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“A Frightful Pleasure, That is All”:
Wonder, Monstrosity, and *The
Changeling*

“I HAVE A WONDER FOR YOU,”¹ Vermandero and Alsemero tell each other in echoing anticipation of *The Changeling’s* final tragic event, overtly invoking the passion of wonder in an act of audience preparation. Such a warning both heightens and restrains the expectation of approaching wonder; it alerts the viewers to wonder’s delicious arrival and situates wonder as the governing and mediating passion that encompasses the “grief and fear” inspired by the spectacle of tragedy and transforms it into the ensuing “enjoyment” of the experience.² Wonder, in *The Changeling* (1622) is thus positioned as the ultimate emotional response to the play and thereby becomes a positive answer to A.D. Nuttall’s compelling question: “Why does tragedy give pleasure?” For the early modern subject, arousal by wonder itself provided pleasure; it provoked a variety of emotional responses that included but went beyond the traditional cathartic reactions of pity and fear. While similar to *katharsis*, *admiratio* did not simply purge the subject emotionally; rather, it inspired pursuit, both of the emotional experience of wonder, and (in Nuttall’s language) of “probable knowledge and intellectual assent” (104). As Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park observe in their detailed discussion of the history and science of wonder, this passion included “not simply a private emotional experience but rather, depending on context, a prelude to divine

¹ Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, *The Changeling*, ed. Joost Daalder, 2nd ed. (London: A&C Black, 1990) 5.3.121, 122.

² A.D. Nuttall, *Why Does Tragedy Give Pleasure?* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001) 1.

contemplation, a shaming admission of ignorance, a cowardly flight into fear of the unknown, or a plunge into energetic investigation.”³ Following the play’s evocation of wonder and guided by wonder’s role in inspiring both intellectual and emotional response, I will explore *The Changeling*’s generation of this passion in its audience with particular reference to the representations and creation of the monstrous within both the main and subplots of the play. The monster, itself a traditional source of wonder, is the framework that leads to the transformation of the protagonists, Beatrice-Joanna and her servant, De Flores, into the surprising monstrosity of the hermaphrodite that inspires the ultimate experience of wonder and the intimately connected pleasures of investigation.

Critical work on *The Changeling* has avoided any direct discussion of wonder’s role in the play. Instead, as Peter Morrison has observed, critics have focused on three main questions: the identity of the changeling, the relationship between the main plot and the madhouse subplot,⁴ and the make-up of the “moral vision” of the play, a broad category that includes the complex question of female representation.⁵ However, wonder is indirectly touched on by several critics who allude to the monstrous through their definitions of the changeling⁶ or through their attention to the physical degradation, the “penetration and conquest”⁷ of Beatrice-Joanna.⁸

³ *Wonders and the Order of Nature 1150–1750* (New York: Zone, 2001) 14.

⁴ Many critics take a formalist approach on this issue: see Christopher Ricks’s “The Moral and Poetic Structure of *The Changeling*,” *Essays in Criticism* 10 (1960): 290–306; Nicholas Brooke’s *Horrid Laughter in Jacobean Tragedy* (London: Open Books, 1979); and Raymond Pentzell’s “*The Changeling*: Notes on Mannerism in Dramatic Form,” *Comparative Drama* 9.1 (1975): 3–28.

⁵ “A Cangoun in Zombieland: Middleton’s Teratological *Changeling*,” “*Accompaning the Players*”: *Essays Celebrating Thomas Middleton, 1580–1980*, ed. Kenneth Friedenreich (New York: AMS, 1983) 220.

⁶ See especially Morrison, “A Cangoun in Zombieland” 219–41, and Dale Randall’s “Some Observations on the Theme of Chastity in *The Changeling*,” *ELR* 14.3 (1984): 347–66.

⁷ Michael Neill, “‘Hidden Malady’: Death, Discovery, and Indistinction in *The Changeling*,” *Renaissance Drama* 22 (1991): 97.

⁸ Along with Neill, several critics have been drawn to explore the ramifications of gender and bodily transformation in *The Changeling*. See Arthur Little, “‘Transshaped’ Women: Virginité and Hysteria in *The Changeling*,” *Madness in Drama*, ed. James Redmond (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993) 19–42; Lisa Hopkins, “Beguiling the Master of the Mystery: Form and Power in *The Changeling*,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 9 (1997): 149–61; Swapan Chakravorty,

In my historicized exploration of the wonder evoked by the play I reciprocally touch on these three concerns through a simple acknowledgement that "*The Changeling* is a monster story."⁹ Spreading from the subplot of the madhouse to the main plot in the castle, the monsters are the stage metaphors used to evoke the range of emotional responses categorized within the early modern experience of wonder, compelling and augmenting both emotional and intellectual pleasure in the play.

Wonder, without a doubt, was recognized as an important and independent early modern passion, identified by Descartes as "the first of all the passions."¹⁰ Wonder and its relationship to tragedy can be usefully traced back to Aristotle's *Poetics*, in which he ties the two together in his statement that "The marvellous is certainly required in Tragedy." Aristotle adds that the marvellous, interchangeable with the passion of wonder, is intensified during an experience of "the improbable," which is in its turn a "cause of pleasure."¹¹ As Aristotle connects wonder with pleasure, he also elaborates wonder's relationship to tragedy, noting that it is the marvellous that inspires the necessary emotions of pity and fear, since tragic events "have the very greatest effect on the mind when they occur unexpectedly and at the same time in consequence of one another." Positing the importance of surprise in creating a witness's wonder, he also outlines the equal importance of "an appearance of design" or "Plot" through which wonder's meaning might be found (1452a1–10). The artful plotting of the marvellous in a manner that both surprises and fulfils realized or unrealized expectations is thus an integral component of tragedy and its con-

Society and Politics in the Plays of Thomas Middleton (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996); Joseph Duffy, "Madhouse Optics: *The Changeling*," *Comparative Drama* 8.2 (1974): 184–98; Sara Eaton, "Beatrice-Joanna and the Rhetoric of Love in *The Changeling*," *Theatre Journal* 36.3 (1984): 371–82; Deborah Burks, "'I'll Want My Will Else': *The Changeling* and Women's Complicity with their Rapists," *Revenge Tragedy*, ed. Stevie Simkin (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001) 163–89; and Cristina Malcolmson, "As Tame as the Ladies': Politics and Gender in *The Changeling*," *Revenge Tragedy*, ed. Simkin 142–62.

⁹ Morrison, "A Cangoun in Zombieland" 225.

¹⁰ "The Passions of the Soul," *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, trans. Elizabeth Haldane and G.R.T. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1931) 1:358.

¹¹ *Poetics*, trans. Ingram Bywater, *Works* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1924) 11:1460a12–18.

joined pleasure. Although Aristotle, in the *Poetics*, does not directly address the intellectual enjoyment that can be derived from the marvellous, his call for “design” implies a framework within which learning from the marvel of tragedy might also take place. As he observes in the *Rhetoric*, wondering and learning are two halves of the same experience: “Learning things and wondering at things are also pleasant as a rule; wondering implies the desire of learning, so that the object of wonder is an object of desire; while in learning one is brought into one’s natural condition” (1371a30–3). The plotted wonder created through tragedy is therefore explicitly linked to knowledge, with pleasure derived from the generation of a richly combined emotional and intellectual response.

The particular relevance of wonder to early modern tragedy, though still ripe for further exploration, has been helpfully recognized by both J.V. Cunningham and T.G. Bishop.¹² As Bishop points out, “Wonder was sought after, deployed and cultivated all through the period” (37). Following Aristotle, Bishop develops the notion of wonder as an intermediary passion, associating the emotion with the stage and calling it a “characteristic and heightened experience of this ‘between’ quality of theatricality” (3). Intensified “acts of violence,” the primary instigators of pity and fear, fall most notably between the categories of the real and imagined, and thus naturally become the focus of wonder “as it is here that figures of our emotional trauma can be concentrated” (33). Early modern wonder was not without its dangers, however, and playwrights walked a precarious line between pleasure and pain as they embedded the wondrous into their works. As Descartes observed, the dangerous extreme of wonder was astonishment, which paralysed the body and mind and prevented any communication between the two (364). Although some individuals, led astray by the strength and seduction of this passion, pursued “things that are rare solely to wonder at them, and not for the purpose of really knowing them” (366), the dramatist’s manipulation of the rare and improbable was, in the Aristotelian framework, designed to connect the

¹² Cunningham’s *Woe or Wonder: The Emotional Effect of Shakespearian Tragedy* (Chicago: Swallow, 1964) lays considerable groundwork for a basic philosophical understanding of wonder in the early modern period; Bishop’s *Shakespeare and the Theatre of Wonder* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) substantially develops Cunningham’s beginnings, with a significantly more subtle approach.

pleasures of wonder and learning. Instead of stunning the audience into astonished stasis, the playwright manipulated audience emotions with an aim to transform inward admiration into its outward counterpart: the desire to know.

Early modern reflections on poetics tend to confirm Bishop's suggestion that the creation of wonder was part of the writer's craft. George Puttenham, in his text on English prosody, notes that as the poet reshapes the natural world, he (or she) heightens nature's effects so that they "appeare more beautifull or straunge and miraculous,"¹³ this strangeness suggesting the component that might inspire a pleasurable passion of wonder in the reader. Such a strategy is also observed by Sir Philip Sidney, who elaborates not only the measure of the writer's intention, but also restates the link between the creative plotting of wonder and its encouragement of learning. Sidney posits the artificiality of the written word as an important aspect of pleasure, with strangeness not only heightened but also formally controlled by words or representations: "those things which in themselves are horrible, as cruel battailes, unnatural monsters, are made in poetically imitation, delightfull."¹⁴ Like Nuttall, who suggests that part of the pleasure of tragedy lies in it being a "death-game" (77), an experience that provides a rehearsal, though not an actuality, of death for the comfortably removed audience member, Sidney similarly observes the distancing power of representation to transform horror into delight at artful creation. Yet part of that delight comes from wonder, which mediates such transformations, since the tragedy that "openeth the greatest woundes, and sheweth forth the Ulcers," by "sturring the affects of Admiration and Comiseration" also "teacheth the uncertaintie of this world."¹⁵ Once again, it is the passionate response to a horror, crafted to arouse admiration, not astonishment, that moves the witness towards learning; as Sidney himself wonders, "For who will be taught, if hee be not mooved with desire to be taught?" (39). Sidney's horror, delight, admiration, and the desire to be taught, a jumble of emotional and intellectual affects, come to be encompassed by wonder, that mover of "the extreme of joy or ... the

¹³ *The Arte of English Poesie* (Ohio: Kent State UP, 1970) 309.

¹⁴ *The Defence of Poesie, A Letter to Q. Elizabeth, A Defence of Leicester*, ed. G.E. Woodberry (Boston: Merrymount, 1908) 41.

¹⁵ Sidney, *Defence* 47.

extreme of fear.”¹⁶ Inspired by artful creation and evocation of horrors, wonder sends those who experience it in the direction of multiple “emotional tones or valences, including fear, reverence, pleasure, approbation, and bewilderment.”¹⁷ At the same time, the variety of emotion is collected within this “first of all passions” as each response similarly signals the body’s approach towards an edge of paralysing astonishment as the brain attempts to “fortify and conserve”¹⁸ the marvellous for future consideration.

Wonder, then, was experienced and expressed as both an inward and an outward emotion, one that moved the individual and then opened her to receiving or pursuing knowledge. Stephen Greenblatt, in his discussion of the wondrous within early modern exploration narratives, emphasizes the interiority of wonder, suggesting that it is experienced “not ‘out there’ or along the receptive surfaces of the body where the self encounters the world, but deep within, at the vital, emotional center of the witness.”¹⁹ The interiority of the emotion is perhaps more striking in the context of the uncontrolled space of the New World; however, in the crafted world of the theatre, wonder becomes a type of exchange—a role Greenblatt also acknowledges—with the witness both affected by and enacting the effects of wonder. Wonder’s intermediary location, as both the cause of and hinge between arousal and learning—the “line between the known and the unknown,”²⁰ or path between interior and exterior—is therefore the most relevant, as Bishop has suggested, to a discussion of tragedy, a form that explicitly allows for actor-audience exchange. It is in the midst of such an exchange that wonder can become both an emotional and “a cognitive passion, as much about knowing as about feeling.”²¹ What exactly might be learned through a theatrical presentation of the marvellous is not as important, it seems, as the inspiration of the movement that could inspire audience desire for learning. This

¹⁶ Cunningham, *Woe or Wonder* 21.

¹⁷ Daston and Park, *Wonders* 16.

¹⁸ Descartes, “Passions” 362.

¹⁹ *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991) 16.

²⁰ Daston and Park, *Wonders* 13.

²¹ Daston and Park, *Wonders* 14.

desire, spinning at times “threateningly out of control”²² into a passion of curiosity that led to the endless pursuit of new wonders, was nonetheless a pleasurable goal for both the audience and the artists of tragedy.

Middleton and Rowley’s careful plotting of wonder in *The Changeling* is discernible throughout. The passion extends from the familiar, yet still wondrous space of the asylum to enhance and anticipate the final goal: the cathartic presentation of a new hermaphroditic wonder in the play’s tragic climax. This tragedy in fact almost immediately establishes wonder’s intentional presence in the play, introducing it through Beatrice-Joanna’s opening speech to her suitor Alsemero, in which she states, “Our eyes ... are rash sometimes, and tell us wonders / Of common things” (1.1.71, 73–74). Although these words are designed to advise Beatrice-Joanna’s hopeful lover, they also simultaneously alert the audience to the craft involved in turning a common spectacle of a play into something illusory and wonderful. Like Alsemero and Vermandero’s imitative “I have a wonder for you,” these lines prepare the audience by arousing its anticipation of and its willingness to experience theatrical wonder. And Middleton and Rowley provide the marvellous, manipulating the monstrous to inspire the jumble of emotions that surround the passion of wonder. Their work recalls the multiplicity of emotional associations that Daston and Park suggest are aroused by the monster: from the late fifteenth-century belief that monsters were “signs of human sin and the righteous wrath of God” (175), to the sixteenth-century discovery of them as “sources of delight and pleasure,” a realization that would eventually turn them into “objects of scientific inquiry” (176). Of course, being wonders, monsters could inspire all of these associations simultaneously, raising “horror, pleasure, and repugnance” (176) even as they provoked in their viewers an overwhelming compulsion to know.

The word ‘changeling’ itself, as critics have observed, implies something that is not quite human, that falls in between. Morrison defines the changeling as “a member of a class of creatures who are aliens by virtue of their mutation, or mutants by

²² Barbara M. Benedict, *Curiosity: A Cultural History of Early Modern Inquiry* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2001) 25.

virtue of their alienation.”²³ Such a definition hints at the existence of a doubleness that, according to Benedict, “is monstrosity itself insofar as the monster is both human and inhuman, divine and carnal.”²⁴ The monstrous humans found within the madhouse are thus natural changelings as they straddle the gap between human and animal, sane and insane, and become the inspiration for the play’s creation of wonder. Yet even as the mad inspire a certain horror or wonder in their audience, Middleton and Rowley also expose their role as entertainers, cynically undercutting the wonder of their spectacle with reference to the profit-earning abilities of the asylum residents. Most importantly, perhaps, this exposure also situates the mad in a familiar role, as asylums were open for viewing by early modern thrill-seekers. The link between the asylum and entertainment has been explicitly made by Steven Mullaney, who states that “Bedlam Hospital was operated as a concession under its Tudor administration, a playhouse of Folly that served as much to showcase madness and oversee its performance as to confine or control it.”²⁵ Alibius, owner and doctor of *The Changeling’s* asylum, immediately draws audience attention to this situation, identifying “The daily visitants, that come to see / My brainsick patients” (1.2.52–53) as

... Gallants I do observe
Of quick enticing eyes, rich in habits,
Of stature and proportion very comely. (54–56)

Not only are these men potential cuckolders, threatening Alibius’s relationship with his young wife, Isabella, but they also appear to have the means actively to pursue the wonderful and unleash their untamed curiosity on the world. Even as these playwrights produce wonders, then, they also offer a comical and cogent critique of those who pursue such wonders indiscriminately. Such a self-

²³ “A Cangoun in Zombieland” 235.

²⁴ *Curiosity* 34.

²⁵ *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1988) 71. In contrast, Ken Jackson’s “Bedlam, *The Changeling*, *The Pilgrim*, and the Protestant Critique of Catholic Good Works,” *Philological Quarterly* 74.4 (1995): 373–93, suggests that much of the source material supporting such an impression is derived primarily from dramatic representations of the asylum.

conscious creation of the asylum and its audience turns the wonderful into the delightful and risible through the intellectual distance provided by its crafty analysis.

The entertainment-value of the mad is an idea revisited later on in the play, as Alibius's charges are requested to perform for Beatrice-Joanna's wedding. Initially asked to provide "a frightful pleasure, that is all" (3.3.262), a line that efficiently reveals the extremes of pleasure and horror within an evocation of wonder, Alibius hopes to do a bit more:

Could we so act it
To teach it in a wild, distracted measure,
Though out of form and figure, breaking time's head,
...
This, this Lollio, there's a good reward begun,
And will beget a bounty, be it known. (3.3.263–65, 268–69)

Initially establishing the profit to be made from the simple exhibition of the mad, now Alibius recognizes the "bounty" that might be made if the madmen become active entertainers, even more marvellous as they dance outside "form and figure" and offer the audience an appropriate artistic representation of their own monstrous humanity. This shift from the known to the innovative also strategically begins to transform familiar wonders into those surprising and marvellous. For although such a discussion of the active exploitation of the mad might arouse a thoughtful and even critical response, it might also arouse audience desire and anticipation for such a spectacle. The "appearance of design," the plot that develops the extremes of monstrous entertainment heightens audience expectations for fulfilment through a release of the mounting and jumbled emotions of wonder. While the madmen never perform for Beatrice-Joanna's wedding, they are permitted, at the end of 4.3, a simultaneously more specific and more general performance, dancing for Alibius in a demonstration of their profitable skill and at the same time providing the theatrical audience with a small release through exposing the wonder of their misshapen dance. But by pre-empting the madmen's wedding appearance, the play's authors are able to provide a much greater and more wonderful catharsis. Scheduled, as Alibius states, "Tomorrow night, as if to close up the solemnity" (4.3.54), the formless and horrible dance is

replaced by the unexpected, and thus more surprising, horrifying, and wonderful, joint performance of Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores, who adopt the madmen's monstrosity, offering instead their own deformed and hermaphroditic doubleness in a dance of death.

It seems, then, that the madmen provide a basis for the play's increasing defamiliarization of the monster. The final wonder of the hermaphrodite is anticipated by the madmen's horrible, yet known, otherness, as they play out their "wild fancies" (3.3.199) by imitating "the beasts and birds, / Singing or howling, braying, barking" (197–98), and toss enigmatic lines—"Bounce, bounce! He falls, he falls!" (3.3.110)—onto the stage from "*within*." The disturbing collision of male and female that culminates in 5.3 is alluded to not only by the familiar madmen, but also by repeated references to hermaphroditism throughout both the main and subplots. The hermaphrodite itself was acknowledged as a monstrous marvel, being part of early modern exploration and medical or anatomical narratives, and easily inspiring the various sensations of horror, pleasure, and repugnance. Thomas Browne's discussion of the hermaphroditic hare is almost an excuse for a consideration of human hermaphrodites, and this is one marvel that he rationally accepts, concluding that "as we much acknowledge this Androgynall condition in man, so can we not deny the like doth happen in beasts."²⁶ Like the wonderful, the hermaphrodite falls in between, is a passage-way, both to the marvellous and between genders. Its double body, "transshap[ed]" (4.3.21) from one sex into both, is disturbingly unfamiliar precisely because of its resemblance to the 'normal' human body. Unlike the mad, it walks unseen in society; it is simultaneously like but unlike its audience.²⁷

The creation of the hermaphrodite is a carefully crafted procedure that, though underpinned and initiated by the mad, has its own parallel trajectory that is introduced in the main plot, appropriately enough, by De Flores, who shares with the madmen an

²⁶ *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, ed. Robin Robbins (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981) 1: 229.

²⁷ Ben Jonson included the marginal figure of the hermaphrodite in his character of the fool Androgyno in his play *Volpone*, first published as a quarto in 1607. Although a comic figure, Androgyno similarly reflects the bestial doubleness of the play's main characters (Volpone, Voltore, Corbaccio, Corvino), even suggesting his/her own passage from beast to hermaphrodite in 1.2.38–50 (ed. R.B. Parker [Manchester: Manchester UP, 1983]).

ability to inspire horror and revulsion in others. As he admits in a moment of self-awareness, "I must confess my face is bad enough" (2.1.37). But De Flores is not only afflicted with a physical deformity. Like the invisible hermaphrodite, he also suffers a secret duality, falling in between class lines and thus never recognized for the man he feels he truly is. Even as he acknowledges his ugliness he blames its "hard fate" for turning him "out to servitude" despite his birth as "a gentleman" (2.1.48–49). He is not only naturally ugly, but his affliction, like insanity, has acted to change his lot in life, confining him not to an asylum but to a class below his birth. His role as servant neatly obscures his status as a gentleman, as the two cohabit uncomfortably in his one body.

Since De Flores has the ability to recognize his own ugliness, it is fitting that he is able to determine a similar misshapeness, or duality, in others. He is particularly concerned with the mutation of Beatrice-Joanna and eagerly follows the process of her betrayal of Alonzo, her betrothed, eavesdropping on her private meeting with her suitor Alsemero. As his own degradation emerges from a physical cause, it is not surprising that he interprets his mistress's immoral actions in physical terms:

I'm sure both
 Cannot be served unless she transgress. Happily
 Then I'll put in for one; for if a woman
 Fly from one point, from him she makes a husband,
 She spreads and mounts then, like arithmetic. (2.2.58–62)

De Flores's sexual innuendo is scarcely obscure, but as he transforms Beatrice-Joanna from virgin to whore, he also linguistically transfigures her from woman to bird, anticipating the transformation of the mad into the birds and beasts as they "act their fantasies" (3.3.194) in an inhuman revelry. De Flores, of course, visualizes Beatrice-Joanna's actions in pursuit of his own fancies, imposing on her a double shape, first of a bird and then of a woman whose flight is a sexual voraciousness, recalling the mythological harpy. As Sara Eaton suggests, Beatrice-Joanna is positioned as "a mirror reflecting male desires ... a vehicle for their pleasures."²⁸

²⁸ "Beatrice-Joanna and the Rhetoric of Love" 378.

She becomes a slate on which De Flores is able to write his own fantasies, her attempt to control her life overcome by the story that De Flores tells. Yet it is notable that this fantasy is gradually familiarized both by the later enactment of the bird-human combination by the mad and through his immediate and commonly understood sexual innuendo. The bird here is an imagined projection rather than an outward expression of a more monstrous hidden interiority.

The outward expression of a hidden interior comes to the fore, however, when Beatrice-Joanna exclaims to De Flores in a fit of frustration over her lack of power to control her own fate: "Would creation— ... Had formed me man" (2.2.107–08). As she expresses her hermaphroditic desire, longing to be one despite her knowledge that she will remain the other, she opens herself to being actively transshaped by her servant's desires. In her own desire for the active potential implied by masculinity, she appeals to the man she believes might provide her with the means to achieve her goal, in this case, the murder of Alonzo, her unwanted husband-to-be. De Flores takes up her exclamation, and offers himself as the solution to the gap Beatrice-Joanna perceives in herself:

O blest occasion!—

Without change to your sex you have your wishes.

Claim so much man in me. (2.2.113–15)

De Flores, of course, simply offers his services to her; yet his actions become the means through which Beatrice can become both man and woman as she uses him to create the change that she cannot. Ironically, their match implicitly fulfils the tenets of early modern marriage; the transformation of two individuals into one flesh is an act that has been explicitly described by Alsemero in the first lines of the play:

The church hath first begun our interview,

And that's the place must join us into one;

So there's the beginning, and perfection too. (1.1.10–12)

As with Beatrice-Joanna's initial allusion to wonder, Alsemero's comment establishes the route that potentially turns the common into the marvellous. For the hermaphroditic union of De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna that provides the surprise and wonder needed

to inspire tragic pleasure is simply a grotesquely literalized interpretation of marriage: a conjoined twin, a body with two sexes—in this case a monstrous perfection formed out of violence.

After De Flores successfully carries out his mission and dispatches Alonzo within the bowels of the castle, he becomes more relentless in his linguistic reshaping of Beatrice-Joanna. Her insistence that De Flores must “take . . . flight” from the castle becomes an ironic echo of De Flores’s image of Beatrice’s sexual flight, underscored by the servant’s reply, “You must fly too then” (3.4.81). As De Flores matches and transshapes her words, he also indicates Beatrice-Joanna’s matching guilt that will serve to transshape the two of them into one, uniting them in their own particular marriage:

Nor is it fit we two, engaged so jointly,
Should part and live asunder. (3.4.88–89)

De Flores now not only transforms his mistress into the bird of his fantasies, but in her presence he also changes her from a separate individual into an integral part of his body. Fitting like joints, he suggests, because he has become the man she wishes to be, thereby “jointly” responsible for the death of Alonzo, De Flores emphasizes that their relationship now constitutes a larger whole, with each fulfilling what the other cannot, his use of “asunder” suggesting the violence involved in a mutual parting, or divorce. De Flores pushes this point home a few lines later as his mistress attempts to hold on to the “distance that creation / Set ’twixt thy blood and mine” (3.4.130–31), a comment that is itself thrown into question by De Flores’s earlier observation of his gentlemanly birth. De Flores, in reply, appeals to a deeper truth, telling Beatrice-Joanna to

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; y'are no more now.
You must forget your parentage to me:
Y'are the deed's creature; by that name you lost
Your first condition; and I challenge you
As peace and innocency has turned you out
And made you one with me. (3.4.132–40)

In his speech, De Flores deconstructs Beatrice-Joanna's identity, remaking and rebirthing her by appealing not to her outward show of nobility but to her inward guilt and ugliness, an ugliness that unites their two bodies into one hermaphroditic, monstrous shape. As De Flores reflects Beatrice-Joanna's wish for masculinity by making her into his female half, he also exposes her to the wonder of the audience, defamiliarizing her by turning her inside out in a move that imitates the anatomist's interest in the hidden secrets of women. As he undoes her, telling her "y'are no more now," De Flores repositions himself at the centre of Beatrice-Joanna's consciousness; he is not only her equal, but can also read and be read within Beatrice-Joanna's inner self. Any self-identity Beatrice-Joanna might have had is replaced by his paternal care that heavy-handedly names her his "creature." As Arthur Little suggests, her body is transshaped as it "comes into its patriarchal identity through its being broken, made mad, silenced";²⁹ but even as she is possessed by De Flores, she also, in an act anticipated by the familiar monstrosities of the madhouse, becomes physically part of him. Divorced from "peace and innocence" she seemingly has no choice but to join her maker and become a monstrous changeling, transforming from a virgin into a whore. But in De Flores's forceful sexual consummation of his vision, Beatrice is not isolated in her monstrosity but becomes one with his, this act anticipating the final wonder of their joint transshaping and self-destruction.

While De Flores undoes and reshapes Beatrice-Joanna, the subplot emphatically elaborates the image of the hermaphrodite through the character of Franciscus, a gallant hiding under the cloak of madness, who insists to Alibius's wife Isabella that he is the classical man/woman Tiresias: "I was a man / Seven years ago— ... Now I'm a woman, all feminine" (3.3.69–70, 72). Like Beatrice-Joanna, who desires the opposite transformation, Franciscus imagines himself what he is clearly not. The male body that claims itself as feminine layers one sex atop the other, crossing genders within a single body. He too lies in between, but in this comparative moment the wonder of the hermaphrodite is mocked and contained as his keeper, Lollo, threatens to whip him and forces him to retreat "To your own kennel!" (3.3.92). Lollo's control over this

²⁹ "Transhaped Women" 29.

monster, who after all is only playing at madness, thus provides a contrast with the more frightening and uncontrollable monster being formed inside the walls of the castle. More dangerous and horrible because of their hidden transformation, Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores fall outside the boundaries of play and into the real, becoming what they speak with alarming results.

Similar to Franciscus, Isabella also effects her own transformation, even changing her physical appearance by entering Lollo's masculine wardrobe to recostume herself in the garb of the mad. This transshaping, anticipated by the verbal arabesques of the asylum-dwellers, is convincing enough that she joins Franciscus in that wondrous place of the in-between. Like Tiresias, Isabella loses the shape she once had and attains a new form that obscures the old, leading Antonio, who previously has been longing after her beauty, to rename her as a madwoman:

I'll kick thee again if thou touch me,
Thou wild unshapen antic; I am no fool,
You bedlam! (4.3.125–27)

But Isabella, unlike Beatrice, can remove her "habit of a frantic" (128) to reveal the familiar shape that lies underneath. However, she also suggests that her beauty is as made-up as her ugliness, telling Antonio, "No, I have no beauty now, / Nor never had, but what was in my garments" (132–33). Oddly enough, in this play of shape-shifting monstrosities, Isabella implies that she remains inwardly stable, but this can be seen as a fitting contribution to the anticipated transshaping of Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores. For the horror that they offer is the inner monstrosity anatomized and exposed to their witnesses.

Isabella's discussion of disguise, in fact, is doubly applicable to the main plot. Her use of Lollo's wardrobe for her transformation finds its mirror in Beatrice-Joanna's incursion into Alsemero's physician's cabinet. Alsemero's cabinet, as Dale Randall observes, is the same chamber in which "Alsemero in the final scene confines his bride with her lover,"³⁰ becoming the alchemical mixing-pot needed to turn two individuals into one hermaphroditic mon-

³⁰ "Theme of Chastity" 354.

ster. Fittingly for this purpose, the early modern physician's cabinet was believed to hold a variety of wonders. Not quite equivalent to the wonder-cabinet that displayed eclectic collections of unusual items from around the world, these closets were more focused in their interests, "full of rare and exotic objects with unknown therapeutic potential" as well as "anatomical and pathological rarities."³¹ In other words, these cabinets provided marvels, but these marvels were collected to provide the wisdom inspired by the wonder-inducing objects inside them. Alsemero's cabinet provides a model for the movement from wonder to learning, producing both the marvellous and inspiring the curiosity needed to achieve knowledge. The cabinet's discoverer, Beatrice-Joanna, initially wonders at its contents, exclaiming:

Bless me! A right physician's closet 'tis,
Set round with vials, every one her mark too.
Sure he does practise physic for his own use,
Which may be safely called your great man's wisdom.
What manuscript lies here? 'The Book of Experiment,
Called *Secrets in Nature*'; so 'tis, 'tis so
'How to know whether a woman be with child or no.'
(4.1.20–26)

Beatrice-Joanna's words clearly demonstrate her progression from initial wonder to active curiosity. Alsemero's potions, designed to "offer him full access to the hidden secrets of women's bodies,"³² to unlock the corresponding marvel of the female cabinet, actually provide Beatrice with important knowledge. She trumps Alsemero's pursuit of wisdom by accessing his closet first and demystifying the potions that test women for virginity and pregnancy. She moves beyond simple observation and, in an act of investigation, tests the secrets out, appropriately enough, on Diaphanta, the maid whom Alsemero identifies earlier as one of the "ladies' cabinets" (2.2.6), and whom Alsemero unwittingly sexually explores and enthusiastically tests out in 5.1. In fact, it is Beatrice-Joanna's exploration of Alsemero's marvels that pushes her to allow him equal access to the holder of her secrets. Diaphanta, on the other hand, following

³¹ Daston and Park, *Wonders* 154–55.

³² Hopkins, "Beguiling the Master" 149.

her mistress's discoveries, becomes the woman who unlocks Beatrice-Joanna's secret, confirming to Alsemero's friend Jasperino that he did indeed overhear Beatrice and De Flores in the adjoining room: "Diaphanta / At her return confirmed it" (4.2.99–100).

The cabinet, as the audience sees, is a place of therapeutic marvels, wanting only "anatomical and pathological rarities" to make it complete. Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores, commanded by the master of the cabinet, Alsemero, succeed in completing his collection of wonders in the final scene of the play. Before Alsemero allows his cabinet to perform its transformative act on the misshapen couple, however, he, like De Flores, verbally transforms Beatrice-Joanna into a monster through his accusation "You are a whore" (5.3.31). As Beatrice internalizes his statement she also construes it as physically deforming:

It blasts a beauty to deformity;
Upon what face soever that breath falls,
It strikes it ugly. (32–34)

Beatrice-Joanna, named as whore, now equates herself visually with De Flores and is turned, not simply ugly, but misshapen. Their joint disfigurement is reiterated by Alsemero who cries, "O, thou art all deformed!" (77), a few lines before he turns his wife into his prisoner and forces her to enter his closet. Beatrice-Joanna, unseen and captive, is left to call like the madmen from "*within*," only her "sounds"—themselves equated with the marvellous "crying crocodile" (112)—left to represent her. As Alsemero sends De Flores into the closet to join Beatrice-Joanna he invokes more marvels, anticipating their "scene of lust" (115) enacted before an audience in hell, "Where howls and gnashings shall be music to you" (117). This hell has hovered throughout the play in the disguised shapes of madmen and the uncontrolled "Singing or howling" (3.3.198) they emit during their mad dance. But the mad have been replaced by a new monstrosity in the shape of De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna, who come together inside the physician's cabinet, their "horrid sounds" (5.3.141) of misshapen and inverted creation "erupting like the madmen's howls."³³ They emerge as the wondrously conjoined "twins of mischief" (5.3.142), an appellation

³³ Neill, "Hidden Malady" 116.

that explicitly evokes the marvels of duality, with Beatrice caught in the entwining arms of De Flores, their bodies contorted in mirroring extremes of ecstasy and pain.

The carefully plotted emergence of the hermaphroditic monster that is Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores fulfils the unwitting anticipation of characters and audience, as Alsemero and Beatrice's father, Vermandero, promise each other "a wonder" (5.3.121, 122) in a tension-building exchange of riddles. This wonder, more horrible than expected, is only exposed when the two tumble from the cabinet, Beatrice-Joanna bearing the physical marks, the wounds, of her transformation at the hands of De Flores. This time, instead of verbally anatomizing her, De Flores heightens his violence by physically opening up her body in an attempt to expose her internal disarray. The pair, it seems, are a stunning sight; as Vermandero puts it,

An host of enemies ent'red my citadel
 Could not amaze like this. Joanna! Beatrice! Joanna! (147–48)

Inspiring not only wonder, but the more dangerous passion of amazement, the doubled monstrosity of his daughter and De Flores stuns Vermandero into an unending focus on the image of their hermaphroditic being. As he watches in his stupefied state, the final death throes of the monster take place as Beatrice admits her internal deformity, her now bleeding veins revealing that "I am that of your blood was taken from you / For your better health" (150–51). As Beatrice bleeds, De Flores completes the madman's anticipatory line—"Catch there, catch the last couple in hell!" (3.3.166)—with his acknowledgement, "Yes; and the while I coupled with your mate / At barley-break. Now we are left in hell" (5.3.162–63), bringing the madhouse into the castle in a final cathartic performance. In this madhouse chamber De Flores confesses to having "drunk up all" (170) of Beatrice, physically consuming her and engulfing her body with his, thus visually transshaping them into the hermaphrodite. It is only a small step to end both of their lives—"but one thread more" (174)—as De Flores stabs himself with his penknife, severing his own life and finishing that of Beatrice-Joanna who dies a moment later, her body, like that of the conjoined twin, no longer able to survive without the other. In this act, as Swapan Chakravorty notes, "De Flores kills

himself to consummate the union with the body he has devoured,"³⁴ ensuring the eternal marriage of these two deformed creatures.

In the final lines of this scene, the characters enact the varying types and stages of the passion of wonder. Vermandero remains in a state of shock and grief, a state beyond wonder that prevents him from expressing anything other than platitudes of amazement. Tomazo and Alsemero, on the other hand, exhibit the awe inspired by the prodigy, referring to divine retribution—"there are wraths / ... about 'em" (194–95)—and ominous planetary signs of fate—"What an opacous body had that moon" (196). Yet even as awe and astonishment are publicly displayed, the characters gradually begin to admit a number of strangely banal personal "changes." Fitting to his role as cabinet-master and scientist-explorer of women's bodies, it is Alsemero who diverts the conversation away from the more superstitious exclamations of wonder and towards rational explanation. He attempts to reinstate "patriarchal normality"³⁵ by erasing the disturbing image of the hermaphroditic pairing that so alarmingly revealed the negatively transformative power of uncontrolled passions. But Alsemero's attempt to wrest attention away from the adulterously entwined De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna is only marginally successful, if at all. The bodies remain onstage until the bitter end, a visual distraction that appears to trap the silent Vermandero, still locked in a rictus of astonishment. Here, in this clash between the "inexplicable" and the seemingly "rational inspection"³⁶ instigated by Alsemero, wonder attains its height as intermediary between the two poles of arousal and learning. Although the characters sidestep the implications of the event they have just witnessed, their "changes" provide a layer of emotional response that suggests the learning to be derived from the horrifying "uncertainty"³⁷ which lingers indelibly on stage.

In this artfully designed tragedy that defamiliarizes the monster and carefully produces the passion of wonder in its audience, wonder plays a significant, perhaps primary role in creating the experience of tragic pleasure. The "pleasure of arousal" (104) identified but undefined by Nuttall can be understood as a specific

³⁴ *Society and Politics* 161.

³⁵ Little, "Transshaped Women" 36.

³⁶ Bishop, *Theatre of Wonder* 18.

³⁷ Sidney, *Defence* 47.

pleasure in the marvellous, a pleasure in the passion of wonder. While Cynthia Marshall suggests that “losing oneself through imaginative involvement with literature or drama is typically experienced as highly pleasurable,”³⁸ it is the intensity of the passion of wonder that might encourage such pleasurable self-loss even as the emotion itself provides pleasure. Mediating fear and delight, the known and the unknown, wonder’s ultimate goal is the act of learning that completes and expands the passion to include responsible knowledge and the pleasures of analysis and investigation. The hermaphroditic monster of Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores, then, is not simply a trick to astonish or amaze or repulse, but is instead a culmination of wonders that have delighted and dismayed and formed a bridge between interior feeling and exterior expression, the simple pleasure of involvement and the more complex pleasures of learning.

³⁸ *The Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2002) 50.