacobean understanding of outward deformity, one that is ideally viewed within the sociological work of Ervin Goffman, centered upon stigma. As Baker suggests, “Deflores is seen in both positive and negative lights through the play by a variety of characters.”<sup>2</sup> The servant is praised by many, yet despised by others, specifically Beatrice-Joanna. His character offers moments for redemption, yet his stigma prevents him from any role outside of villain. At one point he reflects on his life: “I must confess my face is bad enough, but I know far worse has better fortune and not endured alone, but doted on...though my fate has thrust me out to servitude I tumbled into th’ world a gentleman.”<sup>3</sup> Deflores’ tone of jealousy implies that even though he feels as though he is what we might consider the

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<sup>1</sup> Naomi Baker, Plain Ugly: The Unattractive Body in Early Modern Culture. *The Review of English Studies* 62, no 257. (2010). 69.

<sup>2</sup> Baker, 90.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, “*The Changeling*” ed. Michael Neill. (New York: A&C Black Publishers Limited, 2006). II, I, 48-49.

“norm,” he has been denied—presumably due to his stigmatization— a place among the ranks of the gentility. The audience is left feeling pity for Deflores. He appears a humble servant, mistreated only because of his appearance.

Deflores’ treatment reflects the popular view of the later Middle Ages which, according to Irena Metzler, held that a person’s moral disposition was believed to be apparent in their facial features.<sup>4</sup> Deflores is often insulted by Beatrice-Joanna early in the play because of his face; her loathing appearing to stem from nothing more.

What is normal? How do we define ourselves in relation to our bodies and minds? How do we define others in relation to their bodies and minds? Every culture establishes the social, legal, and cultural norms within which its members exist. To be included within this established norm is a privilege. Those who are a part of the norm rarely question their position in society; but what about those individuals who do not fit such a norm? Where do they fit within their societies? The tendency to assign a norm to the human body has existed from early points in civilization: in fact, as disability studies have demonstrated, each culture defines normalcy and deviance differently.<sup>5</sup> The norm is most often, and frequently by default, associated with the “able” body and mind. Those who are deemed able-bodied or of able cognitive development frequently come to be defined as the “norms” and have no problem functioning without stigma in

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<sup>4</sup> Irena Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about physical impairment during the High Middle Ages, c.1100-1400*. (New York, 2006). 54.

<sup>5</sup> David T. Mitchell, “Narrative Prosthesis and the Materiality of Metaphor” in *Disability Studies: Enabling the humanities*, ed. Sharon L. Snyder, Brenda Jo Brueggeman, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson. (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2002). 3.

their society. But what do we make of those who are thought of as having a “dis – abled” body?

Historically, the disabled body has been defined by however a dominant group defines the norm. As Erving Goffman and Lerita Coleman suggest in their crucial studies on stigma, it is frequently “human nature” to base our first impressions of individuals based on their differences. These differences can involve a person’s appearance, personality, social or economic background, or some other general perception felt by an individual.<sup>6</sup> On an individual basis these differences seem mundane, but on a larger scale, they can impact entire groups of people. “First impressions” are not solely based on of an individual’s perception. They too are a product of their society which defines norms. Individuals with disabilities have found themselves on the receiving end of these stigmatized first impressions for millennia.<sup>78910</sup> They are perceived to be different, not fitting the structured norm. This stigma sets those with disabilities aside, and tends to deny them the chance of leaving any impression outside of the negative. Otherness is often cast aside, and looked upon as an

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<sup>6</sup> Erving Goffman, “Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity” (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc, 1963), 7.

<sup>7</sup> Tony Vandeventer Pearman, “Women and Disability in Medieval Literature (The New Middle Ages)” (New York: Palgrave MacMiliian, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> Allison P. Hobgood and David Houston Wood, eds. “Recovering Disability in Early Modern England” (Columbus: Ohio State UP, forthcoming).

<sup>9</sup> Edward Wheatley, “Stumbling Blocks before the Blind: Medieval Constructions of Disability” (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Joshua Eyler, “Disability in the Middle Ages: Rehabilitations, Reconsiderations, Reverberations” (Ashgate, 2010).

individual's medical issue and not the issue of a society as a whole. In the past few decades disability has taken the forefront as a legitimate study in the arts and humanities. Disabled people and their supporters have begun to speak out, questioning the constructed nature of the established norms of society and how we perceive them.<sup>112</sup>

Through the lens of disability, scholars in the arts and humanities are now able to approach works of literature in a new light. By studying texts such as *Oedipus Rex*, we can develop a new understanding of how the culture of the time defined and made meaning with its representation of the body. Oedipus had solved the riddle of the sphinx, for example, based on his own adaptive device, the very crutch with which he had inadvertently killed his own father. He then further disables himself, gouging out his own eyes, after realizing he has fulfilled the prophecy of slaying his father and wedding his mother. Oedipus feels he must blind himself, unable to deal with the sin he is seeing. For Oedipus, his inward sin becomes an outward manifestation through the violent act of blinding himself. Oedipus, however, is only one example of potentially hundreds of characters worth studying further to understand better how different cultures establish standards for the body.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Beauty and the Freak" in *Points of Contact: Disability, Art, and Culture*, ed. S. Crutchfield and M. Epstein Corporealities (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

<sup>12</sup> Simi Linton, "Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity" (New York: New York UP, 1998).

<sup>13</sup> Louis Bragg, "Oedipus Borealis: The Aberrant Body in Old Icelandic Myth and Saga" (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004), 167.

The disabled body has long been a topic of examination. As Laura Davis writes, “The term ‘disability’, as it is commonly and professionally used is an absolute category without a level or threshold. One is either disabled or not. One cannot be a little disabled any more than one can be a little pregnant.”<sup>14</sup> English abounds with disability metaphors. We have, “lame ideas”, “blind justice”, and, “dumb luck”. When readers are alert to disability issues, images of disability flood our literary canon. “Once readers begin to actively seek out representations of disability in our literatures, it is difficult for them to avoid being struck by disability’s tendency to proliferate in texts with which they believed themselves to be utterly familiar.”<sup>15</sup> We have characters such as Sophocles’, *Oedipus Rex*, Shakespeare’s *Richard III*, and Mary Shelly’s, *Frankenstein*,<sup>16</sup> as only a few examples of texts flooded with disability images.

*Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities*, the editors, Sharon L. Snyder, Brenda Jo Bruggemann, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, introduces readers to several of the major issues revolving around disability studies. They reflect that, “in our present collective cultural consciousness, the disabled body is imagined not as the universal consequence of living an embodied life, but rather as an alien condition.”<sup>17</sup> Collectively, it seems that society is unable to face the truth of bodily instability. Regardless of how

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<sup>14</sup> Laura Davis, “Introduction: Integrating Disability into Teaching and Scholarship in *Disability Studies: Enabling the humanities*, ed. Sharon L. Snyder, Brenda Jo Brueggeman, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson. (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2002).1.

<sup>15</sup> Mitchell, 19.

<sup>16</sup> Davis, 1

<sup>17</sup> Davis, 2.

disabilities arise on an individual basis, we are all subjected to aging. Our bodies will change and eventually stop working in ways that our society labels “normal”. As Mark Jeffreys observes, “Disability thus becomes more of a cultural condition than a pathological or biological condition. It becomes a marginalized group identity that has a history of oppression and exclusion. It is a stigmatized category created to serve the interests of the dominant ideology and its privileged classes.”<sup>18</sup>

Typically, when we encounter someone new, we have masses of information moving throughout our minds at once. When that person we encounter has a physical disability, the appearance dominates the thought process, and skews the normal process of sorting out perceptions and forming a reaction.<sup>19</sup> To put it simply, a nondisabled person often does not know how to act towards a disabled person. The disabled body becomes the sole focus of the encounter, not the other multitude of qualities that person may possess.

To better understand the views of the body and the role it plays within our culture, it is beneficial to turn to the social sciences to explore the relationship between stigma and the body. In *Stigma*, Goffman explores how stigma alters our perceptions of those around us. He traces the concept of stigma back to early Greek culture, which originated the term stigma to refer to bodily signs designed to expose something

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<sup>18</sup> Mark Jeffreys, “The Visible Cripple (Scars and Other Disfiguring Displays Included)” in *Disability Studies: Enabling the humanities*, ed. Sharon L. Snyder, Brenda Jo Brueggeman, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson. (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2002) 32.

<sup>19</sup> Garland-Thomson, “Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature” (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 12.

unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier.<sup>20</sup> Stigma is present through all different walks of life. Stigma is usually unapparent to the person applying the stigma since they are functioning within social or cultural pressures of understanding. A person can be unaware of the exact reason why he or she may stigmatize another individual.

Personal beliefs, cultural pressures, and social expectations all play a role within the act of stigmatizing. It is the person who is disqualified from full social acceptance who is truly affected by stigma; “an individual who might have been received easily in ordinary social intercourse possesses a trait that can obtrude itself upon attention and turn those who he meets away, breaking the claim his attributes have on us. He possesses a stigma, an undesired differentness from what we had anticipated.”<sup>21</sup> This difference often leaves the non-stigmatized individual with the “assumption that the disability cancels out other qualities, reducing a complex person to a single attribute.”<sup>22</sup> Social status and economic status often play a significant role in how a person is perceived, but these types of stigmas usually arise from an opportunity to get to know the person.

A stigma frequently involves a factor which an individual has no control. This type of stigma usually relates to appearance. This stigmatized person, specifically once

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<sup>20</sup> Goffman, 1.

<sup>21</sup> Goffman, 5.

<sup>22</sup> Garland-Thomson, 12.

stigmatized for an outward disability, is then lead to believe that, "to be granted fully human status, disabled people must learn to manage relationships from the beginning, - charm, humor, entertainment, etc."<sup>23</sup>

Goffman explains that there are three different types of stigma. The first type of stigma involves the abominations of the body, which would include outward signs of not belonging to the established "norm." The second type of stigma includes blemishes of individual character. Is the individual weak willed? Domineering? The third type of stigma, according to Goffman, involves race, nation, and religion. Does this person belong to the privileged class of society? Given my primary text for this essay, Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling*, I will be focusing on the first type of stigma: abominations of the body. While it can be argued that stigma happens on an individual basis, patterns have emerged in the literary record that illustrate otherwise. "Normals," who tend to discriminate against a person with a stigma, construct a sort of stigma theory.<sup>24</sup> This theory involves an ideology to explain the stigmatized individual's inferiority.

"Normal" individuals convince themselves that there is a danger that the stigmatized individual represents. The instilled fear of otherness creates an uneasy feeling, even without provocation. The "normal" must then rationalize their animosity. This desire to rationalize causes the rise of specific stigmatic terms towards the

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<sup>23</sup> Garland-Thomson, 13.

<sup>24</sup> Goffman, 5.



individual. Terms such as “cripple,” “bastard,” “monster,” etc. emerge from this theory. What is fascinating about this theory is that individuals seem not to realize that they are actively engaging within it. Cultural and social norms have constructed an environment in which this stigma is potentially acceptable.

What effect does the need to establish norms have on the stigmatized individual?

As Goffman suggests, “For the stigmatized individual, day to day life is greatly affected. The individual faces a routine cycle of restrictions regarding social acceptance. An individual with a facial deformity might receive acceptance in his or her immediate area, (yet familiarity doesn’t necessarily reduce contempt) but once outside of those bounds the stigma returns full force.”<sup>25</sup> The desire to be considered “normal” is not enough. In America, according to Goffman, our idea of normal can be defined as, “young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual, Protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight and height, etc.”<sup>26</sup> For the majority of individuals reading this statement, this ideal is far from attainable. The reader is left to question why we hold an unattainable ideal so high. Why must we as a culture, stigmatize those who live outside of this unreachable dream? For many societies, the norm imposed is unattainable and incredibly narrow. Why then must we try to enforce it? It can be said that, “(the) disabled figure operates as the vividly embodied, stigmatized other whose social role is to symbolically free the privileged,

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<sup>25</sup> Goffman, 91-92.

<sup>26</sup> Goffman, 128.

idealized figures of the American self from the vagaries and vulnerabilities of embodiment.<sup>27</sup>

In her book, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*, Rosemary Garland-Thomson provides a helpful insight into the role disability plays within our culture. Garland-Thomson makes clear that disability is as significant as issues of gender, race, ethics, and other figures of otherness that support, by way of contrast, the idea of the privileged norm. Garland-Thomson believes that, “disability is a representation, a cultural interpretation of physical transformation or configuration, and a comparison of bodies that structures social relations and institutions. Disability, then, is the attribution of corporeal deviance – not so much a property of bodies as a product of cultural rules about what bodies should be or do.”<sup>28</sup> Her beliefs can be seen through the different models in which the body and its differences have been judged.

To truly understand the controversial role of disability, we turn to the different models and explanations available concerning the body. According to Allison Hobgood and David Wood, editors of the forthcoming collection, *Recovering Disability in Early Modern England*, the first model of disability is the medical model. The medical model

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<sup>27</sup> Garland-Thomson, 7.

<sup>28</sup> Garland-Thomson, 6.

has been “heavily critiqued for its pathologizing of difference.”<sup>29</sup> The medical model looks at disability on an individual, case by case basis. This model labels the individual as disabled. This labeling carries with it certain stigmas. The individual may not see him or herself as disabled, regardless of his or her condition. Once the medical label has been assigned, the person’s stigma is solidified. Suddenly there is something that needs to be “fixed”, and an individual who should be “pitied.” Since the model views disability as something that can be fixed, the individual should then desire the normal life outside his or her grasp.

Though useful, the medical model contained disability as a private issue, ignoring the social connotations attached with the disability. To more fully understand disability and its role in society, there had to be a move away from the medical model. The desire to move from the medical model of pathologizing conditions lends to the constructivist model. Hobgood and Wood explain that the constructivist model understands disability, and those considered disabled, as “a socio-political category defined by common experience.”<sup>30</sup> The constructivist model allowed disability to move from its assumed ties to only an individual, to a real social experience. To quote Rosemary Garland-Thomson, “This new critical perspective conceptualizes disability as a representational system rather than a medical problem, a discursive construction

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<sup>29</sup> Allison Hobgood and David Wood, “Ethical Staring: Disabling the English Renaissance” in *Recovering Disability in Early Modern England*, (Ohio State, UP, 2013), 5.

<sup>30</sup> Hobgood and Wood, 6.

rather than a personal misfortune or a bodily flaw, and a subject appropriate for wide-ranging cultural analysis within the humanities instead of an applied field within medicine, rehabilitation, or social work.”<sup>31</sup>

Lennard Davis attempts to explain why social cultures have been so fascinated by establishing a norm for the body through a constructivist view of disability. In Davis’ book, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*, he makes clear that the fact of the matter is that disabilities are acquired. Only about 15% of people with disabilities are born with their impairments.<sup>32</sup> For the majority of individuals, they could live a long life without any feelings of stigma, yet still face it later in life once they slip from the “norm.” This illustrates that that disability is more than a medical issue, it is a socially constructed definition applied to the body.

Branching from the concept of the constructivist model, the “social” and “cultural” models of disability offer new perspectives in Disability Studies. The social model separates “impairment” from “disability.” Impairment connotes corporal differences that only become a disability when social obstruction denies access or accommodation for that difference (Hobgood and Wood 6-7). This means that impairment is the physical aspect of the condition. A person may need to use wheelchair, but it becomes a disability when barriers of social access are created.

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<sup>31</sup> Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “Beauty and the Freak,” *Points of Contact: Disability, Art, and Culture*. Ed. S. Crutchfield and M. Epstein, Corporealities, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 181.

<sup>32</sup> Lennard Davis, “Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body” (New York: Verso, 1995), 8.

Disability in this instance ties heavily to Goffman's explanation of bodily stigma. The individual is perceived as disabled because of how that person is limited.

The cultural model emphasizes the reciprocity between body and culture. Unlike the social model, impairment and disability are linked as one. This model attempts to look at disability within a larger scale. They look to shared experiences, allowing individual experiences be taken into account without the stigma typically attached. There is the real lived corporal difference, and there is the social perception of that difference.<sup>33</sup> The social perception is what often leads to stigma and opposition within a social community.

Moving from these current models of disability, this essay will explore early modern concept of disability. I will first explain how the stigmatized body was perceived, as well as how we can further study the literature of that time to enhance our understandings of the social stigmas at play. This project will then establish the disability issues at stake in a reading of Shakespeare's *Richard III*, with a focus on stigma and its effects, then turning to Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling*, and the character of Deflores, to explore the way in which his representation both parodies *Richard III*, and develops this character and displays him in new ways.

Hodgood and Wood write that, "Early modern representations of disability function not just towards metaphorical ends, in other words, but rather offers insights

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<sup>33</sup> Davis, 7.

into the material, lived experience of disabled individuals in the distant past.”<sup>34</sup> How disability looks and means in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century England is different from our understandings of what it is today. During that time normality wasn’t an established goal. It was accepted that some individuals were born differently than others when it came to physical or mental ability. While acceptance doesn’t necessarily include all positive reactions, difference was a part of life. The body and its functions remained an important area of interest in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century England. Science was on the rise, yet old superstitions and beliefs remained within the culture.

The body was much more than a physical shell; it was an active part of a person’s outward personality and temperament. In Medieval Renaissance Europe there was a common concept of the human body as a microcosmos, a small scale representing the order and hierarchy of the wider world outside.<sup>35</sup> Such a spiritual understanding of the body often stigmatized those born with disfigurements. Abigail Comber writes, “the Christianization of impairment in the Middle Ages functioned in the same way the medicalization of impairment does in modern society: It kept the focus on the impairment of the individual rather than the disabling religious constructs of society.”<sup>36</sup> Often disability disqualified people as candidates for higher order, placing emphasis on

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<sup>34</sup> Hobgood and Wood, 10.

<sup>35</sup> Metzler 47.

<sup>36</sup> Abigail Elizabeth Comber, “A Medieval King ‘Disabled’ by an Early Modern Construct: A Contextual Examination of Richard III” in *Disability in the Middle Ages: Reconsiderations and Reverberations*, ed. Joshua R. Eyer, (VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), 185.

biblical notions that those disabled are not of a uniform nature<sup>37</sup>. This idea places a heavy stigma upon individuals who have a disability. Regardless of when the disability arose, it placed an individual unworthy of serving a higher religious purpose. Looking at texts such as the Old Testament, we see the associations of deformity or a disability perceived as a sign of sin and therefore punishable.

Metzler writes that there were three categories of physical anomalies in the Middle Ages. The first was the extreme deformities or monstrosities. They were physical forms that did not match the most basic human, normative standards. The second was impairments which notably restricted normal function, in case of Shakespeare's Richard would be his humpback and limp. The third category contained minor impairments that did not restrict normal function<sup>38</sup>. For the purpose of this essay, I will focus on Metzler's second category of physical anomalies, that of impairments which restricted normal function. Arguably, this category is the most relevant to our modern conceptions of disability and the stigmas surrounding a physical ailment. *Richard III* offers a look at how both scientific and religious concepts of the body can come together to form one of Shakespeare's most famous villains.

To understand the early modern perceptions of disability, it is crucial to read Shakespeare's *Richard III* within its social, cultural, and political atmosphere. Abigail Comber reminds her reader that numerous essays are available concerning *Richard III*

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<sup>37</sup> Metzler 42.

<sup>38</sup> Metzler, 5.

but that, “what most examinations of Richard III have failed to do, however, is to place the play within the context of both its age and setting.<sup>39</sup> Why Shakespeare would chose to represent Richard III as deformed is an essential question to understanding the different social and political pressures molding the character of Richard III.

Richard’s body was a topic of debate long before Shakespeare immortalized him on stage. Accounts differ from a handsome man, to “little of stature, eiull features of limnes, croke backed, the left shulder muche higher than the righte”<sup>40</sup> The differing views can be quickly explained with a look into the author’s life, and where his or her loyalty lied. A supporter of the throne would be quick to debase Richard who represented the previous reign. Shakespeare’s Richard becomes a metaphor the political atmosphere of his reign. Abigail Comber writes that Richard was “made dramatically deformed by a burgeoning monarchy’s need to discredit its predecessor”<sup>41</sup> Shakespeare, aware of this notion, would benefit greatly from exacerbating Richard’s deformities. Shakespeare’s audience would know to perceive Richard’s deformity as representation of both his inward evil, and the social attitude of his family’s reign. Richard is deformed, yet he is still able to rise to King, a feat that would seem impossible. Richard represents not only himself as an individual, but his family’s reign.

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<sup>39</sup> Comber 183.

<sup>40</sup> Edward Hall, *Hall’s Chronicle*. 1548.1550. (New York, 1965), p.343.

<sup>41</sup> Comber, 189.



## DISABILITY IN LITERATURE

Social stigmas often involve the fear associated with encountering a disabled body. Literature provides a means of representing these social stigmas. The disabled body is unruly in its relationship to the stable “normal” body. The opposite relations that form allow disability to become a literary metaphor for breaking from the norm, or refusing to adhere to it. Disability moves beyond the individual character to play on stigmas the reader will possess. David Mitchell’s term “narrative prosthesis” argues that “disability has been used throughout history as a crutch on which literary narratives lean for their representational power, disruptive potentiality, and social critiques.”<sup>42</sup> The disabled body is an easy cue for a reader to assume certain stigmas and beliefs on a person’s nature. The individual person or character loses themselves within a larger social or cultural context.

Garland-Thomson writes with a keen eye on the disabled figure in literature. She suggests that the disabled figure is usually in the foreground, used to operate as a sort of spectacle.<sup>43</sup> Usually a disability functions only as a visual difference that signals a specific meaning, which becomes apparent both in *Richard III* and *The Changeling*. Garland-Thomson writes, “Representations rely on cultural assumptions. People construct schemata that make their world seem knowable and predictable –these categories can become stereotypes – stereotypes in life become tropes in textual

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<sup>42</sup> Mitchell, 17.

<sup>43</sup> Garland-Thomson, 9.

representations.”<sup>44</sup> Once a disabled character has reached the literary page, he or she often becomes a representation for something more. The disabled person becomes objectified within the cultural norms of the time. To illustrate the ways in which culture defines the body within literature, I will turn to Shakespeare’s *Richard III* and an early modern version of narrative prosthesis.

Mitchell has formulated this term as a basic narrative structure often found in literature dealing with disability. The first step is a deviance or marked difference that is exposed to a reader. Following the exposed difference, the narrative provides the reader an explanation of the deviation’s origin and the consequences of the past, either distant or occurring. Next, the deviance is brought from the periphery of concerns onto center stage. Finally, the remainder of the story seeks to fix the deviance in some manner, shape, or form.<sup>45</sup> This structure allows the reader to see how the presentation of a stigmatized character is developed and revealed to the audience. While every narrative may not follow this exact structure, the elements involved are often in play within the text.

*Richard III* demonstrates the way disability was commonly used to represent much more than simply who the character is. When Richard falls, it is not the fall of an individual, but the entire Plantagenet line. The presence of disability in literary narratives is often twofold. Disability provides a stock feature of characterization and

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<sup>44</sup> Garland- Thomson, 11.

<sup>45</sup> Davis, 20.

secondly as a metaphoric device.<sup>46</sup> A disabled character signifies the reader to lean towards certain assumptions. These assumptions could include pity for the disabled character, uneasiness, or even fear of the character's nature.

*Richard III* reflects the medieval perception of an outward impairment reflecting an inward evil. Richard uses his disability to frame his plot for the throne. Following the end of a long civil war, Richard feels as though he was not meant to live in a time of peace. In Richard's own opinion his body, and the stigma constructed through his malformation, is not meant for court life. Richard has decided that since he cannot adapt to a life of peace he will overturn it. Richard reflects that, "since I cannot prove a lover to entertain these fair well-spoken days, I am determined to prove a villain and hate the idle pleasures of these days."<sup>47</sup> Richard's own perception of his body reflects the attitudes of his culture. Richard reflects, "...cheated of feature by dissembling Nature, deformed, unfinished, sent before my time into this breathing world, scarce half made up, and that so lamely and unfashionable that dogs bark at me as I halt by them."<sup>48</sup>

From the very beginning, in other words, the audience is aware through his 1<sup>st</sup> person narration of his stage villainy that Richard is planning something evil. Richard finds himself stigmatized within the ideal life of court, unable to appear normal outside

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<sup>46</sup> Mitchell 15.

<sup>47</sup> *Richard III*, 1:1 28-31.

<sup>48</sup> *Richard III*, 1.1, 19-23.

of battle and war. In this passage Richard seems to believe that his role is pre-determined. He has no control over his physical state having been born with his deformities. Richard's character reflects the complex pressures of a disabled person trying to pass in the English court. This society is one in which people are raised with the belief that any outward deformities to the body affect not only the body itself, but also reflect the spiritual and moral aspects of a person.

Richard changes his personality based on his situation, allowing him to deceive other and to commit terrible acts. His deformity becomes not only a trigger, but a constant reminder to the audience of his evil. The audience is aware of Richard's lies as he deceives his family, woos Lady Anne, and gains the crown before his fall. Richard is often associated with the image of an inhuman body. He is referred to as a "diffused infection of a man, hedgehog, bottle-spider, and foul bunch-backed toad."<sup>49</sup>

Claiming his evil desires from the start, it is easy to plot Richard's rise to power through acts of deception. He has set the king against his brother Clarence while at the same time convincing Clarence he will do whatever he can to change the king's mind. Richard uses his position of power and his outward deformity to win over Princess Anne in Act 1:2. Richard has no real feelings towards Anne, and is simply using her as pawn in his rise to power. Richard reflects to himself that, "the readiest way to make the wench amend is to become her husband and her father: the which will I- not all so

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<sup>49</sup> *Richard III* I.II, 78. I.II, 103. I.III, 242. I.III, 246.

much for love as for another secret close intent by marrying her which I must reach unto.”<sup>50</sup> Richard approaches Anne as she is mourning over the body of her dead father-in-law whom Richard has killed. She curses the murderer, his wife, and children to come. Richard uses her emotions against her by claiming it was for her love that he killed. Richard eventually gives her two options, kill me or marry me. Anne does not want to be a murderer, indirectly agreeing to marry Richard. Anne does not truly accept Richard as a changed lover in this scene; she accepts because she has no other option. It is interesting to note that in this moment, Richard’s masculine privilege overshadows his disability. He gains a wife, even after lamenting his body was not formed for such matters. Richard times his encounter with Anne so that he strikes at her in her most vulnerable moment. She despises him, yet to stay in court and have a chance at staying a princess she consents. Richard continues to manipulate those around him by lying, deceiving or murdering anyone that stands in his way. Richard embodies the perfect example of the attitudes of the time about the physical body and its moral implications. Following the classic narrative prosthesis, Richard is killed off as a scapegoat in the end. His fall was not that of an individual, but of an entire ruling family.

### **THEORIZING UGLINESS IN MIDDLETON AND ROWLEY’S *THE CHANGELING***

Shakespeare’s *Richard III* offers insight into the ways in which early modern English society viewed the deformed body. Richard himself laments that his form is the

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<sup>50</sup> *Richard III* 1.1,155-159.

cause of all his evil ambitions, as we have seen. Richard's disability is apparent through his walk, and the way he carries his body. Like disability, deformity carried with it the same social stigma. How does one define deformity? Like disability, the culture of the time helps to provide that definition. The idea of ugliness directly relates to that of deformity or disability.

The authors had a history of collaboration at a rapid pace to meet the commercial dramatic needs of the time. Rowley's life is a bit of a mystery. He was known well for his comic roles within the theatre. Middleton however earned his livelihood through writing. He was known to have collaborated with writers such as Shakespeare, Webster, Ford, and Dekker.<sup>51</sup> Middleton mainly gained prominence through his city comedies that mocked the vices and foibles of urban life, which can be seen within *The Changeling*.

The play is categorized as a domestic tragedy in that the tragedy unfolds within the intimate setting of the household and offers a sharp take on social observation.<sup>52</sup>

Michael Neill says that the play represents a "genre that satirized the mores of the

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<sup>51</sup> Michael Neil, ed. *"The Changeling"* by Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, (New York: A&C Black Publishing, 2006), xxi.

<sup>52</sup> *The Changeling* was first licensed by Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels on May 7th, 1622 for performance by the Lady Elizabeth's Men at the Phoenix (xxxiii). The play must have been a hit because on January 4th of 1623 it was chosen for court performance. The play remained in the Phoenix repertory for years, up until the civil war that would close down the play houses. After the restoration, *The Changeling* was one of the first plays to be revived. It's popularity lasted up into the 1670s where it may have started to seem outdated and old fashioned in its writing style and presentation.

urban middle class." *The Changeling* may appear to only focus on domestic matters, but it also reveals the gathering social and political tensions of the time.

*The Changeling* offers its audience a new look at how closely linked ugliness and disability is within the early modern culture. Like Shakespeare's *Richard III*, we are introduced to a man who seems to have no place within the pleasurable court life. Deflores decides that since he cannot be a lover, he will indeed prove the villain. Deflores reflects, "I must confess my face is bad enough, but I know far worse has better fortune..."<sup>53</sup> Deflores' has lost his place within society, solely based on his physical deformity. According to Naomi Baker, the early modern period was an "age in which the human figure in all of its often repellent as well as potentially magnificent variety was the object of fascination."<sup>54</sup> The human body was under both scientific and cultural scrutiny. While ugly subjects tended to be female, the male is far from an exception, evident within Shakespeare's *Richard III*, and Deflores himself. The idea of ugliness, the stigma of it, solely compromised the identity of the individual. Baker observes that, "for male literary and dramatic characters, in particular, physical ugliness has the potential to be regarded as a misleading veneer, concealing, rather than revealing, the nature of the self within."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *The Changeling*, II.i, 37-38.

<sup>54</sup> Baker, 1.

<sup>55</sup> Baker, 3.

The depiction of ugliness within literature provides an example to the Early Modern perspectives of deformity and disability. While ugliness might not typically fit within our modern understanding of disability, the social stigma remains the same. For those who are considered “ugly,” there is no hope in the early modern period for attaining the “norm” through medicine, etc. Baker asserts that, “depictions of unattractive faces and bodies in fact play a key role in the construction and representation of Early Modern subjectivities, confirming emergent models shift in early 17<sup>th</sup> century to ugliness being “skin-deep,” no longer necessarily a reflection of natural or moral order.”<sup>56</sup> While I would agree with Baker that more emergent models arose, ugliness continued to represent far more than “skin deep” issues. Deflores provides an excellent example of ugliness still reflecting his nature and his moral character.

Baker acknowledges the move away from moral assumptions associated with ugliness and deformity, but it is important to note the role these early models played within English culture and society. The body and a person’s character were still closely linked, especially within literature and plays. An outward deformity marked an individual from the start. The audience knew to pay close attention, either to watch a misjudged good character, or an evil villain unfold.

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<sup>56</sup> Baker, 12.



In classical thought, what was ugly was morally repellent. Issues of nature and morality contribute heavily to the reactions given to an individual who would be considered “ugly.” Various beliefs on ugliness and its reflection of a corrupt soul were in play in early modern England.<sup>57</sup> To be ugly meant there was something wrong much deeper. It could be a sin of the individual, or even a reflection of sins of the parents that could contribute to a person’s deformity or difference.

While some stigmas of ugliness were general, others were religiously specific. “Religious sects would look at the mark of Cain for answers to other individual’s blemishes. In *Genesis*, of course, God marks Cain after punishing him for murdering Abel. The mark guaranteed Cain isolation from human society. The story of Cain was used politically in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, yet a consensus on what the blemish means was never fully agreed upon.”<sup>58</sup> A blemish was considered a physical emblem of divine judgment. For an individual stigmatized in this fashion, it is hard to escape the assumed reality of being punished for some sin, past or present. The mark of Cain is not the only biblical interpretation applied to those considered ugly.

Associations were often made between ugly bodies and evil through Christian doctrines of the fall.<sup>59</sup> The fallen Satan is often depicted as being stripped of his once glorious beauty. Baker writes, “Unattractive bodies thus have a long philosophical and

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<sup>57</sup> Baker, 41.

<sup>58</sup> Baker, 58.

<sup>59</sup> Baker, 43.

theological history of being interpreted and represented in moralizing terms. Classical rhetorical traditions invoked physical features as signs of moral character, praising the bodily beauty of the virtuous while verbally dissecting repellent bodies in order to encourage disgust for those deemed vicious. Medieval literature follows...maintaining an almost inevitable relationship between physical unattractiveness and evil."<sup>60</sup> While the Early modern era starts to break away from this idea, the ugly body continues to be associated with moral corruption.

As models of identity continued to change, so did the understandings of the self and appearance. The ties between morality and the body slowly start to change, yet only for those with certain social standings. Baker writes, "For women, as for those of low social status and other marginalized groups, the body, constructed in disorderly terms, continues to be perceived to play a key role in defining the self. Early modern depictions of ugly characters are therefore uneven." Men could be depicted as ugly yet noble, and women who were beautiful could be morally ugly. Women and men of low social status were denied the acceptance some of their "ugly" counterparts receive.<sup>61</sup>

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*The Changeling* is a play with two parallel plots. The main plot, as explored in the beginning of this essay, involves the young Beatrice-Joanna, and her desire to obtain the marriage she wants through the manipulation of her servant, Deflores. The second plot

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<sup>60</sup> Baker, 45.

<sup>61</sup> Baker, 69.

of the play takes place within a madhouse. Within the madhouse there is an older doctor named Alibius who runs the facility. He is a jealous man, keeping his young beautiful wife Isabella contained within the madhouse. Early in the plot, a young man named Antonio is brought in for help. Antonio desires Isabella, and fakes madness to try and obtain his desires. Isabella stays strong within her marriage vows, seeing through the plot of the two men. This plot line contains a comedic ending in which Isabella's purity is confirmed, as is the wicked plot concocted by Antonio.

While the parallel plot lines appear to be utterly disconnected, they provide the reader with mirrored images of characters involved within the other plot. Beatrice and Isabella provide an excellent example of mirrored opposites. Beatrice is blinded by her lust and sexual desires, Isabella perseveres against temptation and flattery. The two plots intersect briefly as the madhouse agrees to provide entertainment at the home of Vermandero. This moment provides a brief, but interesting look at how mental disabilities were perceived. The play represents individuals with mental disabilities as a form of entertainment.

Deflores' treatment reflects the popular view of the later Middle Ages which, according to Irena Metzler, held that a person's moral disposition was believed to be apparent in their facial features.<sup>62</sup> Deflores is often insulted by Beatrice-Joanna early in the play because of his face; her loathing appearing to stem from nothing more. She

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<sup>62</sup> Metzler, 54.

says to herself after conversing with him, "I never see this fellow, but I think of some harm towards me, danger's in my mind still, I scarce leave trembling of an hour after. The next good mood I find my father in, I'll get him quite discarded."<sup>61</sup> As a product of her time, Beatrice-Joanna senses something sinister in Deflores' character based on his appearance, yet she has not yet witnessed him do anything to make her feel this way. Metzler observes that, "The body was believed to represent more than a vessel; it also embodied spiritual, theological, and philosophical connotations."<sup>63</sup> Deflores is able to separate his moral character from his appearance until he is left alone on stage. Like Shakespeare's *Richard III*, Deflores then allows the audience access to his thoughts.

It is easy to see Deflores offers a terrific example for exploration of early modern disability. Like Shakespeare's *Richard III*, Deflores alters his personality depending on a given situation, forcing the audience to interpret his impairment as a representation of inward evil. He is able to trick the men around him into believing he is a good man, much like Shakespeare's "honest Iago" in *Othello* and his *Richard III* are able to do. Alonzo, the fiancé of Beatrice-Joanna and later victim of murder, calls Deflores, "kind Deflores"<sup>64</sup> even as he is unknowingly being led to his death. After the murder of Alonzo, which Deflores performs, his brother Tomazo too is deceived by Deflores. When he sees Deflores he calls him "honest Deflores."<sup>65</sup> It is obvious in their

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<sup>63</sup> Metzler 62

<sup>64</sup> *The Changeling*, II.i, 90.

<sup>65</sup> *The Changeling*, V.ii, 35.

interactions that Beatrice-Joanna's father, Vermandero, sees no threat from Deflores. Vermandero uses Deflores as a right hand man, and Deflores is often sent to Beatrice-Joanna by her father. These moments illustrate the variety of ways in which Deflores is seen by others, and the complex selfhood he creates for himself.

Deflores differs from Shakespeare's Richard, however, with regard to how Middleton and Rowley represent his disfigurement. Where Richard walks on stage boldly claiming his evil nature and plotting his quest for power, in *The Changeling*, Beatrice-Joanna establishes Deflores' stigma within the play by her instant disgust. Her words in fact stigmatize him long before the audience perceives any immoral actions. As a character, following Goffman, Deflores thus stands as a representation of someone who might have been easily received in ordinary social intercourse, but possesses a trait that turns others away.<sup>66</sup> He was born of a good family and outside of his deformity, for a time at least, acts and behaves no differently than anyone else. Yet as a stigmatized individual, he possesses a desire for acceptance. Deflores longs to possess Beatrice-Joanna sexually, yet his appearance disgusts her.

When we first see Beatrice-Joanna she is within a church having completed her morning prayers. She appears virtuous, chaste, and of course beautiful. The appearance of Deflores on stage would counter this drastically. He is physically repellent, especially through Beatrice-Joanna's eyes. Anyone watching the first initial scene of their

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<sup>66</sup> Goffman, 5.

interactions would assume that virtue and villainy are visibly present in the features of a character.<sup>67</sup> The audience has to question whether or not to rely on the old understandings of the body and morality to perceive this play. It doesn't take long for Beatrice-Joanna to prove that outward beauty certainly does not reflect inner.

The concept of the female body differs drastically from our understanding of it today. While our culture tends to elevate physical beauty, there was a time when physical beauty was regarded with suspicion during the early modern period. These suspicions become evident through literature where a woman's charm is exposed as dangerous and "disguises her true deformity."<sup>68</sup> Women, especially those of higher birth, were raised to meet assumed expectations to keep them from their potentially disfigured perception of the world. Conduct books at the time such as, *The Mother's Counsel, or Live within Compasse*, written in 1631. This guide defined for women appropriate behavior. They should be first and foremost chaste, have a good temperance, appear humble, and finally beauty.<sup>69</sup> Beatrice-Joanna's beauty is first framed within an ideal of courtly love. She has fallen for a man, yet she is already promised to another.

Deflores enters the stage to inform Beatrice-Joanna of her father's soon arrival. He is met with scorn he knows comes from nothing he has ever done but for her

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<sup>67</sup> Baker, 83.

<sup>68</sup> Baker, 75.

<sup>69</sup> Baker, 76.

“peevish will”. Her peevish will would include the knowledge that she is above him not only in class, but socially and culturally as well. She is the daughter of a wealthy noble family, a place in society Deflores cannot dwell in because of his appearance.

It is important to note is that Alsemero never comments on Deflores’ appearance in this first encounter. Alsemero does not stigmatize Deflores and it causes him to question the reason behind Beatrice-Joanna’s sudden change of character. Beatrice-Joanna responds, “Your pardon, sir, ‘tis my infirmity; Nor can I other reason render you than his or hers of some particular thing they must abandon as a deadly poison, which to a thousand other tastes were wholesome: such to mine eyes is that same fellow there, the same that report speaks of the basilisk.”<sup>70</sup> Beatrice-Joanna instinctively hates Deflores, exclusively for his lowly status, and his ugliness.

It is in his private asides that Deflores begins to demonstrate his sinful desires. Beatrice-Joanna drops her glove on the ground, desiring that Alsemero retrieves it as a love token. Vermandero, however, notices the glove and asks Deflores to retrieve it. Beatrice-Joanna is so disgusted that Deflores has touched her glove that she throws the other one on the ground, wanting nothing to do with them. Once alone, Deflores rams his own fingers into the glove, saying to himself “Here’s a favour come-with a mischief! Now I know she had rather wear my pelt tanned in a pair of dancing pumps than I should thrust my fingers into her sockets here. I know she hates me, yet cannot choose

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<sup>70</sup> *The Changeling*, I.i, 105-110.

but love her. No matter: if but to vex her, I'll haunt her still, though I get nothing else, I'll have my will<sup>71</sup>.

Deflores here provides the first glimpse into his moral character through his overtly sexualized language. The audience is aware of the word play on the word "socket", which can mean literally the fingers of the gloves, but can also refer to a woman's vagina. His use of such word play suggests that his words and actions can no longer appear to be innocent. The audience of the time would be conditioned to look for this type of action as an outward display of his inner sinful nature. The audience is now in tune to watch for the development of Deflores' true character.

Goffman states that "stigmatized individuals will often avoid situations in which their stigma will be most apparent."<sup>72</sup> Shakespeare's Richard falls into this assumption of stigma. He knows that a time of peace and courtly folly is not for him. To avoid this situation Richard forms plots to change the situation he finds himself in. Deflores differs from Richard as a character in that he willingly brings himself into Beatrice-Joanna's presence. Deflores knows he will be abused by Beatrice-Joanna, yet he purposely finds ways to put himself in her path. Deflores reflects to himself, "Some twenty times a day –not so little- do I force errands, frame ways and excuses to come into her sight; and I have small reason for 't, and less encouragement, for she baits me

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<sup>71</sup> *The Changeling*, I.ii, 224-230.

<sup>72</sup> Goffman, 134.



still every time worse than other."<sup>73</sup> Deflores accepts Beatrice-Joanna's treatment of him claiming that his love for her is what makes him able to receive these blows.

While Deflores ends up no better off than Richard by the end of the play, his evil nature is placed upon him by the society around him. Outside of his sexual language and private desires for Beatrice-Joanna, it is Beatrice-Joanna herself that assumes his evil nature and sets into motion his rise as a villain. Beatrice-Joanna wants to be with Alsemero yet her father has already arranged a marriage for her, and as a young woman she would have no real say in his decision. Beatrice-Joanna changes her attitude towards Deflores completely when she wants him to help her gain her desires. Deflores has shown no sign of an evil nature, yet Beatrice-Joanna knows to turn to him when she can turn to no one else. Alsemero wants to be with Beatrice-Joanna as well but desires to do the noble action of challenging her fiancé in a duel. Beatrice-Joanna argues, not wanting to risk the life of the man she loves. She struggles to develop a plot in which she can get what she wants without risking Alsemero's life. She says to herself, "The ugliest creature creation framed for some use, yet to see I could not mark so much where it should be."<sup>74</sup> Beatrice-Joanna is starting to consider Deflores as a pawn for her own game. As she is one of his greatest tormentors, she knows exactly how to appeal to him.

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<sup>73</sup> *The Changeling*, II.i, 30-35.

<sup>74</sup> *The Changeling*, II.ii, 40-45.

Baker explains, "So closely is ugliness aligned with female matter in early modern representations, in fact, that female beauty itself has the potential to be presented as a kind of deformity."<sup>75</sup> Beatrice-Joanna possesses beauty on the outside, yet it plays a major factor in her ultimate downfall. Garland-Thomson writes that, "both the female and disabled body are cast as deviant and inferior, both are excluded from full participation in public as well as economic life; both are defined in opposition to a norm that is assumed to possess natural physical superiority."<sup>76</sup> While it is easy to mark Beatrice-Joanna as a villain by the end of the play, she becomes a stock deviant character just as Deflores becomes through his ugliness.

Aristotle labeled women as a "mutilated male." Women did not fit the norm of masculinity, and for that they faced a cultural stigma for life. Beatrice-Joanna is a woman raised in a society that this way of thinking still pervades cultural norms. Women were rarely educated outside of the upper class, and women had little to no control over their lives. Women were subjected to men's direct control. A woman would move from her father's shadow to her husbands. Beatrice-Joanna lived within a society in which her social position didn't loom as heavily over Deflores as she had hoped to believe.

Beatrice-Joanna appeals to Deflores using her own form of stigmatization, being a woman. Beatrice-Joanna appeals to Deflores flirtatiously by speaking kindly to him,

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<sup>75</sup> Baker, 5-6.

<sup>76</sup> Garland-Thomson, 19.

complimenting him and even touching his face. By touching the source of his stigmatization she is trying to make him forget all of her past transgressions against his face. Beatrice-Joanna compliments Deflores by saying, "What ha' you done to your face alate? You've met with some good physician; you've pruned yourself, methinks: you were not wont to look so amorously."<sup>77</sup> She turns his source of stigma into something easily overlooked, touching it with her own hand without fear. Deflores is almost giddy over her attention, a reminder that because of his outward appearance and the stigma it carries he has never been treated this way by a woman. Beatrice-Joanna laments to Deflores as he starts to question her sudden change of emotion, "would nature...have formed me man!...Oh, 'tis the soul of freedom! I should not then be forced to marry one I hate beyond all depth; I should have power then to oppose my loathing- nay, remove 'em forever from my sight."<sup>78</sup> Beatrice is raised in a society that does not view marriage as an act of love, more as an economic and political stability. She clearly is not pleased with her father's decision yet she cannot bring herself to address him. Deflores quickly agrees that he is the man for her and that he will rid her of the fiancé she loathes. The declaration of murder becomes his first true statement of performing a deadly sin.

Baker's assessment is that, "Deflores' ugliness works to his advantage, falsely suggesting to Beatrice-Joanna that he is someone she 'may at pleasure despise' and thus

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<sup>77</sup> *The Changeling*, II.ii, 72.

<sup>78</sup> *The Changeling*, II.ii, 110-115.

blinding her to his growing hold over her, until, too late, she sees him 'in possession.'<sup>79</sup>

Deflores is able to change the terms of his social identity. He changes how he is both perceived and treated, especially by Beatrice-Joanna.

As Rosemarie-Garland Thomson writes concerning disability and feminism, "(they) challenge existing social relations; both resist interpretation of certain bodily figurations and functions as "deviant," both question the ways that differences are invested with meaning; both examine the enforcement of universalizing norms, both interrogate the politics of appearance; both explore the politics of naming, both forge positive identities."<sup>80</sup> Deflores offers an excellent example of how outward deformity was manipulated on stage to force audiences into certain stigmatized thought. Beatrice offers another example of deviance. Her expected social norms tells her to do as her father commands, her tragic deviance and fall demonstrates the repercussions of separating from that norm.

Deflores is arguably able to rise above his stigma by murder and deceit. It becomes apparent that Deflores is not performing evil acts because of his impairment, but that his impairment visually alludes to the evil he will commit. The play makes this clear through Beatrice-Joanna's manipulation of Deflores. While his appearance never changes, his position of power does. Beatrice-Joanna knows that Deflores finds ways to interact with her, giving her the correct notion that he will do anything for her. What

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<sup>79</sup> Baker, 92.

<sup>80</sup> Garland-Thomson, 22.

Beatrice-Joanna miscalculates is how performing the murder of Alonzo will change her power relationship with Deflores. She believes that by having Deflores perform the murder she will be able to pay him off with money. Beatrice-Joanna says in an aside, "I shall rid myself of two inveterate loathing at one time: Piraquo and his dog-face."<sup>81</sup> Beatrice-Joanna thinks that since she is in a privileged position she can use Deflores as she pleases. She does not see Deflores as a person, she sees him as a sort of animal. Beatrice uses Deflores' sensitivity to his own lot in life to establish a relationship in which she will get what she desires. Beatrice does not yet realize that she is giving Deflores true power over her.

The act of murder gives Deflores the power and attitude that seems to personify the evil deformed villain. He murders without guilt because he has done it for the woman he loves. Deflores has no personal reason to hate Piraquo and murders him only to please Beatrice-Joanna. Deflores can be seen briefly as a stigmatized individual risking his own life to please a woman in hopes of gaining her acceptance. When it comes time for his reward, the true evil of his character is revealed. Deflores is enraged to realize Beatrice-Joanna believed that she could pay him with money. Deflores says to her, "Do you place me in the rank of verminous fellows to destroy things for wages? Offer gold? The life blood of man...I could ha' hired a journeyman in murder at this

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<sup>81</sup> *The Changeling*, II.ii, 145.

rate.”<sup>82</sup> Deflores is offended that she could consider him among the same ranks as an everyday criminal. Regardless of his servant position within her household he is still gentle born and demands much more than her money. Power, social influence and social control play a major role in the stigmatization process.<sup>83</sup> Beatrice once held the power, the influence and the control over the life of Deflores. Now that he has something that can be held against her, his power over her has increased. He no longer feels stigmatized, knowing she can no longer exert any true power over him. Deflores’ knows that he can ruin Beatrice as quickly as she can ruin him, creating a new relationship between them.

Deflores tells Beatrice that, “I have eased you of your trouble-think on’t: I’m in pain, and must be eased of you: ‘tis a charity.”<sup>84</sup> Deflores echoes Richard’s language to Anne in this passage. Richard uses the idea of charity in his plea for Anne to marry him. Deflores uses the same tactic here to appeal to Beatrice’s emotions. Deflores is able to catch Beatrice in such a vulnerable position that she realizes she has no other choice. Both men echo the idea that stigmatized individuals are likely to use their stigma for secondary gains.<sup>85</sup> Richard and Deflores both understand how they can use their own bodies as manipulation to get what they want. By drawing attention to the characteristics that stigmatize them they are able to manipulate those around them.

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<sup>82</sup> *The Changeling*, III.iii, 65-70.

<sup>83</sup> Lerita Coleman, “Stigma: An Enigma Demystified.” in *The Disability Studies Reader*. Ed. Lennard Davis. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 143.

<sup>84</sup> *The Changeling*, III.iii, 100.

<sup>85</sup> Goffman, 134.

Nothing about Richard's actions is disabled, as with Deflores. Beatrice tries to beg Deflores to leave her honor intact but it is a pointless struggle. Deflores essentially rapes Beatrice, bringing his sexual language from the first act full circle.

Deflores is thus able to gain complete control over Beatrice-Joanna. Where he was once kneeling at her feet she must now do the same. She no longer has power over him since the plotted murder brings guilt upon them both. Regardless of her pleading otherwise, Deflores is able to get from her exactly what he wants. Deflores uses his love for her as a reason for desiring her chastity, a similar excuse Richard uses when he confronts Anne. Richard and Deflores both use the madness of love as an excuse for their terrible actions and desires. Act Three of *The Changeling* ends with Beatrice-Joanna giving herself to Deflores, unable to refuse him any longer. Deflores is able to gain what he has wanted from the very beginning.

After the murder of her fiancé, Beatrice-Joanna believes she is free of all worry. She will pay off Deflores and he will be gone. When she finds out it is her body he wants for payment, she finds herself slipping further into dark deception. She gives herself to Deflores as payment for the bloody murder. It is important to remember the time period in which Beatrice-Joanna is living. She is a woman of noble birth, and because of that she is placed under certain expectations. The highest expectation is that she will enter her husband's bed a maid, which for Beatrice-Joanna is no longer an

option. She fears she will lose Alsemero, especially when she discovers he has a test that will prove her virtue.

Beatrice-Joanna has to start a new scheme, realizing her soon to be husband Alsemero will be able to test if she is truly chaste. Beatrice-Joanna appears upset, yet she never again treats Deflores differently, ending his immediate sense of stigma. Stigma often mirrors the culture and societies, making it work within a constant flux that is influenced by social comparison.<sup>86</sup> While the audience can still see Deflores as a stigmatized individual, within his private life he has been able to change the way in which his society treats him. On the other hand, Beatrice-Joanna herself now feels a sense of stigma. She is now a “ruined” woman, a concept held in high regard during the early modern period. Beatrice-Joanna’s secret is safe, as long as she submits to Deflores’ will.

Realizing her body will betray her, Beatrice-Joanna must use her servant Diaphanta to learn the proper reactions to the test. Beatrice-Joanna is able to then fake the symptoms to Alsemero, proving to him that she is a maid. Her deceit does not stop there. On her wedding night she sends Diaphanta in her place, to ensure Alsemero will never question that he slept with what he thought to be his virgin wife. Diaphanta takes too long, leading to Deflores setting fire to part of the castle. As her plan crumbles, Deflores arrives to fix everything. Beatrice-Joanna says aloud, “I’m forced to love thee

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<sup>86</sup> Coleman, 142.



now, 'Cause thou provid'st so carefully for my honour...How heartily he serves me!  
His face loathes one, but look upon his care, who would not love him?"<sup>87</sup> Beatrice  
embraces Deflores' love having gone through a transformation in her own self  
perspective. In the chaos that follows, Diaphanta ends up dead.

Deflores must pay for his sins by the end of the play. Deflores' impairment is no  
longer foundational since it has already set the backdrop for his character. Like  
Shakespeare's Richard, Deflores gains everything that he wants regardless of his  
stigma. Richard proves himself an able-bodied fighter until he is finally brought down.  
Deflores would not have fallen if it had not been for Beatrice-Joanna. Alsemero  
confronts Beatrice when he learns that Diaphanta had seen Beatrice-Joanna and  
Deflores alone together. Even though Diaphanta is already dead by the time Beatrice-  
Joanna is confronted, she is key to Alsemero finding the truth. Beatrice-Joanna claims  
her actions were completely out of love. Alsemero says to her, "thou art all deformed."<sup>88</sup>  
Ultimately, it is Beatrice that is labeled as being the truly deformed character. Deflores  
may have held the outward deformity, but Beatrice-Joanna sets everything into motion.  
In the end, it is the most beautiful that turns out to be the most ugly.

From birth Deflores is considered something other than normal. Stigma often  
results in a special kind of downward mobility since part of the power of stigmatization  
lies in the realization that people who are stigmatized often lose their place in a social

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<sup>87</sup> *The Changeling*, V.i, 50,70.

<sup>88</sup> *The Changeling*, V.iii, 77.

hierarchy.<sup>89</sup> Regardless of the fact that Deflores is still an able-bodied man, he loses his place in society because of his facial deformity. Coming from gentle birth, he should have been considered equal in position to Beatrice-Joanna, yet because of the popular early modern view of the body he is denied his place of power. Though Deflores' disfigurement would have been seen as a minor impairment, it still carries the stigma of deformity. In an age when the body also reflects a sense of spirituality he is seen as potentially possessing the outward traits of an inward evil. An audience watching the play unfold would likely associate his impairment with something more, regardless of his actions. Middleton and Rowley were both aware of how their audience would perceive Deflores, much like how Shakespeare knew to turn the historical figure of Richard into something deformed to represent the nation he would have controlled.

By using the audience's knowledge of dramatic and religious construct and social and political implications of disability, Shakespeare is able to render Richard all the more menacing because of the constant visual cues provided by disability.<sup>90</sup> The same can be said in the use of deformity of Deflores' face. Deflores enters the stage as a low servant and leaves with having everything he wanted at a terrible price. Beatrice-Joanna proves to be his greatest antagonist. She is the driving force behind the audience's understanding of who Deflores is and how he should be viewed. By using both modern views on stigma, and the attitudes about impairment at the time, it

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<sup>89</sup> Coleman, 142.

<sup>90</sup> Comber, 194.

becomes more apparent that Deflores was a product of his social and cultural influence. As Albert Magnus wrote, “physical appearance of a person can influence their character, but does not make them to behave a certain way absolutely. They should strive to overcome their negative effects.”<sup>91</sup> Deflores allowed his life to be ruled by his facial ugliness, never letting go of the resentment he felt over losing his station in life. Deflores becomes a monster not because he wants to, but because murder will in his mind give him access to something he could never have had, Beatrice’s affections.

## CONCLUSION

Disability, and the stigmas associated with it, present a real unspoken cultural aspect of our society. It is ever present, yet society seems desperate to ignore it. The ideal norm is ever present within all cultures and time periods. Individuals are raised to believe there is an attainable, Garland- Thomson writes, “by opening up a critical gap between disabled figures as fashioned corporeal others whose bodies carry social meaning and actual people with atypical bodies in real-world social relations, I suggest that representation informs the identity –and often the fate- of real people with extraordinary bodies.”<sup>92</sup> Literature not only helps researchers to understand how the disabled body was perceived, but also the repercussions created for real individuals dealing with the social stigmas of their condition.

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<sup>91</sup> Metzler, 54.

<sup>92</sup> Garland-Thomson, 15.

Texts like Shakespeare's *Richard III* provide excellent insight into how the disabled body was used on stage. Richard pleads his case for evil using his disabled form. His body represents the broken country in which he is trying to inherit. His twisted form representing his inward twisted morality.

Similarly, Deflores is defined by his appearance from the very start. He is deformed, and for that has lost his social position in life. Beatrice assumes his natural disposition towards violence and uses him for her own gains. Deflores embraces the role of villain out of love for Beatrice. Beatrice herself presents the audience with an image of true inward deformity. She is consumed with desire using any means, even murder, to get what she wants.

Literature helps researchers to understand the social and political contexts of the body. By opening up the humanities to disability studies, we are able to further understand the role the body plays within texts. The disabled body is constantly used to represent something more than the individual. The disabled figure becomes a symbol, and how that symbol is analyzed reflects the thoughts of the time and permits us to read such works in new ways.

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