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Rewriting a Murder Pamphlet: the Perspective of Deviance in *The Changeling*

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the relationship between murder pamphlets and early modern drama. I first provide a brief overview of typical features of murder pamphlets. In the rest of the article, I examine a specific example of a play based on a murder pamphlet, Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's *The Changeling*. Exploring the play in contrast to its pamphlet source reveals some of the key differences between the two genres: namely, the pamphlet stories typically follow a moralizing narrative that ensures that providence will bring murderers to a just punishment and repentance, whereas the play invites the audience to experience a subjective world of morally ambivalent motives and ambiguous signs. The two genres thus take dramatically different perspectives on the experience of moral choice and deviance.

FULL TEXT

1> Renaissance murder pamphlets had lent themselves to appropriation by some of the dominant discourses of godly religion, yet were also transferred to the popular stage. Theatrical appropriations of the conventions of the murder pamphlet deviated from normative expectations in subversive, questioning and problematizing ways. Tragedies, for example, often feature unrepentant reprobates who evade capture, trial, condemnation,

and repentance on the scaffold, which would be the usual chain of events in providential murder pamphlets. Plays based upon the narrative template of the murder pamphlet tended to weaken the moralizing and providential framework of the pamphlets.[1] This paper examines the reworking of pamphlet conventions in Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's *The Changeling*, a play directly based on a murder pamphlet.[2] An intensified focus on the interiority of sinners and a problematization of the epistemology of providence in the play complicate notions of divine providence that typify murder pamphlets. Middleton and Rowley strip away the moralizing framework to tell the story primarily through the eyes of its weak and flawed main characters. This, along with other changes to the plot, heightens the audience's exposure to the attractive forces of deviance and to the reprobate's blindness to moral responsibility. In arguing this, the essay draws on the play's source text and a body of literature about murder pamphlets that has rarely been used to illuminate the play.

2> By comparing the play to its pamphlet source, we can appreciate Middleton and Rowley's reshaping of the story, omission of moralizing commentary, and psychologically nuanced account of its main characters' process of moral degeneration. Murder pamphlets were a subset of providentialized news pamphlets that contained hybrid elements of other pamphlet types. Standard features of murder pamphlets included miraculous or pseudo-miraculous events that served to expose criminal perpetrators. The natural world and its elemental forces might serve as means of exposing malefactors by producing omens or natural signs of the crime, or providence might be shown to operate internally, through the bad conscience

of the murderer. The title of *The Changeling's* source accentuates the role of providence in it: *The Triumphs of Gods Revenge against the Crying and Execrable Sin of Murder*.^[3] The opening sentence of Reynolds's story emphatically invokes this moral, eschatalogical framework:

Sith in the day of Iudgement we shal answere at Gods great Tribunall for euey lewde thought our hearts conceive, and idle words our tongues utter, how then shall wee dare appeare, (much lesse thinke to scape) when wee defile our bodies with the pollution of adulterie, and taint our soules with the innocent blood of our Christian brethren? (105-106)



Image Source:

John Reynolds' GOD'S REVENGE AGAINST MURDER, 1657.

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3> Murder pamphlets were of course not the only source for dramatic plots and conventions of Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge tragedies, but since *The Changeling* was directly based on

a story in a murder pamphlet, it affords the opportunity to examine the relationship between these two genres in detail. Attention to the play's reworking of pamphlet conventions offers another approach to understanding drama's unique power, through live performance, to invite audiences to experience the subjective worlds of others. In addition to the source of its plot and characters in the murder pamphlet genre, the play also features spectacular signs and effects that were often the focus of a separate genre, prodigy pamphlets. The attitudes and beliefs about providential signs woven into murder narratives or recounted in prodigy pamphlets were not explicitly Protestant, but often predated the Reformation, and sometimes even Christianity itself. Alexandra Walsham's study of early modern providential pamphlet genres reveals residues of frankly pagan, medieval, folkloric, or otherwise not explicitly Protestant beliefs woven into the pamphlets. In providentialized murder pamphlets, Lake argues, we see these sorts of folkloric and pagan ideas "being appropriated by, grafted onto . . . a Protestant, even rather puritan, providentialism." [4] In *The Changeling*, Middleton and Rowley draw on the atavistic energies behind the Christianized interpretations of preternatural signs and events, rendering a morally ambivalent atmosphere.

4> Murder and prodigy pamphlets present moral choice as simple and divine providence as self-evident, whereas *The Changeling* complicates these moral certainties. The prodigy pamphlet is the case *par excellence* of a providentialized news pamphlet built on pagan and folkloric beliefs. Such pamphlets centered on celestial omens such as meteors, natural disasters like storms and earthquakes, and on malformed births of children and animals. Prodigy pamphlets regularly presented bizarre events as

signs of widely accepted Christian beliefs.[5] This involved running Calvinist doctrine together with folk beliefs in a way that educated contemporaries would find problematic.[6] The title of *The Changeling* refers to a belief from European fairy-lore: a deformed child supposed to have been left by fairies in exchange for a stolen human child. In the play, De Flores's physical and moral defects make him its most obvious changeling. The audience may interpret his deformed physical appearance as a conceit for his reprobate soul, but such visual tropes function implicitly and are not made verbally explicit.[7]

5> Even though they omit the moralizing commentary of its pamphlet source, Middleton and Rowley accentuate and amplify other conventions from providential pamphlets, adding portents and prodigies, and emphasizing the visibility of providential signs already in the source story. Instead of having transformative powers to inspire sinners to repent, however, the play's prodigies, marvels and monsters lack morally reformatory effects. In the play, a ghost, a bloody finger, a transfiguration in a church, the sinner's guilty conscience, and a righteous avenger lack the power to bring malefactors to justice. In this way, they play up the murderers' ability to hide their sin and elude justice, frustrating expectations of the comeuppance of Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores.

6> Middleton and Rowley's play takes place on a blurry plane of human perception where the illusion of human autonomy is powerful. Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores seem to operate as if there is no divine providence, or, if there is, as if it functions in tandem with their actions and desires. Within a Calvinist theological framework, humans aren't held to have free will, but in the human experience of life they think that they

do.[8] Criminal action, in thwarting divine interdictions, may seem to be the example *par excellence* of exerting free will. Middleton and Rowley exploit the dramatic verisimilitude of the stage and its lifelike impersonation of human experience to present the illusion of human autonomy to its full effect. In addition, their liberal use of asides for the speeches of Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores encourages the audience to accept these characters as providing a form of omniscient narration that seems to make transparent a more authentic subtext than the polite social posturing on the surface of the play. Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores do not simply experience their deviant projects as assertions of subjectivity; they also, especially initially, rationalize their crimes as mandated, compelled, or at least aided by providential forces. This makes an already ambiguous providence even more slippery and elusive in the play.

Beatrice-Joanna: free agent or trapped woman?[9]

7> In the pamphlet source, Alsemero takes the romantic initiative with Beatrice-Joanna, and the ensuing narrative focuses on the course of Alsemero's moral ruin rather than Beatrice-Joanna's. The sequence of events in the Reynolds narrative is illustrated in an engraving that appears in the 1657 edition of the work (see figure 1: taken from John Reynolds, *The triumphs of Gods revenge against the crying and execrable sin of murther*, 1657, p.34. Huntington Library call number 138039; by permission of the Huntington Library). The final frame of the engraving shows Alsemero kneeling on the scaffold, sentenced to death for killing Tomazo (having earlier been acquitted of shooting Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores). In *The Changeling*, by contrast, Alsemero is an innocent dupe, without any blood on his hands, while Beatrice-Joanna's moral decline and treachery are amplified.

Middleton and Rowley ramp up her betrayal of Alonzo de Piracquo in representing the couple as already engaged, having exchanged rings, and having set a wedding date (whereas Piracquo in the Reynolds story is still in the process of courting Beatrice-Joanna). The prior promise to marry Alonzo heightens Beatrice-Joanna's betrayal of him, and the playwrights highlight this betrayal through bringing back Alonzo's ghost and the ring she had given him. In added scenes and symbols, the playwrights demonstrate Beatrice-Joanna's growing capacities for deception and treachery. In shifting the focus from Alsemero's criminality to Beatrice-Joanna's, Middleton and Rowley explore the different dynamics of female criminality, involving unruly sexuality and antagonism towards patriarchal relations.

8> Middleton and Rowley create a complex, paradoxical dynamic of helplessness and manipulation in Beatrice-Joanna's dealings with men. When Beatrice-Joanna sounds De Flores out for the part of her hired assassin, she seduces him into the job by playing the part of a damsel in distress, a frail female who relies on male assistance.[10] She displays enticing feminine charms and exhibits nurturing attention to De Flores's facial deformity and admiration for his "manly resolution." If we compare the interview with De Flores to her other social exchanges with men, we see that this tendency to play the demure and dependent beneficiary of men's service -- even with servants like Jasperino -- is an ingrained habit (see II.1.1-3).[11] To judge from her deployment of the glove dropping maneuver in I.1, from the delay of the wedding she secures in II.1, and from Alsemero's assent to her special conditions for the wedding night, Beatrice-Joanna is used to receiving the condescension of men in response to the demands of feminine modesty and frailty. While her feminine

charm is a pretense with De Flores, perhaps as a result of habit, that act has acquired a convincing air of normalcy. In other words, the helpless female and the dominatrix may not represent the fake and the real Beatrice-Joanna so much as the flip sides of an impoverished economy of female roles within which Beatrice-Joanna defines herself. Accustomed to being treated as a child, at times it becomes convenient for Beatrice-Joanna to imagine herself so, particularly when it exonerates her from moral responsibility.[12]

9> Middleton and Rowley dramatize this dynamic of helplessness combined with control in added scenes and condensed symbolic objects and gestures. Beatrice-Joanna's dropped glove at the end of I.1, for example, epitomizes the ambivalent nature of her deviant experience.[13] Her artfully dropped glove represents an attempt, within the bounds of modesty permitted her, to communicate her regard for Alsemero; it is a sneaky attempt to establish clandestine physical contact with him right under the eyes of her father. The glove could be offered as a sign of patronage and favor, a more specific invitation to a courtly lover, or a sign that she is willing to lose her birth right and give away something precious, and thus perhaps a delicate and oblique way of referring both to her dowry and her virginity. And if the overture is not accepted, the whole gesture may be dismissed as an accident. It indicates the limited repertoire of forms of communication available to Beatrice-Joanna and her determination to employ them creatively. Beatrice-Joanna's resourcefulness under severe constraints builds sympathy for her predicament.

10> While De Flores initially represents an extension of Vermandero's paternal control over Beatrice-Joanna, she

creatively re-imagines his role as her chivalric servant. Ostensibly, Beatrice-Joanna's prickliness towards De Flores stems from her visceral repugnance for his deformity; yet it is equally possible that the source of irritation springs from his role as an intermediary for her father, acting as a proxy and extension of paternal control and supervision (this explanation would be consistent with her aversion to him in I.1 and II.1.52-88). As soon as Beatrice-Joanna perceives De Flores as a potential instrument for *subverting* rather than enforcing her father's will, he begins to appear more attractive to her. Just before their first secret interview, Beatrice philosophizes that even a loathed creature like De Flores may have a role in the divine plan ("the ugliest creature/ Creation framed for some use, yet to see/ I could not mark so much where it should be!" II.2.43-45). Taking this logic a step further, she muses, "Why, men of art make much of poison,/ Keep one to expel another; where was my art?" (II.2.47-48). In this analogy, poison has a therapeutic rather than a lethal effect -- one poison being used to neutralize another -- which bespeaks her evasion of the moral consequences of her fantasy. The Beatrice-Joanna of the pamphlet source also exhibits moral evasions, rationalizing her attraction to Alsemero, for example, as ordained by divine providence: "As it is not for earth to resist heauen, nor for our wills to contradict Gods prouidence, so I cannot deny, but now acknowledge, that if euer I affected any man, it is your selfe." Yet, however Beatrice-Joanna may attempt to deceive herself, the pamphlet's moralizing narrator continually presents a counter interpretation in comments like the following: "And now, after shee had ruminated, and runne over many bloody designes; the diuell, who never flies from those that follow him, proffers her an invention as execrable as damnable." [14] The play, lacking a

moralizing commentary, invites the audience to share Beatrice's perspective.

11> The interlude of the virginity test, which is absent from the play's pamphlet source, has seemed gratuitous, bewildering and ham-fisted to many critics, yet when considered as representing a stage in Beatrice-Joanna's psychological, criminal development, it serves a key narrative purpose. The episode demonstrates Beatrice-Joanna's growing commitment to deviance: it shows her pleasure and sense of accomplishment from studying and counterfeiting innocence.[15] She distances herself from the first crime (the murder of Alonzo) by hiring De Flores to carry it out, but in the virginity test scene she engages directly and independently in the reconnaissance necessary to sustain a cover up. Initially, a fretting Beatrice-Joanna ("This fellow has undone me endlessly" IV.1.1) worries that she will be found out by Alsemero ("Before whose judgement will my fault appear/ Like malefactors' crimes before tribunals" IV.1.7-8), conjuring up the culmination in providential exposure that would typically transpire in a murder pamphlet. The source story includes just such a providential discovery, when Alsemero surprises Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores *in flagrante delicto*, killing them both on the spot. The narrator describes the discovery as ordained by the providence of God: "Thus by the prouidence of God, in the second Tragedie of our Historie we see our two murtherers murdered, and *Piracquo's* innocent blood reuenged in the guiltinesse of theirs" (137). In the play, by contrast, Beatrice-Joanna's premonitions of divine retribution vanish, and instead she manages to conceal her defloration, control her public image, and continue to outwit her male superiors. In this respect the plot offers a coming-of-age story for Beatrice-Joanna that can be a

feature of comic plots. In plays like *The Merry Wives of Windsor* or *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, for example, when a daughter being coerced by a tyrannical father into an unwanted marriage asserts her own desires and maneuvers for herself, this can be seen as part of a natural process of maturity. By accentuating this process in adding the virginity test, which provides a framework for seeing Beatrice-Joanna in the light of a comic heroine, Middleton and Rowley further complicate Beatrice-Joanna's moral status.

12> Beatrice-Joanna's giddy exhilaration in the scene where she discovers and then passes Alsemero's virginity test reflects a shift from her sense of powerlessness to control. Saved from the mortifying exposure that she had anticipated, she enjoys an enormous sense of relief and guilty pleasure. Alsemero's medicine cabinet ties into the idea that one can test signs of salvation, whereas Beatrice suggests that you can fake the signs. An appreciation for the work involved in constructing normal appearances is key to her sense of celebration and accomplishment in this scene. Alsemero's asides indicate how convincingly her performance clears her of suspicion: "Push, modesty's shrine is set in yonder forehead" and "the dove's not meeker;/ She's abused questionless" (IV.2.124; 128-9). By manipulating appearances and executing an elaborate cover-up, she proves her ability to get away with it, passing several tests of adult competence. She has imposed her line of interpretation on everyone else, summoning up the practical skill and the emotional stamina necessary to sustain her lie. Having successfully faked the external signs predicted by the virginity test, she now prepares to substitute Diaphanta for herself as a *bona fide* virgin in her wedding bed. From the sneaky thrill of hiding from her father her

illicit love for Alsemero she graduates to the sneaky thrill of deceiving the bridegroom himself.[16]

13> Reynolds's source story, by contrast, deprives Beatrice-Joanna of this triumph. In the pamphlet, Beatrice-Joanna's infidelity with De Flores is blamed on Alsemero's jealousy; by shutting Beatrice-Joanna away, he makes her resent him. There, when Diaphanta tells Alsemero of the secret meetings between Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores, Alsemero confronts the adulteress who feels compelled to reveal the murder of Piracquo, "loe, the providence of God so ordained it, that shee is reduced to this exigent and extremity, as she must bee a witness against herself, and in seeking to conceal her whoredome, must discover her murder." [17] After the jealous husband shoots and stabs the adulterers, the narrator comments, "thus be the providence of God . . . we see our two murthers murthered, and Piracquo's innocent blood revenged in the guiltinesse of theirs"(137). *The Changeling* eventually brings Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores to their deaths, but by their own hand rather than by Alsemero's, and after they are given a wider scope for deviant action. In the play, unlike the pamphlet, Beatrice-Joanna and DeFlores operate relatively unchecked by prying maids and jealous husbands.

De Flores: victim or monster?

14> The paradoxes of freedom and determination play out differently with De Flores, but are no less extreme. This character is developed much more fully in the play than in the pamphlet, where, for example, his direct speech is never quoted. The De Flores in the pamphlet source has no physical defect nor does Beatrice-Joanna feel such initial disgust towards him as in the play. Reynolds describes him as follows, "There is a Gallant

young gentleman, of the Garrison of the Castle, who follows her [Beatrice-Joanna's] father, that to her knowledge doth deeply honour, dearely affect her.”[18] In the play, De Flores deeply resents the birth defect that disfigures his face and he recognizes that it repels Beatrice-Joanna, yet he also exhibits a masochistic internalization of blame. The play's De Flores describes his infatuation for Beatrice-Joanna, a woman who openly hates and abuses him, as an uncontrollable compulsion: “I know she hates me,/ Yet I cannot choose 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” (I.1.233-39). Paradoxically, he experiences the attraction to Beatrice-Joanna as at once something that he cannot choose and the product of his perverse will.[19]

15> The scene in which De Flores retrieves Beatrice-Joanna's dropped glove offers a compressed tableau of the sado-masochistic dynamic between them. Having been bidden by Vermanadero to pick up the glove, and thereby thwarting Beatrice-Joanna's intended overture to Alsemero, De Flores receives a second glove defiantly thrown at him by Beatrice-Joanna. Picking up the glove after her exit, he transforms the delicate coquetry of her message to Alsemero into an obscene, phallic gesture by thrusting his “fingers into her sockets” (I.1.235-36). Like the fetishized gloves discussed by Peter Stallybrass and Ann Rosalind Jones, Beatrice-Joanna's gloves are made into a fetish by De Flores, and as such, are hated as well as strongly desired. Beatrice-Joanna seems to exert an irrational control over De Flores almost as if she had bewitched him. The intensity, irrationality, and helplessness of his infatuation remind one of tales of medieval knights bewitched by fairies. In these tales the fairy queen entices mortals to sin or servitude, and mortals find

themselves enslaved by an irresistible and selfless devotion to her.[20] The pamphlet source, by contrast, simply condemns Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores for engaging in the sin of adultery. Thus, while the pamphlet easily dismisses the transgression, the play presents factors in both Beatrice-Joanna's frustration and De Flores's wounded self-image to render their motivations for the liaison more ambivalent.

16> Analogies from the world of fairy tales and ballads work further to associate the 'changeling' of the title with the fairy world. The depiction of De Flores as a kind of early modern prodigy or monster is Middleton and Rowley's most innovative but also deeply ambivalent providential sign in the play. Middleton and Rowley return to a more atavistic notion of the changeling in conjuring up a complex of ideas involving deformity, unnatural or ungodly creation, sexual appetite, guilt expressed as aggression toward the self, and the mark of Adam's sin. Beatrice-Joanna associates De Flores with a series of wonders and prodigies. She describes and addresses him variously as "this serpent" (I.1.117), "this ominous ill-faced fellow" (I.1.53), "that thing of hate" (II.1.58), "Thou standing toad-pool!" (II.1.58), "slave" (II.1.68), and "thou thing most loathed" (II.1.72). She compares him to an evil portent, "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" (II.1.89-93). She calls him "dog-face," recalling zoomorphic early modern prodigies like Tamakin the hog-faced woman, the monk-calf, and the pope-ass that were featured on the covers of prodigy pamphlets. In the course of the play, De Flores is linked with the standard subjects of prodigy pamphlets: natural disasters, celestial omens, portents and malformed births. This is more than just a fanciful way of

referring to an ugly face; in the world of the play, De Flores's facial deformity literally classifies him as a preternatural monster.[21]

17> According to folklore, De Flores's deformity would be explained as the mark of a changeling. The half-folkloric, half-Christianized notion of the changeling survived in early modern England in ballads, fairy tales, and prodigy pamphlets. Various critics of *The Changeling* have attempted to define the play's title and identify its applications to the characters. It has been argued, for example, that the notion of a changeling functions as a kind of master trope and, extended to a certain level of abstraction, may apply to almost every character in the play.[22] While it is true that we see many permutations of the word "change" operate in the play, excluding the definition relating to infants exchanged by fairies has been rather counter-intuitively dismissed as irrelevant to the play.[23] For, arguably, Middleton and Rowley draw on precisely this definition to mark De Flores as a kind of spiritual amphibian -- caught between human and demonic worlds.[24] In the pagan lore of agrarian, European subsistence cultures, changelings were believed to be elf children substituted by fairies for human children. The related belief that beating or abandoning such a child might induce the fairies to reverse the surreptitious exchange licensed the expression of otherwise unspeakable abuses, abandonment, and even infanticide of such children. Rationalizing the abnormal child as a changeling allowed the parents to focus their aggression directly on the child since, presumably, it was not their own.

18> Christianity tried to eradicate pagan beliefs in changelings, and children whose mental or physical defects had traditionally been explained as the result of fairy exchanges were, in popular

Christian thought, subsumed under the category of prodigies. Prodigy pamphlets encompassed a field of cultural overlap where the official religion had points of contact with folklorized or magical ritual. In practice, prodigy pamphlets regularly presented wonders as signs of divine punishment and displeasure, but in theory they were much more highly ambiguous and polysemous.[25] Both pagan and Christian beliefs surrounding humans with birth defects involved notions of invisible supernatural agency, whose benevolence or malevolence was uncertain, and Middleton and Rowley draw on these ambiguities to indicate De Flores's moral and existential ambidexterity. Middleton and Rowley's representation of De Flores, with one foot in the world of fairy lore and the other in the world of Christian prodigies, conjures up a world of invisible demonic and divine powers.

19> In the scene where De Flores murders Alonzo we see this morally ambidextrous nature, for he vacillates between a sense of his actions as determined and as purposefully chosen, finding signs in his surroundings that give him the confidence to follow through with the crime. Leading Alonzo down the narrow passage where he'll stab him, for example, De Flores remarks to his victim with dark humor: "All this is nothing; you shall see anon/ A place you little dream on" (III.2.1-2), and later, "My lord, I'll place you at a casement here/ Will show you the full strength of all the castle" (III.2.6-7). And when the stage direction indicates "He takes up the rapier," De Flores darkly directs Alonzo to "Take special notice of that sconce before you;/ There you may dwell awhile." The apparent conspiracy of his surroundings with his plan to kill Alonzo encourages a sense that he possesses a secret charm or black magic over his intended victim and surroundings.

In order to follow through with the murder, De Flores needs to believe that he is in control of all contingencies. He needs to summon up the nerve and confidence to transcend the risks inherent in the open-ended reality of the situation, and his description of the situation helps conjure up the spirit of criminality.

20> At the same time as he internalizes the stigma of his deformity, De Flores also learns to exploit it. Just as Beatrice-Joanna manages to turn the disadvantages of female frailty and incompetence to her advantage, so De Flores appropriates the very monstrous persona with which he has been stigmatized to gain control over Beatrice-Joanna. He invokes the implied malevolence of his cursed visage to intimidate Beatrice-Joanna into submission. When he claims his reward for service, she must reckon with the uncontrollable implications of the female charms that she deployed in seducing him into the crime. Now the pretense of female incompetence and weakness fails and backfires, leaving her in his power. By contrast, the De Flores of the source text has no deformity, and the liaison between him and Beatrice-Joanna, rather than originating in an act of blackmail as it does in the play, happens at Beatrice-Joanna's instigation.

21> In the play, De Flores fantasizes about, discovers and manufactures an angle of superiority over Beatrice-Joanna. He attempts to convince her that his violence is not contingent on materialistic rewards: "Do you place me in the rank of verminous fellows,/ To destroy things for wages? Offer gold?/ The life blood of man! Is anything/ Valued too precious for my recompense?" (III.4.64-67). He backs up this meaning by explaining that nothing but pure hedonism motivates him: "You see I have thrown contempt upon your gold --/ . . . For I place wealth after

the heels of pleasure” (III.4.111; 115). He later adds the threat, “If I enjoy thee not, thou ne’er enjoy’st./ I’ll blast the hopes and joys of marriage./ I’ll confess all; my life I rate at nothing” (III.4.147-150). Trying to end the conversation, he curtly rhymes, “She that in life and love refuses me,/ In death and shame my partner she shall be” (III.4.154-55). At length, frustrated by Beatrice-Joanna’s continuing resistance, he backs up his intentions violently and remorselessly, stressing the extravagance of his libertinism, and equating his will with immovable fate: “Let this silence thee:/ The wealth of all Valencia shall not buy/ My pleasure from me./ Can you weep fate from its determined purpose?/ So may you weep me” (III.4.159-63).[26] Here De Flores insists that Beatrice-Joanna’s purposive, coherent, utilitarian variety of criminality has no answer for his chaotic, antirational, libidinal species of evil. Unlike hers, his violence is not contingent on the prospect of extrinsic rewards, and hence, not ultimately controllable by others. Here De Flores embraces the myth of bestiality surrounding his deformity; he suggests that he cannot be negotiated with; she must simply give in and grant him dominance. Thus the dynamic of intimidation and submission between Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores is reversed.

***Digitus Dei?* prodigies, portents, providence, and predestination**

22> Aside from what Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores perceive as compelling and liberating forces, the play presents subtle hints and signs pointing to the operation of an authentic divine providence. Such a hint is given in the favorable wind that urges Alsemero’s departure in the first scene of the play. His servant Jasperino stresses its auspicious nature even while implying its ambiguity: “Come, the wind’s fair with you./ You’re like to have

a swift and pleasant passage . . . If you could buy a gale amongst the witches,/ They could not serve you such a lucky pennyworth/ As comes i' God's name" (I.1.13-14; 17-19). If natural elements like the wind can be ruled by the stars and by witches as well as by divine power, they cannot be definitively providential. Yet for Alsemero the favorable wind is counterbalanced by what seems like a God given example of Dantesque or Petrarchan *fin amor*: love at first sight in a church, with the chaste Beatrice-Joanna. Where, if not in a church, should Alsemero be touched by grace? Yet, as a man of science, Alsemero dismisses portents as superstitious and places his trust in reason and judgment, aided by the science in his cabinet of experiments. While the favorable wind urging him on his journey away from Alicante may in retrospect seem a providential sign, its own dramatic moment generates an atmosphere of competing, ambiguous signifiers. While genuine providential signs might interrupt the world of the play, they compete with such convincing counterfeits that it is hard to tell the difference. The hermeneutic confusion of a moment like this belies, and implicitly critiques, the confident divination of portents in prodigy pamphlets.

23> The ghost of Alonzo would seem to be another providential sign intended to prick the conscience of the murderers, but it turns out to be a relatively pallid and effete version of the dramatic convention. The ghost is mute, uttering neither threats, nor commands, nor recriminations. One detail mentioned in the stage directions for the apparition as it flits past De Flores (IV.1.Dumb Show) is that it shows him "the hand whose finger he had cut off." This may seem yet another sign of the ghost's pusillanimity, an insulting reminder of the indignities suffered by Alonzo and his defiled corpse, and of his symbolic castration or cuckolding. Yet

the absent finger may also play on a conventional metaphor in murder pamphlets where the *digitus Dei* (finger of God) thwarts or exposes evildoers. In Thomas Cooper's *Cry and Revenge of Blood* (1620), for example, the pamphleteer describes both the discovery of bodies that had been hidden in a pond and of the murderers responsible for them as follows: " . . . seeing this is contrary to all sense, and reason, it must needs be ascribed to the finger of God, even in such impossibility yeelding some light to the discovery both of the murthered, who they were, and also of the murtherers. Will you see the prooffe hereof in the sequele of the story, oh then stir up your harts to wonder at the prouidence of God." [27] In *The Changeling*, the ghost of Alonzo showing his absent finger could work as a kind of divine threat, warning the murderer and puncturing his arrogant illusions of power and security. Later, the ghost again breezes past De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna, and De Flores dismisses it confidently, "I dread thee not;/ 'Twas but a mist of conscience – All's clear again" (V.1.59-60). Because the play is presented to us primarily through the eyes of the transgressors, they miss the significance of these providential signs. These characters are not morally accessible; they have no conscience.

24> In a ghoulish parody of a marriage proposal, De Flores had earlier presented the dead bridegroom's finger and ring to Beatrice-Joanna. Her revulsion seems to show the finger functioning in the manner of a classic *digitus Dei* to remind a malefactor of her crime. While Beatrice-Joanna squeamishly recoils from the severed finger, De Flores, assuming his monstrous persona, responds with callous impassivity, "Why, is that more/ Than killing the whole man? I cut his heart-strings./ A greedy hand thrust in a dish at court/ In a mistake hath had as

much as this” (III.4.29-32). Things that make her gorge rise cannot reach his sensibilities; he is impervious to pain and guilt; he is not morally or emotionally accessible. While the ring that sticks to Alonzo’s finger identifies Alonzo as Beatrice-Joanna’s lawful betrothed, De Flores revels in defying divine sacraments. At points like this De Flores appropriates the myth of his own monstrosity, making it work to his advantage. In Alonzo’s ring and the ghost, then, Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores prove relatively impervious to apparent signs of divine providence and retributive justice.[28] In doing so, the play frustrates the sort of expectations which its source story raises in warnings such as, “though man as yet see not this murder, yet God in his due time will both detect and punish it.”[29]

25> Another typical agent of revenge or, as it were, finger of God, in the play is Tomazo de Piracquo, brother of the murdered Alonzo. Tomazo seems from the first Act a likely and promising candidate to avenge his murdered brother. In the source story, Tomazo challenges Alsemero to a duel. In the play, by contrast, he broods around the castle, Hamlet-like, grumbling bitterly of suspected foul play, but lacking the proof to bring concrete charges. Middleton and Rowley tease us with the possibility of De Flores’s exposure by Tomazo when De Flores sees and smells the blood of his victim and sees his ghost when in Tomazo’s presence (IV.2.41, 44-45 & V.2.32-33). The presence of such supernatural signs were not mere literary flourishes in sensational pamphlets. Malcolm Gaskill shows that early modern English witnesses at depositions in murder cases also presented evidence “in the supernatural idiom of providential miracles – bleeding corpses, ghosts and dreams.”[30] Gaskill encourages us to avoid simplistic evaluations of these reports as factual or false and

instead to focus on what they meant to contemporaries. Often, in the absence of objective forensic processes by which murderers might be discovered, he argues, such supernatural evidence provided a means of articulating popular convictions about guilt. In the play, De Flores imagines the corpse of his victim bleeding anew, but Tomazo does not see it. Neither ghost nor cruentation, conventional supernatural catalysts for outing guilty murderers in murder pamphlets, leads to the unravelling of the case. By the end of the play Tomazo has progressed no further in his investigations, and seems, if anything, about to charge the wrong men on the strength of Vermandero's misguided information. In the pamphlet source, Tomazo is a more effective character, actually challenging Alsemero to a duel, though he is killed in the duel and dies without solving the mystery of his brother's death. Here again, then, the play teases us with the possibility of the malefactors' exposure by conventional providential means, but complicates and frustrates those expectations in order to render more lifelike the complex unfolding of the truth in criminal investigations.

26> Prodigy pamphlets and sermons which sought to edify Christian readers with examples of natural monsters and wonders typically sought to draw analogies between objects and events in nature and theological doctrines; monsters provided an opportunity to moralize on universal sin and human defectiveness.[31] In the play, ironically, De Flores preaches such moralizing commentary to Beatrice-Joanna about her sinfulness, “. . . Push, you forget yourself! A woman dipped in blood, and talk of modesty?” (III.4.124-26; see also III.4.132-5). Finding such morals in the mouth of the play's arch-villain suggests that the confident moral rhetoric of prodigy and murder pamphlets can

be manipulated for polemical purposes. Sounding like the evangelical narrator of a providential pamphlet, De Flores enjoins Beatrice-Joanna to examine her sinful heart:

Look but into your conscience, read me there;
'Tis a true book; you'll find me there your equal.
Push, fly not to your birth, but settle you
In what the act has made you; you're no more now.
You must forget your parentage to me:
You're the deed's creature; by that name
You lost your first condition, and I challenge you
As peace and innocence has turned you out,
And made you one with me. (III.4.132-39)

27> However, the moral of De Flores's sermon, unlike that of a godly pamphlet, is not for the sinner to repent, but to slide deeper into depravity.[32] According to this, Beatrice-Joanna has orphaned herself, cutting herself off from both earthly and heavenly fathers. In De Flores's mock sermon, Middleton and Rowley seem to figure forth one fear about the Calvinist doctrine of repentance: that sinners would conclude that predestination rendered their actions inconsequential. Because, according to this doctrine, a sinner may do evil a hundred times yet still be saved if he fear God, the libertine thinks he can continue in sin. He reasons perversely that the greater the sin, the more abundant and glorious is God's grace. But persisting in wickedness deadens him to sin and hardens his heart, rendering him ultimately deaf to the call to repentance. Acquired callousness thus makes him incapable of performing the one necessary condition of salvation, fearing God. De Flores's perversion of the rhetoric of human depravity and original sin thus presents a possible critique of murder pamphlets' confident assurance in triumph over sin.

28> As a result of instigating the murder and entering into a conspiracy with De Flores, Beatrice-Joanna concludes that she has recreated herself in De Flores's monstrous, ungodly image, and she refers to notions about the origins of monstrous births in her reaction to the sermon, "Was my creation in the womb so cursed/ It must engender with a viper first?" (III.4.165-66). At the end of the play Beatrice-Joanna returns to this imagery, when, in her dying words, she authorizes her father Vermandero to perform a kind of late abortion:

Oh, come not near me, sir; I shall defile you.
I am that of your blood was taken from you
For your better health; look no more upon't,
But cast it to the ground regardlessly.
Let the common sewer take it from distinction.
Beneath the stars, upon yon meteor
Even hung my fate, 'mongst things corruptible;
I ne'er could pluck it from him. My loathing
Was prophet to the rest, but ne'er believed. (V.149-57)

29> The image here of letting blood for one's health may initially suggest the medical practice of bleeding to restore the proper balance of humors, yet it may also be a kind of bizarre image for male menstruation in which Beatrice-Joanna likens herself to defiling menstrual blood. One early modern theory held that monsters originated in sinful sexual intercourse during menstruation, a theory that was backed up by biblical books such as Leviticus which declared that menstrual blood contaminates.[33] As Beatrice-Joanna becomes aware of her moral turpitude, she sees herself as miscreated. Similar to the

monstrous image of herself, she refers to De Flores as a meteor, another common marvel from prodigy pamphlets.

30> Reynolds's source story presents quite a different ending from the play. There, after Beatrice-Joanna and de Flores are killed by Alsemero, the narrative focuses on Alsemero's moral decline. Beginning with his tacit acceptance of the murder of Piracquo, Alsemero's guilt is compounded when he murders Piracquo's brother. Alsemero's end is full of assurances that murderers will not escape temporal justice. Fleeing the scene where he has ambushed and killed Tomaso de Piracquo, Alsemero is pursued by magistrates. Eventually, after his horse providentially goes lame, he confesses and repents before his judicial execution. Here the ultimate revenge is left to the appropriate agent, the magistrate.[34] When Alsemero reveals that Beatrice and De Flores had murdered Alonzo de Piracquo, their bodies are exhumed and burned at the common place of execution. Reynolds concludes, "Loe here the iust punishment of God against these devilish and bloody murtherers! At the sight of whose executions, all that infinite number of people that were Spectators, universally laude and prayse the Maiesty of God, for purging the earth of such unnaturall and bloodie Monsters." [35]

31> At the end of the play, the emphasis is not so much on the providential revelation and judgment of the felons – as one would expect in the stock narratives of murder and prodigy pamphlets – as on their irredeemable depravity. While the workings of providence are not entirely absent from the play, they are left implicit. The cluster of images of misbegotten creatures and prodigies at the end accumulates to deliver a kind of apocalyptic crescendo. In frustrating the expectations of readers of providentialized pamphlets, while at the same time invoking so

many of their conventions, Middleton and Rowley seem quite deliberately to resist the temptation to preach and moralize. Instead, they show what plays do best: they take us inside the experience of the main characters, graphically presenting their temptations and crimes – deception, murder, blackmail, rape, adultery, and so on – giving free reign to their deluded, subversive and disorderly experience and showing what the world looks like from inside that perspective. Middleton and Rowley imaginatively enter the mental world of their reprobate characters, showing us the sensual attractions of deviance and the hardening of the heart that accompanies it.

32> Thomas Dekker's observation in *Newes from Hell* (1606) nicely describes the mentality of the play's two major villains:

. . . many are brought into a fooles Paradise, by gladly believing that either there's no such place [hell] at all, or else, that tis built by Inchauntement, and stands upon Fayrie ground, by reason such pinching and nipping is knowne to bee there, and that how well favoured soever we depart hence, we are turnd to Changelings, if we tarry there but a minute. (sig. C1r)

33> Middleton and Rowley use the trope of a preternatural, in-between fairy world to gesture towards psychological and existential aspects of deviant experience that escape the conventions of moralized murder pamphlets.

NOTES

[1] Peter Lake, with Michael Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), chapter 1.

Throughout this paper the term murder pamphlet refers to the non-fiction genre and its conventions as outlined by Lake.

[2] The source for the narrative of the main plot is in John Reynolds, *The Triumphs of God's Revenge against the Crying and Execrable sin of Murder* (London, 1621), Book I, Historie IV, 105-146. In his Preface, Reynolds contrasts his edifying volume with the corrupting and tempting influence of "Stage-plays" (sig. A2v). I consulted the Huntington Library's copy of the first edition, Call number 69124. John Stachniewski's "Calvinist Psychology in Middleton's Tragedies" has some affinities with questions I investigate here, but he assumes a continuity between the moral of *The Changeling* and its pamphlet source which I argue against; his article is published in *Three Jacobean Revenge Tragedies* ed. R. V. Holdsworth (London: MacMillan, 1990), 226-247.

[3] First published in 1621, *The Triumphs* was immensely successful. It went into eleven editions by 1660 and was continuously published until 1778 under various titles. When Middleton and Rowley wrote *The Changeling* in 1622, its source story had only been published for one year. Information taken from K. Grudzien Baston, 'Reynolds, John (b. c.1599, d. after 1655)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/go.libproxy.wfubmc.edu/view/article/23422>, accessed 2 April 2011]. The license to perform *The Changeling* was granted in 1622; it was performed at court and at the Phoenix, the newest playhouse in London, located near Drury Lane, a residential area favored by the gentry and situated close to the Inns of Court.

[4] Peter Lake, “Deeds against Nature: Cheap Print, Protestantism and Murder in Early Seventeenth-Century England” in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* eds. Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 273. Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 111-114; while Lake sees a conscious effort to appropriate such non-Protestant beliefs in the pamphlets, Walsham argues that they are a result of cultural syncretism. Lena Cowen Orlin investigates the fascinating case of a miracle associated with a medieval saint that gets repurposed as the providential event that exposes the murderer in a Renaissance murder pamphlet in “A Case for Anecdotalism in Women’s History: the Witness Who Spoke When the Cock Crowed” *English Literary Renaissance* 31, 1 (2001), 52-77. See also Julie Crawford, *Marvelous Protestantism: Monstrous Births in Post-Reformation England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011) on the prodigy pamphlet.

[5] Helaine Razovsky discusses how Reformation hermeneutic practices were unleashed on the extra-scriptural objects of prodigy pamphlets but without acknowledging how problematic this would be for educated contemporaries: “Popular Hermeneutics: Monstrous Children in English Renaissance Broadside Ballads” *Early Modern Literary Studies* 2.3 (1996): 1.1-34. Tessa Watts writes of the Protestant assimilation of secular forms in ballads in *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), chapter 2.

[6] Lorraine Daston discusses competing religious and scientific interpretations of marvels in “Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence in Early Modern Europe” *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1991).

Michael P. Winship chronicles growing skepticism and debate about prodigies in the later seventeenth century extensively in *Seers of God: Puritan Providentialism in the Restoration and Early Enlightenment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). While critics have recognized persistent attempts in Jacobean drama to experiment with ideas from Calvinist theology, and Middleton has attracted some attention in such discussions, I do not consider *The Changeling* a serious attempt to grapple with high theology, so much as a parody of cheap pamphlets as a crudely commodified form of theological ideas. See N.W. Bawcutt, "Was Thomas Middleton a Puritan Dramatist?" *Modern Language Review* 24, 4 (1999), 925-939. Dennis R. Klinck, "Calvinism and Jacobean Tragedy" *Genre* 11,3 (1978): 333-57, helpfully reviews scholarship about the presence of Calvinist concepts in Jacobean drama. Robert Ornstein devotes a chapter to Middleton in *The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1960), chapter VII, and Irving Ribner discusses Middleton's plays in *Jacobean Tragedy: the Quest for Moral Order* (London: Methuen, 1962), 123-134.

[7] Euan Cameron provides a good discussion of changelings in the context of magic and religion in *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason, and Religion 1250-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Gordon McMullan illuminatingly discusses ugliness in the play broadly and pertaining to De Flores specifically, but does not consider DeFlores's ugliness as a deformity or birth defect in "The Changeling and the dynamics of ugliness" *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy* eds. Emma Smith and Garrett A. Sullivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 222-235. In the 1993 BBC

production of *The Changeling*, to portray De Flores, actor Bob Hoskins wears a port wine birthmark across half of his face.

[8] By ‘free will’ I refer specifically to the choice of whether one is saved or not rather than to the simple exercise of desire and will in everyday life. On the level of pastoral advice or edificational instruction, English Calvinists left room for the notion of human effort in the preparation of the soul and perseverance in godliness or grace. The power to will a conversion to faith might ultimately come from God, but the invisible working of God in the soul was hidden from human perception, and the resulting outward human action could look like personal choice or initiative. See Peter Lake, *Moderate puritans and the Elizabethan church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), chapter 7. Doohyun Park examines a more modern notion of agency in “‘Y’are the deed’s creature’: Questioning Personal Autonomy in Thomas Middleton’s *The Changeling*” *Journal of Classical and English Renaissance Literature* 11, 2 (2002), 159-172.

[9] Female Protagonists in popular pamphlets are analyzed in Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England 1550-1700* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994) and Joy Wiltenburg, *Disorderly Women and Female Power in the Street Literature of Early Modern England and Germany* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1992). Garthine Walker considers the representation of female criminality and the nature of patriarchal relations in murder pamphlets in “‘Demons in female form’: representations of women and gender in murder pamphlets of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries” in *Writing and the English Renaissance*, William Zunder and Suzanne Trill eds. (New York: Longman, 1996), 123-139.

[10] A closer parallel to the plot of *The Changeling* can be found in another murder pamphlet, *A Briefe discourse of Two most cruell and bloudie murthers* (London, 1583).

[11] Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, *The Changeling*, ed. N.W. Bawcutt (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); edition cited hereafter. Middleton scholarship has also benefitted enormously from the massive, new *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino eds. (Oxford: the Clarendon Press, 2007) and *The Oxford Handbook of Thomas Middleton*, Gary Taylor and Trish Thomas Henley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[12] Natalie Zemon Davis has suggested that a limited strategy for female autonomy was for women to invert the cultural formulation of being given away by giving themselves away; see “Boundaries and the Sense of Self in Sixteenth-Century France” in *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, eds. Thomas C. Heller, Morton Sosna, David E. Wellberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), 61. See also Cristina Malcolmson, “‘As tame as the ladies’: Politics and Gender in *The Changeling*” *English Literary Renaissance* 20 (1990), 320-339.

[13] On the passivity of female criminals as inviting sympathy and making them forgivable, see Garthine Walker, “Demons in Female Form” (1996), 133.

[14] See Reynolds, *The Triumph* (1621), 116, 122 and 127.

[15] For an example of critical bewilderment over this episode, see Peter Morrison, “A Cangoun in Zombieland: Middleton’s Teratological *Changeling*” in “*Accompaninge the players*”

Essays Celebrating Thomas Middleton, 1580-1980, ed. Kenneth Friedenreich (New York: AMS Press, 1983). This episode is entirely absent from the pamphlet source. Lisa Hopkins analyzes the scene in “Beguiling the Master of the Mystery: Form and Power in *The Changeling*” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 9 (1997), 149-161.

[16] On the subversion of patriarchal and familial authority as the definitive feature of female deviance, see Garthine Walker, “Demons in female form” (1996), 125.

[17] Reynolds, *The Triumph* (1621), 135.

[18] Reynolds, *The Triumph* (1621), 127.

[19] Sara Eaton discusses the contradictions of Courtly Love rhetoric in the play in “Beatrice-Joanna and the Rhetoric of Love in *The Changeling*” *Theatre Journal* 36, 3 (1984), 371-382.

[20] Peter Stallybrass and Ann Rosalind Jones, “Fetishizing the Glove in Renaissance Europe” *Critical Inquiry* 28, 1 (2002), 114-32. Diane Purkiss explores the erotic subtexts of fairy stories as tales of sexual bondage in “Old Wives’ Tales Retold: the mutations of the Fairy Queen” in *This Doubled Voice: Gendered Writing in Early Modern England* eds. Elizabeth Clarke and Danielle Clark (New York: Macmillan/ St. Martin’s, 2000), 103-118. The seventeenth-century ballad “Tam Lin” is one well known example of the motif of the enchanted, enslaved lover.

[21] In the source tale, the De Flores character has no deformity.

[22] This point is made by Lois E. Bueler, “The Rhetoric of Change in *The Changeling*” *English Literary Renaissance* 14, 1 (1984).

[23] See G.W. Williams, "The denotation of the word 'changeling' familiar to the modern audience is 'an infant exchanged by fairies for another infant'; it is the only meaning not relevant to the play," in "Introduction" to *The Changeling*, Regents Renaissance Drama (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), xvi.

[24] There is a dramatic precedent for this symbolic significance of the changeling in the fifteenth-century *Second Shepherd's Play*, where Mak and Gill disguise their stolen sheep as a changeling child, whose antitype in the play is the genuine *agnus Dei*.

[25] Changelings were not automatically assumed to be evil, but sometimes taken as signs of good luck who would bring fortune to families who treated them well. It was also believed that an elf child could acquire a human soul by being suckled by a human mother, thus entering the human, Christian fold. See Carl Haffter, "The Changeling: History and Psychodynamics of Attitudes to Handicapped Children in European Folklore" *Journal of the History of Behavioral Sciences* 4 (1968), 55-61; David Cressy, "Monstrous Births and Credible Reports: Portents, Texts, and Testimonies" in *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 40-41; Katherine Park and Lorraine Daston, "Unnatural Conceptions: the Study of Monsters in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century France and England" *Past and Present* 92 (1981): 20-54; Dudley Wilson, *Signs and Portents: Monstrous births from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 1993).

[26] See Frances E. Dolan, "Re-reading Rape in *The Changeling*" *The Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 11,

1 (2011), 4-29, and Deborah G. Burks, "'I'll Want My Will Else': *The Changeling* and Women's Complicity with their Rapists" *ELH* 62, 4 (1995), 759-790.

[27] See Thomas Cooper, *The Cry and Revenge of Blood*, London, 1620, 42 and chapter 4 generally. For a sampling of murder pamphlets in a modern edition see Joseph H. Marshburn, *Murder and Witchcraft in England, 1550-1640* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971). An entire article has been devoted to finger imagery in the play: Norman Berlin, "The 'Finger' Image and Relationship of Character in *The Changeling*" *English Studies in Africa* 12 (1969), 162-66.

[28] In chapter 4, "Reformation Controversies: Demons and Ghosts," R.C. Finucane discusses the problematic status of ghosts in Protestant belief; see *Appearances of the Dead: A Cultural History of Ghosts* (London: Junction Books, 1982).

[29] Reynolds, *The Triumphs* (1621), 130.

[30] Malcolm Gaskill, "Reporting murder; fiction in the archives in early Modern England" *Social History* 23 (1998), 4.

[31] Joseph Hall makes a direct connection between deformity and reprobation, for example, in his *Occasional Meditation XLII*, "Upon the Sight of a Natural."

[32] Dennis Klinck, "Calvinism" (1978), 351, notes a similar tendency in comic characters of Jacobean plays to make specious appeals to predestination to rationalize their actions.

[33] Ottavia Niccoli, "'Menstruum Quasi Monstrum': Monstrous Births and Menstrual Taboo in the Sixteenth Century" in Edward

Muir and Guido Ruggiero eds. *Sex and Gender in Historical Perspective* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1990).

[34] See Lake, "Deeds against Nature: Cheap Print, Protestantism and Murder in Early Seventeenth-Century England" in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* eds. Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

[35] Reynolds, *The Triumph* (1621), 145-46.

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APPOSITIONS:

Studies in Renaissance / Early Modern Literature and Culture,

<http://appositions.blogspot.com/>, ISSN: 1946-1992,

Volume Seven (2014): *Genres & Cultures*

