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IRREGULAR BODIES:
PERFORMING DISABILITY ON THE EARLY MODERN STAGE

By

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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“Irregular” bodies—described as deformed, foul, ugly, maimed, crooked, limping, sick, and infected—appear everywhere in the English drama of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. My dissertation asks: what accounts for the theater’s fascination with these bodies, and what, exactly, can “disability” mean on the early modern stage? I read plays by Shakespeare, Dekker, Heywood, Rowley, Jonson, and Middleton (among others), alongside medical manuals, conduct books, and legal codes, to explore how dramatic representations expose the vexed and shifting standards that dictate bodily norms in the period. Drawing upon contemporary work in disability theory, I show how these standards at once constrain and depend upon irregular bodies. I argue that irregular bodies make possible a range of early modern social formations—not only medical knowledge or aesthetic standards of beauty, but also concepts of political power, citizenship, social status, and economic exchange. Theorizing disability through social structures allows us to see how theatrical representations of irregular bodies cut across distinctions—between art and nature, form and matter, public and private—foundational to early modern thought. Bringing disability to the stage, early modern drama highlights

the impossible ideals of social order that depend upon excluding irregular bodies and the vibrant re-orderings these bodies elicit.

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DEDICATION

For Emily

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Introduction

“When I say ‘disability’ I mean
all the brilliant ways we get through
the planned fractures of the world.”
--Laura Hershey, “Translating the Crip”¹

Bodies described as “crippled,” “lame,” “blind,” “deformed,” “foul,” “maim’d” “ugly,” “infirm,” “sick,” “crazed,” “monstrous,” “misshapen,” and “crookbacked” crowd the commercial stages in sixteenth and seventeenth-century England. They “swound” with the “falling sickness” (Julius Caesar) and acquire “large cicatrices” of “wounds” and “gashes” (Coriolanus), putting the body’s vulnerability on spectacular display. Nor is the fascination with the damaging bodily exigencies limited to Shakespeare’s plays or to a particular genre. The accumulation of bleeding spectacles in Jacobean revenge tragedies; the excessive, sweating, and pockmarked bodies of city comedy; and the transformed, reanimated bodies that populate romances all rely on dramatizing bodies marked by anomalous features.

Scholars of early modern literature have primarily understood these bodies—which I will term irregular—according to the idea that in the period, physical deformity signifies a natural inclination to moral transgression. William Shakespeare’s Richard III seems like the best example of this correlation because his body, with the hump, the limp, and the withered arm, becomes either the sign of—or the motivation for—his ruthless, politically motivated acts of evil in the play. This reading of the deformed body as an ominous prediction has become so commonplace within critical discourse that it seems to go without saying: when a critic asserts that bodies that are “physically deformed, which

for early moderns of course translated as moral deficiency, and often evil,” the “of course” signals that this idea proceeds as if relying on ubiquitous scholarly consensus.² The recent identification of the skeleton of the “real” Richard III brought these assumptions about early modern bodies into focus. Pointing out that Richard’s spine is “weirdly curved in a ghastly S,” Stephen Greenblatt asserts: “that skeleton in turn seems to confirm Shakespeare’s intuition that there is a relationship between the shape of a spine and the shape of a life.”³ But what, exactly, is the “relationship” between “ghastly” bodily shape and the murderous actions—dramatized as thrilling theatrical evil—that we are supposed to understand? This reading of the physically aberrant body not only forecloses on the range of irregular bodies that appear on the stage; it also assumes that the shapes and scars of these bodies are legible and easily codified.

From another perspective, the discussion of Richard III’s body has focused on the recognition of this body within a contemporary framework: Richard had scoliosis. This medical diagnosis, recognized with a tone of relief, as if we now understand what was really wrong with Richard, works to assert distance from (and often implicit critique of) an earlier moment, which had a limited way for interpreting bodily contingency. To notice this impulse to frame this body in our terms—asking: what, exactly, does scoliosis *solve* for our understanding of Richard?—in order to privilege contemporary medical interpretations rather than early modern moral interpretations, is to begin to think about how this reading obscures the historical complexity of the present, as if a medical diagnosis arrives free of its own set of interpretive assumptions. Work on disability has helped us to see how different social and cultural environments are organized for “normal” bodies. These studies critique the “medical model” of disability, the assumption

that disability is a personal misfortune to be corrected and cured. In response, disability theorists proposed a “social model” of disability, which understands the impaired body as operating within disabling environments. In the social model, disability happens in the interaction between an impaired body and a world that is not built to accommodate this body, a world that makes assumptions about what this body can or cannot do. Understood in this way, a wheelchair user is not actually disabled, for example, until she tries to enter a building without a ramp. Thus disability, Nancy Hirschmann observes, “is a social construction in the most obvious sense: Because of the ways that social relations, the built environment, laws, customs, and other practices are structured and organized, certain bodies are disabled, and other bodies are facilitated.”⁴ The emphasis upon the structural barriers that disable certain bodies has motivated the disability rights movement, which takes disability as a reclaimed identity upon which to build a coalition—from the rallying cry, “Nothing about us without us!” to ADAPT’s focus on public transportation to the 1990 protest to support the Americans with Disabilities Act, when activists left their wheelchairs and crawled up the steps of the U.S Capitol building—to accomplish political aims.⁵

The emerging academic field of disability studies follows from the disability rights movement in arguing that not only does access to public structures determine the presence of disabled bodies in public spaces, but also that the presence of disabled bodies, in turn, shapes representation. At the core of this claim is the idea that the representation of disabled bodies is fundamentally incoherent. In her study of the American legal codes termed the “ugly laws,” which explicitly prohibited “diseased,” “maimed,” “mutilated,” “unsightly,” “disgusting,” and “improper” persons from

appearing in public throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Susan Schweik points out that discursive aesthetic judgments about bodies reveal a “startling indeterminacy of scope”: the law that prevents disabled bodies from public visibility “cannot find one term to settle the question of its own object” when the codes try to determine the limits of acceptable embodiment.⁶ Disability criticism based on the social model thus takes aim at both physical barriers and cultural narratives that disable nonstandard bodies, in order to counter the belief, as Tobin Siebers puts it, “that having an able body and mind determines whether one is a quality human being.”⁷

The critique the social model performs is grounded in a robust concept of disability as an identity category, one that depends upon reclaiming the voice and experience of people with disabilities in contradistinction to the negative representations that have scrutinized and objectified disabled bodies.⁸ Even so, this account of disabled identity depends upon an historical narrative; for if the question of disability is a “what?” it is also a “when?” Disability critics have drawn on the emergence of what Michel Foucault defines as “a discourse about a natural rule, or in other words a norm”⁹ to argue that the category of “disability” begins coterminously with a specific set of discourses of cure that begin in the late eighteenth century. The “normal” body becomes the standard applied to diverse bodies, with the possibility of curing, surgically altering, or eliminating bodily “defects.” The corollary to this modern sense of the normal body is the emergence of disabled identity through a record of personal experience. The critical emphasis on identity as refracted through the first-hand account of a disabled person—rather than the interpretations imposed upon a disabled body from the outside—means that scholars find disabled identity in later texts, such as William Hay’s 1754 work, “Deformity: An

Essay,” which begins with his own experience as a person whose particular body has been socially stigmatized, and then seeks to imagine a broader community of people with “crookback’d” features, united by the alienating effects of their bodily difference.¹⁰

Given this historical trajectory, Richard III’s placeholder status as the paradigmatic example with which to understand early modern disability—or the lack of “real” disability despite his astonishing deformity—becomes clearer. For disability critics, Richard has a body that might today be called disabled; yet in this earlier period, as this argument goes, disability could only be read through the assumptions about moral evil prevalent in an earlier moment. Pre-“disability” (as we know it today), Shakespeare’s Richard III bursts onto the scene to instantiate the “disabled revenger” trope that still proves influential. The claim, as it often appears in disability studies, is that Shakespeare’s play exaggerates the features of a particular historical figure in order to imagine how the theater might embody and psychologize evil.

While Richard III has been the primary example, critics have divided pre-modern bodily anomalies more broadly into one of two categories: either deformity or monstrosity. This distinction persists over the past decade across literary, historical, and philosophical accounts of disability: while Lennard Davis identifies them as “regnant paradigms,” David Turner likewise claims that in early modernity, “the concept of disability was subsumed under other categories, notably deformity and monstrosity.”¹¹ The monstrous body (witness Richard III) provokes wonder, horror, and awed revulsion. Yet the implication of the binary for the other side is that, as Davis suggests, “unless the deformity is wondrous, it is ignored or erased.”¹² In opposition to monstrosity, that is, critics have taken examples of deformity—a missing finger, a limp, a pockmarked face—

simply as everyday impairment in a pre-modern society. Anita Silvers explains, “perhaps because they were so much more common, expected and accepted then than they are today, illnesses, injuries, and syndromes (and their sequelae) that now place people in the disability group used not to render individuals socially unfit or invisible, that is, excluded on the basis of their biological anomalies.”¹³ From this perspective, unless the irregular body is marvelous, there is no “real” disability, because the early modern period is a moment without the standard for the “normal” body that emerges in modernity.

Recently, critics have begun to complicate this picture of the pre-modern body, encouraging us, as Julie Singer puts it, to “consider not only that disability is constructed by bodily difference and social perception, but also that *disability itself*—whatever that is!—(re)constitutes and (re)configures other, contiguous social categories.”¹⁴ Although the destabilizing interjection underscores a new willingness to rethink the concept of disability in relation to the pre-modern body, critical work suggests the difficulty of mapping disabled identity backward, since sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts offer no sustained engagement with somatic difference from a first-person perspective. The problems remain: if we are not to understand disability in terms of a coherent identity category, how else might we understand this period? What does the story I have been telling, about the emergence of disability from the convergence of physical deformity and moral depravity, look like if we de-center Richard III from this account? If not through the codifying binary of monstrosity and deformity, how might we make sense of the irregular bodies that fascinate the early modern stage? What might it look like to produce an historically rigorous, theoretically imaginative engagement with disability in the early modern period?

**

When the word “disability” is used in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English texts, the term registers a sense of bodily diminishment and of impaired function, often the inability to work. Disability in this sense (to which we will return in chapter two) is evident in the language of Elizabeth’s 1592 Act, which ensures that soldiers who “ventured their lives and lost their limbs, or disabled their bodies in the defence of Her Majesty and the State, should at their return be relieved and rewarded”¹⁵ or the bodily inability echoed in the line from Shakespeare’s sonnet, when “strength by limping sway disabled”¹⁶ appears as one of a catalogue of losses. Yet the rhetorical valence of the term already suggests varying valuation. George Puttenham’s confidently magisterial work on rhetoric, *The Arte of English Poesie*, calls the figure of *meosis* the “Disabler,” or, the “figure of Extenuation” that operates to minimize or rhetorically reduce an opponent by recasting audience perception. The example he gives is when a captain expresses “contempt” for an enemy, “disabling him scornfully” to give courage to his soldiers and “make light of euery thing that might be a discouragement to the attempt.”¹⁷ Each of these examples of usage involves a body that does not measure up and the rhetorical act of description that highlights this body’s inability. Michael Bérubé suggests that “disability” in the early modern period is “closely associated with impairment and incapacity,” used in the context of law and contract, rather than the new meaning the term has accrued, since the 1960s, as an identity.¹⁸ Yet these earlier texts ask us to think about the gap between somatic experience and social significance. Already within the period, I am suggesting, “disability” is a slippery word because the term registers not only an

impaired body, but also the mobile social perceptions that frame this body's lack of function.

In the texts to which I will turn, I draw upon the core insight of the social model: the idea that the source of disability is not within the body itself, but within the structures that constrain this body. Reserving "disability" to describe this interaction, I trace the distinction between the irregular body and the environment or perceptions that disable the body in order to question the presumption that bodily irregularities are inevitably disabling. Instead, I argue, disability emerges in the dramatic fiction as limitations that do not necessarily follow from the physical impairment of the body. Rather than the static interpretation in which the irregular body signifies physical and moral defect, I show how disability is not necessarily legible in the ways we might expect. Nor can the codification of unremarkable deformity, monstrosity's opposite, account for the immense range of examples in which the irregular body, deformed but not monstrous, becomes key to pressing concerns of the early modern period. Ultimately, I suggest, theorizing early modern disability demands that we ask, not *who* counts as a disabled person, but *how* disabled bodies cast social formations into sharp relief.

Asking this question, my project highlights how irregular bodies are indispensable to early modern concepts, not only of health and beauty (which we might expect) but also of political power and citizenship, of labor and status, and of commerce and desire. I describe these bodies as "irregular," defined in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts as that which is "without rule."¹⁹ Edward Phillips expounds on this definition with an example that proliferates into addition: his *New World of English Words* defines "irregularity" as "disorderlinesse, as it were a being without rule."²⁰ The notion of rule in

the period is at once formal, ethical, political, and medical, varying from the rule of the monarch; the rule of reason to order the passions; the ruled symmetry of a pleasing shape; and the “regiment” so central to discourses of physic. These brief contexts suggest the range of, in Henri-Jacques Stiker’s formulation, “the conditions and figurations in which we receive what is born and what appears,”²¹ and the array of surprising contexts in which irregular bodies come to shape expectations for social formations that do not seem to depend upon distinguishing between bodies.

To shift disability from a question of identity to social formation is to turn, inevitably, to the early modern stage. On the stage, all identity comes in the service of fictions that dissemble the unreality of their origin. This inherent refusal of “authentic” identity makes the early modern theater the best place to understand how irregular bodies function in terms of social constructions rather than personal experience. These bodies are performed, constructed and projected by actors, and within the dramatic fiction, they are performative, counterfeited and dissembled by characters. The plays that I examine offer surprising examples of irregular features that we might otherwise misread as disabling, suggesting that Cripple’s “crooked shape” or Richard’s manipulation of his “deformity” actually constitute enabling differences. Because visible difference is always at stake on the stage, theatrical representations of irregular bodies, I argue, expose disability as the product of cultural constraints rather than intrinsic bodily limitation. Bringing disability to the stage, early modern drama highlights the impossible ideals of social order that depend upon excluding irregular bodies and the vibrant re-orderings these bodies elicit.

The dissertation opens with the most recognizably irregular body in the early modern period, that of the “deformed” Richard III. However, rather than reading his figure as representative of an early modern paradigm of disability, I set William Shakespeare’s *Richard III* alongside historical sources, popular verse libels, and other Elizabethan plays in order to show the startling differences in this play’s characterization. I argue that Shakespeare’s play departs from contemporary representations because the play depicts Richard’s body differently every time he appears. Refusing to specify the expected hunchback in his famous opening speech, seducing Anne, and suddenly producing a withered arm, Richard recruits his audience to observe his ever-changing deformations. The play implicates spectators through their desire, at once diagnostic and erotic, to linger on the sight of his deformed body. Routing political power through the interpretive fervor the irregular body incites, the play highlights the indeterminacy of disability as a resource for theatrical statecraft.

While Richard III invites his audience to stare at deformity, the state tries to hide an injury that the body of the disabled veteran of war puts on display. To look at this body, as I do in my second chapter, taking up Thomas Dekker’s city comedy, *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*—which features a shoemaker returning from his conscripted military service “being lame”—alongside *A Larum for London* and *The Triall of Chivalry* is to see disability troubling the celebratory vision of citizenship. Although the period boasts new surgical technologies, from amputation techniques to prosthetic limbs, to “trim” and “fit” wounded soldiers, Dekker’s play refuses this restoration. The service demanded by the nation damages the able body of the citizen: if the shoemaker can still perform artisanal labor despite his limp, he is nevertheless “strange,” misrecognized, and

called “lame Ralph.” The play highlights the lame body not as incidental cost but as citizenship’s inevitable result, and underscores how attempts to repair bodily harm can never—try as the state might—fully hide the consequences of the martial labor that civic duty compels.

If the body of the lamed soldier is meant to be hidden, the body of the “crippled” beggar is dragged into plain view through jest books and begging prohibitions of the period, which consistently imagine the beggar subverting legitimate financial exchange by soliciting charity through faked disability. My third chapter examines the unattributed comedy *The Fair Maid of the Exchange*, which produces the social world that evolves around London’s chief financial institution, the Exchange, as one that thrives upon impersonation. The play’s central character, Cripple, appears to be part of the exchange that renders identity fluid: he loans out his “crutches” and “crooked habit” to another character, Frank, who uses the disguise to court his way into a financially advantageous marriage. But if Frank can impersonate Cripple, Cripple cannot impersonate Frank. The play stages two conflicting models of mimesis: it is precisely because Cripple’s deformed body registers as disabled in his inability to impersonate that he becomes the privileged guarantor of non-deceptive representation, and this dramatic problem undoes the value of the “proper” body the play insists he lacks. Yet the balked exchange reveals that success in the financial and social negotiations that preoccupy early modern city comedy depends not upon the productive labor Cripple performs but upon duplicitous impersonation that is performed by—and requires, it seems—an able body.

To look at the “ugly,” as opposed to the “crippled,” body, however, is to evaluate an irregular appearance according to an aesthetic standard of beauty rather than an

economic standard of labor. The fourth and final chapter of the dissertation takes up Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's *The Changeling* alongside John Bulwer's mammoth compilation, *The Artificial Changeling*. When the play opens, ugliness is the singular attribute of De Flores, whose "bad face" encapsulates an interpretive model in which visible appearance corresponds to moral virtue. This neo-platonic fantasy drives popular early modern theories of decorum that imagine the desirable body as simultaneously beautiful and virtuous. However, desire unsettles the initial correlation between bodily form and conduct. In the play, ugliness comes to describe the social force of sexual transgression, a public accusation that "blasts" Beatrice-Joanna's beauty. Shifting the definitions of ugliness, the play decouples conceptions of the "beautiful" from the "good" and undermines aesthetic standards for bodies by revealing these standards as arbitrary and subject to manipulation.

The project concludes with a coda that considers the body that seems the most self-evidently irregular: the "sick" body. In Ben Jonson's *Volpone*, Volpone himself feigns illness, scheming to acquire gold under the pretense of a decrepit, rotting body. This putative "sickness," built of stage properties and faked symptoms, however, imperils Volpone at the exact moment that the imposture becomes public. When Volpone puts his body on display as legal proof of illness, in the play's first trial scene, he finds himself suddenly undone by the disguise, and, at the end of the play, condemned to become "sick indeed." While each individual chapter of the dissertation takes up a different example of an irregular body—deformed, lame, crippled, and ugly—the project as a whole produces a new paradigm for thinking about early modern disability. Theorizing disability through social structures allows us to see how theatrical representations of irregular bodies cut

across distinctions—between art and nature, form and matter, public and private—foundational to early modern thought. If disability, as an encounter between the irregular body and the world, does not depend upon what the body can or cannot do, but upon the social formations and perceptions that disqualify bodies from doing or not doing, then these dramatic representations invite us to ask different questions about the irregular bodies that populate their scenes. Rather than satisfying the impulse to determine early modern paradigms by looking for the hump, the limp, the scars, or the wooden leg as the signposts of disability, these texts ask us to look further, to notice how the restrictions that disable this body do not follow from intrinsic physical limitation—in order to see disability as the product of cultural constraints embedded within key social, economic, political, and aesthetic concepts in the early modern period.

¹ I cite Laura Hershey's poem, "Translating the Crip," from her website pursuant to print publication. <www.laurahershey.com> Accessed 12 November 2010.

² Mark Hutchings argues for the "obvious parallel" between the dramatic characters of Richard III and De Flores (of *The Changeling*) on this basis ("*Richard III* and *The Changeling*" [*Notes and Queries* (2005): 229-30]), 230.

³ Stephen Greenblatt, "The shape of a life," *The New Yorker* blog, <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/books/2013/02/the-shape-of-a-life-richard-iiis-twisted-bones.html>. Accessed 5 February 2013.

⁴ Nancy J. Hirschmann, "Disability as a New Frontier for Feminist Intersectionality Research" (*Politics & Gender* 8.3 (2012): 396-405, 398).

⁵ For personal and broader histories of the emergence of disability studies from disability rights activism, see Joseph Shapiro, *No Pity* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1994) and Simi Linton, *Claiming Disability* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1998).

⁶ Susan Schweik, *The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2009), 12. See also Rosemary Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Literature and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

⁷ Tobin Siebers, *Disability Theory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 4.

⁸ Indeed, some of the most recent disability scholarship considers contemporary disability as an intersectional identity in relation to race, gender, and sexuality: see, for example Chris Bell, ed. *Blackness and Disability* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2012); Kim Q. Hall, ed. *Feminist Disability Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), the most recent example of a line of inquiry initiated by Rosemarie Garland

Thomson and Susan Wendell that, attending the Aristotelian logic of the female body as a deformed version of the male body, pursues the links between femininity and disability; on productive overlaps between disability studies and queer theory, see Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2006).

⁹ Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* (New York: Picador, 2003), 28. Foucault expounds on the idea of the norm as he tracks the development of psychiatric evaluation in the 1974-5 College de France lectures later compiled as *Abnormal* (Trans. Graham Burchell; Ed. Valerio Marchetti and Antonella Salomoni, New York: Picador, 1999). He argues that psychiatry both “introduced” and “exploit[ed]” the concept of the norm, making it both “the norm as rule of conduct,” in opposition to “irregularity and disorder” and “the norm as functional regulation,” “opposed to the pathological and the morbid” (162). The result of this—thoroughly historical—development is that “psychiatry will deal with something that is an irregularity in relation to a norm and that must be at the same time a pathological dysfunction in relation to the normal” (162-3).

¹⁰ On the historical development of disabled identity, see Helen Deutsche and Felicity Nussbaum’s *“Defects”: Engendering the Modern Body* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), and David Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *Cultural Locations of Disability* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006).

¹¹ Lennard J. Davis, *Bending Over Backwards: Disability, Dismodernism and Other Difficult Positions* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2002), 55; “Introduction,” David Turner’s introduction to *Social Histories of Disability and Deformity*, eds. David M. Turner and Kevin Stagg (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 4.

¹² Davis, 58, 60. Henri-Jacques Stiker, *A History of Disability* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1999) underscores this shift from deformity to disability in late seventeenth-century France.

¹³ Anita Silvers, “An Essay on Modeling: The Social Model of Disability” in *Philosophical Reflections on Disability*, eds. D. Christopher Ralston and Justin Ho (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), 24.

¹⁴ “Editor’s Introduction” to the essay cluster on “Disability and the social body” in *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies* 3:2 (2012), 137. As other examples of these new approaches, see the “Disabled Shakespeares” special section, ed. Alison P. Hobgood and David Wood, *Disability Studies Quarterly* 29: 4 (2009). Medieval disability studies, in particular, has begun to reimagine points of contact, while acknowledging the complexity of “trying to relate such an activist scholarship, focused on the present, to medieval sources” (154), as Julie Orlemanski frames the problem in “How to kiss a leper,” *postmedieval* 3 (2012): 142-57.

¹⁵ 35 Eliz. I c.4. Quoted, Charles Mathew Clode, *The Military Forces of the Crown, Vol. I* (London: John Murray, 1869), 353. Clode refers to this Act as the “Disabled Soldiers Act of 1592.”

¹⁶ William Shakespeare, Sonnet 66 in *The Norton Shakespeare*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, and Katharine Eisaman Maus (W. W. Norton: New York & London, 1997), 1944.

¹⁷ Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 379. This sense of *meosis* as a trope is echoed in

Morocco's speech in *The Merchant of Venice* when he chooses the casket on the basis of his "deserving": "And yet to be afeard of my deserving / Were but a weak disabling of myself. / As much as I deserve" (2.7.29-31); Rosalind's admonition to Jacques in *As You Like It*, "Farewell, Monsieur Traveller; look you lisp and wear / strange suits, disable all the benefits of your own country, be / out of love with your nativity" (4.1.29-31), suggests that "disabling," as in Puttenham's example of the soldiers, begins to shade into dissembling on the part of the speaker. Both citations from *The Norton Shakespeare*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, and Katharine Eisaman Maus (W. W. Norton: New York & London, 1997).

¹⁸ "Disability" in *New keywords: a revised vocabulary of culture and society*, ed. Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris (London: Blackwell, 2005), 87.

¹⁹ The 1572 *Huloet's Dictionary* (trans. John Higgins [London, 1572]), which moves between Latin, French, and English, defines the Latin term "Abnormis" as "Irregular, or without rule" (152).

²⁰ Edward Phillips, *New World of English Words* (London, 1658), 98. The entry continues with an addition to the definitional note: "also an incapacity of taking holy orders, as being maimed, or very deformed, base-born, or guilty of any hainous crime, a Term in Canon-law."

²¹ Stiker, 11.

Wanting to See the Body in *Richard III*

“It may be asked, then, why all great actors
choose characters from Shakespeare to come out in;
and again, why these become their favourite parts?
First, it is not that they are able to exhibit their author,
but that he enables them to show themselves off.”
--William Hazlitt¹

The 1606 play *The Second Part of the Return from Parnassus, Or the Scourge of Simony*, stages a curious moment that compresses stage history and calibrates dramatic character through the actor’s body. Richard Burbage, the famous actor, shows up in the play in a brief cameo role as he evaluates prospective actors with Will Kempe, another luminary of the early modern stage. When they see Philomusus, one of the main characters in *Return*, Kempe suggests that Philomusus would excel as “a foolish Mayre or a foolish Justice” (1809-11),² but Burbage disagrees, summoning Philomusus with another request:

Bur.	I like your face, and the proportion of your body for Richard the 3. I pray, M. <i>Phil.</i> Let me see you act a little of it.
Philomusus:	“Now is the winter of our discontent. Made glorious summer by the sonne of Yorke”
Bur.	Very well I assure you

(1835-40)

This exchange—less than fifteen years after the first performances of William Shakespeare’s *Richard III*, in which Burbage starred—suggests the popularity, conventionality, and iterability of Richard’s role when, invited to “act,” Philomusus promptly strikes a pose and begins the opening lines of Richard’s famous soliloquy. Burbage cuts him off after these two lines (it turns out that Philomusus would *not* be a

good actor). The invitation seems to mock Philomusus, not immediately for a lack of acting ability, but for his features: a “face” and bodily “proportion” that instantly suggest Richard III might not be a compliment, even as the figure Philomusus cuts appears to offer an advantage for this role. Yet when Burbage, the famous player of Richard, sizes up Philomusus, the doubling introduces a fundamental uncertainty into the exchange: the invitation to act Richard presents a moment in which Philomusus resembles, in a sense, Burbage himself.

This moment in *Return from Parnassus* glances back at Shakespeare’s *Richard III*, performed in 1593, and reprinted in quarto versions six times before the 1623 Folio. The play foregrounds Richard’s body from the opening scene, and scholars have argued astutely for the political, theological, moral, and dramaturgical lessons his figure provides.³ The play’s early modern audience “would have immediately recognized Richard’s physical deformity and moral depravity as a synecdoche for the state,”⁴ and seen Richard as the “vehicle for the doctrine that villainy in the soul was predicated by a correspondent deformity in the body.”⁵ These readings take Richard’s distinctive body as visible evidence of the lessons and entertainment the play provides. Given the emphasis on Richard’s body in the critical history, I want to ask: what exactly does this body look like on the stage? Critics have been quick to describe the Richard of Shakespeare’s play: “A twisted mind in a twisted shape, Richard, the crippled figure, has an unbalanced and unfinished body, a hump, a limp, and . . . he even acquires a withered or shortened arm by the middle of the play.”⁶ This body is both the effect of an actor’s practice and shorthand to his deeper motivations: “In acting the body—hunched, limping, and creeping in the margins—the actor will automatically enact mind, manner, and motive” (359).⁷ Indeed,

the “deformed Richard Crookback” comes to stand for not only a particular kind of body, but as a stereotype, in which Richard is one example of a whole class of characters whose “sheer physique...is so extraordinary that their very bodies make a continuous implicit contribution on their own account, as powerful cultural signs, to the dramatic narrative” because they “provoke deep-seated irrational responses, activated and reinforced verbally.”⁸

These interpretations, I am going to suggest, assume a body for Richard that retrospectively codify his figure and reveal critical assumptions about deformed bodies more than they attend to the specific complexities of Richard’s shape in *Richard III*. This chapter begins by disentangling Shakespeare’s play from other representations of Richard, and then turns to the play itself, to explore the abstraction and illegibility of “deformity” as a central term. I will argue that Richard’s body, far from being simply one thing, reveals the incoherence of the stereotype of the “crookback” and the enabling contradictions of “deformity” in the play in which the deformed body takes center stage. Both Shakespeare’s play and the character of Richard himself seem aware of the possibilities of the theater to unsettle easy interpretations, as Richard’s character manipulates and is constrained by the expectations about his form. What interests me in these familiar interpretations is how easily we—a long tradition of critics, actors, and audiences—come to assume that we know what early modern deformity looks like and what this deformed body does in the dramatic fiction.

Understanding the play’s startling revision of “deformity” is important because Richard comes to stand in for Shakespeare and, by extension, for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century ideas in the critical trajectory of disability studies: disability critics

take Richard's deformity as the precedent for disability in the pre-modern body. Lennard Davis argues that "rather than disability, what is called to readers' attention before the eighteenth century is *deformity*" as a category along with monstrosity, so that: "disability as the observation of the absence of a sense, a limb, or an ability is much less remarked on than deformity as a major category, a dramatic physical event or bodily configuration like giantism, dwarfism, or hunchback formations."⁹ In the most fully explicated reading of *Richard III* in disability studies, David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder argue that Richard is the key figure because Richard's "dispute with the terms of his own embodiment of physical monstrosity" contests the fixed associations of his body: this "pre-Enlightenment challenge to the long-established equation between deformity and metaphysical meaning also initiates a host of many other mutable and *social* meanings for disability."¹⁰ Reading the "mutability" of Richard's character begins to approach the contemporary "social" model of disability, which separates impairment from disability to argue that disability is produced in the interaction between impaired body and the cultural environment that disables this body. This reading of Richard allows disability critics to posit a continuum between bodies of the past and the contemporary moment, so that, "the wondrous monsters of antiquity, who became the fascinating freaks of the nineteenth century, transformed into the disabled people of the later twentieth century."¹¹ As part of a lineage of disabled identity, Richard's distinctive body—the hunchback formation and the social implications of this form—might be recognizably "disabled" in contemporary terms.

However, critics have also read Richard as *not* an example of disabled identity, arguing that what we recognize as disability comes later, after historical changes that produce medicalized, post-industrial bodies through techniques of biopower. The

genealogy of disability historicizes the emergence of the “normal” body through standards of quantification, in order to highlight and critique how “abnormal” bodies become subject to cultural exclusion and institutional control. The “new discursive category of disability,” as Davis notes, appears “continuous, running the gamut from physical impairments to deformity to monstrosity to madness” and the category requires “an institutional, medicalized apparatus to house, segregate, isolate, or fix people with disabilities.”¹² In this reading, Richard emblemizes a prior historical moment, a pre-modern approach from which representation of and attitudes about bodies, especially irregular bodies, have now shifted: retrospectively, early modern disability does not exist as an “identity,” and there is not sense of a collective category.¹³ Indeed, Mitchell and Snyder claim Richard as a “Renaissance version of late medieval attitudes toward deformity” and argue that “the play sits at a crucial threshold between a flat, static understanding of disability as a definite aesthetic impropriety (as in classical renderings) and the more mysterious complexity of full-blown maladies sketched out by medical science in the eighteenth century.”¹⁴ Richard’s intermediate status means that he becomes the “almost, but not yet” example of disability.

Reading Richard’s example as a “Renaissance” attitude has meant reading deformity as evidence of moral depravity, in which the deformed body evinces unambiguous evil in a kind of one-dimensional interpretive clarity. Other critics in disability studies, like the literary critics above, have imagined a specific body for Richard. For Tobin Siebers, for example, “Shakespeare’s Richard III is a hunchback, but his disability represent deceitfulness and lust for power, not a condition of his physical and complex embodiment.”¹⁵ Ato Quayson reads Richard’s distinctive body as

ambiguous only in the sense that “the disability is placed at the foreground of the action from the beginning and brings together various threads that serve to focalize the question of whether Richard’s deformity is an insignia of or indeed the cause of his villainy.”¹⁶ But rather than asking, as disability critics have, “*why* did the era that created the text find it necessary for Richard to be impaired in order to make the point the text is trying to make,” I want to ask instead: to what extent have literary and disability critics already codified the “point” of the text—here, about the equation between evil and deformity—because we have retrospectively assumed a stability to the discourse of deformity that the play complicates in constructing Richard’s dramatic character?¹⁷ Yet, as Christopher Baswell argues, even if the term “disability” does not come to describe bodily experience until the end of the eighteenth century, we can still examine what “kinds of social and intellectual encounters with eccentric bodies and eccentric minds preced[e] that concept.”¹⁸ If Richard’s distinctive body can work as evidence for both the development of disability as an identity category and Renaissance cultural attitudes toward anomalous bodies, then what exactly does Shakespeare’s play reveal about a concept of disability still inchoate in the early modern period?

Here, I consider how a richer concept of “deformity,” the term that Shakespeare’s Richard uses to describe his figure, reworks early modern “disability” from fixity to indeterminacy to reveal disability as a theatrical asset.¹⁹ While critics have imagined a specific body for Richard, one with unambiguous moral meaning, I argue that disability—as an interaction between the deformed body and the world that constrains this body—first emerges in *Richard III* as indistinction, the inability to categorize Richard’s body clearly. Richard uses this indistinction to his advantage to enable his rise

to kingship. I begin showing how Shakespeare's play differs from other texts in refusing to specify the exact details of Richard's body. Along with his own pronouncement of deformity, Richard's body becomes identified rhetorically with oozy contagion, social corruption, and divine judgment as a prophetic cipher of English history. The play, however, is at pains to muddle these interpretive categories into conflated and competing discourses. Shakespeare's Richard recognizes the possibilities for manipulating interpretations of his body because they presume legible impairment and a static model of deformity signified by the expected hump. Richard's "disability drag" confounds the desire for interpretive certainty that other characters express when they call attention to his bodily features. Deformity, as a problem within the dramatic fiction, also illuminates a broader question for dramatic form: what is the relationship between the deformed theatrical body of a character and the body of the actor, who may or may not be deformed, who "personates" the character? By "theatrical body" I mean the presumed, the imagined, the implied body of the character produced by the personating actor, the illusive shape of a dramatic character that exists only in performance. The many answers to this question over a long history of stage production of *Richard III* reveal how easily the incoherent, conflicting discursive register of "deformity" codifies, under pressure, into legibility. To construct a more complex model of early modern disability, I argue, we must account for the peculiarity of dramatic form and the historical specificity of publicized deformed body; to do so requires rethinking disability around the slipperiness and incoherence—rather than fixity—of the concept of deformity.

I. Re-reading Richard

The chief historical source for Shakespeare's play, Thomas More's *History of King Richard the Third* (ca. 1513), which influenced Edward Hall and Raphael Holinshed in their sixteenth-century histories, calls attention to Richard's body at the outset of the narrative. Richard's physical description is a brief point in a digression from what More terms the "course of this history":

Richard, the third son, of whom we now entreat, was in wit and courage equal with either of them, in body and prowess far under them both: little of stature, ill-featured of limbs, crook-backed, his left shoulder much higher than his right, hard-favored of visage, and such as in states called warly, in other men otherwise. He was malicious, wrathful, envious, and from afore his birth, ever froward.²⁰

More's account begins by dissociating "wit and courage" from "body and prowess," and then delineates Richard's specific features in terms that become the keywords for later plays: "crook-backed," "ill-featured," and "hard-favored." The description suggests that Richard is short, his shoulders are different heights, and his back is bent into a hunchback formation. While More describes Richard's talent for dissimulation and his cruelty, this excursus on Richard's body and disposition is only a brief portion of the narrative. More concentrates his account on the multiple occasions of public performance that test and subtend Richard's political machinations: his arrests of the Queen's kinsmen as they convey the prince to London for the coronation, repeated attempts to stage-manage public approval of his kingship by the citizens of London, and plans to solidify his claim to the throne through strategic marital alliance. More is interested in what his audience can learn, not so much from Richard's body, but from his statecraft and mastery of public opinion in the steady consolidation of tyrannical power.

And yet, as the prose description of “Richard, the third son” offers a detailed list of his bodily irregularities, the dramatic representations that precede *Richard III* follow suit. The unattributed play *The True Tragedie of Richard III* (1594) opens with a dialogue between the characters of “Poetrie” and “Truth,” who introduce “Richard Duke of Gloster” through description. Poetrie asks: “What maner of man was this Richard Duke of Gloster?” and Truth replies: “A man ill shaped, crooked backed, lame armed, withal, / Valiantly minded, but tyrannous in authoritie” (1.1.57-58).²¹ Truth’s summation reads like an excerpt from More’s history, setting out the essential features of his body, and adding the “lame armed” description. Truth’s account conjures an image of Richard’s body and delivers the didactic takeaway (“Valiantly minded, but tyrannous”) before Richard himself appears on the stage. Richard, then, enters the dramatic action of the play within an interpretive framework: Truth and Poetrie explicate his appearance and heighten the audience’s expectations for the emblematic figure of tyranny they will see.

The play that directly precedes *Richard III* in Shakespeare’s history cycle has the most extensive discussion of the character’s body. In 3 *Henry VI* (1591), Richard is called “scolding crookback” (5.5.30) and “misshapen Dick” (5.5.35), “hard-favoured Richard” (5.5.77) and “an indigested and deformed lump” (5.6.51).²² Repeating the “crookback” epithet and adding new descriptions, the other characters in the play do not hesitate to explicate the meaning of the visible signs of Richard’s theatrical body. When Richard comes to kill King Henry, Henry claims that Richard’s pre-natal teeth were “to signifie thou cam’st to bite the world; / And if the rest be true which I have heard / Thou cam’st—” (5.6.54-6), and breaks off as Richard, calling him a “prophet,” kills him to end the speech. But it is not just the other characters who proclaim and revisit the significance of

his features: Richard himself adopts an interpretive framework that aligns his body with his disposition and future actions. After killing Henry, Richard returns to the question of his monstrous and portentous birth with a belated answer:

And so I was, which plainly signified
 That I should snarl and bite and play the dog
 Then, since the heavens have shaped my body so,
 Let hell make crooked my mind to answer it.
 (5.6.76-79)

Like Henry, the Richard of *3 Henry VI* claims that his body should “signifie,” wresting his irregular form into a portent of “plainly” visible providential history, a causal logic that links body and mind through a fixed shape. For this Richard, the “misshapen” contours of his body provide the impetus for the actions that will follow. In the scene that follows, he again describes the specific features of his body that will empower his political action:

For yet I am not look’d on in the world.
 This shoulder was ordain’d so thick to heave;
 And heave it shall some weight, or break my back:
 Work thou the way,—and thou shalt execute.
 (5.7.17-20)

In the muttered aside, Richard identifies his “thick” shoulder as both “ordain’d” and as starting point for his own actions. His “work thou the way” cues the actor to display this shoulder to the audience, while the second cued gesture—“and thou shalt execute”—suggests an expression of physical force. The Richard of this play begins with a carefully delineated body and moves, part by part, through formal actions that match this body. These brief examples suggest that by *Richard III*, the “crookback” character is associated with a set of physical features—the hump, the uneven shoulders, the limp, the shortened arm—that come to be expected at the beginning, or at least as a site of explication.

II. Richard Playing Himself

Shakespeare's Richard in *Richard III*, however, refuses to spell out the features of his irregular body in the opening lines. His soliloquy begins with a decisive and repeated "Now" to commence the actions, conceived as dramatic "plots" and "inductions," he has planned, and in the middle section Richard theorizes his form as a decisive rejection of the sociality of the present moment:

But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks
 Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass.
 I that am rudely stamped and want love's majesty
 To strut before a wanton ambling nymph,
 I that am curtailed of this fair proportion,
 Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
 Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
 Into this breathing world scarce half made up—
 And that so lamely and unfashionable
 That dogs bark at me as I halt by them—
 Why, I in this weak piping time of peace
 Have no delight to pass away the time,
 Unless to spy my shadow in the sun
 And descant on mine own deformity.

(1.1.14-27)

Richard provides a vocabulary of negative bodily descriptions—"unfinished," "cheated of feature," "unfashionable"—under the rubric of deformity, piling up attributes that catalogue his body's deformity in terms of its social defects. But these descriptions refuse the specificity of the source texts, and even Shakespeare's earlier plays: the terms that describe his body rely on negation ("not shaped," "curtailed") or abstraction instead of bodily attributes the other plays offer. Richard begins the play by calling attention to a theatrical body that he displays to the audience, a body that defines his character through expectations from the histories and other plays, but he does not tell the audience exactly what they see when they see this body. Instead of describing his theatrical body, that is,

Richard draws out the effects that his deformity produces. Even Richard's "halt" calls attention to the movement of his body rather than naming a distinct feature. Where, for this Richard, is the "crookback"?

In his opening speech, Richard wants his audience to believe that his "deformity" is the deformed body, that this body is his identity, and that this body is disabling in social setting of the court. Richard's language breaks down into disputing concerns—court, masculinity, Nature, time—through his "descant": he repeats the venues within which his "deformed, unfinished" body registers as a selective index that deliberately underestimates his figure. An early reader of the First Folio glosses this speech as "Richard acknowledgeing the crooked deformities of his bodie and malice of his mind."²³ The marginal note suggests the coincidence of bodily shape and "malice" of mind, but Richard's speech markedly avoids casting this relationship as causative: Richard is interested in mocking the "proportion" and "shape" that he perceives as required for social performance. Sporting, strutting, and courting (with the attendant ironies for the audience that is well-aware of Richard's relation to court and courting in the scenes that follow) call attention to the un-deformed, sociable body that he claims he does not have. Although Richard insists on presenting his body as the only one that is lacking, he intensifies the scrutiny upon his body (in calling attention to it), while appearing to initiate selective disclosure of his form. The levels of theatrical significance multiply: the opening speech both announces Richard's body as unfit for performance and calls attention to the theatricality he summons in his narration to a listening audience.

Never explicit about what exactly he looks like, Richard goes on to emphasize his body's features as he pleases. After claiming deficiencies associated with deformity,

Richard's success in wooing Anne in the very next scene confirms that his distinctive body is capable of performing the role of lover.²⁴ Anne begins by lamenting her husband's death caused by "thou lump of foul deformity" (1.2.55), Richard: "Villain, thou knowest no law of God nor man. / No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity" (1.2.68-9). Richard's response selectively engages her interpretive structure only to distort it: "But I know none—and therefore am no beast" (1.2.70). This verbal pattern continues, as Anne enumerates Richard's crimes to Richard's stichomythic response. The rhetorical intensity increases until, just as in the first scene, Richard highlights bodily insufficiency as a sign of inability. Here, though, he "confesses" to Anne:

Those eyes of thine from mine have drawn salt tears,
Shamed their aspect with store of childish drops.
I never sued to friend nor enemy—
My tongue could never learn sweet soothing words—
But now thy beauty is proposed my fee
My proud heart sues and prompts my tongue to speak.
(1.2.151-6)

With the words of "suit" the script cues gesture, action, and expansive display. Proffering his sword, Richard exposes his figure and tells Anne "Take up the sword again, or take up me" (1.2.169). When Anne refuses, Richard offers, "Then bid me kill myself, and I will do it" (1.2.171) before arguing that his gestural display shows the signs of a "far truer love" (1.2.176) that he feels. Richard's body comes into focus when he protests his recurring bodily lack, but the meaning of his body is different every time he invites Anne to gaze upon the shape he presents.

Successful in courtship, Richard appreciates the particular malleability of his "misshapen" form, even to the point of occupying the very spaces he rejected in his opening soliloquy. Once Anne concedes and Richard is alone again on the stage,

Richard's exultant questions, "Was ever woman in this humour wooed? / Was ever woman in this humour won?" (1.2.215-16), reflect astonishment with his own accomplishment despite the obstacles of "God, her conscience, and these bars against me" (1.3.222). Marveling that Anne will "abase her eyes" he exclaims:

On me, whose all not equals Edward's moiety?
 On me, that halts and am misshapen thus?
 My dukedom to a beggarly *denier*,
 I do mistake my person all this while.
 Upon my life she finds, although I cannot,
 Myself to be a marv'lous proper man.
 I'll be at charges for a looking-glass
 And entertain a score or two of tailors
 To study fashions to adorn my body.
 Since I am crept in favour with myself,
 I will maintain it with some little cost.

(1.3.236-46)

Richard uses Anne's acquiescence to shape his future interpretations, revaluing his own ability to present himself as "marv'lous proper." Invoking an implicit sense of standard (and standardization) of ideal attributes, Richard suggests that he can perform this persona, and his plan to engage tailors and "study fashions" articulates the body that—just the scene before—he imagined as "lamely and unfashionable" (1.1.22). After his encounter with Anne, he proclaims, "Shine out, fair sun, till I have bought a glass, / That I may see my shadow as I pass" (1.2.249-50). Richard's new "favour" for himself produces an exultant appraisal of his visible difference. He imagines himself seeing his form not only to "descant" on his shape, but to applaud his newfound fashioning as he acts in the world. Not just despite, but because of the particular malleability his "misshapen" shape suggests, Richard sees the opportunity of this body.

By contrast, Richard also produces his deformity as exaggerated recognition, assuring others that there is nothing more to know about his body other than its

limitations. When he enters the conference with Queen Elizabeth and the other nobles, Richard decries his inability to act out the rituals of courtly sociability. He claims:

Because I cannot flatter and look fair,
Smile in men's faces, smooth, deceive, and cog,
Duck with French nods and apish courtesy.
I must be held a rancorous enemy.
Cannot a plain man live and think no harm,
But this his simple truth must be abused
With silken, sly, insinuating jacks?

(1.3.47-53)

Richard equates his anomalous body with the “plain” and “simple truth,” unlike the “silken, sly, insinuating jacks” that surround him, whose bodies never reveal their true selves. Deformity becomes a claim to honesty, in that excessive scrutiny of his body would demonstrate that he finds it impossible to counterfeit or conceal himself from an interpretive gaze; this accounts, he claims, for the “rancor” with which others regard him. Richard aligns a talent for courtesy with the artificial (“apish courtesy”) and the foreign (“French nods”), against which his body’s deformity—a seeming inability to become anything other than what it is—appears virtuously resistant. Reversing his earlier disparagement of his body as “unnatural,” he claims that his bodily inability to “flatter and look fair” or “smooth, deceive, and cog” makes his sincerity self-evident, even though the audience in the theatre, having watched Richard pursue Clarence’s death by this point in the play, is well-aware of Richard’s capacity for deception.

Thus Richard himself multiplies the possible interpretations of his body—as unfit for court, as skillful lover, as evidently honest—even as he seems to decode this body for different audiences. Richard’s incessant revelation shifts his appearance with each description. Of course, Richard’s audience within the dramatic fiction does not accept his interpretations of his body without resistance: Anne rejects him at first as a “foul devil”

(1.2.50), “diffused infection of a man” (1.2.78), and “hedgehog” (1.2.102); Margaret curses him as “elvish-marked, abortive, rooting hog” (1.3.225), the “slave of nature and the son of hell” (1.3.227), and calls him a “bottled spider” (1.3.240), “poisonous bunch-backed toad” (1.3.244), and “yonder dog” (1.3.287). Cursing Richard within a providential structure, the women’s epithets—like the association with the “beasts” that Richard rejects—move down the scale of being and into “hell” in the search for fitting invective. But Richard evades these epithets, interrupting Margaret’s curse to “make the period” (1.3.236) with her name rather than his own, so that her curse is “done” by Richard and “ends in ‘Margaret’” (1.3.237). As the play progresses, this language is revealed as strikingly ineffective either to describe Richard’s body accurately or, more crucially, to resist his political actions. The women’s interpretations of his figure as providential curse and singularly evil are too limited to account for the mobility with which Richard himself changes the interpretive structure in which his body appears.

Alongside the structure of approbation, the play also stages misinterpretations that highlight the illegibility of Richard’s body to his onstage audience. Read with reference to early modern beliefs about physiognomy, the shape of Richard’s figure could easily suggest inner evil.²⁵ Practices of physiognomy in the period depend upon what Roy Porter calls the “hermeneutic process” of interpreting the body’s signs in order to determine natural tendencies, seeking useful predictors of social and moral behavior.²⁶ In this reading, for example, persons with a “bunche on the shoulders,” according to Thomas Hill, are “rather trayterous, and verie wicked in their actions.”²⁷ The art of physiognomy, Porter argues is “a *way of looking*,” learned through “a collection of authoritative, normative physiognomical wisdom and knowledge”; the art “of discovering

a person's character by that person's physical appearance."²⁸ *Richard III*, however, seems interested in staging acts of physiognomic interpretation as either fraudulent or mistaken. The play never makes explicit a causative relationship between Richard's mind and body—as repeated readings of Richard's body in the previous plays in the *Henry VI* cycle do—and Richard's character takes special delight in frustrating the possibilities of reading visible appearance. When Richard admonishes his nephew not to doubt his punitive actions toward Rivers and Grey, the other uncles that Richard has dispatched on the grounds of their alleged treason, he pontificates:

Sweet Prince, the untainted virtue of your years
Hath not yet dived into the world's deceit;
No more can you distinguish of a man
Than of his outward show, which God He knows
Seldom or never jumpeth with the heart.
(3.1.7-11)

The disjunct Richard claims between the “outward show” and “heart” emphasizes the importance of attaining the ability to “distinguish” between the outer signs and inner knowledge. Richard's argument here contradicts the notion that the legibility of outward appearance provides a key to understanding the moral framework of the inner person.

In the context of the play, of course, Richard's speech is yet another act of obfuscation, “clothing” his “naked villainy” in order to “seem a saint” (1.3.335-7). But as Richard's practice of narrating and interpreting his own body obfuscates his actions, Richard's own visage is repeatedly misinterpreted by others to their political downfall. Just before the council that will end in his death, Lord Hastings proclaims:

His grace looks cheerfully and smooth today.
There's some conceit of other likes him well
When he doth bid good morrow with such a spirit.
I think there's never a man in Christendom
Can lesser hid his love or hate than he;

For by his face straight shall you know his heart.
(3.4.53-58)

The first thing to note in Hastings' words, of course, is how different Richard appears in this moment: here he looks "cheerfully and smooth," unlike his aspect in previous scenes. But while correct in his assessment of Richard's happy "conceit," Hastings wrongly assumes a correlation between "face" and "heart." What Hastings perceives as revelation—and indeed, when Stanley queries him for the "likelihood" that Richard shows, he replies that if offended, Richard would have "shown it in his looks" (3.4.56)—he recognizes belatedly as political performance instead when Richard's designs against him become clear.

This interpretive problem intensifies when the play highlights "monstrous" actions, which we might expect to locate with Richard. Critics repeatedly identify Richard's body as the location of monstrosity in the play, arguing, for example, that "Richard becomes the physical representation not only of a monster but of a deformed body politic"; even when they note that Richard is never *actually* called a monster in the play, they identify him as "simply a composite of 'monstrous' markers and behaviors."²⁹ This assumption of monstrosity derives in part from the common juxtaposition of deformity and monstrosity in early modern texts—as when the surgeon Ambroise Paré repeatedly describes the anomalous births he discusses as "monstrous and deformed"—but terms are not necessarily interchangeable and, I want to suggest, the play resists their proximity in describing Richard.³⁰

The discourse of the monstrous or wondrous objects and bodies, whether human or non-human, was a matter of intense political discussion and public appraisal in the early modern period. The sheer number of literary artifacts (pamphlets, ballads, medical

treatises) circulating between popular and learned audiences to tell and re-tell accounts such as “The True Fourme and Shape of a Monsterous Chyld” (1565), “A True and Certain Relation of a Strange-Birth” (1635), and “True Relation of the Birth of a Monster Born at Exeter” (1682), testify to monstrosity as a lively discursive site. But the key feature of monstrosity is that the monster’s multiple meanings require interpretation and application, whether political and religious judgments about the state or inquiry for natural philosophers. The “multiplicity and lability of meanings” assigned to these monsters include “portents signifying divine wrath and imminent catastrophe,” “violations of both the natural and moral orders,” “marvels” that “reflected an aesthetic of variety and ingenuity in nature as well as art,” and as “natural errors” that were “the occasional price to be paid for the very simplicity and regularity in nature from which they so shockingly deviated.”³¹ Although Richard cites his “deformity” at the play’s outset, his characterization of a time-bound relation to Nature is as close as he comes to the boundaries of the human that monsters trouble. Richard’s body, with its multiplication of indistinction, never becomes a clearly interpretable portent—to follow one etymology of the monstrous—because his body never stays the same.

Instead, in the play, “monstrous” registers acts of bad political interpretation, demonstrating not the interpretability of a bodily sign, but the effective display of political power. In the curious timing of 3.4, Richard enters belatedly for the conference of nobles, requests the Bishop of Ely to send for some strawberries, withdraws with Buckingham, and then re-enters the conference in a fit of energetic passion, to ask:

I pray you all, what do they deserve
That do conspire my death with devilish plots
Of damned witchcraft, and that have prevailed
Upon my body with their hellish charms?

(3.4.64-7)

When Hastings volunteers “deserved death” as sufficient punishment, Richard brandishes visible evidence of the “witchcraft” he has referenced:

Then be your eyes the witness of this ill.
 See how I am bewitched. Behold, mine arm
 Is like a blasted sapling withered up.
 This is that Edward’s wife, that monstrous witch,
 Consorted with that harlot strumpet Shore,
 That by their witchcraft thus have marked me.

(3.4.72-77)

Richard’s “Behold” directs the attention of his onstage (and offstage) audience to his body once more to claim his “withered up” arm as evidence of “ill”—but not his own evil. Richard harnesses the force of the “monstrous” accusation against the women and their supposed witchcraft.³² The staging possibilities for this moment could include a prosthesis that the actor playing Richard adopts off-stage before he re-enters, so that he displays an arm that does, in fact, look different. But this theatrical accommodation to one textual cue forecloses on the real power dynamic of the scene (especially since none of the lords respond to the accusations of witchcraft): Richard’s arm, I would suggest, looks exactly the same as it has throughout the play. This is a test to see whether the audience is willing to participate in his fantasy of political power. If nothing about Richard’s body has changed, his point in the display is not to confirm his body in a “monstrous” sign, but to reveal those who resist his interpretation. When Hastings begins to respond “If they have done this thing, my gracious lord—“(3.4.79), only to have Richard cut him off: “‘If,’ thou protector of this damned strumpet, / Tell’st thou me of ‘if’s? Thou art a traitor. / Off with his head!” (3.4.80-81). Richard produces a deformed

body in front of an audience, not to highlight the limitation of his shape but to index the frightening consolidation of his power.

Because the theatrical effectiveness of Richard's deformity inheres in its indistinction and multiple interpretations, his body falls out of focus intermittently. After the first speech and the wooing scene, there are moments in which his body appears, contradictorily, not to be deformed at all. The Duchess of York, Richard's mother, bewailing the deaths of Clarence and Edward by Richard's hand, laments that, "deceit should steal such gentle shapes, / And with a virtuous visor hide foul guile" (2.2.26-27). Buckingham, Richard's collaborator in staging public support for his reign, appeals to corporate imagery in a bid for Richard's kingship: "Withal, I did infer your lineaments— / Being the right idea of your father / Both in your face and nobleness of mind" (3.7.12-14). Although his first attempt to inspire public support for Richard fails, Buckingham returns to this preoccupation with Richard's body the second time (which barely succeeds), staging the plea before the crowd rather than enlisting their support. Buckingham exhorts Richard: "Know then, it is your fault that you resign...The lineal glory of your royal house / To the corruption of a blemished stock" (3.7.117, 121-22); Buckingham then urges him to mend the "body" of the nation: "The noble isle doth want her proper limbs: / Her face defaced with scars of infamy" (3.7.125-28). This scene contrasts a corporate figure with a corporeal enactment. Conjured through public speech-acts, the imagined body of the nation exists only through theatrical vocalization, but these images allow Richard's body to shift into visibility, not to show his deformity, but rather to emphasize his fitness for the task of being king. Certainly, as Linda Charnes argues persuasively, Richard appropriates the notion of the "King's Two Bodies" in order to

“use the King’s Body to transform ‘handicaps’ of his own,” so that Richard attempts to “sublate his deformed body to the perfect ‘Body’ of the king.”³³ But it is not just that the invisible body of the King, in its imagined perfection, assimilates Richard’s deformities. Buckingham’s language produces a King Richard that—at least rhetorically—promises to look like a king and supply “proper limbs” to the nation.

As Richard transforms himself into “King Richard” instead of “Richard Gloucester”—a shift in character borne out by the speech pre-fixes in the play’s printed text—and seeks to preserve the kingship he then holds, the body that he pronounces “deformed” drops out of language completely.³⁴ The coronation scene begins with King Richard announcing “Stand all apart” (4.2.1) and then calling Buckingham, only to command, “Give me thy hand” (4.2.3). Richard “ascendeth the throne,” the stage directions note, and he announces: “Thus high, by thy advice / and thy assistance, is King Richard seated” (4.2.4-5). Richard acknowledges Buckingham’s aid in his plans, but he also produces the coronation scene as director and self-designating actor. This moment is especially open to scenic dilation—a kind of “actor’s choice” of how to play Richard playing his own coronation—because only Richard speaks. The text scripts a moment of visibility for Richard’s body through a pause in the dramatic action and cues action for his character. Productions regularly amplify the space between Richard’s lines in order to call attention to the theatrical body of his character, and usually do so to emphasize his apparent unfitness for looking like a king (whether through stumbling or sprawling on the stage as he attempts to ascend the throne). Critics have noted, of course, the sense that the coronation divides the play, and Richard’s increasingly erratic language and behavior marks the end.³⁵ Following from the characterization of Richard as a Vice figure, Robert

Weimann argues that while Richard as “Gloucester” builds upon audience expectations for an improvisatory quality, Richard as “King Richard” must move away from presentational qualities and into a fully representational sphere.³⁶ The play ultimately disavows Richard’s attempt to redefine the possibilities of the future in the shape that he imagines, one that leaves behind his deformed figure, through the character of Richmond, Queen Elizabeth’s ancestor, who defeats and kills Richard at the end of the play. But even without the determination of this ending, the final acts of the play articulate Richard’s obsession with what it means to be king as a worry about an illusory shape he cannot project.

Once king, Richard tries to propagate a totally conventional view of monarchical power. His first post-coronation words inquire, “But shall we wear these glories for a day? / Or shall they last, and we rejoice in them? (4.2.6-7). Richard now looks forward to the possibility of preserving his kingship and claiming that the name of the king is a “tower of strength” (5.3.13). Richard tries to re-appropriate the rhetoric of kingship, with the language of divine right and protection that he had disavowed in order to make his claim to the throne. Hearing that Richmond is on his way to claim the crown, Richard asks, “Is the chair empty? Is the sword unswayed? / Is the King dead? The empire unpossessed?” (4.4.400-02). Each of these questions point toward a pre-condition for establishing a new king, the logic of monarchy that denies the mutability that Richard had employed in his own ambition for the throne. But the play marks a transition in its final acts, from deforming as indistinction and enabling possibility to deformity as limitation. The “template” of the title of King, a character shift that delineates his deformed figure against the clarity of an ideal “shape,” disables his deformed body. Tobin Siebers argues

that, “when a disabled body moves into a social space, the lack of fit exposes the shape of the normative body for which the space was originally designed.”³⁷ The body that Richard performs in order to achieve kingship is laden with the risk of its own visibility, though, and he cannot easily jettison this body even after he becomes King Richard. Although Richard ceases to call attention to his physical body in the way that he had before, the audience continues to see the visual spectacle that Richard presents. The “normative shape,” to follow Siebers, of the ideal kingly body is “fair,” the word the play uses to describe Richmond, who defeats Richard at the end of the play. The deformed and deforming body that Richard Gloucester has employed until this point becomes a liability once this body is fixed as the body of King Richard.

III. Richard Playing Richard: The Actor’s Body and Performative Risk

In Richard’s resounding proclamation of his “deformity,” Shakespeare stages a term already marked with interpretive complexity. The designation “deformity” or “deformed” collates a broad range of examples in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many (though not all) entirely negative. George Puttenham’s treatise on poetry, *The Art of English Poesy* (1589), seeks to catalogue and correct the “vices or deformities in speech and writing” (3.21) that impair and occlude courteous English language³⁸; Philip Sidney’s *Defence of Poesie* (1595) claims that “we laugh at deformed creatures, wherein certainly we cannot delight”; and the pamphlet *Hic Mulier* (1620) conceptualizes deformity in relation to cross-dressing women who “mould their bodies to every deformed fashion, their tongues to vile and horrible prophanations... To have their gestures as piebald and as motley-various as their disguises, their souls fuller of infirmities than a horse or a prostitute, and their minds languishing in those infirmities?”³⁹ But “deformity”

is also a vexed category, in which a form's lack of uniformity provokes a range of interpretations. For Edward Reynolds, deformity is a problem of ungovernable resistance to form, and may serve one of two functions, either springing from "divine malediction" for human sin or existing to "set forth the beauty of regular operations, which, by deformity and confusion, will appear more beautiful."⁴⁰ The precarious distinction between the two functions of deformity depends upon a barely tenable attempt to contain a potentially limitless problem of irregular matter. Especially, however, with reference to the human body, deformity becomes an unstable category because, as William Vaughan puts it: "For he that is deformed in his body, may conceale a generous spirit within, like unto a tottered ship, which containes within it more goods then tenne such ships are worth."⁴¹ If, for Reynolds, deformity may be divine judgment or aesthetic complement, in Vaughan's account, the body may be at odds with the "spirit" within. These examples take "deformity" in relation to "form" as a general principle of that which is apt, suitable, and measured by noticing what is not: the contours of deformity are never quite defined, only deferred and denounced through negative designation (as the *de-* prefix suggests). Deformity presumes a recognizably irregular form that prompts affective response, a judgment of aesthetic and ethical value.

But as a verb, "deforming" is also a way to think about the act of playing, one of the early modern terms for dramatic performance. "Deforming" action is one of the defining characteristics of the Vice, one of the most popular characters from medieval morality plays, who takes "sportive tricks" as his special province.⁴² The Vice character occupies a structural position of audience interaction that is not about "psychological" depth but spatial proximity, drawing on an older form of mimesis "that either preceded or

at least partially precluded representation.”⁴³ In deforming action, dramatic character is not simply produced representationally, but presentationally, so that the performance depends upon the body of the actor coming through to the audience. Tracing an older lineage of performance back to practices of playing “quite remote from humanist doctrine or learning,” Robert Weimann argues that, “deformity, rather than form, *disfigurement* rather than pure figuration was what these practices excelled at.”⁴⁴ William West goes beyond the specific practices of the Vice character to think about this mobile relation to form as the basis of the theater, as “one way of understanding what happens through and during the playmakers’ work: as the reforming, or deforming, or performing, of the player’s substance into a series of new forms while maintaining a material sameness.”⁴⁵ Richard’s explicit allusion to himself as Vice participates in this tradition, and his manipulation of deformity into as many shapes as possible reveals his mastery. Richard’s “rhetoric of deformation,” as Marjorie Garber puts it, takes his “physical appearance, his ill-design, [and] perversely glories in its difference from the usual, the uniform, the fully formed.”⁴⁶

In this way, deformity illuminates the complexity of the relationship between the body of the actor and the theatrical body of the character he projects. The theater employs the powerfully affective device of the actor’s body beneath the character’s projected body, and this overlapping presentation complicates the dramatic fiction’s descriptions of the character the actor represents. Theatrical performance trades a certain kind of clarity produced by the written word for the thrill of the human actor; as Bert States observes, “[w]hat the text loses in significative power in the theater it gains in corporeal presence, in which there is extraordinary perceptual satisfaction.”⁴⁷ Following Robert McRuer’s

point that Richard demonstrates a “crip perspective,” which is “not as invested in substance or authenticity as in processes that unsettle, unravel, and unmake straightness,”⁴⁸ I would note that Richard’s “unmaking” occurs through theatrical playing—and playing with expectations about the character’s body. Richard’s deformations shift the appearance of his theatrical character and his deformity amplifies the body of the actor on which the theater depends.

In assigning to Richard’s character the representational indeterminacy and the presentational visibility of deformity, that is, Shakespeare’s play sets up a particular challenge for actors. While Burbage, as the opening anecdote suggests, made himself memorable as Richard, the stage history of *Richard III* reveals that actors— from Colley Cibber, David Garrick, and Edmund Kean, to Laurence Olivier, Antony Sher, and Ian McKellen— identify in Richard’s distinctive irregular body a possibility, if daunting, for idiosyncratic interpretation.⁴⁹ The sheer length of the play is challenging (in the Folio version, second only to *Hamlet*), and Richard appears in nearly every scene. To read the play’s production history as one built around the challenge of a role is to begin to see how Richard’s double-facing presence in the disability studies narrative reproduces the challenge of uniqueness inscribed within the role itself. This is the paradox of taking Richard as the key example of early modern disability: Richard’s role depends upon the actor’s body that is especially capable. Carrie Sandhal has argued more generally that a notion of acting that begins with a “neutral” stance means that the “appropriate actor’s body for any character, even a character that is literally disabled or symbolically struggling, is not only the able body, but also the extraordinarily able body.”⁵⁰ In this play, while the actor’s performance calls attention to the deformity of the character, the

character's distinctive body calls attention to the physical ability of the actor, even as it demands the actor instantiate of the shape of Richard himself.⁵¹

Consequently, the danger of warping the actor's body is one of the key features of anti-theatrical invective in the early modern period, in pamphlets that worried about the effects of the role upon the actor's body and the contortions and vulnerabilities the act of performance imposes upon it. As Stephen Gosson concedes in his treatise against the theater, the church fathers wrote plays, but "whatsoever such plays as contain good matter are set out in print may be read with profit, but cannot be played without a manifest breach of God's commandment."⁵² In his insistence on the problem of playing, Gosson refracts and contributes to a long line of argument, stretching back to Plato's *Republic*, about the ill effects of mimetic performance upon the body. The problem is the adaptive demands of the role: when, for example, "If it should be played, one must learn to trip it like a lady in the finest fashion; another must have time to whet his mind unto tyranny that he may give life to the picture he presenteth, whereby they learn to counterfeit, and so to sin," Gosson claims, the deleterious effect of playing is clear.⁵³ At pains to distinguish between printed and dramatic form, as a way of disseminating "good matter," Gosson insists that the crucial difference is the player's body that presents the habits and actions of another, especially when the character performed requires extreme alteration of the actor's body. Because the actor's part, or role, as Tiffany Stern and Simon Palfrey have argued, was "an adjunct to the actor's being, a tangible experimentation in imaginative 'becoming,'"⁵⁴ Gosson articulates the fear that the actor will not successfully "exit" the character, once engaged in "becoming."

The production history of *Richard III* is rife with mythologies of harm to the actor's body that note the acute irregularity of the body that actor must project, with great intensity, for the lengthy play. One example of such a performance is "the scholar who played Richard III in college in such a lively manner that 'ever after he was transported with a royall humour in his large expences, which brought him to beggary.'" ⁵⁵ The anecdote recasts the "transport" of performance as dangerous—because possibly permanent—transformation, and this fear that character might overtake the actor has been especially acute around the figure of Richard. In a journal entry about his preparation to play Richard, Antony Sher for example, puzzled over how best to show how "Richard's personality has been deeply and dangerously affected by his deformity," when the physical technique required is potentially dangerous: "But the problem in playing him extremely deformed is to devise a position that would be 100 percent safe to sustain over three hours, and for a run that could last for two years. Play him on crutches perhaps?" ⁵⁶ Sher's performance did use crutches as a distinctive feature of his embodiment of Richard, and Sher himself reflected upon how his own physical injury influenced his portrayal, after the director of the Royal Shakespeare Company production observed: "Richard is notorious for crippling actors." ⁵⁷ Indeed, Sher's account is only one of a long history of reflections on the dangers of playing Richard—and the heroics of the actor's body. Edmund Kean, who received glowing reviews when he opened as Richard III, succumbed to "a violent cold and exhaustion," ⁵⁸ while Garrick's biographer marveled that, unlike other actors who played *Richard III*, Garrick himself never suffered harm from the role. For Laurence Olivier, the toll of playing Richard in the stage production produced new injuries: "...I tore a cartilage in my right knee; my limp in *Richard III*, in

constantly fatigued conditions, had set up a weakness in the ‘straight’ leg.”⁵⁹ Contributing a body to Richard, the actor engages in the physical risk of the role because of the intensity of projecting the character’s body. Even if—and perhaps because—Shakespeare’s play refrains from spelling out the exact features of the body, a long theatrical tradition has taken Richard’s “descant” as an invitation to stage challenging bodily feats. The riskiness of playing Richard is felt most strongly in the actor’s body: the potential detrimental effects of role delineate the vulnerability of the able-bodied actor. Theatrical disability poses a risk of “real” disability: the disjuncture between the actor’s body and the character’s deformity must be effaced for a successful performance of disability and maintained for a safe performance.

The challenge to the actor’s body is also, of course, part of the delight: Richard’s character offers an “extraordinarily able” actor the chance to excel at and become absorbed by a physically demanding role even as the role summons expectations about the actor’s body that will personate him. If the danger for the able actor is the possibility of absorption into Richard’s role to the point of injury, the possibility for the bad actor is the body that hampers theatrical absorption into the character? Thomas Heywood’s prologue and epilogue written for “A young witty Lad playing the part of Richard the third: at the Red Bull” reveal this need to manage possible discrepancies between the bodies of actor and character: “the Author because hee was interested in the Play to incourage him, wrot him this Prologue and Epilogue.”⁶⁰ Instead of effacing the gap between the actor and character, this spoken prologue amplifies the discrepancy in order to manage the tension of potential discomfort produced by anticipating poor performance. The speaker begins by foregrounding his apparent unsuitability for the role:

If any wonder by what magick charme,
Richard the third is shrunke up like his arme:
 And where in fulnesse you expected him,
 You see me onely crawling, like a limme
 Or piece of that knowne fabrick, and no more,
 (When he so often hath beene view'd before.)⁶¹

The speaker anticipates audience response to the difference between his diminutive size and the expectation of “fulnesse” *Richard*’s role entails. The language highlights the performative problem: where the audience expects a metonymic theatrical relation in which the performer stands in for character, the prologue presents a simile (“like a limme”) that equivocates (“or piece”) into synecdoche because the speaker worries that the contrast between what the audience expects and what he will present will prove ridiculous.

The potential mismatch between an actor’s body and the character’s appearance is a problem—and may become a pleasure—precisely because of the play’s popularity. The audience is familiar with *Richard III* because Richard has “so often hath been view’d before,” but the joke may be on their expectations. In representing but a “piece,” the actor may fall short of the “knowne fabrick” of *Richard*’s part, but he may also offer a surprising performance. After lines claiming that diminutive size, rather than disqualifying him from fitness for the role, instead present the opportunity for skill, the speaker concludes the “Prologue” by reassuring the audience:

So *Richard* is transform’d: if this disguise
 show me so small a letter for your eyes,
 You cannot in this letter read me plaine,
 Hee’ll next appeare, in texted hand againe.⁶²

The boy actor’s final point of reassurance for the audience encodes performance as a practice that translates between page and stage. The pun relies on the synecdochal

relation between the actor's body and the role, so that the "so small a letter" is both the basic unit of a word cut down to the smallest size, and a figure in which the role itself stands for the play, a metonymy summoned by the eponymous title of the play. The pun suggests that even in the act of playing, the "Prologue" registers an awareness of how dramatic character is "read" or known through parallel and mutually-perpetuating registers of words and bodies. The actor's body is both subordinate to a text and exceeds it in instantiation. The speaker gestures to his performance in the play to come and to a future script, the "texted hand againe" that will appease an audience who fails to "read" this boy player in his "disguise." The actor's claim "So *Richard* is transform'd" thus simultaneously enacts performance of Richard and narrates this action. The conventional template of Richard's character which the speaker is quick to note may not actually match the "Richard" on stage, exists apart from his particular personation as a standard. And yet: Richard exists in the brief transformation that is the act of performance.

The striking flexibility of Richard's deformity in Shakespeare's play—which, I have argued, puts the actor's body on display because it resists specificity about the character's theatrical body—is perhaps clearest in contrast to Colley Cibber's eighteenth-century rewrite of *Richard III*, which works to opposite effect. Cibber rewrote and then starred in the play, amplifying the rhetorical intensity of the language of deformity under the sign of his own capability as an actor. Cibber adapted the play because he imagined the "Insufficiency" of his voice and his status as "an uninform'd meager Person" mean that he "had but a melancholy Prospect of ever playing a Lover."⁶³ He modeled his performance of Richard on Samuel Sandford, another actor associated with the Theatre Royal company, who played the "Stage-Villain...from Necessity; for having a low and

crooked Person, such bodily Defects were too strong to be admitted into great, or amiable Characters,” so that had Sandford lived a century earlier: “I am confident [Shakespeare] must have chose him, above all other Actors, to have play’d his *Richard the Third*.”⁶⁴ From Cibber’s perspective, the “necessity” of the actor’s body maps onto the character. Critics have called attention to how Cibber’s play, in cutting the figure of Margaret and dramatizing the murder of the princes (which Shakespeare narrates), streamlines *Richard III* and amplifies Richard’s part.⁶⁵

What I find most striking is that while Shakespeare’s Richard mobilizes the illegibility of his deformity, Cibber’s Richard everywhere emphasizes not just that he is deformed, but what this deformity means. When Richard enters in the second scene of the first act—Cibber having composed an entirely new first scene—his opening speech exclaims: “But I that am not shaped for sportive tricks / I that am curtailed of Man’s fair proportion” (83). Cibber’s Richard colludes with the non-human registers of his shape, insisting that he falls short of “Man’s” proportion. The end of Richard’s famous speech interlaces *3 Henry VI* into Richard’s already-truncated soliloquy: ““Why then to me this restless World’s but Hell, / Till this mishapen trunk’s aspiring head / ‘Be circled in a glorious Diadem” (83).⁶⁶ Cibber also incorporates Richard’s rhetoric describing his body’s irregular shape: “an envious Mountain on my Back, / Where sits Deformity to mock my Body, / To shape my legs of an unequal size / To disproportion me in every part” (84). Cibber’s play explicates the description of the body that Shakespeare’s play refuses. Cibber’s Richard describes his body so that “Deformity” is, much more clearly, the “Mountain on my Back,” and embraces the providential determination of his form as both explanatory device and impetus.⁶⁷ In the same scene, just before Richard goes to

court Anne, he confides to the audience: “‘Tis true, my Form perhaps will little move her,
/ But I’ve a Tongue shall wheadle with the Devil” (85). While this confession forecloses upon the chance that Anne’s surrender to Richard’s wooing might be a response *to* his form, as is at least a possibility in Shakespeare’s play, Cibber’s Richard nonetheless emphasizes his power to mobilize a cunning rhetorical plea. Cibber adapts the play because he insists upon a conventional reading of deformity in the way that Shakespeare’s play does not; he reads a correlation between his bodily “defects” and the Richard’s character. He thinks he is well-suited to play this part, and, rather than worrying about the gap between actor’s and character’s body, he amplifies the presumed connection to increase, as he saw it, the theatrical potential for pleasing an audience. Seeing in Richard’s body the chance to extrapolate from his own—picking up on the presentational elements of Richard’s character—Cibber reconstructs the “crookbacked” form that Shakespeare’s play avoids.⁶⁸

IV. Revising Richard: The Politics of Deformity and the Cecil Libels

Scott Colley introduces his stage history of *Richard III* with a claim for the vanishing matter of dramatic character: “Once the final curtain falls, the body disappears.”⁶⁹ While this is true enough for the theater, in this final section I want to consider how Richard’s deformed body does not exactly disappear, but the presumed legibility of deformity turns up to explicate a set of early modern concerns about political power. While in Shakespeare’s play Richard frustrates legibility by employing deformity as a strategy, by the early seventeenth century, Richard’s body—and what his shape reveals about his character—had become an index for political corruption. Andrew Gurr has argued that the 1590s marked a shift in the theater’s engagement with explicit

political commentary in a variety of ways, whether staging or reflecting upon contemporary events in the public theaters.⁷⁰ More specifically, in Richard's case, M. G. Aune claims that "in early modern England this particular character shifted from the sphere of dramatic entertainment to become available as a tool for personal attack and political commentary."⁷¹ The resurgence of interest in *Richard III* in the early seventeenth century correspond in interesting ways to the political career of Sir Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, first Elizabeth's and then James's key advisor, whose own distinctive body—a hunchback formation resulting from childhood injury and extremely short stature—produced no shortage of nicknames that pointedly remarked upon his form. Critics have suggestively tracked a "remarkable chronological relationship between Cecil's career and the popularity of the histories of King Richard III": the repeated printings of the *Richard III* quarto, in addition to other plays such as *The True Tragedie* and Ben Jonson's *Richard Crookback* (no longer extant) in the final decade of the sixteenth century and the first decade of the seventeenth century map closely onto Cecil's political advancement.⁷² For an audience "exceptionally alert to contemporary political applications," then, "it seems very likely that the drama of a ruthless hunchback, a younger son with vaulting ambition, gained extra appeal from its topicality."⁷³ Even as repeated coincidence, Andrew McRae notes, for Cecil, "the historical precedent provided by Richard's allegedly hunched back was particularly unfortunate," and Peter Lake has argued that *Richard III* becomes a didactic model for audiences responsive to Cecil's irregular body and critical of his political power.⁷⁴ Cecil's advancement to Secretary of State, Master of the Court of Wards, Lord Treasurer, and Earl of Salisbury meant that he held "the three greatest offices of state in an unparalleled monopoly of power," and as

Lord Treasurer, he was responsible for managing fiscal activity and blamed, rightly or wrongly, for increased taxes.⁷⁵ The verses that comment on Cecil's death in 1612 testify, in Pauline Croft's account to "the existence of a lively and informed body of public opinion which relished political gossip and subjected famous figures to a far-from-deferential scrutiny."⁷⁶

Indeed, the end of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century saw an intensification of political critique through the explosion of the verse form: as Alastair Bellany explains, "Contemporaries called poems like these 'libels', and the name captured their essential feature: the defamation of powerful individuals with vituperative, scandalous abuse."⁷⁷ Andrew McRae argues that the libel, "a form with established popular and courtly roots, flourished in the reign of James, providing perhaps the single most important textual site for interaction between political and literary cultures."⁷⁸ The verses composed on Cecil's death reflect intense and expansive critique: in the libels the "themes which emerged most insistently and savagely were those of Salisbury's crooked back and his sexual appetites," clearest in the "remorseless images of deformity and moral corruption."⁷⁹ Here, I briefly examine two of the twenty-two libels identified either explicitly (or most likely) penned in response to Sir Robert Cecil's death.⁸⁰ These two link Robert Cecil and Richard III, citing both as examples of a basic correspondence between corrupt political rule and a deformed, "crookback't" body. Where the dramatic character of Richard III mobilizes the incoherence of the stereotype of deformity—and never adopts the "crookbackt" label that described him in *3 Henry 6*—the libels reduce Richard and Cecil to literalized examples of deformity to indict Cecil. The form of the "crookback't" body appears self-evident in its shape but also encodes an assumption of

the ability to conceal evil. The temporality of this critique is curious: the shape of deformity is both a belated pronouncement on Cecil's crimes that can be conclusive only upon his death, and a set of assumptions about the "crooked" and very public body of a statesman. Indistinction no more, disability becomes codified with the genre shift from play to libel: without the actor's body, deformity becomes an interpretive description, an exercise of power on the part of the libeler.

The first libel begins with a comparison between Richard and Cecil but appears to reject it almost immediately:

Heere lieth Robbin Crookt back, unjustly reckond
A Richard the third, he was Judas
In their lives they agree, in their deaths somewhat alter,
The more pittie the poxe soe cousend the halter.
Richard, or Robert, which is the worse?
A Crookt back great in state is Englands curse.⁸¹

Referring to Cecil as "Robbin Crooktback," the verse claims immediately that he is "unjustly reckond / A Richard the third," which suggests initially a positive revision of critique of Cecil. In fact, however, the next clause amplifies Cecil's treachery by comparing him to Judas, the betrayer, in an allusion to Cecil's role in the downfall of the Earl of Essex. While the final couplet returns to Robert and Richard, to ask which figure is "worse," the Judas comparison is one Richard Gloucester himself makes in an earlier play by Shakespeare: at the very end of *3 Henry 6*, when Richard appears to participate in a scene of reconciliation with King Edward's party. Richard claims: "Witness the loving kiss I give the fruit [Edward's offspring]. *[/Aside]* To say the truth, so Judas kiss'd his master, /And cried 'all hail!' when as he meant all harm (5.7.32-4). Richard's allusion to Judas emphasizes betrayal as a performative act, an apparent gesture ("loving kiss") that veils menacing intent. But the intimacy with the audience that the Vice figure creates

through an “Aside” is absent in the libel, in which the speaker appeals to the audience against the “Judas” figure. The verse returns to Richard in the form of a question that reckons comparison to heighten Cecil’s condemnation: if Richard is a tyrant who usurps the throne, Cecil’s deeds against the realm must seem heinous indeed.

The second libel that mentions Richard progresses from noting the similarities between their initials to their bodily shape, and then to their political travesties:

Two R:R:rs twoe Crookebacks of late ruled Englands helme
The one spilte the Royall bloode, the other Spoylde the Realme.⁸²

The explicit comparison of the first line is, of course, not strictly accurate: Cecil did not actually “rule” the nation. Before the second line explains the connection, the two are aligned not just in their names but also in their perceived malignant power. For all his power, Cecil, the verse suggests, might as well have “ruled” from an equally usurping position; the verse not only pairs the two figures, but elides the historical difference. The first line pares the two down to the letter, to their designation as “Crookebacks” and their power in ruling to emphasize their similarity. The second line succinctly individuates them according to act, but the two clauses are understood to be commensurate: the repetition of the alliterative structure draws attention to the actions. Richard “spilte” and Robert “Spoylde,” the verse claims, but these actions share a common destruction of the linear processes designed to perpetuate the nation of England. Richard cuts off literal descendants through murder and Cecil through plunder of national resources; even though these two acts are not the same, the Cecil libels associate a specific kind of body with the corruption of political power. Localizing deformity to a particular shape, the libel argues that the two political figures share an initial that bends into a “Crookeback” and halts the possibilities of perpetuating national power. The word maps indirection as a

refusal of the straight line, onto the bodies accused of political corruption, coding the body of the nation as susceptible to this “crookback’t” shape.

This second verse returns in a slightly different form, in a letter sent from Benjamin Norton on 16 August 1612, which begins by noting the profusion of verses published on Cecil’s death above:

of the laste lorde Treasurer & secretarye theire is a booke written in his prayse &
there bee a multitude of Epitaphes scarce turninge to his praise. the shortest is.
Thatt to crookebackt RR in sittinge at the helme the one overthrewe the nobles &
the other the Realme. And another (yea & one of the cleaneste) is.
Heere sleepes in the Lorde beeperperde with pox
a Ciciliane monster beegott of a fox
some caulde him crookebacke & some litle Robbin
hee bore on his backe a packe like ower Dobbin
yett none coulde rule him, ride, or beestride him
butt he beestrid many or els they beelyde him
by crafte hee got credit, & honor by moneye
& much hee delighted in hunting the Cunniye
but Rotten with ruttinge like sores in September
hee died as hee lived with a faulte in one member.⁸³

This letter’s recounting of the libels both re-circulates and testifies to the imaginative staying power of the verse: these two lines are almost exactly the same as the other example (from a different manuscript) that I have discussed. The energy of this mock-epitaph derives not only from the rhythm but also from its amalgamative quality: “Ciciliane monster” and “beeperperde” Lord, “crookback,” and “little Robin” all map onto what turns out to be a distinctive body. And yet this body, in the figuration of the “crookback” stereotype, moves inevitably toward abstraction that subsumes Cecil’s specific actions. The longer libel, while only implicitly referring to Richard through the “crookback” insignia, expands to broader concerns: in addition to accusations of financial misappropriation and dangerous political power, verses highlighted his figure as

“monstrous” and “infectious,” picturing his political influence as a disease to the commonwealth and highlighting Cecil’s alleged death from syphilis.

The success of this stereotype is such that even those libels that do not refer to Richard by name suggest the connection through historical-performative gestures to other figures associated with disastrous political ambition in the English dramatic tradition, recruiting an array of familiar figures from medieval plays, whether Judas, as above, or the tyrant Herod here⁸⁴:

The divell now hath fetcht the Ape
Of crooked manners, crooked shape.
Great were his infirmities,
But greater his enormities
Oppression, lechery, blood, & pride
He liv’d in; & like Herod di’d.⁸⁵

Reinforcing the connection between inner and outer deformity in the “crooked manners, crooked shape,” the verse claims that the physical shape of the body offers only an incomplete index of the magnitude of Cecil’s crimes. The visual evidence of “infirmities” begins with the body but always points beyond to more “enormities,” so that Cecil’s visible bodily anomaly provides (always insufficient) proof of the still greater crimes not yet revealed. Andrew McRae argues that the libel alludes to Herod to emphasize Cecil’s death from syphilis, because Herod Agrippa, like his grandfather Herod the Great, was believed to have died of “worms,” an illness coded as divine punishment for wickedness; this allusion to Herod suggests that Cecil was punished by an illness that had a definitive mark, “a mark that could neither be arrested nor dissembled.” McRae’s insight into the significance of the pox brings to the fore a distinction: Richard’s example shows that, if the pox cannot be dissembled, deformity certainly can—and perhaps used to great effect. The repeated tropes of “crookedness” testify not only to the departure from an accepted

form, but also to the possibilities for deception and dissembling inscribed upon a particular kind of body.

Cecil's reputation did not only depend upon the libels: defenses, mostly in prose rather than verse, circulated to counteract the public condemnation of the libels. The book to which Norton refers as a posthumous encomium was Sir Walter Cope's *Apology*, and other defenses of Cecil, such as Richard Johnson's *A Remembrance of the Honors due to the lyfe and death of Robert Early of Salisbury treasurer of England*,⁸⁶ focus on his service to the crown, especially in attempting to set the crown's finances in order, and claims that popular judgment came from an insufficient grasp of the complexities of rule. Neither defense engages the visceral imagery of the libels other than obliquely: Johnson claims that "fame killing falsehood" is a "cankering disease" and spends some time discussing how Cecil masterminded King James' succession so that the King "like a perfect Phisition applied precious salues to euery sore of the common wealth."⁸⁷ Where there are bodies in the defenses, they emphasize the vulnerability of the nation itself. Cyrill Tourneur's defense, *The Character of Robert Earl of Salisbury Lord high treasurer of England*, is the only one that notes Cecil's form obliquely: "Had his body been an answerable agent to his spirit, he might have made as great a Captain as he was a counselor."⁸⁸ Unlike the anonymous libels, defenses of Cecil were composed and circulated by named figures, such as Samuel Daniel and the Earl of Pembroke in addition to the above examples. Cecil's posthumous reputation, contested vigorously and viciously, thus "prefigured exactly the opposing view of Robert Cecil arrived at by modern historians."⁸⁹ Cecil's deformed body presents a form to be overlooked by his defenders and incessantly scrutinized by his detractors.

This narrative about Robert Cecil's "crookback't" body is crucial to understanding early modern disability not only because the libels explicitly draw upon figurations of Richard's body to critique Cecil, but also because Cecil lingers in the background of the other text that disability critics have used to contextualize *Richard III* in early modern culture: Francis Bacon's "Of Deformity." Pauline Croft's extensive work on the Cecil libels turns to Bacon's essay as important evidence for her claim that "the seventeenth century had little hesitation in equating physical imperfection with both moral and political decay" when she historicizes Cecil's body.⁹⁰ From the outset of publication, commentators have suggested that Bacon's observations on deformity were influenced by the political antagonism between Bacon and Robert Cecil, who was his cousin: in December 1612, John Chamberlain wrote that "the world takes notice that he paints out his late little cousin to the life."⁹¹ Bacon's essay codes "deformity" in general terms that do not disclose the local animus of Cecil's deformed body. But disability critics have used Bacon's essay, removed from the historical particularity, to think through early modern disability more generally. Stephen Pender argues that Bacon's essay reveals that, in the period, "somatic configuration was taken as evidence of personhood; comportment was the window to the soul."⁹² Lennard Davis accounts for deformity by arguing: "For Bacon, deformed people are ambitious, 'void of natural affection,' good spies, and advantaged in 'rising' in court," which then leads him to conclude, "Shakespeare, clearly holding to all these opinions, depicts Richard III as a crooked-back, limping sexual villain, a spying, usurping plotter."⁹³ Bacon's essay helps to shape both Richard's characterization in the critical discourse about disability, and a

sense of the early modern period more broadly, but critics fail to recognize the personal animus against Cecil that Bacon brings to this particular essay.

Bacon's essay "Of Deformity," appears in the 1612 edition of *Essays*, an addition to the collection he had published in 1597.⁹⁴ Yet where we might expect "Of Deformity" to begin by explicating or defining "deformity" as a concept, Bacon begins: "Deformed persons are commonly even with nature."⁹⁵ The essay immediately translates the "Deformity" of the title to the adjectival formulation, "Deformed Persons." While this slippage between idea and thing goes unmarked, Bacon proceeds immediately to generalize about the characteristics of these persons who are deformed: "for as nature hath done ill by them, so do they by nature; being for the most part (as the Scripture saith) 'void of natural affection'; and so they have their revenge of nature" (426). From this general claim, Bacon does not define what constitutes "deformity" until the opening line of the second paragraph, and even this brief definition is curiously unspecific: "Whosoever hath any thing fixed in his person that doth induce contempt" (426). For Bacon, the body of the deformed person is already unstable, simultaneously characterized as such by the "fixity" of the feature and the social response this "any thing" compels. Critics have argued that the essay's key intervention is in distinguishing between deformity as cause rather than sign, and this departure from physiognomy's discourse of interpretation compels a methodical accounting of the effects rather than semiotic proliferation.⁹⁶ Bacon's formulation recalls the debates in physiognomy over how to read the "signs" of the body, and he begins by acknowledging some relationship between inner person and outer frame: "Certainly there is a consent between the body and the mind; and where nature erreth in the one, she ventureth in the other....But because there is

in man an election touching the frame of his mind, and a necessity in the frame of his body, the stars of natural inclination are sometimes obscured by the sun of discipline and virtue” (426). While the deformed shape is a “necessity” of the “frame,” the diligent work of “discipline” and “virtue” may undo the “natural inclination” toward revenge that Bacon traces. Turning apparent bodily limitation or proclivity for evil into occasion for good, Bacon claims, “it is good to consider of deformity, not as a sign, which is more deceivable; but as a cause, which seldom faileth of effect” (426). Rather than asserting that visible deformity is the sign of moral deformation, Bacon’s formulation charts the effects that “seldom faileth” of the body’s shape in order to manage the possibility of error.

Yet the relationship between cause and effect, while ostensibly rooted in the deformed body, is inevitably social: in addition to inducing “contempt,” Bacon suggests, the “thing fixed” also acts as a “perpetual spur” to the deformed person “to rescue and deliver himself from scorn” (426). The generality of the “any thing fixed” perpetuates stylistic indeterminacy that refuses to define what deformity is. The middle section of Bacon’s essay charts how the deformed person lives out the effects of his scorned body: a “general habit” of being “extreme bold” because of the scorn he faces and modes of compensation, such as “industry” and deception. But each of these observations escapes grammatical specificity. When Bacon writes, “Also it stirreth in them industry,” the logical antecedent of “it” is the “any thing fixed” that the beginning of the paragraph sets out as the defining characteristic of the deformed person. But while the lack of referent suggests that deformity is rooted within the person himself, the next sentence shifts to consider the response of others who perceive the person as deformed: “Again, in their

[the deformed persons'] superiors, it quencheth jealousy towards them, as persons that they think they may at pleasure despise: and it layeth their competitors and emulators asleep; as never believing they should be in possibility of advancement, till they see them in possession" (427). Deformity, presumably the "it" in the sentence, becomes itself an effectual force, "quench[ing] jealousy" and "lay[ing]...asleep" the competition. The pronouns multiply, and the sentence requires multiple readings to track the subject ("they") of each clause. Where "Of Deformity" tries to show the effects of deformity, the causal explanation repeatedly elaborates upon deformity by describing the responses of others: "superiors," "competitors," and "emulators" of the "deformed persons," Bacon seems to suggest, are those who best can mark the effects of the deformed body. These effects reveal the normative expectations of those who are not "deformed persons," who "think they may at pleasure despise" or find themselves "surprised" by deformity.

Bacon's account is ultimately ambivalent about the extent to which deformity is, in fact, generalizable:

And much like is the reason of deformed persons. Still the ground is, they will, if they be of spirit, seek to free themselves from scorn; which must be either by virtue or malice; and therefore let it not be marveled if sometimes they prove excellent persons; as was Agesilaus, Zanger the son of Solyman, Aesop, Gasca President of Peru; and Socrates may go likewise amongst them; with others.
(427)

The final sentence strings along clauses of condition that hover between possibility and destiny: "if" is the determining conjunction for the "deformed persons," but the generality resolves into specific examples. The address ("let it not be marveled") elides the audience (who, suddenly, is marveling?) and concedes a partial rehabilitation for the "sometimes...excellent persons" that Bacon has characterized as deformed. Most suggestive, however, is the list of examples, which range from biblical to ancient to

contemporary figures. The final clause gestures beyond these examples but trails off in an elusive suggestion of incompleteness. Though the form of writing promises no labored argument, the essay's final "with others" gestures not to a formal device but to the undecided quality of the topic, a fundamental hesitation about the relationship between deformity, which spurs action, and the social restrictions upon a body. Bacon summons his audience to take note of deformity, but the causal production of "deformed persons" from "deformity" depends on acts of interpretation, and is finally indeterminate, except upon an individual basis.

While I am suggesting that the "with others" designates a space for the "deformed person" who is possibly an "excellent person," I am not arguing that Bacon's essay gives voice to these persons in the way that William Hay will later claim his own bodily condition in his *Deformity: An Essay* (1754).⁹⁷ All of the textual accounts I have examined so far presume a remove—even at the level of dramatic instantiation—from the voice of the deformed person. This lack of a first-person account is taken as a key marker of the "not quite" disability of the pre-modern body. Lennard Davis has marked the publication of Hay's essay as the "watershed" moment in literary representations of disabled identity: introducing the "disabled person in print as author and character," Hay "appears to occupy a liminal position in his analysis between discourses of wonder and deformity and a discourse of disability," and the most important feature of the analysis is Hay's capacity to self-represent.⁹⁸ Indeed, Hay begins where Bacon leaves off: "Bodily Deformity is visible to every Eye; but the effects of it are known to very few; intimately known to none but those, who feel them; and they generally are not inclined to reveal them" (24). Hay does not define deformity either, except to note that it appears self-

evident but always betokens a secret knowledge. As Hay continues in his Essay, to “treat this uncommon Subject,” his own address is to the community of others; he hopes his experience “may be useful to Persons so oddly (I will not say unhappily) distinguished; and perhaps not unentertaining to others” (24). Hay’s refusal to adopt “unhappy” as a condition of his embodiment, establishing “oddly” instead as the more neutral descriptor, indeed reflects a radical shift in narrating an identity that seems far from Richard’s insistence upon deformity as a negative condition.

While the whole of Hay’s fascinating *Essay* is beyond the scope of this chapter, I will close with an introductory moment when Hays responds to the imagined request for a “frontispiece” of his image:

But for want of it [the frontispiece] let him know; that I am scarce five Feet high: that my Back was bent in my Mother’s Womb: and that in Person I resemble *Esop*, the Prince of *Orange*, Marshal *Luxemburg*, Lord Treasurer *Salisbury*, *Scarron*, and Mr. *Pope*: not to mention *Thersites* and *Richard* the Third; whom I do not claim as Members of our Society: the first being a Child of the Poet’s Fancy; the last misrepresented by Historians, who thought they must draw a Devil in a bad Shape. But I will not (on this Occasion) accept of *Richard’s* Statue from the Hand of any Historian, or even of *Shakespeare* himself; but only from that of his own Biographer, who tells us (and he ought to know) that *Richard* was a handsome Man.⁹⁹

Hay imagines a “Society” of deformed men that reaches across deep chronological divides, a society in which the “bad shape” of the body does not correlate to a person’s value or moral character. Hay includes “Lord Treasurer Salisbury” among this group, in which the deformed body is a mark of resemblance of outward shape rather than inward corruption, claiming Cecil alongside other figures with a positive valence. In order to make the case for the wrongful association of deformity with moral evil, Hay jettisons Richard from the group, claiming that, while Richard was a “Devil,” he was also a “handsome Man” whose evil deeds have nothing to do with a “crookback” body. Hay

reverses the polarities of signification: if a particular body determines a collective, he suggests, that collective does not take the coincidence of an irregular body for the causation of moral deformity. But in producing disabled identity from a bodily shape shared by members of the “Society” he envisions, Hay also closes down the possibility that, in the case of Richard III, the “handsome Man” might also possess a “bad shape” and that this shape might be reconfigured as a site of pleasure for an audiences that wants to see this body.

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One of the anecdotes to which literary critics frequently turn to think about contemporary reception of *Richard III* emphasizes the extent to which the Richards—Burbage and Gloucester—become indistinguishable as a result of impersonation. John Manningham’s diary entry, dated 13 March 1602, records a theater-driven tryst that depends upon confusing the actor and the character: “Upon a tyme when Burbidge played Rich 3, there was a Citizen grewe soe farre in liking with him, that before shee went from the play shee appointed him to come that night unto hir by the name of Ri the 3.”¹⁰⁰ Jean Howard asks, “In the anecdote, who is attractive: Richard III or the Burbage who impersonated him?”¹⁰¹ The very undecidability of the referent—which Richard?—recalls the opening of this essay, in which Burbage’s character identifies the “face and body” of the Richard he popularized in another actor. Richard’s body becomes inter-theatrical, seeming both to exist as a form to be identified in another actor and to draw upon Burbage’s own Richard in the act of playing. But to read the Richard/Richard overlap in the Citizen’s reported request is also to draw out the irresistibility of Richard’s character. After watching Burbage play Richard, the Citizen wants to participate in the play

herself.¹⁰² She asks to be seduced by Richard's compelling presence, his distinctively deformed body and the arresting spectacle this body presents. She wants not simply Burbage, but Burbage as the character he personates. Making the appointment, the Citizen insists on having Richard III played offstage, desirable in his deformity.

I have tried to show *Richard III* complicates a notion of early modern disability as merely "deformity" because of Richard's astonishing mobility in and through dramatic form. Taking Richard as exemplary for a model of deformity as purely negative, disability critics have too often discounted the extraordinary affective power of the play. While it is clear that the *legacy* of Richard's body is one that reduces his character to a particular bodily stereotype, Shakespeare's *Richard III* associates deformity with sexual and political power. In doing so, the play upends the critical and cultural impulses to codify Richard's deformity into a specific, legible, bodily formation. Richard mobilizes deformity as the object of interpretive fervor and leverages this attention to his shape for seductive power. What does it mean that the dramatic character taken for the most emblematic figure of disability on the early modern stage is the one who presents the most challenging physical role for the actor? If we read early modern drama to understand disability in the period, then *Richard III* is one of the right plays to read but the wrong play to take as exemplary. Reading Richard as a normative example of early modern disability forecloses upon the extraordinary possibilities of political power his use of deformity encodes, and points to how easily the "deformed" body is taken for coherent in the service of political rhetoric. Richard's dramatic character offers the chance for virtuosic acting because the play invokes a long history of speculation about his over-determined body, inciting the desire of his onstage and offstage audiences to see

this body. But in refusing to make this body explicit except through the actor's gestures and movement, the play reveals disability—here, as the bodily indistinction that Richard performs—as a powerful theatrical resource for the early modern stage.

¹ William Hazlitt, *Hazlitt on Theatre* (New York: Hyperion Press, 1980), 76.

² *The Second Part of the Return from Parnassus, Or the Scourge of Simony* (London, 1606) is unattributed, composed as part of a set of three plays, probably between 1599 and 1602. See Paula Glatzer, *The Complaint of the Poet: The Parnassus Plays* (London: Edwin Mellon Press, 1977). All quotations from 1602 edition and cited parenthetically by line.

³ While the critical history of *Richard III* is replete with detailed studies, see especially the following pieces: on Tudor myth and providential history, see A. P. Rossiter's classic study, "Angel with Horns: The Unity of *Richard III*" in *Angel with Horns: 15 Lectures on Shakespeare*, ed. Graham Storey (New York: Longman, 1989), 1-15 and Richard P. Wheeler, "History, Character and Conscience in *Richard III*" *Comparative Drama* 5 (1971-72); on the history play and anti-feminist rhetoric, see Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation* (New York: Routledge, 1997); on the history play in performance, see Brian Walsh, *Shakespeare, the Queen's Men, and the Elizabethan Performance of History* (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 2009); on deformity as a feature of Richard's body and historiography, see Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers: Literature as uncanny causality* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987).

⁴ Linda Charnes, *Notorious Identity: Materializing the Subject in Shakespeare* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1993), 30.

⁵ John S. Wilks, *The Idea of Conscience in Renaissance Tragedy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 19.

⁶ Besnault, Marie-Helene and Michel Bitot. "Historical legacy and fiction: the poetical reinvention of King Richard III," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's History Plays*, ed. Michael Hattaway (London and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 110.

⁷ Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford and London: Oxford University Press, 2007), 359.

⁸ Brian Gibbons, *Shakespeare and Multiplicity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 48.

⁹ Lennard Davis, *Bending over Backwards: Disability, Dismodernism & Other Difficult Positions* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 52.

¹⁰ David Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 103.

¹¹ Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 58.

¹² Davis, 57.

¹³ In his account, Henri-Jacques Stiker argues that, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, scholarly accounts of "aberrance and monstrosity" were sharply divided from the "world of the disabled," and he asks: "Are we not still in the presence of a

classification that neatly separates the universe of congenital *deformity* from that of inherent or acquired *disability*?" (*A History of Disability*, trans. William Sayers [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999]), 95.

¹⁴ Mitchell and Snyder, 102.

¹⁵ *Disability Theory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 48.

¹⁶ Ato Quayson, *Aesthetic Nervousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 27.

¹⁷ Abigail Comber, "A Medieval King 'Disabled' by an Early Modern Construct: A Contextual Examination of *Richard III*" in *Disability in the Middle Ages*, edited Joshua Eyler (New York: Ashgate, 2010), 186.

¹⁸ Christopher Baswell, "It's only at the Bodleian that I am a cripple" (*The Times Higher Education*, 6 December 2006). Recent work pursues this possibility; see, for example, Allison P. Hobgood and David Wood, "Disabled Shakespeares," in *Disability Studies Quarterly* 29:4 (2009) (<<http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/991/1183/>>), and Julie Singer, "Disability and the Social Body" in *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies* 3:2 (2012), recent journal issues devoted to medieval and early modern bodies and disability theory.

¹⁹ I have argued elsewhere ("Enabling Richard: The Rhetoric of Disability in *Richard III*" in *Disability Studies Quarterly* 29: 4 (2009) <<http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/997/1181/>>) that to conflate "deformity" with "disability" in the play is to miss how Richard employs his visible difference to his own ends; here I depart from this argument to consider the stakes of deformity as a theatrical strategy.

²⁰ Thomas More, *The History of King Richard the Third*, ed. George M. Logan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 53.

²¹ This and all further quotations of *The True Tragedie of Richard III* (London, 1594; scholarly facsimile under general editor W. W. Greg for the Malone Society Reprints, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929) cited parenthetically by scene and line. While the only extant quarto of the play was printed in 1594, the play was performed by the Queen's Men, probably in the late 1580s or early 1590s.

²² This and all further quotations of the plays *Richard III* and *3 Henry VI* from *The Norton Shakespeare*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, and Katharine Eisaman Maus. (W. W. Norton: New York & London, 1997), cited parenthetically by act, scene, and line.

²³ James Siemon, "The power of hope? An Early Modern Reader of *Richard III*," in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works*, Vol. II: The Histories, ed. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 363.

²⁴ As Robert Weimann puts it, "Appealing to an authority that resides in the unparalleled quality of performance, the actor/character stands back as it were and looks at his own delivery in the preceding scene" (*Author's Pen and Actor's Voice*, ed. Helen Higbee and William West [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000]), 91.

²⁵ See Michael Torrey, "'The plain devil and dissembling looks': Ambivalent Physiognomy and Shakespeare's *Richard III*" *ELR* 30:2 (2000): 123-53.

²⁶ *Windows of the Soul: Physiognomy in European Culture 1470-1780* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 190. Porter distinguishes between *physiognomy*, Thomas Hill's word coined in 1556 when he published *The Art of Physiognomy* to introduce the practice to a literate but specifically English audience; *physiognomy*, derived from the Greek

words *physis* (nature) and *gnomon* (indication, knowledge, judgement, or essence), the classical theories to which popular treatises referred; *fisnomy*, a colloquial term from Middle English and Old French before that, which refers to an intuitive sense of human nature, an “ontological fact”; and *physiognomy* as an anatomical term that refers to the face or the ‘countenance’ (x). My use of physiognomy here designates the first, but the play is interested, I think, in the judgments that characters make repeatedly about Richard’s body even though they do not make specific reference to the texts so profoundly influential in early modern culture.

²⁷ Thomas Hill, *The Contemplation of Mankind* (London, 1571), 161.

²⁸ Porter, 21, 49.

²⁹ Mark Thornton Burnett, *Constructing ‘Monsters’ in Shakespearean Drama and Early Modern Culture* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 93; see also Besnault and Bitot; and Ian Frederick Moulton, “‘A monster great deformed’: The Unruly Masculinity of *Richard III*” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47:3 (1996): 251-68.

³⁰ Ambroise Paré, *Of Monsters and Marvels*, trans. and ed. Janis L. Pallister (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 42.

³¹ Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 191, 209.

³² In “What’s the matter with Shakespeare? Physics, Identity, Playing” (*South Central Review* 26 [2009]), William West conflates the Richards of *2 Henry VI*, *3 Henry VI*, and *Richard III*, but he astutely argues that with Richard’s mandate to look, his “withered” arm “snaps into deformity,” asking: “But is this merely rhetorical information or physical performance? Far from being fixed in any significance, or fixed at all, Richard’s forms can appear or disappear to suit the needs of the moment” (121).

³³ Linda Charnes, *Notorious Identity: Materializing the Subject in Shakespeare* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1993), 32, 274.

³⁴ Randall MacLeod/Random Cloud has argued that non-standardized speech prefixes in printed texts produce interestingly discontinuous notions of dramatic character: see “The very names of the persons’: Editing and the Invention of Dramatic Character” in *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, eds. David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 88-96.

³⁵ Richard Wheeler argues that “Richard’s theatricality, through which he manifests his strength, is also his essential political weakness, because he believes the momentary illusion of reality that he creates by acting can be extended through time over the real sources of power” (“History, Character and Conscience in *Richard III*” in *Critical Essays on Shakespeare’s Richard III*, ed. Hugh McRae Richmond [New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1999]), 185.

³⁶ Robert Weimann persuasively traces this shift in terms of the inheritance of the Vice character, to argue that while the Vice tradition is clearest as Richard plots his way to the throne, “the more consistently the vicious capacity for negation is integrated into the framework of a royal plot (centering on the throne, the *locus* of supreme ambition) the less Gloucester can—as chorus or commentator—remain outside the autonomous realm of a self-enclosed action” (*Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater*, ed. Robert Schwartz [Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978], 159).

³⁷ Tobin Siebers, "Disability as Masquerade" (*Literature and Medicine* 23:1 (2004): 1-22), 8.

³⁸ *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 335.

³⁹ In *Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540-1640*, ed. Katherine Henderson and Barbara F. McManus (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 269.

⁴⁰ *A Treatise of the Passions and Faculties of the Soul of Man; With the several dignities and corruptions thereunto belonging*, (London, 1640), 14.

⁴¹ William Vaughan, *The Spirit of Detraction Conjured and Convicted in Seven Circles* (London: W. Stansby, for George Norton, 1611), 343.

⁴² Alan Dessen notes that "If allusions from the 1580s through the 1600s are to be trusted, the best remembered figure from late Tudor and early Elizabethan drama was not Everyman, Mankind, or Wit but the Vice" (*Recovering Shakespeare's Theatrical Vocabulary* [Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 2006], 110-11).

⁴³ Weimann, *Popular Tradition*, 79.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 80, 81.

⁴⁵ West reads *Richard III* through the lens of the relationship between form and matter of *hylomorphism*, proposing: "The particularly Aristotelian physics of the shapeshifting actor whose substance remains the same while his forms change is expressed in Shakespeare's plays and those of his contemporaries partly through a rich vocabulary of words like *disfigure*, *translate*, and *deform*" (116-117).

⁴⁶ Garber, 43, 49.

⁴⁷ States, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 29.

⁴⁸ McRuer, "Fuck the Disabled: The Prequel" in *Shakespeare: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. Madhavi Menon (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 296.

⁴⁹ Colley provides the most extensive account of *Richard III* in theater history in *Richard's Himself Again: A Stage History of Richard III* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992). See also Alice Perry Wood, *The Stage History of Shakespeare's King Richard the Third* (New York: AMS Press, 1965).

⁵⁰ Carrie Sandhal, "The Tyranny of Neutral" in *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance*, eds. Carrie Sandhal and Philip Auslander (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 262.

⁵¹ For example, in the 2011 production of *Richard III* by The Bridge Project, Kevin Spacey played Richard with the following visible distinctions: a prosthetic hump on his back, his left leg twisted to turn out his heel, an external brace on his left leg, cane in his left hand, his left hand and lower arm in a black glove/brace: some of these signifying elements reflect choices from previous productions, while others reflect "innovative" interpretation choices, through which an actor can "personalize" his own instantiation. See also Ric Knowles, "Encoding/Decoding Shakespeare" in *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*, eds. Barbara Hodgdon and W.B. Worthen (New York: Wiley Blackwell, 2007) for discussion of recent productions of *Richard III*.

⁵² "Playes Confuted in fiue actions" in *Shakespeare's Theater: A Sourcebook*, ed. Tanya Pollard (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 102.

⁵³ Ibid., 102.

⁵⁴ Stern and Palfrey, 47.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 48; original reference is W. J. Lawrence, "Lengths", *The Stage* (11 Feb. 1932), 44.

⁵⁶ Antony Sher, *Year of the King* (London: Chatto & Winus / The Hogarth Press, 1985), 30.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 39.

⁵⁸ Hawkins, 175.

⁵⁹ Quoted in *Olivier*, Terry Coleman (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2005), 139.

⁶⁰ Thomas Heywood, *Pleasant Dialogues and Drammas* (London, 1637: STC 63358), sig. R4.

⁶¹ Ibid., sig. R4.

⁶² Ibid., sig. R4.

⁶³ Quoted in Colley, 16.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Colley, 16.

⁶⁵ See especially Julia H. Fawcett, "The Overexpressive Celebrity and the Deformed King: Recasting the Spectacle as Subject in Colley Cibber's *Richard III*," *PMLA* 126:4 (2011): 950-65; and Gillian M. Day, "Determination and Proof: Colley Cibber and the Materialization of Shakespeare's *Richard III* in the Twentieth Century" in *Shakespeare Matters: History, Teaching, Performance*, ed. Lloyd Davis (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003), 266-76.

⁶⁶ Colley Cibber, *The Tragical History of King Richard III* (London, 1718). This and all further quotations cited parenthetically in the text by page number. The scare quotes register, in Cibber's script, lines from other Shakespeare plays that he has incorporated into his version of *Richard III*.

⁶⁷ Colley notes that Cibber's version "supplied linkages, transitions, and motivations that Shakespeare seemed at times almost perversely unwilling to supply" (20). The refusal, of Shakespeare's play, to supply these elements assumed necessary is part of what drives my investigation of deformity here.

⁶⁸ Cibber's text would be in use for more than a hundred years from his introduction in 1700, played by David Garrick and Edmund Kean, among others; while Charles Macready, Kean's rival, employed a "restored" but heavily edited text of Shakespeare's play in 1821, Samuel Phelps staged a return to Shakespeare's *Richard III* in 1845—but began the tradition of incorporating lines from other plays (15 from *2 Henry VI* and 17 from *3 Henry VI*) for additional explication of Richard's character.

⁶⁹ Colley, xiii.

⁷⁰ Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 141-6; see also Lily Campbell, *Shakespeare's Histories: Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy* (San Marino: The Huntington Library Press, 1947), 306-34.

⁷¹ M. G. Aune, "The Uses of *Richard III*: From Robert Cecil to Richard Nixon," *Shakespeare Bulletin* 24.3: 23-47, 23.

⁷² "The Reputation of Robert Cecil: Libels, Political Opinion and Popular Awareness in the Early Seventeenth Century" in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, vol. 1 (1991): 43-69, 55.

⁷³ Croft, 56. Aune maps the corresponding dates based on Croft's suggestion here.

⁷⁴ McRae, 42. In a recent discussion of the didactic application of theatrical histories, Lake cited the popularity of *Richard III* during Cecil's tenure as an example of political education through theatrical entertainment.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 49.

⁷⁶ Croft, 44.

⁷⁷ "Railing Rhymes Revisited: Libels, Scandals, and Early Stuart Politics" *History Compass* 5/4 (2007):1136-79, 1137.

⁷⁸ *Literature, Satire and the Early Stuart State* (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 8. See especially chapter 2, "Contesting identities: Libels and the early Stuart politician," 51-84.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 54.

⁸⁰ For full texts of these libels and brief discussion of their significance and circulation in the context of a larger culture of libels, see "Early Stuart Libels: an edition of poetry from manuscript sources" ed. Alastair Bellany and Andrew McRae (*Early Modern Literary Studies* Text Series I (2005)), especially section D.

<<http://purl.oclc.org/emls/texts/libels/>>

⁸¹ "Early Stuart Libels" D4.

⁸² Ibid., D5.

⁸³ Benjamin Norton letter

⁸⁴ Glynne Wickham argues that "The portrait of this irascible, black-bearded tyrant that emerged on the religious stages of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries raging 'in the pageant and in the street also' was thus keenly etched upon the popular imagination and still sufficiently vivid" (225) in *Shakespeare's Dramatic Heritage: collected studies in medieval, Tudor and Shakespearean Drama* (New York: Routledge, 2008) and Deanne Williams notes that Herod was one of the most popular figures from the Corpus Christi plays; see chapter two, "Sympathy for the Devil," in *The French Fetish from Chaucer to Shakespeare* (London and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁸⁵ "Early Stuart Libels" D8.

⁸⁶ *A Remembrance of the Honors Due to the Life and Death of Robert Earle of Salisbury, Lord Treasurer of England* (London, 1612).

⁸⁷ Johnson, 5.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Croft, 64.

⁸⁹ Croft, 69.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 57.

⁹¹ Quoted in Lisa Jardine and Alan Stewart's *Hostage to Fortune: The Troubled Life of Francis Bacon* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1999), 326. For a brief discussion, see also Ian Box, "Bacon's moral philosophy" in *The Cambridge Companion to Bacon*, ed. Markku Peltonen (London and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 273. Although admittedly interested, Algernon Cecil, a descendant, repeats this charge in an early twentieth-century biography: "posterity has scented in his essays on Cunning and Deformity the satisfaction for his disappointments. If the observations in the latter were really pointed at Salisbury—and people would have been likely to give them that application—the thing was ignobly done" in *A Life of Robert Cecil First Earl of Salisbury* (London: John Murray, 1915), 351.

⁹² Stephen Pender, "In the Bodyshop: Human Exhibition in Early Modern England" in *Defects: Engendering the Modern Body*, eds. Helen Deutche and Felicity Nussbaum (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 115.

⁹³ Davis, 53.

⁹⁴ See Croft, 57.

⁹⁵ Frances Bacon, "Of Deformity," ed. Brian Vickers, in *The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 426. All further quotations from this edition and cited parenthetically by page number.

⁹⁶ As Stephen Pender puts it: "Reading deformity as a *cause* (with its requisite effects) rather than as a *sign* (requiring interpretation) secures an explanatory paradigm in which deformity figures as impetus and end" (115).

⁹⁷ William Hay, *Deformity: An Essay*, 2nd ed. (London, 1754).

⁹⁸ Davis, 54-55. See also Pender, "Bodyshop."

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 24-5.

¹⁰⁰ Manningham, *The Diary of John Manningham*, ed. John Bruce (London, Camden Society: 1868), 75.

¹⁰¹ Howard, "Stage Masculinities, National History, and the Making of London Theatrical Culture" in *Center or Margin*, ed. Lena Cowen Orlin (Cranmont, NJ: Associated University Press, 2006), 210.

¹⁰² Compare Harry Berger, who describes the scene between Anne and Richard succinctly: "She gets herself seduced" ("Conscience and Complicity in *Richard III*" in *Richard III*, ed. Thomas Cartelli, [New York: W. W. Norton, 2009], 404); and Barbara Hodgdon, who speculates on the Citizen's request as a moment in which "the spectator can reperform the performance" ("Replicating Richard: Body Doubles, Body Politics," *Theater Journal* 50.2 (2006): 207-225), 212.

“Enter Ralph, being lame”: Disability and Citizenship

“A Captaine dispatching a lame souldiour out of his
bande, the souldiour mal-content said vnto him: The warres
need no men that can run away, but such as can bide by it.”
--”Of Crookednes and Lamenesse”¹

The epigraph to this chapter emphasizes the possibilities of an apparent bodily deficiency. “[M]al-content” about the captain’s presumptive dismissal, the soldier reconfigures bodily lack into martial virtue, namely the ability to stay put in battle. For the captain, the soldier’s body is visible evidence that he cannot perform the work a soldier must do, while for the soldier, the “lamenesse” of his body is exactly suited for the peculiar demands of “the warres,” which “need no men that can run away.” The stubborn soldier’s negative formulation revalues the demands of the soldier’s body in terms of the evasions this body *cannot* perform: limited mobility produces embodied steadfastness. Nor is this anecdote the only one to pose the question of what the lame soldier’s body can do. In one of Timothy Kendall’s epigrams, “Of Holus a Soldier being lame,” the speaker explains: “Of *Holus* I did aske, wherefore, / lymping to warre he went, / Tushe answered he, though lims be lame, / my mynde to fight is bente.”² John Bodenham records the lines: “*Androclidas* derided being lame, / Said; Then in fight I hope I shall not flie.”³ These verses provide two different readings of the lame body: in the first, a model of compensation, the body’s lack is surpassed—even spurred on—by the mind “bente” to fighting, and the “sound” spirit. In the second, a model of constraint, bodily features produce a good soldier because they prevent mobility: like the soldier in the epigraph, Androclidas imagines his body in terms of what it cannot do, but this lack

only compels another kind of virtue. These anecdotes invite us to ask: how does a lame body signify? What disables a lame body? To what extent does the perception of physical limitation exceed the evidence the lame body produces?

Wounded soldiers pervade English literature in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as figures of recent history and promising innovation, in treatises on military theory and war, edicts for care of returning soldiers, and medical texts that recorded new knowledge from battlefield experience.⁴ At the turn of the seventeenth century, legal provision for poor relief—especially for wounded soldiers, given the relentless campaigns in which England had been engaged—was a pressing concern. The constellation of responses that constituted the edicts for relief recognized the state’s responsibility to the soldier: the first act under Elizabeth to address soldiers (35 Eliz. I c.4) designated that “such as since the 25th of March, 1588, had ventured their lives and lost their limbs, or disabled their bodies in the defence of Her Majesty and the State, should at their return be relieved and rewarded, to the end that they may reap the fruit of their good deserving and others may be encouraged to perform the like endeavours.”⁵ Yet the soldier returning to England after these “endeavours” was a vexed figure: he might be unable to work because of his injury and thus eligible for relief, or he might be able-bodied, threatening as a possible “vagrant” if he had no job to which to return.⁶ As Steve Hindle points out, the “deserving poor” designated by the laws were “identified primarily by their *inability to labour*” and described as the “lame, ympotent, olde blynde and such other among them being poore and not able to worke.”⁷ Indeed, A. L. Beier notes, “Most of the thirteen poor laws passed between 1495 and 1610 had as a first premise the discrimination between those able and unable to work.”⁸ The laws more broadly linked

care for deserving poor with punishment of those who claimed relief to which they were not entitled, belying the fear that “relief” and “reward” might go to imposters: the 1598 and 1601 statutes prescribed strict punishment for unlicensed beggars, migrants, “rogues,” and able-bodied “poor” who shirked possible work.⁹ While soldiers were allowed to beg on the way home, a practice that “arguably increased vagabondage and provided no answer to the problem of reintegrating them,”¹⁰ this informal practice was highly suspect upon their return, especially if they were unable to resume their former professions. Linda Bradley Salamon argues that, in fact, “former soldiers who returned from battles foreign or civil were construed as a transgressive presence on the margins of public life.”¹¹ While the Elizabethan edict proclaimed provisions for returning soldiers, in order that “others may be encouraged” to do the same, the message signaled by returning soldiers, with their battle scars and wounds, was by no means clear.

This chapter takes up the figure of the wounded soldier, returned from war, whose body bears the signs of this service. Plays in the period repeatedly intermingle wounded soldiers with fakes, featuring “maymed” soldiers and characters that claim to be maimed in order to solicit charity. I focus first on Thomas Dekker’s play, *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* (1600), which features Ralph, a journeyman who is “pressed” to the wars as part of conscription from London in the play’s opening scene, and returns later in the play, “being lame.” While the dramatic fiction is preoccupied with citizenship as a communal identity, depicting a workshop of artisans and the fantastical advancement of Simon Eyre, the shop-owner who rises to become Lord Mayor of London, my reading begins from a curious detail in the comedy: Ralph’s lameness renders him oddly unrecognizable upon his return from war. How should a leg wound so thoroughly challenge social recognition?

Dekker's play, I suggest, brings out the potential contradiction between two senses of citizenship in the period: citizenship as a civic framework of the early modern guild system organized around artisanal work, and citizenship as service to the nation, as in the language of Elizabeth's edict, the soldiers who fight "in defence of Her Majesty and the State." While both senses of citizenship depend upon the citizen's labor—the martial labor the soldier performs,¹² and the artisanal labor that distinguishes the craft—the injury that attends upon the soldier's service renders the citizen unrecognizable. I read Ralph as a citizen-veteran, a figure that makes visible how labor on behalf of the nation, imagined as Ralph's civic duty in the play's opening scenes, puts the citizen's artisanal labor—on which Ralph's identity as the journeyman shoemaker depends—at risk.¹³ I examine the citizen-veteran that *Shoemaker's Holiday* stages alongside surgical texts from the period that return relentlessly to the social effects of prosthetic devices to restore the limping body. Re-orienting a reading of early modern disability around the quotidian figure of the wounded soldier reveals disability not as a matter of the lame body's function, but of appearance.

To read the lame soldier on the stage as the citizen-veteran is also to return to the terms of the Elizabethan act for poor relief and see the soldiers who "ventured their lives," "lost their limbs," and "disabled their bodies." While Richard III, as I show in the first chapter, has often been imagined the key figure for thinking about disability in the early modern period—in which the irregular body accrues emblematic power as a sign of moral evil—the wounded soldier would seem to fit into a reading of disability as incapacity at a moment in which the irregular body did not occasion social limitations because impairment was so commonplace. Lennard Davis observes that bodies in earlier

periods are “variously marked” so that if bodily difference is not fantastically different, it is so undifferentiated as to be unremarkable: “unless the deformity is wondrous, it is ignored or erased.”¹⁴ Deformity, here, is not the vital, elusive phenomenon that I traced in the previous chapter (since Richard is, for disability critics, an example of the monstrous body); rather deformity is defined as “unexceptional” bodily difference. Irina Metzler’s groundbreaking study of medieval disability argues that while “the medieval period certainly had a notion of impairment in the physical sense,” the period lacked the notion of disability as a cultural phenomenon; thus, “The lack of the modern umbrella term ‘disability’ and the cultural implications it carries with it may also entail during the Middle Ages the lack of the entire notion of an impaired person as being disabled.”¹⁵ For critics in disability studies, the impairment of these bodies does not display the “attribution of corporal deviance” that defines disability: lameness is apprehended only as impairment, not disability.¹⁶

My reading of the figure of the lame soldier, however, argues Dekker’s play departs from the lesson we might expect to see in the soldiers who have “disabled their bodies.” Ralph’s return from war brings out the injury produced by the service citizenship requires. However, the dramatic fiction suggests that the disabling constraints upon this body do not align with his irregular body. Ralph’s lame body becomes disabled when his lameness becomes a social limitation, estranging him from his identity as a shoemaker: the disability is the misrecognition that attends Ralph’s bodily loss when service as a soldier eclipses the citizen he was before. The citizen-veteran’s body becomes remarkable not at the level of impairment, as if Ralph cannot work—although the prospect of losing the ability to labor is the shadow that hovers over every theatrical

image of a citizen dispatched to fight—but because the state cannot restore the bodily loss that soldiers suffer. This irregular body exposes the glaring incompleteness of modes of compensation, whether prosthetic legs or monetary payments, for the service that the nation requires. The citizen-veteran asks us to see disability in the early modern period embedded within the foundational structure of citizenship.

I. The Citizen Becomes a Soldier

The title page of Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1600) adds, *or The gentle craft With the humorous life of Simon Eyre, shoemaker, and Lord Maior of London*, announcing the mix of citizen history and romantic comedy emblemized in the dramatic fiction. Until the late twentieth-century, the critical tradition endorsed the play as “a dramatized folk-tale, a fantasy of success” and “a comedy which ends in a cheerful assertion of English unity, a unity embracing monarch, nobility, merchants, and apprentices.”¹⁷ Participating in the fashion for London citizen comedies, which offer the audience “the pleasures of familiarity” of the representation of sight, spaces, and sounds to which they are accustomed, the play depicts urban life in a moment of London's burgeoning population and economic growth.¹⁸ Critics have attended more recently to how the festivity and ebullient moments of the play cover over the ambivalence of the social tensions and contradictions, obscuring actual labor and severing the fantasy of wealth from the experience of poverty that characterized citizenship for many Londoners.¹⁹ The unease extends even to the space of the workshop, in which, critics have argued, the dramatic fiction mystifies labor by short-circuiting the relationship between artisanal work and money.²⁰ This reluctance to valorize actual labor is most pronounced in Eyre's rise, which depends on a “miraculous,” if specious, deal in foreign goods that produces

fabulous wealth, rather than the artisanal work the shoemakers in his shop perform. These readings have focused the themes of citizenship and urban life around the trajectory of Eyre, the shoemaker becoming Lord Mayor of London, while Ralph, the journeyman who performs artisanal and (invisible) martial labor in the play, figures the reality of war's devastation merely as a subplot, a near-tragedy averted through the goodwill of his fellows in the workshop.

The notion of citizenship itself is multiple in the period; the distinction between the soon-to-be Lord Mayor and the journeyman shoemaker reveals the range of discourses around citizenship in the period.²¹ In one way, citizenship is a form of national belonging that requires service through public acts of virtue, one of which may be going to war. The Dutch humanist Cornelius Valerius defines the citizen this way in *A Casket of Jewels* (1571): "hee is to be considered a good Citizen of his countrie, who, being trimmed with ciuill virtues...may be able to perfourme very well not only Domesticall and familier offices, but also Publike both at home and in warre."²² Citizenship here depends on the performance of "Publike" duties, of which "warre" is one part, in a gesture of classical, masculinized, humanist aims. But citizenship, in addition to the more general sense of being a member of a nation (a "Citizen of his countrie," for example), also encodes a specifically urban sense vividly on display in fictions of London life at a particular historical moment. In the early modern period, Julia Lupton argues, "Citizenship was by and large a category of municipal, not national, life, naming a limited moment of self-governance and emergent capitalism within an overarching monarchic order."²³ The citizen's ability to work was fundamental to this "municipal" category, called the exercise of "freedom," which designated a specific set of obligations

and rights in the early modern period. In the early modern period, “freedom” denoted the authorization *to* work in the guild: the freedom of the citizen of London was (usually) obtained by moving through stages of apprenticeship to become a journeyman and a member of the guild.²⁴ Within the guild, there were more distinctions: while “skilled workers” still “referred to themselves as freemen or citizens,” according to John Archer, they struggled “with company elites at various levels for control of their labor.”²⁵ The division between workers and elite proceeded not only on the basis of wealth, but also on the basis of physical labor: as Crystal Bartolovich observes, “The major social theorists of the later sixteenth century all explicitly distinguish citizens (by which they mean wealthy merchants) from artisans, who share the attribute of laboring with noncitizens, even if they might jealously guard their own skilled status over the unskilled.”²⁶

From the opening scene of the play, *Shoemaker’s Holiday* highlights competing concerns around the structure of citizenship in all of these senses. The play begins with an exchange between the Lord Mayor of London and Earl of Lincoln, who collude to end the romance of Oatley’s daughter, Rose, and Lincoln’s nephew, Lacy, because both men consider the match impossible (for predictable reasons): Rose is a “poor citizen” and Lacy is an “unthrift” aristocrat who squandered his money while traveling on the continent. The patriarchs appear to solve the problem of mismatched lovers and resolve the tension of differing status: Lacy is bound for “honorable fortunes” (1.81) in the war with France, which will remove him from Rose.²⁷ This discussion gives way to Lacy’s entrance and his disclosure to the audience that he will stay in London secretly in order to further his courtship (posing as Hans, an immigrant Dutch shoemaker, the audience will learn, Lacy is the key figure in the play’s central marriage plot). While the first half of the

scene makes the offstage war the key dramatic mechanism for fraught negotiations of social status raised by the prospect of boundary-crossing marriage, the figure who actually goes to war is a citizen, the journeyman, Ralph Dampont. A group of citizens enter: Simon Eyre, the shoemaker, his wife Margery, membership of the workshop, and Ralph's wife, Jane, all beg for Ralph to be excused from "service"—pleading his new marriage and offering a bribe—but Lacy insists, "Truly, my friends, it lies not in my power...I cannot change a man" (1.147,149). While Lacy himself has outlined a plan to escape the war, this option is simply not available to Ralph. The play's immediate division between citizen and gentry, in the contrast between Lacy and Rose, gives way to a sharper distinction between Lacy and Ralph, a journeyman without sufficient power or wealth to dodge his conscription for service in the war.

Indeed, the play insists on identifying Ralph specifically as a citizen as he departs. Ralph is one of the many "Londoners" who are "pressed, paid, and set forth / By the Lord Mayor" (1.148) to the war, a journeyman bound within the strictures of the city of London's corporate obligation to "press" citizens into military service. His first words in the play certify his place in the "rolls" of the city's contribution to the king's effort. When Lacy asks, "Is thy name Ralph?" (1.182), Ralph's reply, "Yes, sir," completes the line in assent to the address that names him as a citizen-soldier, part of the city's contingent sent to France. But the accent is on the "citizen" aspect of his service. Eyre's farewell address to Ralph codes his fighting as guild participation: "Fight for the honor of the Gentle Craft, for the Gentleman Shoemakers, the courageous cordwainers, the flower of Saint Martin's, the mad knaves of Bedlam, Fleet Street, Tower Street, and Whitechapel" (1.218-22). This litany of dedications moves from artisanal craft to specific

locations in London, affixing Ralph within the scope of urban practice and affiliation.²⁸

Although the figure of the soldier is national—this is war with France, after all—the play insists upon Ralph’s urban and craft allegiances. The dramatic fiction underlines Ralph’s departure for the wars not as fighting for the king, or for England more generally, but as the service of a citizen of London, known in relation to the civic space he inhabits. In the play’s portrayal of citizenship, fighting as a soldier becomes one mode of serving other shoemakers and working for the guild.

There is a precedent for the shoemaker-as-soldier plot in the source for Dekker’s play, but it is the story of a shoemaker of noble birth. Thomas Deloney’s *The Gentle Craft* tells “how Crispianus was prest to the warres,” fighting “like a second *Hector*.”²⁹ When his commanding general demands to know his birth, Crispianus (who had taken refuge with a shoemaker, although he is the son of the King of Logria) replies that his “birth is not mean” but he is, by trade, “a Shoomaker in England,” at which the general exclaims: “well were it for us, if all the people in the Kingdome were Shoomakers.”³⁰ Transmuted effortlessly from artisan to soldier, Crispianus displays a talent for peace-brokering: when the opposing commander, Iphicratis—himself the son of a shoemaker—learns of Crispianus’ trade, he seeks to make peace between the two armies. The moral of this chapter, in Deloney’s text, is that a “Shooemakers son was by a shoomaker foyled.”³¹ Crispianus, knighted, makes the “shoemaker” designation a sign of communal identification that overcomes even the discord of war. Crispianus converts antagonism to peace through the shared affiliation of the shoemakers and his ability to engage in the “Gentle Craft.” Although this appearance of social leveling is, of course, already fictional at one remove because his English origin distances Crispianus from full identification

with the nationalist concerns of the army with which he fights, this bond *via* skill in trade depends upon and forges anew a fundamental recognition: Crispianus and Iphicratis recognize each other not, ultimately, as soldiers on opposite sides of a war, but as a shoemaker and a shoemaker's son. This fantasy of Crispianus—the character apparently both fully noble and fully artisanal—is, of course, suggested in *Shoemaker's Holiday* in the character of Hans, who is really Lacy in disguise.³² What seems especially striking in the source text is the seamless shifting between artisanal and martial labor as the shoemaker identity trumps national conquest.

By contrast, Ralph's occupation as a shoemaker-turned-soldier speaks to the uneasy relationship between the civic mechanisms that make citizens and the royal authority that orders the citizens to war. Although *Shoemaker's Holiday* obfuscates the identity of the King who appears in the final scenes to restore the social tensions, it follows other plays preoccupied with the knotty relationship between the King of England and artisans of London sent to the battlefield. When the English stage scrutinizes the relationship between the King and the citizen, in the context of war, the shoemakers who serve as soldiers point up not only the difference in social status but also the problem of recompense, the wages for their labor. The title page of the 1598 quarto of *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* promises an account of the presumed "famous victories" in the text, advertising that it "Contain[s] the Honourable Battell of Agincourt."³³ The play begins, however, not with martial scenes but with a contrast between the "young Prince" Henry and his companions Ned and Tom, a group of "fellows" that give way to a group of citizens. The play reprises the stage direction, "*Enter John Cobler, Robin Pewterer, Lawrence Costermonger,*" in the opening discussion:

John Cob.³⁴ All is well here, all is well maisters.
 Robin. How say you neighbor *John Cobler*?
 I think it best that my neighbor
Robin Pewterer went to Pudding lane end,
 And we will watch here at Billingsgate Ward.
 How say you neighbor *Robin*, how like you this?
 (119-24)

Parceling out city watch duties, the men call each other “neighbor” and associate this spatial relation with collective responsibility. These are “fellows” of a different sort, brought together by civic duty, and their surnames designate their guild membership. What is evident here is not just their citizen affiliation, but also their status: none of the three is a member of one of the great livery companies: “John Cobler,” that is, advertises not just his labor but also the restrictions upon his trade.³⁵ However, the contrast between the war these citizens face and the nobles who maneuver in war for political advantage emerges most clearly in the play when Henry, now a king and provoked by the French dauphin’s scorn, decides to go to war with France.³⁶ John Cobler, conscripted for war, begs the Captaine to release him, but the Captaine insists, “Thou must needs serve the king” (1006). Try as he might to protest this duty, first with the plea, “I am not able to go so farre” (1008) and then, “Oh sir, I have a great many shoes at home to Cobble” (1015-16), not even the claims to work can stay his summons. Even when John’s wife begs, “I pray you let him go home againe” (1017), the Captain repeatedly insists “thou shalt go” (1014, 1018).³⁷ The King’s conscription of citizens for his cause removes them from their own work, in service to his acquisitive aims instead.

This distinction between the citizen and king at war contrasts the citizen’s preoccupation with labor, as a means to survival, and the king’s assumption of conquest, as projected gain. The penultimate scene of the play (between King Henry’s wooing of

Katheren and the final scene, in which the French court submits to Henry and approves his marriage to her) returns, ostensibly, to the battlefield: Dericke, the clown figure, enters “with his girdle full of shooes” (s.d. at line 1570), only to be met by “John Cobler rouing, with a packe full of apparel” (s.d. at line 1573). In a work of desperate spoil, Dericke and John have been canvassing the battlefield and collecting shoes from the bodies of dead soldiers. When Dericke observes, “But what hast thou there? / I thinke thou hast bene robbing the French men” (1607-8), John replies that he has “gotten some reparrell / To carry home to my wife” (1609-10). John has claimed the shoes that he could not “cobble” back in England from the bodies on the field.³⁸ The act of unauthorized appropriation of shoes is self-compensation: John Cobler cannot afford to be at war without earning a wage, and after the battle is done, the play suggests, the soldier conscripted for the wars must figure out a way to return home to his trade on his own. In the dramatic fiction, these are all the wages John Cobler will get—in contrast, of course, to the King, who concludes an alliance with France, a new source of wealth, in the next scene.³⁹ Recovering the very objects he had left behind in England, John Cobler substitutes soldierly labor for artisanal labor to the same end: he has a “great many shoes to cobble.” If the comic dimensions of the scene undercut the plight of the citizen forced to go to war, the dramatic fiction still emphasizes the extent to which serving the state is at odds with the citizen’s labor.

II. Citizen-Veteran: Disability and Looking “Strange”

Unlike *Famous Victories*, *Shoemaker’s Holiday* does not go with Ralph into battle. When Ralph returns from the war ten scenes later, though, he initially imagines that his ability to work as a shoemaker will be at stake. Upon Ralph’s arrival at the shop,

Hodge, another journeyman, hails him: “What, fellow Ralph? Mistress, look here: Jane’s husband! Why, how now, lame? Hans, make much of him; he’s a brother of our trade, a good workman, and a tall soldier” (10.62-64). Hodge introduces Ralph as the journeyman he was before he left: he is a “brother” with a capacity for work, whether artisanal, as “good workman,” or martial, as a “tall soldier.” Ralph’s immediate concern is for how his injury may make him unable to perform the labor his craft requires. He fears he cannot provide for his wife: “How does my Jane? When didst thou see my wife? / Where lives my poor heart? She’ll be poor indeed / Now I want limbs to get whereon to feed” (10.82-5). Ralph initially imagines that the wound to his leg, acquired in the war, will prevent him from engaging in his trade: he “wants limbs,” and consequently, he fears, will not be able to “get” food. Hodge, however, rejects Ralph’s premise that his now-limping body disqualifies him from working: “Limbs? Hast thou not hands, man? Thou shalt never see a shoemaker want bread, though he have but three fingers on a hand” (10.85-7). Although he may no longer wear the shoes he makes, Hodge suggests that Ralph still possesses the capacity to perform his tasks as a shoemaker, since the shoemaker only needs hands to pursue his craft.

Hodge’s assertion that “a *shoemaker*” will never “want bread” also points to the civic function of the guild to extend charity to another journeyman. Ralph’s return to the workshop has been mobilized in service of the comedy’s festive social vision: critics have read this moment as one in which, even “[Ralph’s] wound, if it testifies to the real dangers of combat, accommodates Dekker’s strategy of idealization, for it serves to prove the ability of the ‘gentle craft’ to protect and provide for its practitioners.”⁴⁰ Rhonda Arab shows that Ralph’s figure redefines the association of masculinity and bodily wholeness,

so that, in the play, “manhood is not defined in terms of the completed whole closed-off body, nor in terms of the self-sufficient individuality of the body.”⁴¹ Yet the scene also reveals how community care has failed: while Ralph left Jane in the care of the workshop, he returns to find that, according to Margery: “O Ralph, your wife! Perdie, we know not what’s become of her” (10.89-90) and even Hodge attests to Jane’s absence: “No, faith, Jane is a stranger here” (10.107). Ralph’s return brings into relief the failure of social support that makes Jane a “stranger” to the workshop, lost in the city of London as a domestic casualty of the war. Yet although Ralph’s reply insists on the specificity of his loss, he can at least resume his labor: “Since I want limbs and lands, I’ll to God, my good friends, and to these my hands” (10.115-6). The play goes out of its way to assert that Ralph can work, although his war wounds are real, ensuring that he is a sympathetic character.

However, even within the culture of the workshop, Ralph’s body is marked as irregular. The play underscores his loss through puzzling, repeated encounters in which Ralph’s new injuries also render him oddly unrecognizable. When Hodge introduces Ralph, Margery exclaims, “I knew him not” (10.66) and then assures him, “Trust me, I am sorry, Ralph, to see thee impotent. Lord, how the wars have made him sunburnt! The left leg is not well. ’Twas a fair gift of God the infirmity took not hold a little higher, considering thou camest from France—but let that pass” (10.71-4).⁴² Margery describes his visible appearance as “not well,” drawing attention first not to the specific impairment she later marks (his lame left leg), but to the erotic implications of his injury. Although Ralph’s concern for Jane (“oh, my wife!”) distinguishes his fidelity from the syphilitic associations with soldiers who return from serving in France, Margery recognizes Ralph

as a maimed soldier. She sees an “impotent,” “sunburnt,” “infirm” body, and, seeing the wounded soldier, she does not at first recognize Ralph, the journeyman she knows.

Although Margery’s lack of recognition at his return might be understandable—she is, after all, preoccupied by the possible news of her husband’s advancement—this ontological confusion about Ralph’s person extends throughout the play. Later in the play, Ralph recounts a scene of unexpected encounter when Jane brings shoes to the shop. As he explains to his fellow shoemakers, Jane also fails to recognize him:

This morning, when I stroked on her shoes, I looked upon her, and she upon me, and sighed, asked me if ever I knew one Ralph. ‘Yes,’ said I. ‘For his sake, said she’ tears standing in her eyes ‘and for thou art somewhat like him, spend this piece of gold.’ I took it. My lame leg and my travel beyond sea made me unknown.

(18.7-12)

Despite Ralph’s return to the workshop, Jane does not know Ralph, her husband, although she sees an affinity between “lame Ralph” and the Ralph she knew. Ralph explains that he is now “unknown,” and this failure of recognition results from his bodily injury incurred in France. Whom does Jane recognize, seeing “lame Ralph”? The “piece of gold” Jane gives Ralph, a token in memory of another soldier, marks a moment in which she recognizes him now as a lame soldier rather than the shoemaker Ralph Dampont, her husband, who was conscripted for war. Half-recognized, “somewhat like” himself, Ralph receives not wages for his work as a shoemaker, but charity, a gift from Jane to the returned soldier she sees before her.

The play points up Ralph’s sudden unfamiliarity by staging the shoes that link Ralph and Jane in the workshop as failed tokens of recognition. When Jane enters, Ralph is “stroking on” the shoes that he made for her, which he gives her in the opening scene of the play. Upon his departure for war, Ralph explains:

Now, gentle wife, my loving, lovely Jane,
 Rich men at parting give their wives rich gifts,
 Jewels and rings to grace their lily hands.
 Thou know'st our trade makes rings for women's heels.
 Here, take this pair of shoes cut out by Hodge,
 Stitched by my fellow Firk, seamed by myself,
 Made up and pinked with letters for thy name.
 Wear them, my dear Jane, for thy husband's sake,
 And every morning, when thou pull'st them on,
 Remember me, and pray for my return.
 Make much of them, for I have made them so,
 That I can know them from a thousand mo.
 (1.233-44)

Ralph's speech articulates Jane's shoes as a product of intensive and individuated labor, a gift from him that required the whole workshop in the making. The shoes mark status (opposed to the "rich gifts" that other men give) and citizen affiliation (the work of "our trade"). But the emphasis here is on the intimacy of the gift: Ralph decorates the shoes with Jane's initials ("Made up and pinked with letters for thy name") and enjoins her to "remember" him through her use. Shoes, by virtue of bodily diversity, are already particular objects that vary according to the individual size of a person's feet, or even according to the individual foot. The doubled identification with Jane amplifies the gift's specificity: the shoes are sized to her feet and marked with her name in the most extensive description of artisanal labor in the play. Ralph's desire to ornament Jane's shoes codes the pair as a talisman of memory, and this emphasis in the opening scene drives home Jane's misrecognition in the later scenes. Ralph can recognize these shoes "from a thousand mo"—and, indeed, when he encounters them again he does—but while he hopes they will help Jane to "remember" him, she cannot recognize him as anything but a former soldier because of his lame body, irrevocably altered by the war.

The play recapitulates Jane's recognition of Ralph as a "stranger" when they are finally reconciled. In Ralph's absence, Hammond, a gentleman citizen, has courted Jane and convinced her that Ralph died on the battlefield in France; Jane's return of the shoes to the workshop, in fact, was to prepare them for her second wedding. The shoemakers band together to assist Ralph in preventing the wedding, and they arrive just before the ceremony begins. As before, however, the mere sight of Ralph does not prompt Jane's recognition of him as her husband. Ralph's bodily loss continues to frustrate recognition. In fact, Hodge must identify Ralph explicitly in order to effect their reconciliation: "Jane, dost thou know this man? 'Tis Ralph, I can tell thee. Nay, 'tis he, in faith; though he be lamed by the wars, yet look not strange, but run to him, fold him about the neck and kiss him" (18.38-41). Hodge attributes the "strange" sight to Ralph's injury, "lamed by the wars," and he cues action from Jane through the language of reconfirmation ("Nay, 'tis he"), suggesting Jane's reticence to see Ralph for the shoemaker he was. Ralph's identity as a citizen—even while he returns to the shop—is eclipsed by his visible identification as a wounded soldier. The repeated scenes of Ralph's unrecognizability when he returns to the obligations of his craft suggest that disability is about how the lame body is perceived rather than what the body can actually do. The play stages Ralph as *citizen-veteran*: he bears the signs of his service upon his body, and this bodily loss inevitably transforms his participation in the very structure that demanded his service in the first place. Even though his "lame leg" does not prevent him from working, Ralph is more identifiable as a former soldier than as the journeyman shoemaker he was before.

III. Surgical Arts and Social Restoration

The play, I am suggesting, marks Ralph as a citizen going to war and never lets the audience forget Ralph's injury. But in making Ralph's body "strange," what exactly does the audience see? How does, or might, the play stage a theatrical body "being lame"? Other examples of wounded soldiers on the stage emphasize how impairment is faked, or bring the wooden leg to bear on the soldier's plight. In the final act of Thomas Middleton's *The Roaring Girl* (1611), for example, Rafe Trapdooor enters the stage "like a poor soldier" in a ruse to solicit money, entreating his audiences for charity for the "maimed soldiers" (5.1.77) and claiming he has been wounded in his "nether limbs" (5.1.79).⁴³ In a very different register, Anthony Munday's play *Life of Sir John Oldcastle* (1600), features "poore men" and soldiers begging for aid upon their return to England; when told they must possess a license to beg, a soldier identified only as "2" observes, "Faith we haue none, but what we beare vppon our bodies, our maimed limbs, God help vs" (1.3.339-40) and a fellow soldier, "4," avows, "And yet, as lame as I am, Ile with the king into France, if I can crawle but a ship-boorde, I hadde rather be slaine in France, than starue in England" (1.3.341-3).⁴⁴ Thomas Dekker's *The Wonder of a Kingdom* (1636) features a "lame-legged Soldier" nearly forced to surrender his wooden leg to a "Broker" when he cannot pay his debts, complaining that the Broker, "Swore (not to save my soul) unless that I / Laid down my stump here for the interest, / And so hop home" (4.2.141-7).⁴⁵ While other examples of "lame" soldiers on stage explicitly identify the wooden legs that function as prosthesis or prop, the theatrical cues in *Shoemaker's Holiday*, however, offer an unstable collection of descriptions of Ralph's body. Upon his immediate return, Ralph says that he "wants limbs," suggesting that perhaps he has lost

both legs; Margery specifies his “left leg” as “not well”; Ralph himself later refers to his “lame leg” as the reason for Jane’s lack of recognition.

Ralph’s lame (missing? wooden?) leg becomes even more prominent as an ambiguity in the play because the contemporary moment is one in which the prosthetic potential of the wooden leg is a signal achievement of surgical advances. Here, I begin by sketching out the possibilities that early modern surgeons envisioned for a prosthetic leg (or stilt or stump), a development that depends, the surgeons claim, upon adopting new techniques of “dismemberment” to accommodate a prosthesis and enhance a wounded soldier’s appearance. Literary critics have read prostheses as evidence for early modern fascination with the monstrous dimensions of a human body that relies upon the supplement, or what Vin Nardizzi calls “the inhuman valence of prosthesis.”⁴⁶ David Wills, for example, notes how the object blurs the boundaries of the human body: “But that which presents itself as a supplementary operation, designed to remedy the imperfections of nature, must at the same time admit of the artificial as unnatural, of what is counter to nature, a perversion and a monstrosity,”⁴⁷ While the most prominent French surgeon of the period, Ambroise Paré, does indeed file his book on prosthetic devices alongside the book “Of Monsters and Marvels” (a litany of anecdotes and illustration, including chapters with observations on topics ranging from animals to—as we will see in the next chapter—beggars who feign illness) in his *Oeuvres*, I depart from this strand of critical analysis to examine instead Paré’s interest in the possibilities for successfully counterfeiting missing body parts. What interests me is how surgery manuals that describe the techniques for advanced treatment of wounded soldiers conceptualize restoration of the wounded veteran’s body. This restoration is not *merely* medical, but is

also concerned with the social effects of the surgical intervention, aiming to integrate the veteran back into society on an aesthetic, as well as practical level.

The Company of Barber-Surgeons, formed when two companies merged in 1540, were the key medical practitioners on the battlefield.⁴⁸ Trained and licensed through the College of Barber-Surgeons, surgeons learned the discipline of anatomy as the art of the hand. Differentiated from physic (though overlapping in theory if not in practice) through the conventional understanding that physicians, with university training, did not accomplish cure through physical intervention, surgeons worked either on the surface of the body—excising fistulas, shaving hair, lancing boils—or performed operations within the interior of the body.⁴⁹ Contemporary treatises call surgery the “first instrumentall part of Medicine” and the Handy part of healing⁵⁰; the “noble handy woorke”⁵¹; and “an Art, which teacheth the way by reason, how by the operation of the hand we may cure prevent and mitigate diseases.”⁵² The surgeon’s manual intervention puts theoretical knowledge of anatomy to practical use; indeed, the English anatomist Helkiah Crooke, author (more precisely, compiler) of the most well-known anatomical treatise in the period, the *Mikrocosmographia* (1615), dedicates his text to the Company of the Barber-Surgeons because, as he tells them, “the Body of Man is the Subject of your Art.”⁵³

Much of the innovation in surgical technique and anatomical knowledge in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was linked to war.⁵⁴ *The Surgeons Mate*, by John Woodall, aims to express “the easiest and safest waies and meanes of healing the wounds and other great infirmities and diseases that warre usually produceth.”⁵⁵ Paré’s landmark texts on surgery distill new techniques from his battlefield experience (one of the most famous being a method of cauterizing flesh wounds through a turpentine preparation

rather than burning oil).⁵⁶ His work entered the English medical canon when Crooke appended a translation of Paré's *An Explanation of the Fashion and Vse of Three and Fifty Instruments of Chirurgery* to the second edition of his own *Somatographia Anthropine* (1634), and Thomas Johnson's 1634 translation of Ambroise Paré's influential *Oeuvres* (1585), *The Workes of that Famous Surgeon Ambrose Parey* into English made the full work widely available. *Ouevres* contained an entire book on prosthetic devices, published separately in 1561 and 1564 before the 1585 compendium. Paré's treatise, David Wills observes, "is extensive in its explanations of the use of prosthetic devices, all of them accompanied by diagrams, taking into account aesthetic as well as orthopedic concerns."⁵⁷

Paré's work stresses that he differs from classical directives for surgery when experience has taught him better techniques. In the chapter, "Where Amputation must be made," Paré distinguishes moments when amputation should go against the "common rules of Art."⁵⁸ While a surgeon should try to preserve as much of the good flesh as possible in an amputation of the hand or the arm, Paré directs him, by contrast, to consider taking off more flesh than strictly necessary when amputating the leg if it will allow for a better fit for a prosthesis: "cut off the Legge some five fingers breadth under the knee," Paré suggests, so that "the patient may more fitly use the rest of his Legge and with lesse trouble, that is, he may the better goe on a wooden Legge" (458). If a surgeon follows the received practice that prescribes removing as little flesh as possible, Pare explains, "the patient will be forced with trouble to use three Legges instead of two" (458) and rely upon a cane. Paré cites the example of a Captain Francis Clerke who, when his foot was shot off, had more of the leg amputated (to "five fingers below the

knee”) to employ a wooden leg, and “verily hee useth it with much more ease and facility than before in performance of any motion” (458). Paré emphasizes Clerke’s “more ease and facility” as a valuable outcome of the surgery that follows a new rationale of function rather than tradition. This surgical innovation takes the patient’s restoration into account as much as possible, even contravening the “rules” from the ancient authorities that would direct otherwise.

The surgeon’s work, that is, begins to include new possibilities for reconstruction rather than removal. While Crooke’s introduction to *Mikrocosmographia* (1616) redacts the traditional view of anatomical knowledge as that which empowers surgeons to know “how to auoide the most sensible & vsefull parts in Trepaning, Cauterizing, dismembring and such like,” new developments in prosthetics allow the surgeon to do more than simply “auoide” the “useful” parts when “dismembring” the body.⁵⁹ Paré suggests that the artful surgeon also displays the highest competence when his interventions appear “natural”: the ends of medical intervention are measured according to the degree that they present the patient as newly restored to the world. In a chapter titled, “By what meanes armes, legs, and hands may be made by art, and placed in stead of the naturall armes, legs, or hands that are cut off and lost,” (880), Paré writes: “Necessity oftentimes constraines us to find out the meanes whereby we may help and imitate nature, and supply the defect of member that are perished and lost” (880). These “means” by which a surgeon may “help” and “imitate” are prosthetic devices, “made by art,” that allow the patient to “performe the functions of going, standing, and handling” (880). With diagrams and instructions for prosthetic devices, such as “The forme of a wooden Leg made for poore men” to address the “great deformity” of “halting,” *Workes* emphasizes

the availability of “meanes” to patients. Vin Nardizzi describes this wooden leg, consisting “mainly of a ‘stump or stock’ that the wearer straps tightly onto the thigh and which enables him to balance and to move around as if he were on two feet.”⁶⁰ And, as Patricia Cahill notes, “In Elizabethan England, such a semi-mechanical apparatus could be purchased from a joiner for eighteen pence, a sum then roughly equivalent to a bit more than two days pay for a soldier.”⁶¹ Paré’s vision for a “wooden Leg” to restore a patient’s “functions” insists that a prosthetic device might make movement and labor (“handling”) possible again.

Yet Paré stresses not just the material function of the devices to aid in movement, but also how they reconstruct the appearance of the wearer and reconfigure visibility around implicit standards of moral and aesthetic value for bodies: “They [the prosthetic devices] are not onely profitable for the necessity of the body, but also for the decency and comelinesse thereof” (880). The emphasis shifts, in this justification, from the practical value of surgical intervention that assists the patient’s bodily “necessity” to the social benefits to the wounded or incomplete body. Prostheses, when they appear “natural,” will “profit” the wearer because they allow the prostheticized body to return to “decency” and “comelinesse.” These virtues shift from mobility to aesthetic appearance, with a stress on the moral value of presenting wholeness. Even in surgery manuals, then, war wounds present not only a problem of repairing the effects of battle, or even of helping the patient regain mobility and function, but also the work of reconstructing the wounded body to make this body socially presentable. The surgeon’s art of “mitigation” not only attempts to ease the patient’s wound, but to restore the body for social relations.

While Paré's text is the best-known example from the period, other surgery manuals offer similar reflections on the value of the surgeon's craft, making explicit links between war and surgical innovation—and imagining the possibility of a wooden leg to restore more than mechanical function. Noting the importance of surgical techniques to care for wounded soldiers, John Woodall begins the section “Of Dismembring or Amputation” by calling the act ‘the most lamentable part of chirurgery,’ so that a surgeon should never “use dismembering” except in “necessitie” (136): “For it is no small presumption to Dismember the Image of God” (156).⁶² Woodall's instructions for amputation are lengthy and detailed, and he repeatedly notes his departures from the ancient advice. Like Paré, he encourages the surgeon to amputate according to what will benefit the patient the most: even “though the foot onely be corrupted, it is best to take off the leg some foure inches below the lower end of the rotule, or round bone of the knee” because “the paine is all one, and it is most profitable to the Patient, for a long stump were but troublesome” (158). Woodall repeatedly directs the surgeon to think about what is “profitable” to the patient, and he praises the surgeon who shows judgment in this regard: if the patient is missing part of the foot, the rest may become “unprofitable” and ought to be removed, “and no lesse of the legge also, for it will be but a hinderance to the Patient, considering that hee cannot stand thereon, and is full of grievous paine” (394). Woodall can advocate for departing from the conventional practice of leaving as much of the body intact as possible, he explains, because of prosthetic devices now available for amputees. If the surgeon amputates “a little below the Gartering place” he will “leav[e] a fit roome for the stilt, to rest the body upon” (394).

The device Woodall describes, like Paré's wooden leg, straps around the "stump" of the leg with a wooden "stilt" for support.

Yet Woodall does not only praise the prosthetic device for the mobility it promises the body; he also emphasizes the way in which the "artificiall" leg may restore visible wholeness to the body. In his accounts of successful surgeries, Woodall praises the supplementary value of the prosthesis, the way in which, once he performed the dismemberment, his patient "went most neatly on an artificiall legge not easily discovered" (398). Digressing to expound upon the prosthetic device, Woodall writes:

...for the noblenesse of each member of mans body, and namely of the legge, is highly even in humanitie to be tendred and regarded, being a great honour and comfort to the man, when, if without a foot, by the helpe of Art, namely, of a hollow Case, or the like, with an artificiall foot adjoined, a man may decently and comely walke, and ride, goe over a style, yea, and runne, and sit straight, and behave himself man-like in Bed, and at Boord, and doe good service for the defence of his Country, or of himself.

(396)

The passage, which begins by expounding the "noblenesse" of the parts of the body, ends by praising the advances of "Art" and the prosthetic devices, from "hollow Case" to "artificiall foot," that allow the patient to resume his activities. Yet Woodall frames the possibilities for this post-dismemberment life as more than simply functional: like Paré's insistence on "decency" and "comelinesse," his patient "may decently and comely walke," a benefit that suggests that without this artificial aid, the patient would not meet a standard both moral and aesthetic. Thus the surgeon's "Art," performing amputation and fashioning the prosthetic object, can transform not only function but also appearance. Moreover, the wooden leg enables a number of actions that do not immediately seem to depend upon the presence of a foot: the man may "sit straight, and behave himself man-like." The "hollow case" secures an ideal of the masculine body, a body capable of

performing sexually in “Bed” and socially at “Boord,” and rendering “good service” for the country.

Indeed, the treatise circles continually back to surgery’s wartime impetus. The final “case” in the section on dismembering that Woodall puts before his reader is speculative: “I will suppose or suggest a valiant well-deserving Souldier, for the honour of his King and Country, pressing forward in right, should receive a wound by a shot upon his legge...” (403). Rather than concluding with another account of a successful surgery, Woodall’s supposed Souldier becomes a putative model for the lengthy discussion that follows, an imaginative template through which he weighs three modes of treatment—immediate, delayed, and deferred amputation—the young surgeon might consider to treat the wounded leg. Woodall’s theoretical soldier is a vivid example of the best possible recipient of surgical restoration: “Valiant,” “well-deserving,” fighting loyally for national “honour,” and “pressing forward in right,” the Souldier is also exemplary in his military service. And, as a good soldier, he engages in a battle that also makes him the most obvious candidate for the kind of amputation Woodall’s pupils will need to perform. If prosthesis will, in the centuries that follow, move in the direction of producing the “normal” body, these surgical manuals proclaim the hope that the wounded soldier may be prostheticized back into sociality, and in doing so, they begin to envision a norm—not quantifiable, but a qualitative expression of appearance—to which the lame soldier’s body might be restored. These brief examples from influential surgery texts, I suggest, reveal that the “defect” of a lame leg is never just about function. The surgeons are interested in the possibilities of their reconstructive “Art” to facilitate social reintegration for veterans of war by masking the disability of a missing leg.

In showing how surgical manuals of the period emphasize the social dimensions of war wounds and the aesthetic power of prosthetic supplement, I do not mean to suggest that the stage celebrates the success with which the surgeons achieve their aims of undetectable restoration, despite the anecdotal accomplishments the texts relate. If anything, theatrical examples of wounded soldiers with wooden legs stress not their “comely” appearance or the ways in which they escape notice as a wooden leg “not easily discovered” (Woodall’s approving nod), but rather the way in which the wooden leg may work against the wholeness of the body to become the defining feature of a dramatic character. On the stage, the performance of lameness demands a particular personation from an actor’s body, one that most likely, due to the repertory demands of the early modern theater, is not actually missing a leg. The actor produces the “lame” body through the prosthetic device of a stage property. Pointing out that Philip Henslowe’s diary includes an entry for “Kentes wooden leage,” Vin Nardizzi suggests that an actor “conscripted an abled leg to perform the ‘stump’ that is the sign of amputation” and locates the performance of the amputated or wooden leg as one that “exacerbates the indeterminacy located at the site of prosthesis, for it exploits the tension between illusion and realism in such a way that could have persuaded audiences not to see things that were visible there.”⁶³ There are multiple ways to stage the lame body: the actor could assume a prosthesis that straps around the able leg; tie up the leg to rest it upon a wooden stump or to suggest amputation at the knee (when viewed from the front); emphasize an irregular gait that favors the left leg; or suspend a bent leg from a shoulder strap and hobble about the stage using crutches.

Given this range of possibilities for how to stage the “lame” body, what the stage direction—and subsequent lack of emphasis upon what Ralph’s theatrical body, “being lame,” looks like—in *Shoemaker’s Holiday* brings to the fore is not the certainty of the prosthetic attachment, but the uncertainty. Genevieve Love has insightfully argued that the play’s lack of elaboration upon a wooden leg is an odd lacuna because Ralph, as a craftsman, has ample opportunity to fashion a prosthetic device for himself; the play, she suggests, is particularly interested in the “theatrical power of loss,” so that “the shoemaker’s disabled body is not *compensated for* but *echoed by* his product,” the empty shoe.⁶⁴ Certainly, this is one option, and a production’s interpretation could suggest the actor’s body under the projection of the character’s theatrical body. For example, an able-bodied actor playing Ralph could slip the character’s limp into invisibility in certain scenes, joining with the other journeymen in the song-and-dance routines of the concluding feast without impaired mobility. However, I want to draw out the lack of clear prosthesis in relation to how the dramatic fiction singles out “lame Ralph” through the visible difference of his body. Rather than a jubilant insistence upon a wooden leg, the play underscores instead the “want” of limbs that Ralph’s movements disclose. Refusing to embrace and elaborate upon the restorative possibilities of the prosthesis, Dekker’s play amplifies instead the uncertainty of the citizen-veteran’s relation to labor and the permanently unsettling loss that service in the war inscribes.

To see this uncertainty in conjunction with the repeated scenes that call Ralph “strange” is also to mark how the stage direction that introduces him upon his return, “Enter Ralph, being lame” (s.d. at 10.61), reconfigures his dramatic character. Stage directions are notoriously variant elements of an already unstable text, but with this

direction the play recasts Ralph's figure in terms of his wounded body, the inescapable sign of his service in the wars. Although the stage direction in the printed text is, of course, inaccessible to an audience in the theater, the play brings out Ralph's limping body not only through moments of misrecognition, in which the other characters recognize him as a stranger and fail to recognize him as Ralph, but also through the renaming of his character according to a ceaseless reminder of his maimed body. Ralph is called "lame Ralph" repeatedly throughout the rest of the play. While his words in the opening scene had defined him as the "Ralph" pressed into service by the city of London, and while the putative proof of his death records him as "Ralph Damport" (leading Jane astray), Ralph's re-entry to the workshop re-names him: Firk, his fellow journeyman, refers to him as "my fellow lame Ralph" (16.154) and to Jane as "lame Ralph's wife" (16.159).

The designation of "lame Ralph" persists to and through the final scenes. When the pancake bell brings the shoemakers with napkins in hand to the hall for breakfast and holiday at the end of the play, Eyre commands his journeymen to help serve in the celebration and his order singles out what Ralph cannot do: "Avoid, Hodge; run, Ralph; frisk about, my nimble Firk! Carouse me fathom healths to the honour of the shoemakers!" (20.16-8). Although this moment captures the gleeful abandon of Eyre's festive proclamation, it also underscores Ralph's limited movement: presumably, Ralph does not, in fact, "run" and "carouse" like the others. Just a few lines later Eyre commands again: "Firk, Hodge, lame Ralph, run, my tall men, beleaguer the shambles, beggar all Eastcheap, serve me whole oxen in chargers, and let sheep whine upon the tables like pigs for want of good fellows to eat them" (20.24-7). This charge seems

entirely in keeping with the fantasy of harmony since Ralph is present with the other journeymen, serving alongside them; yet the epithet that attaches to his name singles out his visible difference as a constant reminder of his war injury. This theatrical delineation requires the crucial liveness of the actor's body: Ralph's limp becomes visibly detectable only when the shoemakers are actually moving across the stage. At rest—lined up behind Eyre awaiting the banquet, or working on shoes in the shop—the journeymen could appear indistinguishable, and Ralph's "being lame" distinction would not necessarily set him apart from the others. However, these final scenes of the play insist upon putting Ralph's body in motion, pairing the irregularity of his gait with Eyre's explicit address to "lame Ralph." Ralph, a citizen-veteran in the midst of a civic feast, appears a visible reminder of the irreparable loss that war entails.

This structural change to Ralph's character also informs his relationship with the other shoemakers in the workshop, when his limping presence seems to alienate him from them at key moments. To return to the scene in which Ralph and Jane are reunited: when Hammon offers Ralph twenty pounds in gold to surrender Jane to him, Ralph responds, "Sirrah Hammon, Hammon, dost thou think a shoemaker is so base to be a bawd to his own wife for commodity? Take thy gold; choke with it! Were I not lame, I would make thee eat thy words" (18.89-92). Ralph rejects Hammon's offer on the basis of what shoemakers do, an expression of virtue that relies on communal strength even in the face of his apparent deficiency. The play continues to reject the suggestion of sexual impotence in contrast to potential interpretations of his newly-injured body as deficient. Ralph diverts attention from physical lack to insist upon his honor in terms of his guild membership ("a *shoemaker* is not so base") and his marital fidelity ("to be a *bawd* to his

own wife”) although his injury prevents him from fighting Hammon. While the play restores Ralph and Jane to each other through the united action of the shoemakers, however, the rest of the scene troubles this sense of mutual dependence and happy resolution.

In the rest of the scene, just after Ralph has been restored as Jane’s husband and know shoemaker, the dramatic fiction points up the visible identity between Ralph’s lamed body and his deceptive double: the pretended soldier who counterfeits an injury. On the heels of the confrontation with Hammon, the play stages Ralph’s estrangement from his former self even more intensely. Oatley and Lincoln, the patriarchal figures from the first scene of the play, enter and accost Ralph and Jane (who is masked), believing them to be Lacy and Rose in disguise; they hope to prevent the wedding they believe is about to take place. Lincoln misrecognizes Ralph and thinks he is Lacy, exclaiming “my nephew, / To hide his guilt, counterfeits him lame” (18.123-4), assuming that his war injury is false. Firk, the journeyman who has arranged to gull Oatley and Lincoln, thinks that their confusion will be amusing and reinforces this assumption: “Yea, truly, God help the poor couple! They are lame and blind” (18.125). Lincoln asserts that he will “cure” this “lameness” and accuses Ralph of falsehood:

O base wretch!
Nay, hide thy face; the horror of thy guilt
Can hardly be washed off. Where are thy powers?
What battles have you made? O yes, I see
Thou fought’st with shame, and shame hath conquered thee.
This lameness will not serve.

(18.131-5)

Lincoln takes Ralph’s actually lame body for Lacy’s deceitful impersonation of a wounded soldier. Paradoxically, he interprets Ralph’s war-wounded body as visible

evidence (“yes, I see”) not of valor, but of soldierly “shame”; not of fighting in a real battle, but of succumbing to dishonor. His taunts disavow the actual injuries that have marked Ralph’s body. The speech that Lincoln intends to excoriate Lacy for his lack of service instead underscores Ralph’s vulnerable body and undoes the value of Ralph’s service to city and country in the war. Not only does Lincoln presume that Ralph fakes impairment; he also interprets the visibly injured body as a sign of dishonor. Lincoln orders Ralph to “hide” his face, as if his falsehood has rendered him all but unrecognizable, a “horror” that “can hardly be washed off.” To what extent does the indelible shame that Lincoln imagines for Lacy’s faked injuries index, instead, Ralph’s real injury, the “making strange” of his body that sets him apart from the others?

Moreover, although Ralph has resumed artisanal labor in the workshop, his fellow journeymen find his newly lamed body an occasion for mockery and sport. The isolation that Lincoln wrongly projects onto Ralph is borne out in the rest of the scene, which distinguishes Ralph from the other journeymen. Ralph is not in on the joke, which becomes painfully clear as the scene progresses: he takes the encounter as further threat from Hammon, believing that Lincoln and Oatley intend to separate him, again, from Jane. The cruelty of the scene, then, is not only in the physical threat of Lincoln’s confrontation; it is also the abandonment of his fellows. Firk’s response is to urge him onward: “To him, lame Ralph! – Here’s brave sport!” (18.144). What Ralph perceives as extreme threat is “sport” for the other shoemakers. The dramatic fiction posits Ralph’s whole body as a substitute for Lacy’s service in the war in the opening scene, and Ralph’s wounded body is still standing in for punishment of Lacy’s deceit.

This scene, near the very end of the play, thus confirms a surprising turn: while the war wound is often taken for a fraud, as Lincoln imagines in this scene, in the case of the real veteran what is in question is not the veracity of the wound, but the uncertainty of his identity. Crystal Bartolovich has argued that Ralph, “maimed in war, pays the price of history in his person;” yet he is “still ultimately considered irrelevant to it. He is named in the play, to be sure, but not as a historical maker ‘of name.’”⁶⁵ However, the history Ralph performs is not irrelevant so much as it is pressingly present; Ralph’s presence as a citizen-veteran unsettles the comedy’s illusion of harmony. If Ralph is ultimately “irrelevant” to the vision of citizen history the play produces, he is indispensable to the dramatic fiction as another kind of history, one that makes visible what is lost in the soldiers who are “not of name” through the play’s persistent interest in the offstage war.

If the question of what it means for Ralph to “want limbs” is both theatrical (about how to stage his character) and historical (about prosthetic models available in the period) this question is also economic, about remuneration for bodily loss in service of the state. In this final section, I turn to two contrasting examples of the “lame soldier” in two plays roughly contemporaneous with *Shoemaker’s Holiday*, to explore how these plays imagine the lame body that war produces, and the relationship between citizen and veteran. These dramatic fictions return to the question of the lame body as a notable, visible signifier of military service. In the unattributed play *The Historie of the tryall of Chevalry, With the life and death of Cavaliero Dicke Bowyer* (1605), the lame soldier offers a point of identification for the common English soldier. The play avoids the question of payment and does so by imagining the soldier through the lens, as the title suggests, of a heavily nostalgic chivalric model of war; even Dick Bowyer’s surname

reminds the audience of the weapon of English warfare that had already given way to artillery at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Part *miles gloriosus*, Bowyer is unapologetically English in a play concerned with conflict between the kings of France and Flaunders, a conflict resolved through the heroic and archaic chivalry of Pembroke, the sole English noble in the retinue. Bowyer's distinctive refrain throughout the play underscores the soldier's work as a kind of parody of aristocratic service, remarking, "he that is a true soldier, and a Gent. as Dick Bowyer is" (15); explaining, "Dick Bowyer knows what belongs to service" (17); claiming "Dicke Bowyer is a Soldier, and a Cavaliero" (28); and insisting, "Tis well known, since Dick Bowyer came to Fraunce, he hath shewed himselfe a gentleman & a Cavaliero" (15).⁶⁶ Outmoded, outdated, and old-fashioned, the chivalric mode of the play describes the soldier's service with no hint of citizen conscription in the national "triall."

Bowyer's lame leg is the valorized sign of this service. His rival in courtship introduces him as a distinctive figure before he ever enters the stage, lamenting: "I am crost with a Sutor, that wants a piece of his tounge, and that makes him come lipping home: they call him *Cavaliero Bowyer*" (6), but Bowyer's lisp is not his most distinctive physical trait. His rival explains: "why, he came over with the Earle of Pembroke; and he limps, and he limps, & he devoures more French ground at two paces" (6). The repetition makes Bowyer's moving body both excessive and notable. Bowyer "limps, and he limps," a verbal reproduction of the gait in rhythm that acquires added emphasis in the description, and Peter, his rival in courtship, vows that "either he shall renounce the wench, or forsake his lame legs, his lipping tounge, and his life" (6). Reiterating the motion of limping and the language of "devouring," the rhetoric previews the incessant

speech and movement that will characterize Bowyer in the rest of the play. Yet when Bowyer himself describes his irregular body, he avoids the material cause of war that produced this injury:

Once as I was fighting in S. Georges fields, and blind Cupid seeing me, and taking me for some valiant Achilles, he tooke his shaft, and shot me right into the left heele, and euer since, Dick Bowyer hath been lame: but my heart is as sound as a bell, heart of Oake, spirit, spirit.

(15)

His tale is one of mistaken identity and confused myth, of inadvertent injury by the god of love, who mistakes Bowyer for the nearly invincible epic hero in the fields of the English conqueror. This is no sordid battle wound, nor is it a disabling injury. Bowyer mystifies the cause of the injury to amplify his capabilities as a soldier; the lame leg is proof not of his vulnerable body but his prowess. He emphasizes not the “halting” gait but rather his internal solidity: his “heart is a sound as a bell” and a “heart of Oake.” Bowyer’s firmness of resolve extends to his body—wounded as a result of brave fighting, rather than any deficiency on his part—and he sees this body as the defining evidence for his ability as a soldier.

When Bowyer’s body becomes the occasion for a mythic tale that converts the English soldier into a valiant and noble figure, his lameness offers proof of English bravery and dedication. While he does occasionally mark the injury as a sign of limitation, as when, bested in single combat for his shield, he admits: “thou mayst thank my lame legge: theres my shield” (29), this failure only makes him like every other knight in the play, since every one else loses in this contest at the hands of a disguised Pembroke. Like the disgruntled soldier in the epigraph to this chapter, whose lameness becomes steadfastness, Bowyer insists upon his fitness in the play’s extended period of

battle. In the confused and lengthy scene, which pits the kings of France and Navarre against each other, Bowyer enters with the other English soldiers to join the fray and, believing that Pembroke is dead, he takes command of the other soldiers:

Hart, stand to it? Heere's some of us knowes how to runne away, and they be put to it: Though wee haue lost our braue Generall, the Earle of Pembroke, yet here's Caualliero Bowyer, Core and Nod, by Jesu, sound Cards; and Mahound and Termagant come against us, wee le fight with them. Couragio, my hearts, S. George for the honour of England.

(32)

Bowyer insists that the battle is for England: though common soldiers, they will fight just as well without the “Earle.” The distinction between his own “Hart” to “stand to it” and those who “knows how to runne away” reinscribes his ability to fight, in the most crucial battle scene, as produced by the lame leg that reveals his sound “heart.” The nostalgia throughout the play is thus not only about the wish to return to a chivalric model of nobility-centered “gentleman’s warfare,” it is also a fantasy of the common soldier who fights for glory and not money, posing no problems of compensation, whose limp is only, ever, a matter of battle. Confined to the “present” of the military scene, English (but not a Londoner), Bowyer is the figure of the play’s nationalist sentiment that obscures—even makes sordid—the citizen’s necessity, the freedom to do his own work.

If Bowyer’s lameness signals the body that will not run away, remains steadfast in service as an English soldier, and needs no compensation other than honor, the lame soldier in the unattributed play, *A Larum for London, or The Siedge of Antwerpe: with the virtuous actes and valorous deeds of the lame Soldier* (1602) models a different relationship between the service of the lame body and the payment this work entails.⁶⁷ In *Larum*, war explodes into civic space. Based on *The Spoyle of Antwerpe*, an account by George Gascoigne of the attack of Antwerp by Spanish soldiers in 1576, the play

redirects Gascoigne's sensationalist prose to stage an explicit warning to "London" in particular, not simply England or any other nation more generally.⁶⁸ Invasion was an urgent concern in London in 1599, when news of Spanish forces preparing to attack London gripped the court and city to the point that Queen Elizabeth ordered soldiers mustered and at the ready for the city's defense until the threat dissipated at the end of the summer.⁶⁹ The register of fantasy in *Larum* extends in the direction of brutality: the play reports and even stages graphic scenes of horrific violence: during the attack, citizens are stabbed, stripped, tortured, hanged, stoned, shot, and threatened with rape. Critics have focused on the topicality of the play, tracing how *Larum* relies upon a notion of didactic power of the history play, how it engages with late Elizabethan fears about increasing militarization and the threat of Spanish attack, and how the stage replicates the traumatic events it tries to explain.⁷⁰

But the play also adds a key dramatic figure not in the source text: *Larum* refracts its lessons to the city through the "lame soldier" of the title, named "Stump" in the speech prefixes of the printed play, and not addressed by any other name until much later in the play. Pointing out that "stump" could refer to the "veteran's wooden leg" but could also name an "amputated member that has not been supplied with a prosthetic device," Vin Nardizzi argues that the soldier raises the question of synecdoche: "the body part that names the whole could be the wooden prosthesis or the nonprostheticized remainder of his leg *after* amputation, or it could be both."⁷¹ That is, not only could "stump" designate the wooden leg; the term could also "signal the portion of the limb that has healed after amputation, the rounded thigh or nub strapped into a wooden stump."⁷² Does "Stump," then, name the bodily loss, or the prosthesis that he employs? Yet Stump is not the first

lame figure the audience sees; *Larum* begins with a prologue spoken by the allegorical figure of Time, often represented as lame. In the prologue, Time suggests that his lame figure will provoke powerful affective response from the audience. Recounting how he has “pursu’d this forward age; / and search the worlds corrupt enormities” (3-4), only to find, repeatedly, that “Courtiers” and “daintie mouthed Damels scoffe” (7-8),⁷³ Time expects no less from “this fair concourse heere met together” (10), gesturing to the audience of the play. He addresses them directly: “you will scorne my wants, / Laugh at my lameness, look basely, fume and frowne” (14-15), only to claim that this “scorne” and laughter will soon change: “But doe so, doe so, your proude eyes shall see / The punishment of Citty cruelty” (16-17), prompting the audience to “weepe in pure relenting kinde” (20). Time predicts that the audience will dismiss his limping figure with laughter, but he links this affective response to admonition: if the “proude eyes” of the audience will see the “punishment” for this dismissal, and if their “hearts” are not hard, they will “weepe, “ because they will see this attitude punished. Roslyn Knutson points out that Time “is both prologue and epilogue and it sets the moral tone of the play” and “delivers the sermon that the narrative will illustrate.”⁷⁴ However, the prologue also registers a more pointed overlap with the central figure of the play: the actor who plays Stump might well speak the Prologue. If Time is the lame figure who delivers the prologue and the epilogue to the London audience, the play registers a parallel in the dramatic fiction later when Stump addresses the citizens of Antwerp. What can the lame figure teach the London citizens who watch the play, and what, exactly, is the “citty cruelty” that Time promises to punish?

The dramatic choice to make the play's didactic aims through the lame figure highlights the relationship between the lame soldier and the citizens who are the play's focus: the citizens, the play suggests, could have been soldiers, were they alert to their city's possible threats. In one of the play's several overtly didactic moments, Danila, the Spanish invader, points out the protection that could have been available to the doomed citizens of Antwerp, who have hired mercenaries to defend them and then caviled at the cost of maintaining the soldiers they employed: "But say twere otherwise that in their peace / And daies of plenty," the citizens of Antwerp might have "foreseen the daunger" and chosen to "exercise themselves," becoming soldiers already, capable of "feates of armes" (2). Yet the citizens have chosen to avoid military obligations (one thinks here of the contrast to citizens in *Famous Victory* patrolling on their nightly march), and Danila insists that they will panic and hide, aghast, "[w]hen once the Alarum soundes" (3) at the Spanish invasion. Danila's critique imagines the citizens as possible soldiers, a duty they have refused that will lead to their destruction. The citizens, admonished to become soldiers in the moment of Antwerp's invasion, are unpracticed and unprepared, and their vulnerability is both tragedy and lesson.

When Stump enters the stage for his first speaking part, he comes in the midst of debate between citizens, who, having just heard of the Spanish attack, are reluctant to take up arms. Egmont, defending the city, urges the citizens: "To armes to armes," and "Stand not amazed, but with courageous hearts, / And forward hands, fight for your libertie" (16), and his final injunction prompts Stump's first words, a diatribe to the questioners about the horrors they will face from the Spanish invaders. Stump asks, "Are yet your eye-lids open, are you yet / Awakt out of the slumber you were in?" and

continues for twenty-five lines more, detailing how the citizens will suffer when the “naked swords” of the Spanish “glide through [their] weasond-pipes” (16). Claiming that he “prophesied” with “zealous words” about the dangers of the Spanish, only to be “revil’d and baffled for my loyaltie” (17), the lame soldier offers a vivid picture of the sleeping citizens that analyzes their “slumber” as careless negligence about the state of the city. Stump offers a similar injunction to collapse the citizen and the soldier, but he suggests that the city fails not only because the citizens will not be soldiers, but also because the citizens have recognized neither the danger from which their hired soldiers protect them nor the bodily costs these soldiers have borne.

From the opening of the play, the relationship between the citizen and the soldier is particularly fraught with tension around the problem of compensation for the soldier’s labor. Stump’s ire is not only about the citizens’ failure to heed his words. When a citizen pleads with him to “helpe to fight for Antwerpes libertie,” Stump questions whether he “haue another groate to giue” in return for his service, a pointed commentary on the remuneration that soldiers receive from the city:

I know your liberall minds will scorne t’impose.
 The sweat of bloudie daunger on the brow
 Of any man, but you’ll reward him for it:
 He shall at least (when he hath lost his limmes)
 Be sent for harbour to a spittle-house.
 How say yee, shall he not? Good reason then,
 But we should venture; yes, to laugh at you,
 Whilst we beholde the Spaniard cut your throates.

(17)

Stump’s scornful rejoinder posits the soldier’s labor: facing the possible harm of “lost..limmes” in exchange for a “groate” from the citizens, he suggests that the soldiers should “venture” not their bodies but their laughter. That is, the citizens are not “liberall,”

the soldiers do not receive a “reward,” and there is no “harbour” for the wounded soldier. Moreover, his language is curiously expansive: although Stump’s figure is singular on the stage in this scene, he moves from the plea for his aid in defense, to a hypothetical soldier, to the plural response of all of the wounded soldiers, the “we” who should “venture.” Stump projects future loss, looking ahead to the day when the soldier’s labor is used up; because the care structure does not exist (“shall he not?”), he suggests that the soldiers should “venture” only scorn for the demand of the citizens rather than venturing their bodies.

The soldier’s body, *Larum* makes clear, grounds martial labor and presents the problem of recompense for this labor. To Stump’s objection, the Burger responds that “it is thy countrie that doth binde thee to it, / Not any imposition we exacte” (17). Although the Spanish invasion threatens the city, the Burger suggests that Stump’s military obligation is due to his contractual obligation to his country, if not the city. To this injunction, Stump responds with a scale of compensation:

Bindes me my country with no greater bondes,
 Than for a groate to fight? then for a groate,
 To be infeeble, or to loose a limme?
 Poore groates-worth of effection; Well, Ile learne
 To pay my debt and to measure my desert
 According to the rate: a groate I had,
 And so much as a groate amount vnto you,
 My sword shall pay ye in exchange of blowes.

(18)

Stump poses an economic “rate” in which this question—how much does a body cost?—is both incalculable and unrecognized. The “debt” and “exchange” are the key terms for a transaction grounded in the body. In this reckoning, the loss of the soldier’s body is only a matter of *when*, not *if*: inevitably, the body will be “infeeble” or “loose a limme.” In

order to force recognition of the soldier's bodily loss, Stump's questions reveal the flawed logic of compensation for war injuries: if paid a groate, then Stump will carry out his obligation with exactly that much fervor. This calculation is impossible to formulate since the reverse confounds economic logic: how many "blowes" and how many "limmes" can a groate purchase from a soldier's body?

Despite his sharp critique, Stump takes the lead in the city's defense, wreaking revenge upon the Spanish, and his wooden stump becomes the sign of his honor as a soldier. Like other lame soldiers, his body is not an impediment to his martial ability: as "antithesis" to the "swollen-bellied" citizens, Cahill points out, "this lame soldier is so well disciplined, the play suggests, that he is willing to fight even in an obscenely unequal contest in which virtually everyone on his side has either given up or been slain."⁷⁵ When Stump comes upon two soldiers who hope to evade the fighting and, disguising themselves "like maymed men," plan to "passe out one by one, / The safest way and with the least suspect" (39), Stump hears them and calls them back: "Harke you hark you, whether wil you flye?" (39). The soldiers' flight would quickly be checked because "the Spaniard has all the country; you cannot stragle a foote out of the walles, but your throates are cut" and they have no mode of transport: "what haue you to carry with you, but your scuruie notch'd limmes?" (39). Reminding them that flight is hopeless, Stump suggests that the soldier's duty is, once undertaken, is not relinquished. Even though the "villanos Burgers" are to blame for "the destruction of the Cittie," Stump explains, "yet it will bee laide to our charge" (40). In this meditation on the soldier's duty, he turns to his stump as the object that registers his long service in the war:

What will you doe then? here is my poore stumpe and I haue stumbled through a thousand shot, & yet we halt together; there was neuer one poore peece of Timber

has been so sindg'd as it has been: bloud it has been foure times a fire vnder me,
and yet we scramble together trotting, trotting.

(40)

Stump's distinctive body records the visible effects of his military experience, and his dilation upon the artifact of this experience, the "poore peece of Timber," prompts the soldiers to acquiesce to his leadership. After this display, the soldiers address him by his title; when Stump tells the soldiers to "dye like men," they respond: "Lieutenant Vaughan, leade vs and wee'll follow you to the death" (40). Stump urges them on: "Yes, Ile halt before you, follow mee as straight as you can" (40). Stump's "poore stumpe" converts would-be deserters to soldiers again.

The clearest clue to Stump's critique of the citizens, however, comes in a moment early in the play, when he explicitly contrasts martial labor to artisanal labor. Addressing the citizens who plead for his aid in defense, Stump responds:

A swettie Cobler, whose best industrie,
Is but to cloute a Shoe, shall haue his fee;
But let a Soldier, that hath spent his bloud,
Is lame'd, diseas'd or any way distrest,
Appeale for succour, then you looke a sponce
As if you knew him not; respecting more
An Ostler, or some drudge that rakes your kennels,
Than one that fighteth for the common wealth.

(17)

Stump opposes the "industrie" of the "swettie Cobler" with that of the "Soldier, that hath spent his bloud" to mark the stakes of the labor in which each engages. Stump's "Cobler"—unlike John Cobler in *Famous Victories*—works in his shop and does not venture onto the battlefield. Pitting the citizen's labor against the soldier's labor, the play emphasizes not only the soldier's ability to work, but also the kind of work he does. The Cobler and the Ostler are clearly remunerated: the citizens see and recompense artisanal

“industrie” in the work of the “swetty Coblér” and can even acknowledge the manual labor of the “Ostler” or “drudge” they employ for their “kennels,” but the citizens will not render the “fee” for the soldier’s work. Not only, however, do they refuse to pay the “lam’d” or “diseas’d” soldier; they also fail to see this body, “distrest” from martial service. Looking “a sponce” the citizens disavow the wounded soldier—“as if they knew him not.” Stump claims that they do not “respect” the soldier that fights for the “commonwealth.” The citizens do not acknowledge Stump’s service because they deliberately overlook the body the “commonwealth” requires. Unwilling to acknowledge the sacrifice of the body on which their city’s defense is premised, they choose to look away from the spectacle of the lame soldier. Even more than the work itself, Stump suggests, the lame body—marked by the stump(s)—becomes a sign of the martial sacrifice the commonwealth can never fully recompense, and, what is more, actively disavows.

IV. Multiplying the Citizen-Veteran

The final scenes of *Shoemaker’s Holiday* raise questions about remuneration and restoration as a thematic problem, not only for the individual citizen-veteran but also for the comedy. The last scene of the play restores Lacy to his identity and rightful status as part of the comedy’s structure of communal resolution. When Lacy and Lincoln come before the King and Lacy admits his evasion of military duty, the King proclaims: “As for the honour which he lost in France, / Thus I redeem it.—Lacy, kneel thee down” (21.113-4). Noting that Lacy became a shoemaker for the sake of love, the King rewards Lacy’s role as an artisan rather than highlighting his decision to shirk the wars. As the play praises Lacy’s decision to take up work as a shoemaker, Brian Walsh argues, the

dramatic fiction “gives priority to the local over the national.”⁷⁶ While Lacy’s workshop scenes (as Hans) do indeed validate the urban world of the workshop, the King’s restoration of Lacy evades the problem of national service required of urban citizens. The emphasis on “honor” also hearkens back to the local affiliations that Lacy had escaped at the beginning of the play: while Eyre had urged Ralph to fight “for the honor of the Gentle Craft” in the opening scene of the play, this final scene invokes an honor bestowed upon a body that never fought at all. What exactly can the King “redeem” here? The moment marks a difference in status because the discourse of redemption highlights the limits of the King’s recuperative power. While the symbolic honor may be his to bestow, he cannot restore the bodily loss that “lame Ralph” suffers in France, his body marked indelibly by the service of citizenship. Ralph’s body poses visible resistance through the stubborn physicality that dramatic form entails.

To read the play’s awareness of the collusion of monarchical and aristocratic power—producing the citizen-veteran even as the dramatic fiction valorizes the figure of the privileged citizen—is also to see, against a joyful reading of the comedy’s conclusion, the hint of tragedy in the final scene. Critics usually take the moment that brings all of the shoemakers in London together just before the banquet to illustrate how Eyre’s rise results in collective betterment for his fellow guild members, as a “movement toward celebration.”⁷⁷ In this final scene, the King has been strategizing with Lincoln, and the shoemakers enter just as the King explains his plans for the future of the war:

With the old troop which there we keep in pay
We will incorporate a new supply.
Before one summer more pass o’er my head,
France shall repent England was injured.

(21.140-3)

England's war is an act of retribution for the "injury" of the nation, and it is accomplished through "incorporation," the replenishing of a figural body of soldiers with the actual bodies of new soldiers. Having spoken these lines, the King then turns his attention to Eyre, asking: "What are all those?" (21.144), presumably referring to the citizens, for Lacy replies, "All shoemakers, my liege" (21.144). Lacy's reply cues a performative gesture from the assembled company; all the shoemakers could bow in deference to the King or step forward to present themselves for his inspection. Oddly, however, the King repeats his question, as if incredulous at the sheer number of men before him: "My mad Lord Mayor, are all these shoemakers?" (21.147). This repeated query sparks Eyre's affirmation of their devotion to the king: "All shoemakers, my liege, all gentlemen of the Gentle Craft, true Trojans, courageous cordwainers. They all kneel to the shrine of holy Saint Hugh" (21.148-50), and the shoemakers speak as one body: "God save your Majesty!" (21.151). In one way, the play's ending affirms the collective fellowship of the shoemakers and their ability to ply their trade, and, more broadly, positions the artisanal labor enabled by the mechanisms of citizenship as crucial to London's well-being: Eyre makes the Leadenhall suit, asking the king for permission to sell leather on two market days of each week. The promise of hospitality infuses the final scene when he invites the king to "add more honour to the Gentle Trade / Taste of Eyre's banquet" (21.189-90). Yet as the scene closes with the shoemakers arrayed before the King, who has just proclaimed the need for a "new supply" of bodies to "incorporate" for the wars, the final lines of the play, "When all our sports and banquetings are done, / Wars must right wrongs which Frenchman have begun" (21.196-7), suddenly seem much more ominous. As I see it, the shoemakers on stage, a synecdoche for the entire company

and for the guild system itself, offer labor “incorporate” for the wars and the King’s reaction stages his dawning realization of the labor force arrayed at his disposal. While the shoemakers, already incorporate in the body of the Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, offer a potential resource for “incorporation,” the single shoemaker on stage who has experienced this act displays the effect in a “lame” body. If the play’s final line suggests that “wars” inevitably follow the “holiday” the title announces, the visual effect of the last scene announces the potential for more citizens to be converted to soldiers, and then, into citizen-veterans.

Read against the celebratory sense of the prosthesis, I argue that *Shoemaker’s Holiday* insists upon the loss the soldier suffers. While the lame soldier of the opening anecdotes may insist that he is in no way “disabled” in his ability to fight, the missing or wooden leg also exposes the wounds that follow, inevitably, from service in the wars. In Dekker’s play, Ralph’s limp discloses how the state—in a finely-tuned conscription of London citizens for service of the king—maims the citizen’s body. Martial and artisanal labor collide in the body of the citizen-veteran as this character’s visible irregularity brings into sharp relief the vulnerability of all bodies and highlights the problem of recompense for service to the body politic. Although Bowyer, in the *Triall of Chivalry*, makes lameness a particular sign of English valor and triumph on the battlefield, he can only do so by disaffiliating martial labor with payment; idealized as the marks of chivalric service, his war wounds project an English martial service that exists, crucially, outside of England. Setting *Larum* alongside *Shoemaker’s Holiday*, by contrast, reveals the unacknowledged subtext of the relationship between citizenship and labor: the essential non-identity between the citizen and the soldier, because the notion of

citizenship is premised upon the rejection of the soldier's sacrifice of the body. While the early modern period boasts new surgical technologies, from amputation techniques to prosthetic limbs, that "trim" and "fit" wounded soldiers to re-enter society, Dekker's play refuses this restoration. The state can never fully compensate the wounded soldier for the sacrifice of his body—but these plays also suggest that the state is always looking "askance" at the body of the wounded soldier, and trying to look away from the war to which this body bears witness. Far from being erased, the lame body becomes prominent through theatrical practice; not the victorious wounds of a soldier-hero, but the lingering loss of a shoemaker's body disabled by the very structure of citizenship itself.

¹ Anthony Copley, *Wits fittes and fancies* (London, 1559), 194.

² Timothy Kendall, *Flowers of Epigrammes* (London, 1577), 98.

³ John Bodenham, *Belvedere, or the Garden of the Muses* (London, 1600), 27.

⁴ On English war generally, see Charles Greig Cruikshank's classic study, *Elizabeth's Army* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946); Henry J. Webb, *Elizabethan Military Science* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1965); Simon Barker's "Dressing Up for War: Militarism in Early Modern Culture" in *Dressing Up For War: Transformations of Gender and Genre in the Discourse and Literature of War*, ed. Aranzazu Usandizaga and Andrew Monnickendam (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), which references the incredible range of treatises on war collected in M. J. D. Cockle's *A Bibliography of English Military Books Up to 1642 and of Contemporary Foreign Works* (London: Macmillan, 1900); Mark Fissell, *English Warfare, 1511-1642* (London: Routledge, 2001); on representations of warfare on the early modern stage, see Paul Jorgenson, *Shakespeare's Military World* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1965); Curtis Breight, *Surveillance, Militarism and Drama in the Elizabethan Era* (New York: St. Martins, 1996); Nick de Somogyi, *Shakespeare's Theatre of War* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998); and Patricia Cahill, *Unto the Breach: Martial Formations, Historical Trauma, and the Early Modern Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁵ Quoted, Charles Mathew Clode, *The Military Forces of the Crown, Vol. 1* (London: John Murray, 1869), 353. Clode notes that Act's provisions were upheld in following statutes: 39 Eliz. c. 21, 43 Eliz. c. 3, 1 James I, c. 25, 21 James I, c. 28, 3 Car. I., c.5.

⁶ In *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), Linda Woodbridge argues that early modern literature recognized "demobilized—and often disabled—soldiers as a persistent, significant element of the destitute homeless" and soldiers (along with journeyman) constituted a population that posed a particular risk: "disorder from hungry disbanded soldiers was feared with good reason—in 1589, for example, troops were called out and martial law

imposed when hundreds of Drake's disbanded soldiers threatened the peace in London" (52).

⁷ Steve Hindle, "Civility, Honesty and the Identification of the Deserving Poor in Seventeenth-century England" in *Identity and Agency in English Society, 1500-1800*, ed. Henry French and Jonathan Barry (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 38; Hindle cites the 1598 statute "For the Relief of the Poore" (39 Elizabeth c. 3).

⁸ A. L. Beier, *Masterless Men* (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), 9.

⁹ Critics have identified contemporary accounts of "rogues" in relation to vagabondage and poverty relief: in addition to Woodbridge's work, see Frank Aydelotte, *Elizabethan Rogues and Vagabonds* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913); Arthur F. Kinney, *Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars: A New Gallery of Tudor and Early Stuart Rogue Literature* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973); William Carroll, *Fat King, Lean Beggar: Representations of Poverty in the Age of Shakespeare* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); *Rogues and Early Modern English Culture*, ed. Craig Dionne and Steve Mentz (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004).

¹⁰ Beier, 95.

¹¹ "Vagabond Veterans: The Roguish Company of Martin Guerre and *Henry V*" in *Rogues and Early Modern English Culture*, ed. Craig Dionne and Steve Mentz (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 262.

¹² Cahill argues that "in Elizabethan military mathematics...the individual is scarcely visible" (27) because "many of the period's practical texts, which codify rules, establish norms, describe technologies, map space, and delineate battle array—represent nothing less than a theory of laboring bodies, a precursor of nineteenth-century efforts to standardize, quantify, and appropriate the productive energies of workers" (7). As such, these texts "pose a challenge to received ideas about the 'birth' of individualism in this period, for the (presumptively male) subject these texts envision is implicated in, and constituted by, an abstract, geometrically and arithmetically manipulable, social body" (27).

¹³ While Linda Bradley Salamon has pointed out that the early modern period does not yet use "veteran" to describe a returned soldier, I use "citizen-veteran" to suggest that the play, in thinking through the lingering effects of the war upon Ralph's body, stages the veteran even if the term has not yet come into use with this meaning.

¹⁴ Lennard Davis, *Bending Over Backwards: Disability, Dismodernism and Other Difficult Positions* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2002), 58, 60.

¹⁵ Irinza Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking About Physical Impairment in the Middle Ages, C. 1100-1400* (London: Routledge, 2006), 5.

¹⁶ Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 6.

¹⁷ Alexander Leggat, *Citizen Comedy in the Age of Shakespeare* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 19; Robert L. Smallwood, in his portion of the introduction to *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, ed. Robert L. Smallwood and Stanley Wells (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979), 9-10.

¹⁸ Smallwood, 4. Smallwood points out that the desire for London citizen comedy at the turn of the century fits also with the 1598 publication of John Stow's *Survey of London* and—in a period in which the population of London was growing rapidly—an increased self-consciousness about the changing rituals of urban life.

¹⁹ On the relationship between the “holiday” of the title and the dramatic economy, see especially David Scott Kastan, “Workshop and/as Playhouse: Comedy and Commerce in *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*” *SP* 84.3 (1987): 324-37; David Bevington, “Theatre as Holiday” in *The Theatrical City*, eds. David L. Smith, Richard Strier, and David Bevington (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Marta Straznicky, “The End(s) of Discord in *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*,” *SEL* 36 (1996): 358-372; on temporalities and dramatic history, see Jonathan Gil Harris, “Ludgate Time: Simon Eyre’s Oath and the Temporal Economies of *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*,” *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 71.1 (2008): 11-32; and Brian Walsh, “Performing Historicity in Dekker’s *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*” *SEL* 46.2 (2006): 323-348.

²⁰ The “citizen history play,” Crystal Bartolovich, argues, “holds the mirror up to labor in order to refuse the image as its own” (“Mythos of Labor: *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* and the Origin of Citizen History” in *Working Subjects in Early Modern English Drama*, eds. Michelle M. Dowd and Natasha Korda [New York: Ashgate, 2011], 36).

²¹ The category of the citizen in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries has undergone significant revision and scholarly attention in the past decades since Patrick Collinson’s key intervention, “De Republica Anglorum: *Or, History with the Politics Put Back* (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 1990). My understanding of the early modern citizen has been influenced by the work of John Archer, *Citizen Shakespeare: Freeman and Aliens in the Language of the Plays* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), who notes that the “status of citizen during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England conferred an urban rather than a national identity” (6); and Phil Withington, *The Politics of Commonwealth: Citizens and Freeman in Early Modern England* (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 2005), who argues that the “citizen” designation “signified additional public powers and responsibilities within the body politic” (10).

²² Quoted in Markku Peltonen, “Rhetoric and Citizenship in the Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I” in *The Monarchical Republic of Early Modern England* ed. John F. McDiarmid and Patrick Collinson (New York: Ashgate, 2007), 110.

²³ Julia Lupton, *Citizen-Saints*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 14.

²⁴ As Withington points out, “In sixteenth-century London...[an estimated] 90 per cent of Londoners became citizens through apprenticeship” (29).

²⁵ John Archer, “Citizens and Aliens as Working Subjects in Dekker’s *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*” in *Working Subjects in Early Modern English Drama*, eds. Michelle M. Dowd and Natasha Korda (New York: Ashgate, 2011), 38.

²⁶ Bartolovich, 24.

²⁷ This and all further quotations cited parenthetically by scene and line number, from Thomas Dekker, *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*, in *English Renaissance Drama* (eds. Lars Engle, Katharine Eisaman Maus, and Eric Rasmussen [New York: W. W. Norton, 2002]).

²⁸ Smallwood notes that Dekker’s play mentions thirty-five places in London, none that are only from fifteenth-century London, and some are only from the play’s contemporary moment: “The interchangeability of past and present is set against the everyday reality of the familiar landmarks of London” (25).

²⁹ Thomas Deloney, *The Gentle Craft* (Ed. Simon Barker [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007]), 31, 33. Deloney’s text was first published in 1597, but no copies remain extant; *The*

Gentle Craft was reprinted throughout the seventeenth century, and all quotations here are from the 1637 edition.

³⁰ Ibid., 33.

³¹ Ibid., 34.

³² Smallwood instead identifies Crispine, Crispianus' brother, as the model for Lacy, and says that Crispianus "virtually disappears" (18) from Dekker's play: "the return of Crispianus in glory contrasts sharply with Ralph limping back as a cripple" (20).

³³ All quotations from *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*, ed. Chiaki Hanabusa, *The Malone Society Reprints*, Vol. 171 (Manchester: Published for The Malone Society by Manchester University Press, 2007). Citations are to line numbers in this edition, imposed upon the facsimile of the 1598 quarto.

³⁴ The quarto does not add a speech prefix following the first "Robin," but presumably John Cobler speaks the lines that follow Robin's address to him (and, indeed, the text indicates "Robin" in reply to the question in the final line quoted here).

³⁵ The distinction here is that cordwainers (shoemakers) work with new leather, while cobblers work with old. The cordwainers absorbed the cobblers into their company in the sixteenth century, but the distinctions seem to persist, at least in terms of status: historically, while the constructive craft of the shoemakers, as in Dekker's play, is evident in their names ("making" shoes), cobblers were allowed to repair shoes but not to manufacture them. See Paul S. Seaver, "The Artisanal World" (*The Theatrical City*, eds. David L. Smith, Richard Strier, and David Bevington [Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 1995]), who makes this point as part of a larger discussion about the apportioning of materials and skills among the guilds.

³⁶ As citizens, however, they exercise astute observation and circumspect knowledge about political rule. To his neighbor, John Cobler observes that the "toward young Prince" though he "dare[s] not call him theefe," is "one of these taking fellowes" (131-4). The play suggests that princely power confounds civic justice through a series of trial and punishment scenes in which Henry himself winds up in prison, though never for very long.

³⁷ This scene overlaps with the dismay in *Shoemaker's Holiday*, but while Jane weeps to see Ralph go, the parting becomes a site of comic relief in *Famous Victories*: John Cobler weeps, while Derek, the clown, harangues John's wife and then (after two stage directions that read, "She beateth him") insists, "Ile tell you maister Captaine what you shall do: / Presse her for a souldier, I warrant you, / She will be as much good as her husband and I too" (1044-6).

³⁸ While "reparrell" might also suggest clothing, John later exclaims, "Dericke helpe me to carry my shoes and bootes" (1646) as they scramble to leave the battlefield before they are caught.

³⁹ Linda Bradley Salamon observes that the question of remuneration was pressing: unlike mercenaries, conscripted soldiers "could not expect regular paydays," and even at the war's end, "while 75 percent payment was probably typical, as little as 30 percent might be granted, and costs for maintenance (whether or not food had been provided) might be deducted" (273).

⁴⁰ Kastan, 330.

⁴¹ Rhonda Arab, *Manly Mechanicals on the Early Modern English Stage* (Sellingssgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2011), 55.

⁴² I am grateful to Kathryn Vomero Santos for bringing this detail of Margery's speech to my attention.

⁴³ Quotations from *The Roaring Girl* (*English Renaissance Drama*, eds. David Bevington, Lars Engle, Katharine Eisaman Maus, and Eric Rasmussen [New York: W. W. Norton, 2002]), cited parenthetically in the text by act, scene, and line number.

⁴⁴ Anthony Munday, *The first part of the true and honorable historie, of the life of Sir Iohn Old-castle, the good Lord Cobham* (London, 1600). Cited parenthetically by act, scene, and line number.

⁴⁵ Thomas Dekker, *The Wonder of a Kingdom* (London, 1636). Cited parenthetically by act, scene, and line number.

⁴⁶ Vin Nardizzi, "The Wooden Matter of Human Bodies: Prosthesis and Stump in *A Larum for London*" in *The Indistinct Human in Renaissance Literature*, eds. Jean Feerick and Vin Nardizzi (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 127.

⁴⁷ Wills, *Prosthesis* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 242.

⁴⁸ In *The Surgeons Mate*, John Woodall insists that the work of the surgeon be recognized and amplified because the surgeon is, in fact, the only medical practitioner (of the three recognized branches of medicine) on the battlefield with soldiers: "the Surgeon that practiceth in military occasions, as in ships and camps...where neither his Majesty nor the Merchant alloweth Physicians nor Apothecaries any place, and there the whole scope of healing the bodies of the bravest and most valiant warriours and hardie sea-men, are upon all occasions wholly referred to the skill of the Surgeon" (London, 1639), sig. B1r.

⁴⁹ In *Beyond the Body: The Boundaries of Medicine and English Renaissance Drama* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), William Kerwin explains the distinction: "the primary domain of surgeons and their professional partners, barber-surgeons, was treatment of surface disorders" in which surgeons "were managers of exterior appearances and keepers of secrets about the gap between outer order and inner disorder" (98). See Kerwin, especially 101-3, for an overview of the development of the surgical craft. As Margaret Pelling observes: "Medical practitioners, and especially barber-surgeons, provided means of fending off the threat, or appearance, of physical decay" ("Appearance and reality: barber-surgeons, the body and disease" in *London 1500-1700* ed. A. L. Beier and Roger Finlay [New York: Longman, 1986]), 104. The 1540 act that united barbers and surgeons into the Barber-Surgeons' Company and entitled the company to four corpses each year for dissection practice, also divided the work of the surgeon from the work of the barber in order to avoid the "contagious infirmities" between a patient treated for disease and a client served by a barber (Pelling 96). On the developments of early modern anatomical knowledge more generally, see especially Andrew Cunningham, *The Anatomical Renaissance* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997) and Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁵⁰ Woodall, (sig. B1r)

⁵¹ Jean Goeurot, *The regiment of life, whereunto is added a treatise of the pestilence, with the boke of children, newly corrected and enlarged by T. Phayre* (London, 1550).

⁵² Ambroise Paré, *The Workes of the famous Chirurghion Ambrose Parey* (Trans. Thomas Johnson [London, 1634]), 7.

⁵³ Crooke, "Preface," *Mikrocosmographia* (London, 1615), 1.

⁵⁴ In *Prosthesis* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1995), David Wills points out that we might expect to find the battlefield “in the forefront of a certain form of medical research, a testing of the limits of the body, the limits between life and death” (223).

⁵⁵ Woodall, sig. A2r. Woodall’s dedicatory note to Charles I observes that he is “Surgeon of your Highnesse Hospitall of St. Bartholomewes, and Surgeon generall of the East-India Companie.”

⁵⁶ Royal surgeon to Charles IX and Henry III, Paré stands out from other authors of medical texts because he published them in French, rather than Latin, in order to make them available to a wider audience of young surgeons, with less academic knowledge.

⁵⁷ Wills, 242-3.

⁵⁸ Paré, 438. This and all further quotations from Thomas Johnson’s 1634 translation, *Workes*; further quotations cited parenthetically by page number.

⁵⁹ Crooke, “Preface,” 3.

⁶⁰ Nardizzi, 123. I am grateful to Liza Blake for her insight on this point.

⁶¹ Cahill, 190.

⁶² John Woodall, *A Treatise of Gangrena, and Sphacelos* (London, 1639), a treatise appended to *The Surgeons Mate*. These and all further quotations cited parenthetically by page number.

⁶³ Nardizzi, 128.

⁶⁴ Genevieve Love, “*The Shoemaker’s Holiday’s* Pedophobia,” unpublished paper circulated in “The Shakespearean Immaterial” seminar at Shakespeare Association of America Annual Meeting, 2009.

⁶⁵ Bartolovich, 33.

⁶⁶ Unattributed, *The Tryall of Chevalry* (London, 1605). All quotations cited parenthetically by page number.

⁶⁷ The play was entered into the stationer’s register in 1600, and printed in 1602, with title and performance record on the frontispiece: “*A Larum for London, or The Siedge of Antwerpe. With the ventrous actes and valorous deeds of the lame Soldier*. As it hath been played by the right Honorable the Lord Chamberlaine his Seruants.” Patricia Cahill suggests that the play was probably staged in 1599, making it contemporaneous with Dekker’s play.

⁶⁸ As Cahill puts it, Gascoigne’s account “hints at a sentiment that by the late sixteenth century would be ubiquitous in Elizabethan martial discourse: ruin will come to Londoners unless they prepare themselves for Spanish invasion” (170).

⁶⁹ In “Filling Fare: The Appetite for Current Issues and Traditional Forms in the Repertory of the Chamberlain’s Men” (*Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 15 (2003): 57-76), Roslyn L. Knutson observes that the play’s “appeal for audiences and readers is immediately evident in the focus of the narrative on the atrocities of war” (63); this topicality, Nick De Somogyi has argued, derives key concepts from the pamphlet narratives about the sack of Antwerp, which address themselves to Londoners and argue for “moral reform, military readiness, and the justice of a self-defensive war” (32).

⁷⁰ In addition to the detailed studies of the play by Cahill, De Somogyi, and Nardizzi, see also “A Tale of Two Cities” in Adam Mckeown, *English Mercuries: Soldiers in the Age of Shakespeare* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2009).

⁷¹ Nardizzi, 121, 122.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 123.

⁷³ “Prologue” to *A Larum for London, or the siedge of Antwerpe: with the virtuous actes and valorous deeds of the lame Soldier* (London, 1602). Prologue cited parenthetically by line number; following quotations from the play cited parenthetically by page number from the 1602 quarto.

⁷⁴ Knutson, 65.

⁷⁵ Cahill, 173.

⁷⁶ Walsh, 329.

⁷⁷ Smallwood, 29. Smallwood highlights Dekker’s departure from his source text in ending the play with a “full-scale civic banquet” that depicts “concluding harmony and festival” (22).

**‘More Legs Than Nature Gave Thee’:
Performing the Cripple in *The Fair Maid of the Exchange***

“One saying to a crook-back’d person that it was
a great default to be crook-back’d: hee answered:
Rather is it an ouer-plus.”
--“Of Crookednes and Lamenesse”¹

The first scene of the unattributed play *The Fair Maid of the Exchange: With the Pleasant Humours of the Cripple of Fanchurch* (1607) is not memorable for its subtlety.² Opening with a scene of attempted assault on Phillis, the “Fair Maid,” as she delivers hand-worked cloth to a customer, the play introduces Cripple, the sub-title’s “humorous” figure who comes to her assistance with loud self-exhortation: “Now stirre thee cripple, and of thy foure legs / Make use of one, to doe a virgin good” (97-8).³ The heroism and suggestive eroticism of these lines draw attention to Cripple’s distinctive body and embellish his crutches as legs, while Cripple’s entrance, rescuing Phillis and averting rape, only just redirects the play’s swerve toward tragedy. When Cripple employs these “foure legs” on behalf of Phillis, she falls in love with him, to the dismay of her many other suitors (principally the three Golding brothers). The rest of the play, set around London’s Royal Exchange, is a flurry of wooing, winning, and disguise to resolve two marriage plots. In the logic of the major plot, Phillis’ intended suitor is the “undeform’d” Frank Golding, whom she should prefer to Cripple’s “crooked shape,” and Cripple encourages Frank to impersonate him in order to win Phillis. The play is preoccupied with key concerns of city comedy: emerging capitalism and economic productivity; status and social relations between gentlemen, artisans, and servants; femininity and feminine labor; the relationship between marketable goods and the marriage market; and the genre

of comedy itself.⁴ What sets it apart from other examples of city comedy is this curious character, Cripple. Distinguished by his “crutches,” repeatedly imagined as additional “legs,” and his singular “crooked habit,” a garment that frames his shape, Cripple is an artisan and poet figure. Although the title of the play promises the audience conventional “pleasant humours” in Cripple, who is never identified with any other proper name, his character engineers the key moments of exchange and competition. Desired by Phillis, sought for counsel because of his “wit and pollicie” (1159), and denigrated as “halting Rascal” (2195), “this paltrie crutch” (771), and “crooked knave” (2532), Cripple is central to economic productivity and sociability in the play.

Early critics emphasized Cripple’s dynamism, poetic wit, and agency in the play. Barron Field, editing the 1845 Malone Society edition, called Cripple “a very original character,” while Charles Lamb named him “the hero of the comedy,” and Edmund Gosse described the “Cripple of Fenchurche Street” as a “delightful creation.”⁵ But early critics puzzled over Cripple because, while his unaccountable attractiveness seemed at odds with his obvious physical deformity, the play’s substitution of Frank for Cripple also foreclosed on the most exciting element of the dramatic fiction. After Cripple’s refusal to assent to Phillis, Gosse claims, the play becomes far less interesting because the “notion of making the tall and handsome Frank personate the Cripple so perfectly as to deceive the girl who loves the latter, and win away her heart, is incredible and unnatural.”⁶ While regretful, early critics assumed that Cripple’s bodily form would preclude romance with Phillis: to Lamb, it appears self-evident that Cripple would help Frank to win her instead, “procuring for her a husband, in the person of his friend, more worthy of her beauty than he could conceive his own maimed and halting limbs to be.”⁷

Lamb argues that it would be difficult to find an actor who would choose to “personate the infirmities” of Cripple because “these personal deformities, however consistent with heroism in the reading of works of fiction, cannot be embodied by an actor without ridicule.”⁸ The distinction between reading fiction and seeing embodied dramatic action explicitly assumes audience reaction to the visual and prescribes that audience reaction to Cripple’s body is marked by distaste or “ridicule.” Even a critic in the twentieth century takes the ending to reflect clear cultural expectations: “To have Phillis waste herself on Cripple would violate a romantic sense present in the average person,” although this change in affection comes at the expense of Cripple’s “lively” character.⁹

While recent critics have concentrated on the play’s economic concerns and representation of women’s labor, the sense that Cripple stands apart from the other characters persists, but in exactly the opposite terms.¹⁰ Critics argue that he confounds characterization, calling him “the prime mover of the plot” even though an “outsider and somewhat monstrous”; and “the explicit figure of the author,” who, identified with the operations of the market, “is still more a force, or a function, than an individual”; so that the play “offers little evidence with which to explain its conflation of eroticism and deformity in the character of Cripple.”¹¹ Cripple, oscillating in critical thought between distinctive character and hardly a character at all, poses both a theoretical and a theatrical problem.

In this chapter, I explore how the play uses Cripple’s theatrical body to think through the practice of making dramatic character through impersonation, and I suggest that this practice of impersonation, so critical to financial and social exchange, depends upon a particular kind of body. Cripple’s theatrical body is “marked” in the play, to recall

one definition of “character,” by a deformity that requires the use of prosthetic devices of “crutches” and “crooked habite.” But while the play’s prologue associates his character with the figure of crippled beggar, whose body is suspect as potentially deceptive, Cripple’s “crooked” shape becomes performatively powerful—for Frank—through the very deformities that critics have read as disqualifying Cripple. Disability, the play suggests, is not in visible bodily anomaly, in appearing crippled, in using crutches, or in having a “crooked shape.” Instead, I argue, Cripple’s character reveals disability as a fundamental inability to impersonate. The play demarcates Cripple’s body as incapable of performing other roles, while Frank can borrow Cripple’s prostheses as props for one of his many deceptions. This distinction is crucial, since the play aligns social and financial practice in the space of the Exchange to emphasize both the necessity of mastering the art of performing diverse social roles and the commercial value of impersonation. The logic of the play—in which one character’s prostheticized identity is another character’s disguise—distinguishes between ultimate bodily reliance upon the prosthesis and temporary use.

I draw on disability theory—in particular, the distinction between impairment and disability—which offers a way to think about Cripple’s “deformitie,” one of the words the play employs to describe his shape. But I also contend that Cripple’s vibrant character redraws the boundaries for the study of early modern disability. Like the figure of the lame soldier in the previous chapter, the crippled beggar is a recurring type in literature of the early modern period. Cripple is the kind of character whose bodily impairment might be dismissed as commonplace, another example of “unmarked” deformity. Yet the play destabilizes a delineation of “disabled” or “able” bodies on the basis of visible deformity:

if Frank has to assume Cripple's prostheses in order to woo successfully, which theatrical body is "able," in any given moment? The dramatic fiction reveals Cripple's visibly deformed body not as intrinsically disqualified, but rather as disabled by the social limits upon his form. Cripple's "crooked" figure becomes briefly valuable for his distinctive prostheses, rather than in spite of them, but he ends up disabled by his perceived immobility in a dramatic world of shifting shapes and impersonating bodies.

I. Imagining a/the Cripple in *The Fair Maid of the Exchange*

The title of the earliest printed edition of the play in 1607, *The Fayre Mayde of the Exchange: With The pleasaunt Humours of the Cripple of Fanchurch*, promises the audience a comic "type" in Cripple.¹² The "with" in the title fixes Cripple in a sidelong relation to the plot of the play, subordinate to the "fayre mayde" though he is a central character. The promise of "Humours" enjoyably consumed, found "delectable" by the reader and productive of "mirth" is completely conventional. The full title of George Chapman's 1598 play features a figure with a similar description: *The Blinde Begger of Alexandria, most pleasantly discoursing his variable humours in disguised shapes full of conceite and pleasure*. The "pleasure" this figure offers is in the variability of the "disguised shapes." In Chapman's play, the "blind beggar" Irus is not actually blind, nor is he a beggar. He tells the audience from the beginning: "I am Cleanthes and blind Irus too / And more than these, as you shall soone perceive."¹³ The "fun" of the disguise is the extent to which the ruse of the "blind beggar" works to deceive an audience until the revelation at the end of the play.

The play's title thus suggests one feature of audience expectations: Cripple's character as the "type" of the crippled beggar. Bert States observes that "comedy, in

general, requires the stereotype as the basic material out of which it builds a world that, above all else, is instantly recognizable.”¹⁴ Before the play begins, the prologue to *Fair Maid* multiplies these expectations by introducing the figure of a “Cripple” in keeping with the “pleasant humours” character. The *prologus* claims the play’s generic categorization, promising that the “Muse” has “don’d” the “humble Socke that true Comedians weare” (1-2), appearing “in lowest Plaine-song” and “borrowing no colours from a quaint disguise” (3-4). Positioned with a clear inheritance of classical technique, the work appears sufficient to itself and whole. The final couplet, however, shifts to a striking image, as if preoccupied with the character in the play to follow: “Though our Inuention lame, imperfect be, / Yet giue the Cripple almes for charitie” (13-14). The prologue employs the figure of a crippled beggar to introduce the play as a begging figure. When the prologue identifies the play as the “Inuention lame,” it gestures generally to a generic hierarchy in which comedy is regarded as less accomplished than tragedy, a modesty trope about literary production. This “Inuention lame” imagines a supplemental relationship, in which the “almes” of the audience can compensate for any artistic defects on the part of the play. Proclaiming the deficiency of an “Inuention lame” on a metaphorical level identifies it with the character of Cripple to come, but in the opening sonnet the figure of the cripple flatters the audience by appealing to their charity and depreciating poetic labor. This appeal suggests that giving “almes,” both applause and financial support, to the Cripple/play is an act of “charitie,” and the drama introduces an economy of pity by emphasizing the act of begging on the part of its “Cripple.” The aestheticized representation of disability prompts the question: to what extent does Cripple figure in the play register in relation to the “real” cripples in early modern

London, whose method of livelihood is perhaps closer to the figure of the cripple in the prologue than Cripple in the play?

The performance-as-begging that the *prologus* imagines for the play gestures not only to the act of soliciting money, but also to a fear of beggars, expounded repeatedly in the early modern period, who fake or exaggerate physical impairment in order to receive charitable aid. What audiences might recognize in the figure of the crippled beggar who speaks the play's prologue is a stereotype of a fraudulent beggar who employs visible deformity to receive charity. In the early modern period, disabled people often appear in literary representation as a subset of "the poor," a fraught category because discussions of poverty inspired controversies over economic and charitable support, productivity, and potential fraud.¹⁵ Social anxieties around disabled beggars index two related concerns: first, that a beggar chooses laziness, consequently relying upon the charity of others instead of pursuing productive labor, and second, that a beggar who displays visible impairment to explain his inability to work is most often faking impairment. Concerns about the fraudulent beggar and the faked deformity are both premised on an impulse to economic productivity that prescribes that the "able-bodied"—those who are physically able—should earn wages through labor. The "histrionics of poverty," William Carroll argues, were amply performed on stage and in culture with charges that vagrants are both "idle" and "mobile," as "the early modern discourse of poverty inscribed the beggar's body both as a potentially valuable commodity and as a site of lawlessness and subversion."¹⁶ The early modern category of "deserving poor," as Linda Woodbridge has shown, was limited to those who were really physically impaired; productivity as a civic goal meant "disability was the only legitimate alternative to hard work."¹⁷ This legal

framework—and cultural representations from cony-catching pamphlets to jest books—worries about charitable giving to a beggar who is actually capable of working but unwilling to do so. The concern extends so far that Robert Allen’s influential *A Treatise of Christian Beneficence* (1600) accounts the proper recipients of charity those who are “uncounterfeit impotent,” which Woodbridge points out, “assumes ‘counterfeit’ as the default setting for impotence.”¹⁸ The overlap between the figure to which the beggar of the play’s *prologus* alludes and the character of Cripple thus registers as a problem, in the sense that the play seems anxious to tamp down the possibilities that his “crooked shape” invokes.

The dangers that fraudulent beggars were believed to represent is evident in texts that aim to teach readers how to detect and expose deceit. Ambroise Paré’s seminal text, *On Monsters and Marvels*, includes a section on fraudulent beggars and gives advice for uncovering imposture. With chapters including, “An Example of the Artifice of Wicked Spital Beggars,” “The Imposture of a Woman Beggar Who Pretended to Have a Canker on Her Breast,” “The Imposture of a Certain Beggar Who Was Counterfeiting a Leper,” Paré’s accounts emphasize how fraudulent beggars play upon the compassion of a public audience, often near a church, employing the shocking effect of their visible impairment. In Paré’s retelling, the hideous body of the beggar may reveal itself as fictive at any time: the putrid arm may turn out to be literal excess as a stolen limb that hides the beggar’s own healthy arm beneath, while the visible impairment of an ulcer may be a prop, composed of an elaborate arrangement of cloth and fluid to amplify the theatricality of the fake flesh.

For Paré, the point of this account is often to highlight the skill that medical knowledge affords, allowing physicians to see through the bodily ruse. He notices, for example, that a gruesome canker is at odds with a woman's otherwise healthy appearance, and he reports harsh physical punishment for this imposture by civic authorities. In the case of a beggar pretending to be a leper, after the judge points out his fitness to work, the leper tells the judge, in Paré's words, "that he knew how to counterfeit several illnesses, and that he had never found greater profit in it than when he counterfeited the leper."¹⁹ Of this beggar, condemned to "get the whip" three successive Saturdays and then banished, Paré reports:

When it came to the last Saturday, the people shouted at the top of their voices to the executioner: 'Strike, strike, officer! He can't feel anything; he's a leper!' wherefore at the voice of the people the executioner was cruelly bent on whipping him so hard that shortly afterward he died, both because of the last whipping and because of having opened up his wounds again three different times: a thing which didn't amount to any great loss for the country.

(78)

While the goal of exposing the fraudulent beggar is to show visible illness as false, the public punishment endeavors to take the deception literally. The threat of performance is transferred to the punishment, as spectators take his deception as the impetus for increased punishment. Worry about the possible performance of disability in the early modern period renders the bodies of beggars suspect, holds out the possibility of punishment as the deserved end, and underwrites acts of charity as potentially liable to fraud.

Though no performance records remain for *Fair Maid*, the prologue offers the possibility of doubling that registers very differently depending upon who speaks it. If Cripple, the "actual" Cripple of the play, speaks the prologue, his figure radically

undermines the play's emphasis on his work and economic independence by collapsing the distinction between Cripple as dramatic character and the figure of a begging "Cripple" in the cultural imagination. If Frank, who will impersonate Cripple later in the play, speaks the prologue, the play gestures toward contemporary suspicions of the beggars' potential deceit. From the opening of the play, before Cripple has officially set foot on the stage, the play marks his figure with an ambiguous, rhetorically charged double who engages the audience to consider the value of the theater's ability to counterfeit for entertainment.

When Cripple appears on the stage, then, the audience expects to see the "type" character that the play's dramatic conventions signal. In the opening scene Cripple himself seems complicit in the play's reduction of his character to comic and deceptive performance. After his self-exhortation "Now stirre thee, cripple" (97), he thanks Frank with the words, "may but the Cripple be, / Of power to gratifie this courtesie" (146-7). The rhetoric articulates a link between character name ("Cripple") and bodily description ("the Cripple") that vie throughout the play. The definite article, echoed in some textual features (such as the stage direction that reads: "Scene IX. The Cripple at worke" [s.d. at line 1282]) but not others (the *dramatis personae*, for example, lists him simply as "Cripple"), suggests the ongoing tug-of-war between character and type. This oscillation foregrounds Cripple's theatrical body to pose the question: is it "Cripple" or "the Cripple," and is his impairment faked for amusement?

To be sure, the play marks Cripple through possibilities for comic mockery and bodily humor. Cripple's crutches at first appear to render him more powerful, establishing the efficacy and desirability of Cripple's body through the extension of his

natural body by means of the crutches that he employs. When Cripple intervenes in the first scene to save Phillis and Ursula, her assistant, beating off their attackers with his crutches, Bobbington (the villain) hails him as “thou that hast more legs than nature gave thee” (127). Cripple’s crutches are a kind of bodily excess that empowers him to defend the women from the men who threaten them. His “more than” legs are quantitatively excessive; yet they also seem qualitatively different. Bobbington’s complaint naturalizes the crutches (they are additional “legs”) but also emphasizes their unnatural quality (“more than Nature gave”), suggesting an implicit falsity to his body. When, just a few lines later, the villains return to attack again, they knock Cripple from his crutches, so that Frank enters to rescue Phillis, Ursula, and Cripple, now in need of deliverance himself. The play invites the audience to see Cripple’s heroism as parodic and hilarious, a botched attempt at rescue that yokes him with the women as recipients of Frank’s aid. After the pratfalls of the first scene, however, Cripple bears the brunt of taunts throughout the play: Bowdler, a young impoverished gentleman, insults Cripple as “filthy dog” (620) and “lame Rogue” (2189) and mocks his nose repeatedly. Although Bowdler seems to regard Cripple with some sense of companionship, his forceful compilation of denigrating stereotypes testifies to the vitriol that Cripple’s figure compels.²⁰

Yet within the scenes that offer troubling caricatures of Cripple, the play develops his character through astonishing departures from the stereotype of crippled beggar as a figure of jest. Though deformed, Cripple labors; he does not beg. Working as an artisan who draws embroidery designs in his shop, Cripple is called “master Drawer” (861), and he serves as scrivener, writing letters and dispensing poems. Cripple’s labor distinguishes him from other male characters in the play, who are impecunious gentlemen or gullible,

greedy, patriarchal figures. Their transactions in the play (unlike Cripple's "honest" labor) include delinquent borrowing and calling in bills, accusing each other of fraud, and accepting bad collateral in hopes of financial gain. Bobbington, the assailant from the opening scene, returns to swindle Master Flowers, Phillis's father, into accepting a stolen diamond as payment for a bond. Bernard, a young gentleman "endebedted a hundred pound" (844) and "not worth a hundred pence" (846) still goes out dancing at his friend's admonition, "lets tickle it to-night, / For tomorrow thy heels may be too heavy" (836-7). Unlike the other men, however, with their social engagements and financial entanglements, Cripple eschews invitations with the frequent plea, "My busines stays me here" (841), and exclaims: "Therefore Ile now turne provident; Ile to my shoppe / and fall to work" (850-1). Cripple's insistence on his work distinguishes him as a subject able to labor, not the object of charity.

This preoccupation with labor goes hand-in-hand with financial exchange as a driving force in the play. The title's allusion and, indeed, the spatial location of Cripple's shop in proximity to London's Royal Exchange, situates financial transactions in the dramatic fiction within key historical developments: emerging forms of capitalism and trade, international commerce, and controversies over domestic production of goods. London's central site of civic commerce, the Exchange, was conceived by Sir Thomas Gresham, modeled on Antwerp's bourse, and officially opened in 1571 by Queen Elizabeth.²¹ Jean Howard argues that, through the theater, the Royal Exchange "entered the culture's imaginative life as a densely coded site speaking to the dangers and pleasures of new kinds of commercial practice," figuring in "complex and contradictory" representations.²² Chief among these contradictions was the problem of conceptualizing

the act of exchange itself within the emerging market economy. Jean-Christophe Agnew has shown how the “formless, qualityless, characterless nature of the money form” sparked attention to the problem of representational mobility, so that texts of contemporary life reveal a “coherent and repeated pattern of problems or questions about the nature of social identity, intentionality, accountability, transparency, and reciprocity in commodity transactions—the who, what, when, where, and why of exchange.”²³ *The Fair Maid of the Exchange* engages with these questions, posing problems of commensurability (can Frank successfully take on Cripple’s identity?), satisfaction (will the exchange of Frank for Cripple solve Phillis’s attention to the “wrong” character?) and the difficulty of ascertaining fraudulent exchange, whether in the stolen jewel or the marriage transactions that exchange status for wealth when impoverished gentlemen wed the daughters of wealthy merchants.

But more than just a thematic problem of exchange and the financial imaginary of the marriage market, the Exchange highlights the pressures and instability of social roles. The play thematizes disguise as necessary to navigate market demands of translating and transforming self-representation, in which characters pretend to be other than who they are in order to get what they desire. Where nineteenth-century literary critics read Cripple’s body in terms of his fitness for a romantic comedy, recent critical work on the play has located Cripple’s complicated role in the dramatic fiction in terms of this relation to the Exchange. Jean Howard and Richard Waswo make compelling cases that Cripple’s figure suggests the puzzling developments of the emergence of new economic practices, calling him the “ambiguous genius of the Exchange” and the “market personified, the activity of exchange.”²⁴ However, taking Cripple as the figure for the

murky process of transforming value into wealth and back into commodities, as the cycle of profit goes, means attending more fully to the possibilities of his “crooked” shape. Cripple, with his ostentatiously prostheticized body, thus becomes the figure for new emerging social practices and theorization of economic value. Cripple himself recalls a past in which he strolled through the ground floor of the Exchange in the company of the men who now must come to visit him. When Bowdler boasts that he has talked often with Moll (“myself hath been her whetstone with my conference in the Exchange, any time these many years”), Cripple responds: “In th’ Exchange! I have walkt with thee there, before the visitation of my legs, and my expence in timber, at the least a hundred times, and never heard thee speak to a wench” (676-8). Although neither Cripple’s character nor the play seem interested in the ontology of this “visitation,” the shift in Cripple’s mobility prevents him from engaging, not in the economic practices, but in the social performance of strolling conversation that the Exchange structures. Cripple’s “visitation” reassigns his character from the Exchange to the pawn, where he is identified with female figures engaged in manual work, now stripped of the proper name he, presumably, possessed before becoming “Cripple.” Never actually staged in the play, the ground floor of the Exchange remains a fantasy of masculinized space that excludes Cripple’s character because, unlike the other men, Cripple remains confined to labor in his shop, cut off from the Exchange and the exchanges that are the driving force of the London comedy.

However, Cripple proves more than able to manipulate and direct the modes of performance that his young male friends employ as they seek to make their fortunes and marriages. Since Cripple’s shop shares stage space with other shops in which Phillis and Moll work as “sempstresses” in the pawn, critics have read Cripple’s physical deformity

explicitly in gendered terms: Juana Green suggests, for example, that the play offers a possible way to explain his limp because “from an early modern perspective, effeminization results from associating too closely with women”²⁵ but concedes that the play “offers little evidence with which to explain its conflation of eroticism and deformity in the character of Cripple.”²⁶ In cultural convention, the ground floor of the Exchange was the site of large-scale transactions and consistently figured as “male space” while “the pawn, site of everyday consumption, is insistently connected with women who sell or who buy in its shops.”²⁷ Yet if no longer identified with the masculinized energies of the Exchange, Cripple does not exactly fit in at the pawn, either: Cripple’s actions in the plot complicate his affiliation with the women. He frustrates the desires that both key female figures initially express. He organizes Frank’s substitution against Phillis’ expressed intent to marry Cripple himself and, in a parallel plot, steers Moll Berry, the daughter of a wealthy merchant, away from marriage with Bowdler to marry Barnard instead, another impoverished gentleman indebted to Master Berry, Moll’s father. Crucially, these machinations underscore the extent to which Cripple engages in a plot that disciplines female desire, especially the desire that Phillis expresses forcefully for Cripple himself.

To see the central romantic plot of the play—in which Phillis pursues Cripple and Frank pursues Phillis while Cripple organizes the affair from where he sits—is to see modes of exchange in action as the plot contests critical assumptions about who might desire a “crooked” body. While marriage between Cripple and Phillis appears unthinkable for later critics, this is simply not the case in the dramatic fiction. Though sought after by all three Golding brothers, Phillis insists on Cripple, declaring: “Well, let

them pleade and perish if they will; / Cripple, my heart is thine, and shall be still” (485-6). Phillis devotes nearly all of her lines to pining after Cripple. Approaching Cripple’s shop to disclose her affection through the “conceit” of an embroidery design she wishes for him to draw, she pleads: “O now you gods above / Pittie poor Phillis heart, that melts in love; / Instruct the Cripple to find out my love” (852-4). From this monologue, Phillis details her chosen “conceit” as that of a “yong gentlewomane” whose image of “wanton love / Drawing his bow” (869-70), across from “an arrow in a heart” (871), instructs him to “picture foorth disdaine, / A cruell fate unto a loving vaine” (872-3) with a poem that explicates the image as a reproach to a hard-hearted lover. Phillis closes: “more I fain would say, / But shame forbids, and calles me hence away” (882-3). Her language suggests nothing about Cripple’s unsuitability for marriage. Indeed, when her parents declare later in the play, that she marry one of the Goldings, she decides to “dissemble” her love to her parents, insisting, “say what they will, / Ile love the Cripple, and will hate them still” (1929-30). For Phillis, “the Cripple” indexes not his general “type,” but rather his specificity. She chooses him in contrast to the multiple—and indiscriminate—suits of her other admirers.

In response, Cripple’s rejection of Phillis depends upon the rejection of the institution of marriage rather than a sense of his particular unfitness for it. After Phillis visits his shop with her embroidery design, Cripple apostrophizes, “Sweet faire, I pittie, yet no reliefe / Harbors within the closet of my soule” (884-5) only to turn to the audience in explanatory address for his response:

This Phillis bears me true affection;
But I detest the humour of fond love:
Yet am I houely solicited
As you now see, and faine she would make knowne

The true perplexion of her wounded heart.

(886-90)

Cripple's assessment of Phillis's courtship emphasizes her desire and the dual burdens of revelation and modesty. The subterfuge of "figures" that Phillis employs in her embroidery, a covert expression of desire, point to the extent of the "true love" she bears for Cripple. Yet Cripple's response to Phillis's proclamation of love employs surprising anti-marital rhetoric, surprising for what it does not mention rather than what it does. He proclaims: "Fancie shall never marry me to woe, / Take this of me, a yong man's never mar'd / Till he by marriage from all joy be bar'd" (988-90). Cripple traces the "marring" (with the play on "marrying") effect of marriage as a general claim rather than drawing equivalence between his deformed body and any unfitness for marriage. Offered the choice of Phillis' love, Cripple rejects it, but without a sense of an innate disqualification because of his lame and deformed body. The play thus far resists, I am arguing, a reading of Cripple's body either as incapable of working or impotent, and suggests instead that the very objects which mark his body as singularly in need of support—identifying him as a "really" crippled Cripple—may become powerful theatrical signs.

II. Feats of Impersonation: Prostheticizing the Theatrical Body

What "characterizes" Cripple are his prostheses, the signs of his deficient body that make him unique. These distinctive objects, Cripple's "crutches" and "crooked habit," underscore his body as deficient and, in doing so, distinguish his character from the conventionally assumed dramatic deceit of the crippled beggar. As prostheses, they also reveal how the theater makes the body of a dramatic character by projecting an imagined theatrical body. Prosthesis operates in the play on multiple levels: on the most basic level, prosthesis describes the material production of dramatic character through

prosthetic devices attached to the body of the actor. This kind of prosthetic use of stage properties is commonplace in the theater, where, as Keir Elam observes, a “rich semantic structure is produced by a small and predictable stock of vehicles.”²⁸ Stage properties produce this semantic structure because they allow the audience to differentiate between characters on the stage; that is, actors use stage properties—from wigs to humps to paint—to make dramatic meaning by creating bodily features or habits of use for their characters. As a fixed object, a particular property may come, within a play or through intertextual reference, to be associated with type characters or to import a set of references into the play-world. Recent work on stage properties has tended toward two strains of thought: first, reading the prop as theatrical sign, emphasizing its mobility and naming it as a crucial source of information about the world of the play, and second, attending to its status as a material object that participates in larger currents of exchange and circulation, within and outside of the dramatic fiction.²⁹ My interest in the stage properties that feature so prominently in *Fair Maid* has to do with how their designated semiotic function constructs dramatic character on the basis of fictional—which is to say, theatrical—bodies.

I use “prosthesis” here to designate how the play naturalizes stage properties extrinsic to the actor, Cripple’s “crutch” and “crooked habit,” by imagining them not just as objects that his figure employs but also as necessary for his theatrical body. Cripple’s “crutches” are not only props that help to constitute his character semiotically; he appears to require them to function, and other characters repeatedly take them for Cripple himself. In one of several scenes in which Cripple refuses a social invitation, Bowdler insists upon the substitution:

Bow. Come, crutch, thou shalt with us.
 Crip. Not I.
 Bow. Downe, dogge, Ile have thy company.
 Crip. I have businesse.
 Bow. By this hand thou shalt goe with us.
 Crip. By this leg I will not.
 Bow. A lame othe, never stand to that.
 Crip. By this crutch but I will.

(719-26)

Bowdler reduces Cripple to “Crutch” in synecdochal exchange: Cripple’s aid stands in for his person. This moment imagines Cripple’s crutch not as supplement to or replacement for his natural leg (as in the “more legs” suggested at the beginning of the play) but as a particularity that becomes the overriding, irreducible marker of Cripple’s identity. The repartee turns on the idea of substitution: Bowdler threatens physical force (“By this hand”), and Cripple reciprocates with a turn to the body, to his distinctively unforceful leg (“By this leg”). Bowdler’s double pun, on the “lame” oath based on Cripple’s leg and the impossibility of standing on it, in turn prompts Cripple’s response, “By this crutch,” a substitution of the wooden support for the body part in the previous oath. Bowdler’s attempt at witty humor in the progression of bodily-based oaths constitutes the rhetorical figure from Cripple’s body; yet what ends their verbal play is the object of the crutch which calls attention to the lame leg, the wooden support that substitutes for the leg, and, in turn, the nickname for Cripple himself. When Bowdler reduces Cripple to “Crutch” the synecdoche of a single feature—in this case, dependence upon a particular object that stands in for his entire character—produces his body as crippled.

The stage property, therefore, rescales and drastically compresses Cripple’s dramatic character. I want to distinguish this synecdochal substitution—in which Cripple’s crutch is at once a physical support, and additional leg, and a nickname for his

person—as a defining feature of prosthesis at the conceptual level in this play. As a supplement, a prosthesis points to the very lack it strives to conceal; the prosthetic object refers to a bodily ideal even as it flaunts the unattainable illusion of bodily perfection that it serves.³⁰ The fantasy of the body in which the prosthesis participates—and inevitably fails to perform fully—is thus one of an independent, self-supporting, autonomous body that announces the self as “able,” without visible or invisible support. The disability studies critique calls attention to the features of this ideal body that prosthesis enables, to suggest that prosthesis illuminates the vulnerability of all bodies.³¹ My use of “prosthesis” to describe how Cripple manages and, in turn, is constructed by prostheses, thus differs from David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder’s important notion of narrative prosthesis, in which disability invites narrative to compel either an explanation of a physical abnormality or a narrative of cure that eliminates the impairment.³² For Mitchell and Snyder, the narrative operates to direct attention away from the disabled body, so that “a textual prosthesis alleviates discomfort by removing the unsightly from view,” and in their formulation, the narrative must foreclose upon the disability or the disabled figure in order to conclude successfully.³³ Although *Fair Maid* opens with the figure of the crippled beggar who suggests that the audiences’ “almes” will supply any artistic defects of the play, the central figure with a prostheticized body, of course, is Cripple. The play does end by devaluing Cripple’s “crooked” shape in contrast to the “proper” shape that Frank inhabits, but Cripple’s figure complicates an easy reading of prosthetic narrative at the level of dramatic form. That is, rather than remove Cripple’s “unsightly” body from view, the play stages Cripple’s prostheses as sites of rich theatricality.

As these “crutches” and “crooked habit” project an intrinsically deficient body, the props that construct Cripple’s theatrical body appear naturalized through performance. Both are prosthetic to his character, though they function differently: the “crutch” operates synecdochally to substitute for Cripple while the “crooked habit” becomes a mode of metonymic replication. Yet they are excessive in this multiplicity: the “crutch” substitutes for Cripple but is insufficient for exchange in the dramatic fiction. Frank could not simply borrow Cripple’s “crutches” and accomplish his act of fraudulent performance because the synecdoche of this single part would not allow for impersonation. Cripple’s “crooked habit,” by contrast, works metonymically to allow Frank to stand in for Cripple himself. This metonymic relation is necessarily multiplicative because the “habit” requires an additional body in order to transfer Cripple’s shape. The “crooked habit” becomes productively identified with Cripple’s person, explicitly refracting and materializing his “crooked shape”—and it is worth observing that, unlike the immediately apprehended “crutch,” the “crooked habit” must be established rhetorically—as the apparently unique sign of his character’s theatrical body.

This second prosthesis, the “crooked habite,” is a cloak that seems both to cover and disclose his bodily shape. “Habit” has multiple definitions in the period, ranging from “bearing, demeanour, deportment, behavior,” to “mode of apparel, dress,” to “bodily condition or constitution.”³⁴ The word perforates a clear distinction between exterior and interior of the body and shades from visible sign to personhood and action.³⁵ Moreover, “crooked,” similarly, encodes ambiguity about the relationship between concrete and abstract: one definition, of course, is literally “bent,” or, when applied to the

body, having “limbs bent out of shape; deformed.” But ambiguity proliferates in the figurative sense of the word: in contrast to a straight, defined figure, “crooked” also means “not straightforward; dishonest, wrong, perverse; perverted, out of order, awry.”³⁶ The “crooked” quality of the habit merges with Cripple’s presumed body because the garment appears to take on—and thus, reveal—the shape of his body. While “crooked,” like “habit,” describes his form generally, the description adds an ethical and moral charge; the definition also shades into figural overlays of “moral character and conduct.” In this conjunction of metaphorical device and material object, Cripple’s “crooked habite” suggests the contours of his theatrical body beneath and links to the stereotype of the crippled beggar’s deceit from which his character so productively departs.

Cripple’s “crooked habite” exposes the distinction between prosthesis and prosthesis most clearly, however, when Frank puts this cloak into circulation through an ostensible act of exchange. Frank appeals to Cripple to assist him in securing Phillis’ affection, recalling Cripple’s obligation from the play’s opening scene. In response, Cripple tells Frank that Phillis came to his shop earlier and “burst into termes of sweet affection” (1949), an affection that Cripple offers to transfer to Frank:

Now since that gracious opportunitie
Thus smiles on me, I will resigne the same
To you my friend, knowing my unworthy selfe
Too foule for such a beautie and too base
To match in brightnesse with that sacred comet.
(1955-9)

Cripple suggests an exchange in which Frank will take his place and woo Phillis. This moment rehearses an assumption about Cripple’s lack of fitness as a suitor—repeated by the later critics who presume the impossibility of Cripple’s attractiveness—but the language becomes startlingly abstract. Cripple’s “selfe” initially seems continuous with

his body because of the aesthetic judgment implicit in the visible contrast between one “too foule” (presumably associated with Cripple) and “such a beautie” (as he refers to Phillis). But, as in Cripple’s meditation on Phillis’ embroidered “conceit,” where we might expect explicit language about his bodily disqualification, Cripple moves from abstraction to the still less-specific metaphor: he is “too base” for the “brightness” that describes Phillis as a “sacred comet.” The language is yet another image of poetic hyperbole, the stuff of “the courting phrase” Cripple himself satirizes as the material of lovers who seek a “judiciall phrase, / As prettie, pleasing, and patheticall, / As the best Ovid-immitating dunce” (1369-71) when he dispenses advice to the lovelorn suitors. What is surprising here is that as Cripple dismisses himself from pursuit of Phillis, he does so with deliberate ambiguity about why he rejects her. In fact, to woo Phillis, Cripple imagines that his distinctive shape can become performatively powerful for Frank. Cripple urges him: “Wherefore I will immediatly you take / My crooked habite, and in that disguise / Court her, yea win her, for she will be wonne” (1962-4). Cripple proposes his “crooked habit” as a “disguise,” a transfer that emphasizes the mobility of “habit,” from prosthesis to prop, borrowed by Frank.

After Frank assents to Cripple’s plan, the moment suggests a number of questions: what does the audience see when Cripple removes his habit? Does he leave his crutches with Frank? If so, does Cripple’s exit from the stage emphasize physical impairment and the difficulty of negotiating the environment without his prosthetic aid?³⁷ Although it is impossible to know what the audience would see and how they might respond, the play stages Frank’s transformation as concentrated attention to Cripple’s deformed body. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson has argued that the dominant mode of

looking at disability in contemporary culture is staring, which “enlists curiosity to telescope looking toward diagnosing impairment.”³⁸ In this moment, the play gratifies curiosity about Cripple’s body, in particular. While all theatrical representation invites the viewer’s gaze, this moment in the play offers the audience the pleasure of diagnostic looking as Cripple removes his “crooked habit” to give it to Frank. The scene delineates a performative crux: is Cripple, unmoored of the prosthesis that covers and evinces deformity, still recognizable as “the cripple” when he transfers his “crooked habit” to Frank?

This moment highlights just how easy it is to assume that Cripple’s “crooked shape” reflects a crippled body. The scene reveals the precarious construction of the theatrical body and articulates the gaps and overlaps between multiple bodies: the (presumably) uncrippled actor’s body, Cripple’s body, Frank’s body, and the crooked body he is about to project as he impersonates Cripple. Depending upon how the scene is performed, the actor who plays Cripple could remind the audience of the gap between impersonating actor and theatrical body by simply walking off-stage once released from the “crooked habite,” or he could amplify Cripple’s deformity through an arduous exit from the stage. The play insists upon drawing attention to the problem, for actors, of impersonating a character’s body that may not fit comfortably with the body of the actor. In this extended meditation on the “deform’d” theatrical body, *Fair Maid* reminds the audience that every actor engages in the practice that Frank employs to his ends. Even though the actor who performs Cripple presumably does not need the “crutches” and “crooked habite,” Cripple’s character is identified by—and despite—his prostheses, which differentiate Cripple’s body as singularly in need of support.

Moreover, this moment suggests the ease of playing for a body that is capable of impersonation: Cripple's prosthesis is, for Frank, only a prop. Frank, metonymically substituting himself for Cripple, replaces him by replication. When Cripple urges Frank "about it then, assume this shape of mine, / Take what I have, for all I have is thine" (1967-8), Cripple describes the transaction as a kind of prosthesis for Frank: "Supply my place, to gaine thy hearts desire" (1969). Yet as Frank supplants Cripple, he does so by taking on a prosthetic device he does not, in fact, according to his theatrical body thus far, need to employ. As Cripple divests himself of his "crooked habit," the dramatic fiction of the play reifies the conventional association between the crippled figure and fraudulent deceit, inviting the audience to watch an uncrippled, and thus fraudulent, "Cripple" ready himself for an audience. Notably, however, in a play that has thematized exchange, Cripple cannot participate fully: Cripple cannot simply exchange habits with Frank. Only when Frank takes on—and later, puts off—Cripple's crooked habit does the audience recognize that Cripple's theatrical body is not only deformed, it is also disabled, in the sense that his body cannot impersonate. Distinguishing between prop and prostheses, the play engages in a larger distinction between bodies that appear to be whole, self-sufficient, and capable of impersonating other bodies, and those that are not.

Yet the play complicates Frank's impersonation of Cripple by suggesting Frank's real purpose. After Cripple leaves, Frank's soliloquy reveals his motive to the audience:

Now, brothers, have amongst you for a third part,
 Nay, for the whole, or by my soule, I'll lose all.
 What though my father did bequeath his lands
 To you my elder brethren, the moveables I sue for
 Were none of his.

(1978-82)

Frank sees Phillis as the object of contest and woos her as a chance to outwit his older brothers in compensation for his lack of inheritance. His preoccupation with defeating his brothers—the end to which marriage to Phillis is the means—reorients the play around inheritance gains rather than the marriage, which suddenly appears just one more competitive financial transaction. As Frank waits for Phillis, he muses upon his deceit and appearance:

Am I not like my selfe in this disguise,
Crooked in shape, and crooked in my thoughts?
Then am I a Cripple right, come wench, away,
Thy absence breeds a terror to my stay.

(1985-8)

This moment is one of doubled identification: Frank pretends to be “crooked in shape” and, in appropriating Cripple’s habit/bodily form, he suggests that the disguise paradoxically reveals his true nature (“crooked in my thoughts”), as he intends to deceive Phillis. At the same time, Frank’s exclamation points to the deception he will perform.³⁹ Frank’s exclamation of “terror” in the assumption of disguise discloses the mimetic enterprise as an exercise in anxiety about the vulnerability of his own body: Frank’s own thoughts are “crooked” because he performs a “crooked shape” not his own, but the relationship between these “thoughts” and the body he displays remains unstable. If impersonating Cripple is a mimetic triumph, Frank’s new sense of himself as “crooked in shape” also brings him uncomfortably close to imagining himself as similarly in need of prosthetic support. This worry suggests the possibility of too much identification with the character he represents. The risk of this exercise in impersonation is that he may actually become what he is only “like” in thought, and the “terror” he expresses before Phillis enters comes from the possibility that changing clothes might change the self. Even as

Frank embraces the possibilities that impersonation offers to him, he worries about the deforming effect on his own body and imagines the collapse of mimetic distance.

In the dramatic fiction, the substitution of Frank as Cripple works for Phillis. Her first reaction to seeing Frank-as-Cripple is to exclaim: “Yea yonder sits the wonder of mine eye” (1991). Although Phillis assumes that Cripple still cannot love her, Frank turns the conversation to his own ends. The encounter between Phillis and Frank-as-Cripple discloses the extent to which Frank’s “crooked” shape registers in his mind as a potential detriment to his suitability for marriage. Frank asks Phillis: “Is my ungarnishd, darke, and obscure Cell / A mansion fit for all-commanding love?” (2017-8). Frank’s language frames his assumed shape as the initial impediment for love. When Phillis protests that there are “no groves more pleasant unto me, / Than to be still in thy societie” (2022-3), Frank says that he cannot love her and begins to list the obstacle of her father’s approval (Phillis says not to doubt—“or, if he do not, alls one / So you but grant to my affection” (2037-8)) and then the exchange takes material focus:

Crip: I am too base.
 Phil: My wealth shall raise thee up.
 Crip: I am deform’d.
 Phil: Tut, I will bear with that.
 Crip: Your friends’ dislike brings all this out of frame
 Phil: By humble suit, I will redress the same.
 Crip: Now to employ the virtue of my shape.
 (2039-43)

For every objection that Frank-as-Cripple raises, Phillis counters with her own resources in stichomythic exchange: her wealth will account for his baseness and she “will bear with” his deformity. She argues that value is found not in visible display but in individual perception, and this equivocation does not read Frank-as-Cripple’s deformity as problematic as much as her response simply sidelines the objection. Although Frank’s

deception in the scene heightens the dramatic irony for the audience, Phillis insists upon the specificity of her ongoing desire for Cripple's singular figure, whose "virtue" of shape Frank busily displays. Her response to Frank-as-Cripple's "deform'd" body affirms its particularity and potential negative associations, but she insists upon his shape as no obstacle to their marriage.

Curiously, the printed text of the play reflects the performative identity Frank assumes. The speech prefixes shift from "Frank" to "Crip," although the audience is aware that it is Frank onstage, and indeed, one editor points this out to reassure readers there is "no need to suspect corruption" of the text.⁴⁰ I think there is more here, however: the brief textual change highlights the performative illusion and marks the temporal substitution until Frank returns to his usual shape. The prefixes suggest that the audience sees Cripple even in seeing Frank-as-Cripple: shifting suddenly to "Crip" instead of Frank, the text marks the gap between theatrical performance and the dramatic fiction.⁴¹ Although the play underscores Frank's deception, the audience sees in this moment the pleasure of requited love from a figure with a "crooked shape."

Moreover, while Frank sees the potential marriage as a means to economic profit, Phillis imagines it very differently. With Frank's success in courting Phillis, the play makes explicit Frank's challenge to his older brothers, Ferdinand and Anthony, who enter and attempt to court Phillis themselves. But Phillis repulses their efforts, pronouncing instead:

Here sits my Love, within whose lovely brest
Lives my content, and all my pleasures rest.
And for a further confirmation,
Which to approve, even in sight of both you here present,
I give my hand, and with my hand, my heart,
My selfe, and all to him; and with this ring

Ile wed my selfe.

(2117-23)

Phillis names Cripple as her “love” and self-consciously echoes the language of the distinctively public sacrament in her proclamation. On one level, of course, the audience is aware that the body beneath the “crooked habit” is Frank’s, and this scene sets up the expectation that Phillis will change her mind and choose Frank at the end of the play. But pausing to imagine the staged scene reveals multiple currents of desire: despite the “real” Cripple’s absence, the play performs the fantasy of courtship and sexual attraction between Cripple and Phillis.

The play, that is, lingers on visual display of the body that appears to be crippled as the object of intense desire. The dramatic fiction frames this expression of desire from Phillis as her claim to independent choice of Cripple, specifically: Phillis will wed Cripple by her “selfe,” she insists. To Phillis’ pledge, Frank responds: “I take thy offering” (2124), gives her a ring, and declares, “and let us seal affection with a kisse” (2126). Presumably, this kiss occurs, staging a public demonstration of physical affection: Ferdinand exclaims, “Oh, sight intolerable!” (2127) and Anthony agrees, “A spectacle worse than death!” (2128), prompting Frank to reply “Now, gentlemen, please you draw neere, and listen / to the Cripple” (2129-30) and dismantle their hopes of courtship. Do they respond with disgust to the sight of affection between Frank-as-Cripple and Phillis, to Phillis’ assertion of independence, to the loss of their chance to marry Phillis and gain her fortune, or to some measure of all these imagined flouts? His ability to impersonate Cripple rewards Frank, and his successful suit is the most pointed example of the power of seeming to be what one is not. In this moment, the unequal

exchange between Cripple and Frank allows Frank to benefit from the possibilities of taking on Cripple's prostheses in disguise.

And Frank's deception of Phillis continues until the final scene of the play, while Frank insists that his use of Cripple's "habite" is only a prop that he can assume temporarily to conceal his own shape. At the end of the wooing scene, Frank wishes aloud that Cripple would return and calls for "the substance of this borrowed shape" (2152). Following these words, Cripple enters and Frank thanks him: "Poor in the well framd limbes of Nature, but / Rich in kindnesse beyond comparison!" (2154-5). Frank then proffers the borrowed "disguise," saying: "Here I resigne thy habite backe againe" (2158). This moment clarifies the body beneath the prosthesis: Cripple possesses the "substance" that fills out the "crooked shape," while Frank merely borrows it. Yet Frank's distinction admits his own form as a liability in this particular economic pursuit. As Frank's language reveals, his sense of competition in the marriage market seeks any possible advantage. To Master Flower, Phillis' father, he concedes:

If I had woo'd her in my proper shape,
I do beleeeve she never would have likde me.
Therefore since I shall have her, give me leave
To come and court hir in my borrowed shape.

(2391-4)

Frank's insistence on the "borrowed shape" in contrast to his own "proper shape" recodes his performance as a temporary illusion, adopted to persuade Phillis. In doing so, the dramatic fiction underscores how Frank's uncrippled body must be dissembled because his figure is less attractive, at least momentarily, than Cripple's "crooked" shape.

Alongside Frank's explicit scheming, however, Phillis continues to insist upon her affection for Cripple based upon a different standard of value. Upon learning that each of

her parents prefers a different Golding brother for her, Phyllis speaks an aside to reveal her “true” feelings to the audience:

Those Gentles sue too late, there is another,
Of better worth, though not of halfe their wealth,
What though deform'd, his virtue mends that misse;
What though not rich, his wit doth better gold,
And my estate shall adde unto his wants,
I am resolv'd (good father, and deere mother)
Phillis doth chuse a Cripple, and none other.

(1879-85)

Phillis contrasts Cripple’s “worth” to the Golding brothers’ “wealth” to institute a compensatory standard of value: Cripple’s “deform’d” figure is set against his “virtue” that “mends” that which is physically “amiss.” The play’s “fair maid” emphasizes the relativity of value (“unto me”) instead of value based on wealth or status, both modes that, the dramatic action has shown, depends upon acts of exchange. This moment suggests that Phillis articulates a different mode of desire—though one foreclosed upon by the play—that insists upon the specificity of personal desire in opposition to collective modes of value. Her articulation of an alternative standard for determining value is the last clear moment of resistance in the play to an economy of social performance in which the deformed body cannot participate, yet still appears inevitably fraudulent.

III. Comedy and the End(s) of Disability

The play articulates the rewards of the ability to impersonate, to manipulate props rather than to rely on them, through social advancement, especially through the cultural institution of marriage. So far I have suggested that, in *The Fair Maid of the Exchange*, the distinction between the able-bodied and disabled body is not actually whether a body is defined by visible deformity, but whether a body is capable of disguise. This means that able-bodiedness is about the ability to impersonate, the possibility of using a

prosthetic device as a prop rather than as integrated bodily support and of assuming temporary roles only to impersonate back out of a “deform’d” body. The end of the play interprets Cripple’s reliance on prostheses negatively because Cripple cannot impersonate a non-deformed subject. Although the disguise plot draws energy from Phillis’s expressions of desire for Cripple’s figure, Phillis rejects him, allowing Frank to reveal himself, and the play finally denigrates Cripple’s “deformities” through social exclusion.

The dramatic fiction disavows the “real” body of Cripple in the final scene, when nearly all of the characters are gathered. Frank arrives, having “put on” his “counterfeited shape” and disguised himself as Cripple again, Master Flower pretends to prevent their marriage only to acquiesce and give his consent. At this crucial moment Cripple enters, just after the promise of marriage is confirmed between Frank-as-Cripple and Phillis. Cripple’s approach shatters Phillis’s illusion of his singularity, and the on-stage doubling of his character refracts the multiplicity of his prosthetic parts into multiple figures. Cripple utters his final lines in the play as he enters and asks: “Gentlemen, sweet bloods, or brethren of familiarity, / I would speake with Phillis, shall I have audience?” (2588-9). At the sight of the second “Cripple” (the “real” Cripple), Phillis expresses a shocking reversal of her earlier affections, exclaiming, “This is some spirit, drive him from my sight” (2591). When Frank-as-Cripple protests, “Were he the devill, thou shalt not budge a foote” (2592), Phillis responds to both “Cripples” by adopting the negative rhetoric that has been directed at Cripple throughout the play:

Hence, foul deformitie!
 Nor thou, nor he, shall my companion be.
 If Cripples dead, the living seem to haunt,
 I’ll neither of either, therefore I say, avaunt.

(2595-8)

Phillis rejects both Cripple and Frank-as-Cripple as “foul deformitie.” Her declaration, “Nor thou nor he,” suggests either that Cripple, who enters, is the “Cripples dead” that “haunts” the Cripple “living” (Frank) or that both (“Nor thou, nor he”) are figures of “Cripples dead” that haunt her in their doubled presence. But even as Phillis rejects both of them—“I’ll neither of either”—her language curiously refracts the generative logic of metonymic reproduction: “Cripples dead” may refer to one Cripple but encodes the figure’s capacity for excessive impersonation. Prosthetic excess has characterized Cripple’s identity throughout the play, from the first scene establishing Cripple’s “more legs than Nature gave thee.” More than an excess of prosthetic parts for Cripple, the play produces an excess of Cripples, staging Cripple in this final scene as the performative double of himself.

The text does not suggest whether Cripple is aware of the disguised Frank when he enters. Although Phillis is the focus of the scene, the play positions Cripple as both doubled figure and object of duplicity. Critics have read the inexplicable and astonishing shift in Phillis’ affections as evidence of authorial lack of skill, in which the playwright makes Phillis “most unaccountably transfer her affections at last, for the mere purpose of letting the curtain fall upon her marriage with somebody,”⁴² or as evidence of the operations of the market, in which “the desire that counts, in the material economy and the comedic one, is collective, not individual.”⁴³ I read Phyllis’s response, which Cripple may—or may not—understand, however, as much more direct: she rejects not just any other suitor, but Cripple, specifically. It is not merely that Cripple is no longer the singular character, especially in a play that has emphasized the interchangeability of suitors and lovers. Even more forcefully, the doubling and excess that characterizes

Cripple in this final scene returns him to the fraudulent associations of the type of the crippled beggar: Cripple's doubling renders his presumed singularity (for Phillis, at least) inescapably deceitful.

While Phillis responds to the sight with horror, the play also marks a potential comic response to this doubleness, a response that stages the indistinguishability of the two figures as a source of laughter. Returning to the title's proclamation of the "pleasing humors of the Cripple of Fanchurch," Bowdler's response to the appearance of Cripple and Frank-as-Cripple is: "Zounds two cripples, two dogs, two cures, 'tis wonderfull" (2593). Bowdler mocks Cripple with the pejorative association that he repeats throughout the play, and none of the characters assembled refute his assessment of Cripple. In the face of this doubling, Frank asserts himself and casts off his disguise, to show that there is only one "foul deformitie":

Deere heart, revoke these words,
Here are no spirites nor deformities,
I am a counterfeit Cripple now no more,
But yong *Frank Golding* as I was before:
Amaze not love, nor seem not discontent,
Nor thee, nor him shall ever this repent.

(2600-5)

Frank appropriates and rejects the language of deformity in order to distance himself from Cripple's shape, no longer useful to him. He imagines that this action of self-revelation will compel Phillis to choose him because his shape must be preferable to the "deformities" that attend on Cripple's figure. Frank's "Here" denotes not just the present scene but also the apparently stable reality of his body, free of "deformities." In rhetoric that recalls worry about potentially fraudulent crippled beggars of the play's prologue, Frank distinguishes between the visual evidence of truth ("as I was before") of his body

in opposition to the “counterfeit Cripple” that he abjures, his “now no more” an attempt to banish the deception he presented. By wearing and visibly removing the disguise, Frank stages the distinction between prop and prosthesis and appears to produce knowledge of his unaided, seemingly un-prostheticized body as newly desirable and definitively ideal. Frank’s disguise, as the “false” Cripple, undoes Cripple when only Frank is able to remove his assumed props and distinguish himself from the “counterfeit Cripple.” The play returns to the expected stereotype that renders Cripple—now the “real” Cripple in the room—deceitful when Frank announces Cripple as the “counterfeit Cripple.”

While the play opens with the figure of a crippled beggar seeking charitable alms from the audience to foreground the possibility of fraud the figure entails, nearly every social interaction in the plot relies on deceit through studied ignorance, disguise, double-crossing, and intent to swindle. The threat of punishment for these actions is a recurring theme, underscored in the ending when officers arrive to arrest Master Flower because he possesses a stolen diamond, accepted in payment of a bond. Bobbington, the villain from the play’s opening scene, had pretended to be one “Captain Racket” to swindle Master Flower, asking to borrow ten pounds and offering to “leave in your hands a diamond of greater value than the money” (581-2). In response, Flower inquires: “A Diamond, is it a Diamond, or but a counterfeit?” (583). Despite being unable to actually see the diamond, since he cannot find his spectacles, Flower had assented, “O tis good, it is a good conceit” (590), his stock phrase of approval. In this final scene, however, told that he must proceed directly to the judge, Flower speaks the last words of the play: “Words here are little worth, wife and friends all / Goe with me to my tryall, you shall see / A good

conceit now brought to infamie” (2690-2). The “good conceit” of Flower’s business dealings is the same language with which Flower approved Frank’s disguised courtship: the play equivocates between real and counterfeit diamonds, and real and counterfeit Cripples. However, unlike other comedies that end with the figure of a judge—notably Jonson’s plays, preoccupied with the problem of justice and ethical judgment—the trial in *The Fair Maid of the Exchange* is, like the wedding we might assume from the genre, deferred in the play. Flower never faces the consequences of the “infamy” of his conceit, unlike Cripple, who bears the consequences of his unequal exchange with Frank. Although the play has staged the problem of the counterfeit as both socially disruptive and commonplace, the final disclosure of Frank’s fraud redounds upon Cripple in Phillis’s dismissal: Cripple is the only figure explicitly rejected on the stage at the end of the play.

But this reading of Cripple’s deformity as entirely negative—as finally socially disabling when he is rejected as “foul deformity” by Phillis—does not fully account for the work that his character performs throughout the play and for his persistent dynamism. To return to the puzzle his dramatic character presents in critical history, I want to suggest two implications of the final scene of the comedy. First, Frank’s rhetoric in his speech of unveiling suggests that the presumptively undeformed body that he blithely assumes will win Phillis may, in fact, be less than convincing. Frank’s lines, from his disclosure and his admonishing “Amaze not,” suggest Phillis’s “discontent” with the deception. Frank’s assertion “nor thee nor him shall ever this repent” labors to assure the object (Phillis) and the means (Cripple) of his deception, but his repeated injunctions suggest that they may object to his proclaimed solution. Cripple, though silent, remains

onstage through the rest of the play, as Phillis finally chooses Frank over the other Golding brothers before Flowers' arrest upends the scene. Because of the sustained nature of Cripple's presence—the silence of his part an invitation to gestures that register a range of responses to the ending—the play cannot quite put off Cripple entirely.

Cripple's lingering presence is also a consequence of the peculiar promise of dramatic form. When Frank assumes Cripple's prostheses for his own props, every interaction he performs as Cripple redefines the possibilities of Cripple's "crooked shape." The play dismisses Cripple's figure on the basis of the assumed deficiencies and deceptions of his shape. Yet I want to emphasize the degree to which Cripple's character has destabilized judgments about this "crooked shape" by the end. As the play essentializes Cripple's body through prostheses, it also marks Cripple as the "truth" behind Frank's impersonation; Frank, for his part, underestimates how his participation in the dramatic economy of exchange evacuates his character in the play. That is, Frank's confident "as I was before" means to reclaim his "proper" shape and display his figure as superior to Cripple's because he can doff the disguise. By this point in the play, however, he has spent most of his time on stage performing Cripple. In the dramatic fiction, Cripple's prostheticized body is the confining shape that prevents Cripple from impersonating out of his position, but these prostheses also affirm Cripple's actual shape as the original, in light of which Frank is merely a copy. Frank's "proper shape" is not easily reclaimed, for though his body was initially the norm—recall critical assumptions about "tall and handsome Frank"—his labor to impersonate and then separate himself from Cripple makes his body visible in a play that has invested Cripple's figure with

desire. Once engaged in borrowing Cripple's prostheses, Frank never really exits the economy of disguise.

The epigraph to this chapter comes from Anthony Copley's *Wits fittes and fancies* (1559). A selection of jests and sayings organized topically, the section entitled "Of Crookednes and Lamenesse" includes jests such as: "One that was a litle crooked fellow and verie craftie withall: an other compar'd him to the common law" and "A crook-back'd Plaintiffe besought a Iudge to doe him right, and the Iudge answered: Well may I heare you, but right I can not doe ye."⁴⁴ The section also includes the brief exchange quoted at the beginning of the chapter: "One saying to a crook-back'd person that it was a great default to be crook-back'd: hee answered: Rather is it an ouer-plus." Playing on the overlap between literal, figural, and metaphorical interpretations of being "crooked" or "crook-back'd," the anecdote takes the physical body as a starting point for laughter because of the figure's visible incongruity. "Crookednes" appears here as a physical condition that is inevitably social, inviting critical judgment (the "over-plus," "the common law," the literal "right" in the sense of "upright") and resolution. Yet the epigraph is the only anecdote in the section that ventriloquizes the response of a "crook-back'd person," and he redefines his condition. The presumed "default" of his figure is in his visibly distinctive body, interpreted by the speaker as a sign of lack. But his response, "rather is it an ouer-plus," re-interprets his figure by literalizing the shape of his form (bent over) and reading its distinctive bent as excessive. These lines creatively reconfigure a relation to the world driven by bodily appearance, because the "overplus" is undecidable. The "overplus" of his figure suggests the possibility of seeing his literal shape differently and producing an alternate interpretation of crookedness.

In my brief reading of this epigraph as a performance that redefines the “crooked” figure, I do not mean to underestimate the vitriolic force with which the play dismisses Cripple’s figure. *The Fair Maid of the Exchange* finally imagines Cripple’s body in need of a remedy and ultimately as an inadequate contrast to the “proper” shape that Frank inhabits. Frank’s actions within the disguise, however, underscore the illusive power of the theater: although Cripple’s theatrical body is every bit as constructed as Frank’s temporally-limited impersonation, the act of performance creates the perception that Cripple’s body is, indeed, really crippled. The material prostheses—the props that become the figural prostheses of “crutches” and “crooked habit”—index Cripple’s deformity but detached and circulated, they become liabilities when they call attention to the presumed defects of the body beneath. Making—and then unmaking—Cripple’s character and producing a theatrical body through prosthesis, the play reveals the possibilities and instability of dramatic form itself. Alert to the pressures of theater as business, in fact, the playtext tags certain characters in the *dramatis personae* for possible doublings (Cripple, Frank, and Phillis, of course, are each noted as “for one” actor). But the standard theatrical practice of one actor playing multiple roles—which, within the dramatic fiction, is also standard social practice for navigating the marriage market and financial transactions at the Royal Exchange—renders uncertain judgments about what “shape” can reveal.

Appearing to reinstate a clear difference between able and disabled bodies at the end of the play, *The Fair Maid of the Exchange* nonetheless underscores the difficulty and tenuousness of this binary. Registering the coordinates of disability around impersonation, the play suggests that impersonation is not stable, and for Cripple’s

“crooked” shape, the exchange is unequal. The dramatic fiction transfers the ethical consequences of fraudulent deception onto Cripple’s character. Cripple’s particular body, taken as both unable to impersonate and inevitably deceptive, finally bears the cost of the play’s attempt to distinguish between permissible forms of performance, which result in financial gain or marriage (or financial gain through marriage) and illegitimate forms of performance, such as the fraudulent appeals to a deformed body a crippled beggar may employ. Given this barely tenable distinction, in light of the “social model” of disability, Cripple’s disability in the play is not about physical impairment as innate disqualification from social norms. What is striking about this play is not just that Cripple’s theatrical body is desirable—as critics have expressed in varying degrees of amazement and disgust—but rather that even as the comedic heroine designates him desirable, even though his “crooked shape” is borrowed for powerful effect in the play, and even while he engages in labor in the Exchange, the play returns Cripple’s vibrant character to the “crooked” contours of conventional shape. Cripple challenges retrospective characterization of early modern as putatively stable to reveal, instead, the implications of the essentializing power of the stereotype and the modulations of dramatic character: disability names that condition by which Cripple cannot participate in an economy of performative exchange. In a cultural moment rife with representations of fraudulent disabled beggars, disability is, paradoxically, performed as the utter impossibility of disguise.

¹ Anthony Copley, *Wits fittes and fancies* (London, 1559), 194.

² The play has often been attributed to Thomas Heywood, but the surviving quartos of 1607, 1625, and 1634 bear no authorial designation and the most recent study of Heywood’s work, Richard Rowland’s *Thomas Heywood’s Theatre, 1599-1639* (London and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), does not attribute the play to Heywood. See introductions to *The Fair Maid of the Exchange: A Comedy*, ed. Barron Field (Printed for

the Shakespeare Society, London, 1845) and *A Critical Edition of The Fair Maid of the Exchange*, ed. Karl Snyder (New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1980) for discussion of the authorship debate.

³ Unattributed, *The Fair Maid of the Exchange*, ed. Peter Davison (Oxford: The Malone Society Reprints, 1962); this and all further quotations from the play from this edition, cited parenthetically by line number in the play text.

⁴ On the generic features of city comedy, see especially Brian Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1980); Theodore Levin, *The City Staged: Jacobean Comedy, 1603-13* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986); and *Plotting Early Modern London: New Essays on Jacobean City Comedy*, eds. Dieter Mehl, Angela Stock and Anne-Julia Zwierlein (London and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004).

⁵ Field, v; quoted in Field, vi; Charles Lamb, *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets* (New York: Wiley & Putnam, 1845), 188.

⁶ Edmund Gosse, *The Jacobean Poets* (London 1894), 135.

⁷ Charles Lamb, *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets* (New York: Wiley & Putnam, 1845), 188.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁹ Snyder, 6.

¹⁰ Recent work probes the play's Exchange setting and problems of the market: see Juana Green, "The Sempster's Wares: Merchandising and Marrying in *The Fair Maid of the Exchange* (1607)" *Renaissance Quarterly* 53.4 (2000): 1084-118; Jean Howard, *Theater of a City: The Places of London Comedy, 1598-1642* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); and Richard Waswo, "Crises of Credit: Monetary and Erotic Economies in the Jacobean Theatre," in *Plotting Early Modern London: New Essays on Jacobean City Comedy*, eds. Dieter Mehl, Angela Stock and Anne-Julia Zwierlein (London and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004).

¹¹ Howard, 66; Waswo, 63; Green, 1105.

¹² Other comedies, such as *The Blind Beggar of Bednal Green* feature the titular blind beggar as a central character who appears in multiple disguises. In *Disguise Plots in Elizabethan Drama* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1915), Victor Freeburg points out that the printed text of Chapman's play advertises the title character's "variable humours in disguised shapes" (127), explicitly yoking comic and fraudulent performance.

¹³ George Chapman, *The Blind Begger of Alexandria* (London, 1598), A4v, 115-6.

¹⁴ Bert States, *The Pleasure of the Play* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 155.

¹⁵ Paul A. Fideler points out that the Parliament sessions of 1597-8 were especially concerned with social care: "No less than 17 bills related to poverty were considered" (100), and from this attention to the problem of poverty, Parliament passed the key statutes that "constitute the Elizabethan Poor Law" (100) in 1598 and 1601, distinguished by the "throughness of the mandate that [the legislation] added to the 1572 statute" (100-1), *Social Welfare in Pre-Industrial England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). See especially chapter 3: "Parish, Town, and Poor Law (c.1540-1610)," 68-102. See also Paul Slack's brief study of legal developments, *The English Poor Law, 1531-1782* (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 1990) and his important study, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Longman, 1988).

¹⁶ *Fat King, Lean Beggar: Representations of Poverty in the Age of Shakespeare* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 3, 8. In “Making Vagrancy (In)visible: The Economics of Disguise in Early Modern Rogue Pamphlets” (*Rogues and Early Modern English Culture*, eds. Craig Dionne and Steve Mentz [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004]), Patricia Fumerton reads early modern rogue manuals alongside broadside ballads to argue that the charge of “disguise” often obfuscates the historical necessity, for an itinerant worker, of changing trades or possessing a varied skill set in order to find work that was often temporary. Paola Pugliatti argues that “disguise, simulation, and impersonation” (3) were aspects of both beggars and players that inspired fear, to a greater extent than the wandering and idleness also associated with both groups; see *Beggary and Theatre in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

¹⁷ *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 23.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁹ Ambroise Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, trans. Janis L. Pallister (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 77. All further quotations are from this edition and cited parenthetically in the text.

²⁰ Howard points out that Bowdler’s “abusive language codes Cripple as a Jew” (66), a term of denigration, even if not literally true of his character.

²¹ For more on the Exchange as a place with powerful influence in the London cultural imagination, see Donatella Calabi, *The Market and the City: Square, Street and Architecture in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 176-179; *Material London, ca. 1600*, ed. Lena Cowen Orlin (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); Janette Dillon, *Theatre, Court and City, 1595-1610: Drama and Social Space in London* (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

²² Howard, 212.

²³ Jean-Christophe Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 9. The classic texts on economic thought in the period are Joan Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects: The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978) and Joyce Oldham Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978). Much has been written on the relationship between early modern drama and economics: see especially Theodore Leinwand, *Theatre, Finance, and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Douglas Bruster, *Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

²⁴ Howard 66; Waswo 63.

²⁵ Green and Howard both emphasize the play’s conflicted representations of the women’s work; Green points out that the “repetition of the shop scene in city comedies where women surrounded by goods risk becoming commodities themselves” (1094) is very much alive in the play, especially as the women employ their handiwork as signs of sexual desire and agency for marriage.

²⁶ Green, 1105.

²⁷ Howard, 214. As Howard observes, the pawn as feminized space produces a twofold representation of women in the play: “While powerfully registering the risk to women of

their public positioning within the commodity culture of the pawn, *Fair Maid* also struggles with another danger, however, that posed by these very public, multiply skilled women: namely the danger that they will grow beyond the control of the families who are supposed to supervise their passage into marriage" (63).

²⁸ Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (London: Methuen, 1980), 12.

²⁹ For a useful discussion of how stage properties work as well as an overview of recent theorizations, see Andrew Sofer, "Properties," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre*, ed. Richard Dutton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). See also Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda, "Introduction: Towards a Materialist Account of Stage Properties" in *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama*, eds. Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1-31; and Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

³⁰ In *Prosthesis* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), David Wills argues that the concept of prosthesis, as the action of breaking apart and reconnecting, comes into the English consciousness in the sixteenth century in several contexts, from rhetoric manuals to educational schemes, and he reads the development of prosthetic limbs as fundamentally connected to worry about fraudulent beggars and their unskillful deployment of prosthetic devices in Ambroise Paré's anatomy treatises. Recent critical work on material culture in the early modern period has shown how the "natural" body relies on prosthetic devices to produce gender as an apparently stable identity: see Will Fisher, *Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³¹ See Sarah Jain, "The Prosthetic Imagination: Enabling and Disabling the Prosthesis Trope" *Science Technology Human Values* 24.1 (1999), 33. On prosthesis more generally, see *The Prosthetic Impulse: From a Posthuman Present to a Biocultural Future*, eds. Marquard Smith and Joanne Morra (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007).

³² See David Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

³³ Mitchell and Snyder, 8.

³⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "habit."

³⁵ In *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass demonstrate that the idea of habit as both clothing and as "cultural way of life" (6) are interrelated and consistently interrogated on the stage.

³⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "crooked."

³⁷ This question recalls Stallybrass and Jones' focus on the body of the cross-dressed boy actor, as he undresses on stage, where they suggest that "the Renaissance spectator is required to speculate upon a boy actor who undresses, and thus to speculate on the relation between the boy actor and the woman he plays," a speculation which requires "a fetishistic attention to particular items of clothing, particular parts of the body of an imagined woman, particular parts of an actual boy actor" (207).

³⁸ Rosemarie Garland Thomson, "Dares to Stares: Disabled Women Performance Artists and the Dynamics of Staring," in *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance* ed. Philip Auslander and Carrie Sandahl (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 31.

³⁹In “What Was Performance?” Mary Thomas Crane distinguishes the range of words that early modern texts employ to describes acts we would call “performance”; she points out that the primary sense of “perform” in the period “convey[s] the careful, complete, and actual carrying out of some action” (*Criticism* 43:2 (2001): 169-87), 173. While Frank’s impersonation of Cripple is an exercise in fraud, the material effects of the action include the possibility—a key concern in treatises against the theater—that the performance might actually “take,” permanently altering Frank’s own person.

⁴⁰ Davison, vii.

⁴¹ Elam distinguishes between dramatic and theatrical texts: the theatrical “*performance text*” is textual material “produced *in* the theatre” and the “written or *dramatic text*” is text “composed *for* the theatre” (3). Marking the character as “Crip” rather than Frank, the dramatic text reflects the theatrical dimension of the scene.

⁴² Field, x.

⁴³ Waswo, 63.

⁴⁴ Copley, 194. The work also includes sections explicitly focused on other body parts and bodily attributes, such as “Of Noses,” “Of Drunkenness,” “Of Face and Skarres” “Of Blindnes,” “Of Talnes,” “Of Fat and Grosse,” “Of Leannes,” “Of Age,” “Of Garrulity,” “Of Littlenes.”

“His face loathes one”: Ugliness in *The Changeling*

The narrator of the unattributed pamphlet, “A Certain Relation of the Hogs-face Gentlewoman” (1640), proclaims a confident assurance about the ugly body the text proposes to represent. Beginning with an overview of “prodigious births,” ranging across historical periods, species, and geographies, the account arrives at a “domesticke” scene in Holland in 1618, when a woman becomes pregnant:

But whether they were unthankful for such an unexpected blessing, or what other thing was the cause, I am not able to determine: but so it hapned, that in the yeere 1618, she was safely delivered of a Daughter, all the limbes and lineaments of her body, well featur'd and proportioned, only her face, which is the ornament and beauty of all the rest, had the Nose of a Hog, or Swine: which was not only a stain and blemish, but a deformed ugliness, making all the rest loathsome, contemptible and odious to all that lookt upon her in her infancie.¹

Momentarily diverted by the problem of cause (although the treatise will go on to relate that the mother was bewitched), the narrator describes the details of the infant's appearance that account her body “loathsome, contemptible and odious.” Although the rest of the body is “well featur'd and proportioned,” the face—and not even the entire face, but the “Nose of a Hog” specifically—transforms the whole body through a ruinous detail. The logic of ugliness that motivates this description raises a number of questions: What is the relationship between the singular feature and the rest of the body? What is the difference between a “stain,” a “blemish,” and a “deformed ugliness”? Why does this account need two terms to register the fullest intensification of the aesthetic judgment; what does “deformed ugliness” convey that mere “deformity” or “ugliness” does not?

These questions in turn help to explicate the range of astounding examples in the period that inform my reading of the “ugly” body in the play to which I turn, Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's *The Changeling*. In the play, the “bad face” of De

Flores comes in for scrutiny as an uncertain signifier of ugliness, while Beatrice-Joanna, whose very name announces her aesthetic superiority, is ultimately “blasted” into “ugly deformity” through the deeds she performs. The play seems, at one level, to affirm an easy equation between ugliness and evil. Yet the dramatic fiction amplifies the unpredictability of the affective power of ugliness, unsettling the gravitational pull toward moral judgment, the kind of judgment the narrator of *A certain Relation* demonstrates when he codes the appearance of the “deformed ugliness” according to a shared assumption about the “loathsome” qualities of this body.

To end with a chapter on the “ugly” body is to double back on the interpretive structure from which I began this project. From the beginning of the dissertation, I argued that in order to fully account for early modern disability, we must move beyond the assumption that deformity was interpreted only through a moral framework, which relies on a putative correlation between outer appearance and inner self, and has been the dominant way in which critics have understood how irregular bodies signified in early modern culture. From the perspective of key texts of Renaissance physiognomy (such as Thomas Hill’s *The Contemplation of Mankind*; Thomas Wright, *Passions of the Minde*; and Richard Saunders, *Physiognomie and Chiromancie*, for example), which argued that bodies could be “read” like books, the signs of nature deciphered to produce knowledge about the person, this reading of the period is accurate. In other words, the long critical tradition of understanding early modern bodies through physiognomic schemes of knowledge reflect an over-emphasis on bodily determinism, because assurance about the legibility of the ugly body is writ large these texts, which do their best to tamp down any doubts that “prodigious” marks, such as a birthmark or a harelip, might not be

prospective signposts—retrospectively confirmed—of the evil that will issue from the ugly person. However, the vast discussion of beauty and ugliness within Renaissance culture includes other examples that belie the claims to certainty that physiognomic texts assert about the “natural” inclinations toward evil that bodily irregularities evince. In this chapter, I trace two key features of the discourse of ugliness: the mode of synecdoche that motors aesthetic judgment, and the vexed and overlapping relationship between concepts of ugliness and deformity, in order to show how *The Changeling* points up the instabilities inherent in the discourse of ugliness. While I argued, in the first chapter, that the deformed body registers a fundamental indeterminacy, here I take up a play in which the character deemed “ugly” acknowledges the specificity of his “bad face” but resists the attempt to extrapolate this feature to a moral interpretation of his body. The crucial discursive move of ugliness is to blur the sight of the body, but De Flores, who is marked as ugly within the dramatic fiction, will not let his body be erased, insisting instead upon the possibility that *this* body could be the object of desire.

The ugly body is another way, then, to consider how irregular bodies become disabled. While ugliness may not seem, in the present moment, to fit with more obvious bodily impairment, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers rank beauty with health and strength through the idea of the “gifts,” of the body or of nature, as a way to describe essential bodily properties. The surgeon Alexander Read argues: “there be three gifts of the body, to wit, Health, Strength, and Beauty, all which medicine is to direct: Health is preserved by wholesome nourishment, Strength by convenient exercises... κοσμητική [cosmetic; skill in ordering] hath care of the beauty.”² Yet these gifts are not only significant within medicine; they recur in philosophical and classical discourse. Barnabe

Googe's translation of Marcello Paligenio's poem renders them: "Strength, beauty, health, activity / these foure the body oweth."³ John Higgins's translation of Richard Huloet's *Huloets Dictionarie*, calls these the "Endowments" of the body, "called the giftes of nature," or "*dotes corporales*," which he lists as: "beauty, health, riches, strength."⁴ Thomas Rogers expounds on the relationship between the body and nature in his collection of observations: under the heading "The goodes of Nature," he explains, "By this worde Nature is understoode the vertue, force, and property of every thing. In this place the goodes of Nature be also understoode, all such thinges as are in the body of man as health, strength, beauty and bignesse."⁵ While various iterations may add a fourth "gift," these three properties—strength (used here in the sense of ability), beauty, and health—appear together consistently, producing an overlapping set of coordinates with which to imagine the ideal body in the early modern period.

Critics have long noted the association of beauty and goodness in Renaissance culture, from the contexts of continental humanism and neo-Platonic conceptions of form, to early modern thought. In his essay on physiognomy, for example, Michel de Montaigne reiterates the praise of beauty, which he calls a "potent and advantageous quality" that is "within two fingers' breadth of goodness."⁶ Critics of early modern literature, in turn, have traced how this preoccupation with beauty is articulated in terms of the human body. Stephen Greenblatt asserts that "featurelessness is for Elizabethan culture the ideal form of human beauty," and consequently, the sign of Shakespeare's unique authorial power is that while this ideal "repeatedly characterizes beauty as the *unmarked*," his innovation is in crafting dramatic figures who "are memorable, distinctive, and alluring not despite but precisely because of their failure to conform to

the code of ideal featurelessness to which Shakespeare and his contemporaries subscribed.”⁷ Representations of ugly bodies, however, are rife in the broader culture, as Naomi Baker shows, and she argues that the ugliness shifts according to gender, so that, “the meanings of male ugliness are opaque while female beauty is represented as an artificial cover for a deformity whose moral and physical referents are inextricably linked.”⁸ A man’s ugliness may, in fact, contravene the goodness of the heart that “passeth show,” while women’s bodies are not, in fact, understood to naturally correspond between inner and outer; female beauty will ultimately become ugliness.⁹ Ugliness, in the early modern period, poses a problem to conceptions of the “natural” body because at the same moment in which physiognomic knowledge insists that “natural” signs reveal evil inclinations that may yet be reformed through discipline, “cosmeticall physic” presents the possibility of altering the “natural” body through art.

Against these ideals, conceptions of ugliness, such as the aestheticized language on display in the descriptions of the “Hogs-face Gentlewoman,” marshal the force of consensus (operating, that is, on the underlying assumption: we all think that’s ugly) to avoid conceding the extent to which ugliness is always produced as a foregone conclusion. The essential mode of ugliness is synecdoche, in which a part of the body determines the aesthetic judgment of the form as a whole. But it is not just any particular part of the body that stands in for the whole: the face is the site of distinction. The surgeon Alexander Read puts this bluntly in his defense of medical care, as an obvious assumption that, “seeing by reason of the face, a man is called beautifull or ugly, who can deny that they deserve the care of a Physitian, and Chirurgeon?”¹⁰ The face is privileged, in particular, because it is the place where the body and mind meet: in *Problemes of*

Beautie, Tommaso Buoni argues that “the face is the true resemblance both of the Beauty of the body, and of the minde...And as for the Beauty of the minde it is manifest in the face, as it were in a cleare looking glasse.”¹¹ This assertion gives way to a parenthetical doubt: “bodyly Beauty is a cleare signe (if Malignity bee not hidden under it) of a faire (that is) of a vertuous mind.”¹² Buoni privileges the face as the site in which beauty is evident or thwarted. The definitional assumption (“that is”) that to be fair is to be virtuous, and that both are reflected in the face raises the stakes of deciphering the “cleare signe” the body presents. Yet the parenthetical concession that “Malignity” might be hidden beneath an otherwise “faire” outward appearance maps that which is morally bad onto that which subverts beauty and suggests that perhaps the beauty of the mind is not very easily “manifest,” as he insists. If the face signifies the self more than any other part of the body (recall how the “Nose of a Hog” disrupts the expected “ornament and beauty of all the rest”), the interpretive paradigm still hints at what the face might be able to hide.

Moreover, while the interpretation of the body operates by synecdoche, ugliness blurs the body part in question, subsuming it into aesthetic judgment. The nose of the “Hog-faced Gentlewoman” stops being a nose when it becomes a “deformed ugliness.” The conjunction of these two terms points to the peculiarly tautological relationship between ugliness and deformity. Sometimes the words appear in conjunction (“ugly and deformed”) and other times one seems to intensify the other. Edward Phillips yokes ugliness and deformity when he defines “deformity” as “uggliness” in *World of Words*.¹³ This sense of reciprocity is echoed in the definitional chain that Margaret Cavendish asserts: “that which is ugly, is that which is deformed, and that is deformed

that is misshapen, and that is misshapen, that is made crooked, or awry, or one part bigger or less than another.”¹⁴ In other usage, however, one word compounds the other’s descriptive powers, and the two terms are distinct. In Montaigne’s essay, he at first combines the two terms, describing “an unnaturall ugliness and deformity of limbs” and then distinguishes ugliness as:

Unseemliness at first sight, which is principally lodg'd in the Face, and distasts us by the Complexion, a Spot, a rude Countenance, sometimes from some inexplicable cause, in members nevertheless of good simmetry and perfect.¹⁵

Montaigne’s definition of ugliness depends upon the “very slight grounds” that prompt the reaction of “disgust”; the “unseemliness” of a face may provoke different reactions from different people. This “superficial ugliness” of the face thus does not necessarily correspond to the mind, for though this marring of the surface “nevertheless is always the most imperious, [it] is of least prejudice to the state of the mind, and of little certainty in the opinion of men.”¹⁶ The pimpled face and blemished complexion that strike a viewer as ugly do not reveal the “state of mind,” and these marks betray their lack of consequence in the range of the reactions they provoke.

By contrast, however, Montaigne argues, “The other, which...is call’d a more substantial deformity, strikes deeper in.”¹⁷ The “more substantial” deformity is not specified, for unlike the “blemish,” there is no instantly recognizable example of this kind of deformity. But if Montaigne’s text, drawing on Cicero, seems to affirm a distinction between a “stain” or “blemish” and a “deformed ugliness,” the difference between the categories—the surface ugliness and the “deeper” deformity—is not precise. Montaigne explains (if he does not clarify): “Not every Shooe of smooth shining Leather, but every Shooe neat|ly made, shews the interior shape of the Foot.”¹⁸ The surface-level marring of

the face is thus, like worn leather, inconsequential to the purpose of object; however, the form of the shoe ultimately reveals the shape of the foot that fills it. As soon as he attempts to distinguish between kinds of deformity, Montaigne turns to metaphor to suggest a difference that is hard to qualify: is this deformity about function, or revelation, or even aesthetic pleasure? His essay describes the act of interpreting the body upon which physiognomy depends, although as he asserts that “there is nothing more probable than the conformity and relation of the body to the soul,” he still concedes that “those Features and Moulds of face, and those Lineaments, by which men guess at our internal Complexions and our fortunes to come, is a thing that does not very directly and simply lye under the Chapter of Beauty and Deformity.”¹⁹ Written into the practice itself, that is, for all of the attempts to add gravity to the judgment of physiognomic knowledge, is a fundamental hesitation about the reliability of such acts of interpretation.

I am suggesting that even within the scheme of physiognomic knowledge, ugliness of the body challenges a clear conclusion about the transparency of appearance because there are always examples that confute interpretation. The ugliness of the face may be a matter of mere “blemish” and “stain,” the initial description in the opening account, or it may be a “deformed ugliness.” The problem of distinguishing between surface ugliness and deeper deformity is compounded by the fact that these qualities are rooted in a particular body that may depart from the expectations the form promises. The fact that the body’s appearance may be overcome is important for Robert Burton’s discussion of “Deformity of Body, Sickness, Baseness of Birth, Peculiar Discontents.” In *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Burton claims:

Deformities & imperfections of our bodies, as lameness, crookedness, deafness, blindness, be they innate or accidental, torture many men: yet this may comfort

them, that those imperfections of the body do not a whit blemish the soul, or hinder the operations of it, but rather help and much increase it. Thou art lame of body, deformed to the eye; yet this hinders not but that thou mayst be a good, a wise, upright, honest man...How many deformed Princes, Kings, Emperors, could I reckon up, Philosophers, Orators! Hannibal had but one eye, Appius Claudis, Timoleon, blind, Muley Hassan, King of Tunis, John, King of Bohemia, and Tiresias the Prophet.²⁰

Within this mode of interpretation, Burton continues to detail the physical defects of famous rulers and philosophers, often making clear the contrast between body and the soul. In fact, he suggests, the body's lack may spur compensation: "Aesop was crooked, Socrates purblind, long-legged, hairy, Democritus withered, Seneca lean and harsh, ugly to behold; yet shew me so many flourishing wits, such divine spirits!"²¹ These examples not only uphold the possibility that, as Naomi Baker argues, "the body does not make the man: the potential for self-fashioning means that a virtuous soul can inhabit a twisted physique,"²² they also amplify the frequency with which the body and "wit" or "spirit" are mismatched. Nor, for Burton, are the triumphs of the mind over matter evident only in the field of philosophy; he turns to powerful soldier-statesmen to make the point that the body may not hinder what the person sets out to accomplish, concluding:

Galba the Emperor was crook-backed, Epictetus lame; that great Alexander a little man of stature, Augustus Caesar of the same pitch; Agesilaus of despicable figure; Boccharis a most deformed Prince as ever Egypt had, yet, as Diodorus Siculus records of him, in wisdom and knowledge far beyond his predecessors."²³

To explain the frequency with which these many men exhibit valor despite their bodies, Burton rationalizes: "Virtue refuseth no stature; and commonly your great vast bodies, and fine features, are sottish, dull, and leaden spirits."²⁴ If the body's deficiencies may spur the spirit on to great things, Burton suggests, the inverse is also possible, and "fine features" may only conceal the "sot" beneath.

But what is perhaps most interesting about Burton's account, which lays out still more bodily anomalies that characterize notable men, is not the wealth of examples but the structure of argument. Burton's chapter on "peculiar discontents" sets "Deformity of Body" alongside "Sickness"; yet the chapter continues with a third category of discontent: "Baseness of Birth." Aligning these "discontents," his text takes up the possibility that both appearance and status are surmountable difficulties, hindrances to spur greater accomplishment. Burton denaturalizes the fantasy of aristocratic physiognomy by calling attention to the vicissitudes of birth: if the body into which a person is born does not determine his possibilities, neither does the status that he inherits. By the end of the section, as might be expected, Burton retreats from the subversive implications of this claim in order to preserve an ideal of natural distinctions: he claims that "innate rusticity" will reveal itself no matter the discipline imposed upon a body. Yet if we read his effort to decouple bodily contingencies—physical irregularities, sickness, and status from birth—from foregone conclusions, the uncertainty remains. If the juxtaposition of these "peculiar discontents" means that birth is as perceptible as a body's difference of height, the "crookback'd," or "despicable" body is no more binding than a point of origin.

This limited selection of examples helps to suggest the concerns against which the ugly body registers as a sign: ugliness likely shows in the face, either as a surface defect or as a natural indication of tendencies toward wrongdoing. Ugliness in the early modern period produces—inevitably, it seems—an affective response on the part of the viewer. The significance of this mark is in the reaction it prompts; to call a body ugly is already to take a stance of aesthetic judgment on that body. While designations like "lame" or

“crippled” might seem to reflect the body’s function (although, as I have argued, the cultural associations that subsume them do not depend upon actual impairment), ugliness, like its counterpart and categorical other, deformity, names a negative judgment without delimiting a specific bodily irregularity.

I. Ugliness in *The Changeling*

All of these dimensions of ugliness—the face as the site of synecdoche, the uncertain distinction between ugliness and “deeper” deformity in determining the inclinations of the body, and the affective revulsion the ugly body provokes—are on display in *The Changeling* (1622), Thomas Middleton and William Rowley’s tragedy.²⁵ The play puts two plots together, the “castle” plot, in which Beatrice-Joanna, betrothed to Piracquo but in love with Alsemero, seeks to obtain the marriage match she desires against her father’s expressed “will,” and the “hospital” plot, in which Isabella is confined by her husband Alibius, to the madhouse he keeps, only to be pursued by disguised men who seek to court her.²⁶ The play is preoccupied with the kinds of desire that sight can produce (and the language of beauty echoes throughout) and with hidden knowledge and actions, evident in what Bruce Boehrer identifies as the “harrowingly claustrophobic” representation of private spaces. The dramatic fiction repeatedly stages moments that test what can be known from the visual evidence of the body, from the virginity test that Beatrice-Joanna steals from Alsemero’s “Book of Experiment,” to the bed-trick that swaps Diaphanta for Beatrice-Joanna, to the disguises of pretending madmen. Knowledge of the body is complicated in this play by the fact the bodies of characters are dissembled, changed, and exchanged, and the rhetoric of the play dwells on “infirmity,” “disease,” “deformity,” and “ugliness.”²⁷

But ugliness is especially prominent, at the level of character (in the description of De Flores and his “bad face”), metaphor (when Beatrice-Joanna is denounced as “whore” at the end of the play), and plot (in the “antic” shapes that signify madness). Naomi Baker has argued that the play begins with “conventional” frameworks for the “significance of physical appearance,” but then distinguishes between ugliness and deformity along the basis of gender: “Beatrice-Joanna cannot define her identity in her own terms and is constructed by others as deformed” while De Flores, “despite his ugly face, demonstrates a shocking ability to manipulate the terms of his own identity.”²⁸ While the equation of female beauty with deformity is clear in the case of Beatrice-Joanna, I want to suggest, however, that De Flores’ ugliness is not as straightforward as it seems. While Beatrice-Joanna talks about his ugliness in the play as if it is self-evidently connected to his status and ability to commit murder, De Flores himself challenges this interpretation. Gordon McMullan has argued that in the play “ugliness is excess; it is what stands out, what marks (unwished-for difference)” so that *The Changeling* maps “the spread of social pollution manifest as *ugliness*,” exerting pressure on the genre of tragedy itself, since the play, with its double plots, is itself “hybrid, multiple, grotesque.”²⁹ I want to qualify these readings of ugliness, to suggest instead that the “shocking” feature of De Flores is precisely that he does not interpret his ugliness as “unwished-for difference.” The play stages conflicting accounts of De Flores’s ugly body and, in doing so, allows the possibility that physical ugliness might have nothing to do with the evil acts a character commits.

The play, that is, departs from its source text most radically in the character of De Flores. John Reynolds’s *The Triumphs of God’s Revenge Against the Crying and*

Execrable Sin of Murder, upon which Middleton and Rowley's play is based, records a series of "tragical histories" that end with clear resolutions and betray none of the complexities of the play's characterizations, of De Flores in particular. This tale begins and ends with Alsemero, who falls for the beautiful woman he glimpses at a morning mass, and whose fateful end is sealed by his sin of concealing the murder that Beatrice-Joana accomplished and then killing Piracquo's brother.³⁰ Reynolds' account suggests that beauty compels love and causes lovers to go amiss, and the narrative repeatedly emphasizes Beatrice-Joanna's beauty as the reason that both Alsemero and Piracquo seek to marry her. But in this version, the most significant difference for the play is the characterization of De Flores. When Beatrice-Joanna "ruminate[s]" and "runne[s]" over many bloodie designs" to do away with Piracquo, she thinks: "There is a gallant young Gentleman, of the Garison of the Castle, who followes her father, that to her knowledge doth deeply honour, and dearely affect her"; as a result, "shee knowes, that at her request he will not sticke to murther *Piracquo*: his name is *Signiour Antonio de Flores*: shee is resolute in her rage, and approves him to be a fit instrument to execute her will."³¹ When she "with many flattering smiles, and sugred speeches, acquaints him with her purpose and desire," the text suggests that she controls the power dynamics in her relationship with De Flores.

De Flores, accordingly, is completely responsive to Beatrice-Joana's initiation. The narrative continues: "*De Flores* having a long time loved *Beatrice-Joana*, is exceeding glad of this newes, yea, feeding his hopes with the ayre of her promises, he is so caught and intangled in the snares of her beautie, that hee freely promiseth to dispatch *Piracquo*."³² Once the deed is done, "*De Flores* (like a gracelesse villaine) having

dispatched this sorrowfull businesse, speedily acquaints *Beatrice-Joana* herewith who (miserable wretch) doth hereat infinitely rejoyce, and thanks him with many kisses.”³³

The description of this requital for the service that De Flores performs in this version of the text tends toward the courtly and away from the rape that Middleton and Rowley’s play suggests. Moreover, in the source text, De Flores is described as a “gallant” who pays suit to Beatrice-Joana. There is no suggestion that De Flores is physically unattractive or that Beatrice-Joana is revolted by his appearance; the only comment on their relationship is to underscore that she assumes that she can use his devotion in any way she likes.

What is surprising to a reader who comes to this text after *The Changeling*, is that all goes well in the narrative: his rival gone, Alsemero courts Beatrice-Joana, and the text marks the marriage with the near-conclusion, “here our two Lovers, to their exceeding great content, and infinite joy, are united.”³⁴ The narrator draws out this emphasis on the happy marriage in what follows, for after three months in the “pleasures of Wedlocke...*Alsemero*, like a fond husband, becomes jealous of his wife; so as hee curbes and restraines her of her libery, and would hardly permit her to conferre or converse with, yea, farre less, to see any man.”³⁵ The results of this jealousy are marital arguments, and Beatrice-Joana “now lookes no longer on her husband with affection, but with disdain and envie.” When Alsemero is away, De Flores comes with a letter from Beatrice-Joana’s father, and their relationship advances:

with many amorous imbracings and dalliances (which modesty holds unworthy of relation) she acquaints him with her husbands ingratitude; he rather rejoyces then grieves hereat, and now revives his old sute, and redoubleth his new kisses: shee considering what hee hath done for her service, and joyning therewith her husbands jealousie, not onely ingageth herselfe to him for the time present, but for

the future, and bids him visite her often. But they both shall pay deare for this familiarity and pleasure.³⁶

While in the earlier account, she gives him “many kisses,” as recompense for his aid, the narrator here makes clear that they take a further step: it does not seem likely that they have consummated a sexual relationship until later, when she turns to him as a confidant in response to Alsemero’s change from being a doting husband.

Even when Alsemero confronts Beatrice-Joana and she tells him about the murder, Alsemero forgives her, “onely hee strictly chargeth her, no more to see, or admit *De Flores* into her company.” All appears to be at an end, except that Beatrice and De Flores cannot halt their relationship:

But *Beatrice-Ioana*, notwithstanding her husbands speeches, continueth her intelligence with *De Flores*; yea, her husband no sooner rides abroad, but he is at *Valentia* with her; and they are become so impudent, as what they did before secretly, they now in a manner doe publikely, or at least, with Chamber-doores open.³⁷

Alsemero deceives them into thinking he is gone, and then hides in his study with weapons, “when finding them on his Bed, in the midst of their adultery, he first dischargeth his Pistols on them, and then with his Sword and Ponyard runnes them thorow, and stabs them with so many deepe and wide wounds, that they have not so much power or time to speake a word, but there lye weltring and wallowing in their bloud” (58). The story of Beatrice-Joana and De Flores ends here, but Alsemero’s continues for four pages more, detailing his murder of Piracquo’s brother and eventual punishment for his own misdeeds. The source text emphasizes Beatrice-Joana’s desire for De Flores, and the logic of sexual transgression is overtly feminized and moralized. In this narrative, the characterization of De Flores is predicated upon his response to Beatrice-Joana’s requests and advances; he fulfills a desire that only ever precedes his presence.

Thus *The Changeling* not only invests De Flores with character development that far outstrips the source text, in which his character's speech is never reported; the play does so by making his body impossible to ignore. While the source text trains readers to expect a tragedy that punishes actions that are morally wrong—murder and adultery, most notably—the play upends the presumption that these actions are straightforward. The marked change from the source text—in which Alsemero, too, must pay for his complicity in desire, dying in a duel with Tomazo—insists, however uncomfortably, upon singling out the characters that the play's fiction has developed from the scant suggestions of the source. Looked at in moral terms, the play makes the question of judgment turn on this body that appears so easily interpretable (he is ugly, he is marked out for nothing better than servitude) to Beatrice-Joanna, pointing up the corresponding fictionality of Beatrice's beauty, goodness, and claims to honor by highlighting her ultimate complicity with him. But if, in the source text, De Flores is never the figure of interest that he is in the play, then the significance of this difference prompts the question: what is the impact of his “bad” face?

Famously, Algernon Swinburne identifies De Flores as a “strangely original tragic figure” remarking: “The man is so horribly human, so fearfully and wonderfully natural, in his single-hearted brutality of devotion, his absolutely absorption of soul and body by one consuming force of passionately cynical desire.”³⁸ This strand of criticism of the play reads De Flores for his centrality to the play and his vivid dramatic characterization, in that he appears “horribly human” and “wonderfully natural.” This argument returns in William Empson's assertion that De Flores is the “real changeling from which the play ‘derives its title.’”³⁹ While there are multiple definitions of a “changeling” at work in the

play, the definition “change” Empson identifies is madness and the symptom of this madness is De Flores’s idea that Beatrice may eventually fall in love with him, despite his appearance. Critics have argued that the response to the ugly face of De Flores is importantly indebted to theatrical form: “A person merely reading the text might subscribe to De Flores’ superficial logic that concludes it is possible that a delicately-reared woman might chide herself to bed with him...[but] faced on stage by the hideous malignity that De Flores is supposed to be, he might realize that only utter irrationality could expect such an outcome and only in madness could it come to pass.”⁴⁰ In other words, what makes De Flores stand out as a character—and what causes his offstage audience to identify with him—is his refusal to accept what we all know: Beatrice-Joanna could never love an ugly man.

Framing the critical assumption in this way shows how ugliness is a foregone conclusion, a judgment about a body; yet the idea of ugliness also seems to assume implicitly that the object of this judgment assents to the same standard of beauty. This assumption of shared norms points to what is perhaps the most destabilizing implication of the insight that disability is about barriers (rather than about bodies): the point that the disabled person does not necessarily wish to be like a nondisabled person. Nancy Hirschmann has argued that as disabled people encounter “prejudicial attitudes and treatment, the blockages of a hostile built environment,” the social model helps to articulate the stakes of engagement with the world: they “do not want to change their bodies; they want to change these barriers,” and the desire for change entails wanting “the able-bodied to see these facets of the world *as* barriers and not as inevitable or natural.”⁴¹ Thus, at the heart of the social model is a challenge, Robert McRuer argues, to

“a system of compulsory able-bodiedness” that “assumes in advance that we all agree: able-bodied identities, able-bodied perspectives are preferable and what we all, collectively, are aiming for.”⁴² This common assumption, he claims, “repeatedly demands that people with disabilities embody for others an affirmative answer to the unspoken question, ‘Yes, but in the end, wouldn’t you rather be more like me?’”⁴³ Disability studies brings out the possibility of answering that question with a “no.” The discourse of ugliness, then, is an especially pointed example of an irregular body that is disabled—not only distinguished as “other” but presumed to be conscious of bodily deficiency—through an act of perception that does not depend upon what a body can *do* but how this body *appears*.

II. Reading the Ugly Body

In *The Changeling*, the scene that sets up the conflict between differing assumptions about the ugly body is the exchange in which Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores initiate their partnership. The central question, for critics, in this scene has been the extent to which Beatrice-Joanna recognizes the stages of her bargain with De Flores.⁴⁴ I am going to suggest that Beatrice-Joanna reacts to De Flores with loathing, mislabeling this feeling as objective conclusion, because she relies upon a moral framework for interpreting his appearance. Trained to look at the body in order to evaluate the person, she understands De Flores’s features to display the innate baseness of his being. Crucially, however, the conflict that will erupt into open confrontation in the later scene is set in motion in their first exchange when she assumes that he shares this moral framework for interpreting his ugly face. De Flores, on the other hand, acknowledges his “bad face,” but he resists the idea that this face is fixed as ugly, rejecting the idea that his

face would suggest anything about his self, and, importantly, operating according to the belief that his looks might spark desire.

From the beginning of the play, Beatrice-Joanna remarks upon what De Flores looks like, especially his face, calling him an “ominous, ill-faced fellow” (2.1.53) and a “villain” (2.1.58), but also comparing him to a “basilisk” (1.1.115), a “serpent” (1.1.232), and a “standing toad-pool” (2.1.58). She assures her onstage audience, in fact, that she has “not spared to tell him” (1.1.133) of her dislike. From her perspective, apology for his appearance would be the only appropriate for the offense his face produces. The clearest example of her moral framework for interpreting his body comes when she plans to conscript De Flores to perform murder for her. When Alsemero offers to challenge Piracquo to a duel, Beatrice-Joanna refuses to let him be “ventured in the action” (2.2.31) and then, exclaiming, “blood-guiltiness becomes a fouler visage—” (2.2.40), she breaks off into an aside:

And now I think on one! I was to blame;
 I ha’ marred so good a market with my scorn.
 ’T had been done, questionless; the ugliest creature
 Creation framed for some use, yet to see
 I could not mark so much where it should be!
(2.2.41-5)

The face that Beatrice-Joanna “think[s] on” is that of De Flores, whose ill-treatment she reproaches herself for only because she might have missed a chance to use him. The causative logic by which she proceeds—according to the idea that even the “ugliest creature” is “framed for some use”—advances a scale of value according to aesthetic pleasure, where the purpose of the “ugliest creature” is, if not to be seen, at least to act. Beatrice-Joanna conceives of a potential solution to get what she wants, and her dawning

realization depends upon a correlation between the base-born figure and the “foul[] visage.”

Interspersed with Beatrice-Joanna’s readings of his figure, however, De Flores advances an interpretation of his own in which ugliness is no impediment to desire. De Flores describes how he regularly will “force errands, frame ways and excuses / To come into her sight” (2.1.30-1) though she “does profess herself / The cruellest enemy to my face in town (2.1.33-34). But if De Flores understands his face to be the factor that compels Beatrice-Joanna’s anger with him, he imagines that this response might be overcome:

I must confess my face is bad enough,
But I know far worse has better fortune,
And not endured alone, but doted on;
And yet such pick-haired faces—chins like witches’,
Here and there five hairs whispering in a corner
As if they grew in fear of one another,
Wrinkles like troughs where swine deformity swills
The tears of perjury that lie there like wash
Fallen from the slimy and dishonest eye—
Yet such a one plucked sweets without restraint,
And has the grace of beauty to his sweet.
(2.1.37-47)

Other people who have wrinkles, watering eyes, and whiskery chins serve as De Flores’s index, not of rejection but of the individuated character of desire. These bad faces begin as abstractions: not only hairy chins, but chins of “witches,” where the hair is “whispering” in “fear”; the wrinkles are not confined to marks on the skin but become “troughs” of “deformity” for pigs to “swill”; “dishonest” eyes hold “perjur[ing]” tears. These features of the body are negatively valenced in moral terms; yet these faces, “far worse” than De Flores’s own, are not only “endured,” but “doted on.” The face of “such a one” becomes the object of attraction, with the “grace of beauty.” De Flores preserves an

opposition between ugliness and beauty—that is, beauty is both positive and prized, while ugliness is negative—but he envisions the affective response to a particular body, to insist that desire transforms ugliness into beauty.

If the implicit suggestion here, given the association between status and appearance, is of distinct social boundary-crossing, his next lines upend the association between a “bad” face and lower status: “Though my hard fate has thrust me out to servitude, / I tumbled into th’ world a gentleman” (2.1.48-9). Although he is a servant, and what will follow in the play utterly breaches hierarchical lines of authority, he distinguishes himself by his status. But where we might imagine (to consider a possible counterpart, say, in the character of Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*) that De Flores seeks to marry Beatrice-Joanna to improve his status, his contemplation of the possibilities of being “doted on” remains fixed on the erotic delights, not the social advancement, of marriage. De Flores is motivated not by the structure of marriage but by the promise of fulfilled desire. By the end of the scene, even if he has not recruited the audience to his side, De Flores has talked himself into the belief that Beatrice-Joanna may one day find his sight not only tolerable but desirable:

I’ll despair the less
Because there’s daily precedents of bad faces
Beloved beyond all reason; these foul chops
May come into favor one day ‘mongst his fellows.
(2.1.83-6)

The “precedents” that De Flores cite are examples of visible features that trigger unexpected, even counter-intuitive (“beloved beyond all reason”) responses. This “face” that De Flores displays is already contested: he fits the bill for the “very slight grounds” of disgust that a surface ugliness might inspire (recall that Montaigne lists a

“complexion,” a “spot” and a “rugged countenance,” all of which seem to apply to the face that De Flores displays), but as Beatrice-Joanna makes clear, she thinks that his “fouler visage” suggests what Montaigne calls the “deeper deformity.”

The scene that sparks the conflict between notions of ugliness sets their partnership in motion. When Beatrice-Joanna decides to win De Flores over for her work, what follows is a dialogue in which Beatrice assumes that De Flores must feel that his bad face is his greatest liability, while De Flores takes her language for their physical interactions they produce, not the content of her speech:

Beatrice:	What ha' you done To your face alate? You've met with some good physician. You've pruned yourself, methinks; you were not wont To look so amorously.
De Flores:	Not I; 'Tis the same physnomy, to a hair and pimple, Which she called scurvy scarce an hour ago. How is this?
Beatrice:	Come hither. Nearer, man.
De Flores:	I'm up to the chin in heaven!
Beatrice:	Turn, let me see. Faugh, 'tis but the heat of the liver, I perceive't; I thought it had been worse.
De Flores:	Her fingers touched me! She smells all amber.
Beatrice:	I'll make a water for you shall cleanse this Within a fortnight.
De Flores:	With your own hands, lady?
Beatrice:	Yes, mine own, sir. In a work of cure, I'll trust no other.
De Flores:	'Tis half an act of pleasure To hear her talk thus to me.
Beatrice:	When we're used To a hard face, 'tis not so unpleasing. It mends still in opinion, hourly mends; I see it by experience.

(2.2.72-90)

What would be a stichomythic exchange between a pair of requited lovers in another play, is here, instead, a set of observations (“You’ve met with some good physician,” “I

thought it had been worse”) and commands (“Come hither,” “Turn,” “let me see”) from Beatrice-Joanna. Although the two characters often share lines in the scene, Beatrice-Joanna talks to De Flores, and De Flores talks to the audience. Jeremy Lopez has argued that asides “demarcate theatrical space, isolating but insisting upon the simultaneity of several different and very specific interpretive possibilities for the on-stage action,” making the aside both one of the “most pervasive” and “most potentially disruptive” dramatic conventions.⁴⁵ The danger of the aside is that the audience will stop paying attention to what transpires between characters within the dramatic fiction, and instead, cued by the intimacy of the aside, start thinking about the interactions that include them.

In this dialogic misfire, the logics of ugliness collide, but neither character seems to recognize this conflict because each takes the language of the other to confirm a prior opinion. When Beatrice-Joanna claims that being “used to” his appearance will make it “mend[] in opinion,” De Flores understands this to mean that familiarity breeds affection, even for a “hard” face, given the precedents that he has cited. De Flores marvels in an aside: “I was blest / To light upon this minute! I’ll make use on’t” (2.2.90-1). When Beatrice-Joanna finally observes, “hardness becomes the visage of a man well; / It argues service, resolution, manhood, / If cause were of employment” (2.2.92-4), De Flores takes this as confirmation. Beatrice-Joanna thinks their interaction confirms her sense of social status because she reads De Flores’s response to the touch of her hands as a plea for cosmetic aid. But De Flores’s aside about the pleasure of responsive listening (“Tis half an act of pleasure”) underscores the reciprocal currents of power in this exchange. He is neither disadvantaged by his face, as he imagines her response as the prompting of desire, nor is he silent, as his asides to the audience make clear.

The exchange that follows, before Beatrice-Joanna enlists De Flores to commit the murder she intends, underscores the extent to which advancement in the world of this play depends upon coercive, sexualized, desire. Once Beatrice-Joanna resumes her asides to the audience, they underscore the deceptiveness of her interactions with De Flores. She thinks he only wants money (“Belike his wants are greedy, and to such / Gold tastes like angels’ food” [2.2.127-8], and then repeats this assessment: “Possible his need / Is strong on him” [2.2.129-30]). Her preoccupation with his apparent desire for money makes her emphasize the payment: “As thou art forward and thy service dangerous, / Thy reward shall be precious” (2.2.131-2). In turn, his preoccupation with the desire he thinks will be requited prompts his answer, which completes her line: “That I have thought on / I have assured myself of that beforehand” (2.2.132-3). The audience understands the double meanings of these words because, privy to their asides and soliloquies, we have knowledge that both of the characters do not. Their final disclosures to the audience reveal the extent to which the exchange confirmed their hopes. Beatrice-Joanna exclaims, “I shall rid myself / Of two inveterate loathings at one time, / Piracquo and his dog-face” (2.2.148-50). She links her “loathing” with De Flores’s appearance, his “dog-face,” and assumes that he is motivated by the promise of financial advancement.

For De Flores, however, the interaction has confirmed his conviction that the specificity of his body’s irregular features is desirable to Beatrice-Joanna. De Flores emphasizes that he imagines that she is attracted to his body, not despite how he looks, but because of it:

Oh, my blood!
Methinks I feel her in mine arms already,
Her wanton fingers combing out this beard,
And, being pleased, praising this bad face.

Hunger and pleasure, they'll commend sometimes
 Slovenly dishes, and feed heartily on 'em—
 Nay, which is stranger, refuse the dainter for 'em.
 Some women are odd feeders.

(2.2.150-7)

While before De Flores had deduced the possibilities for her response by citing the experiences of others, here he begins to imagine that Beatrice-Joanna responds to him specifically, to “this beard” and “this bad face.” While he acknowledges a “hunger” of desperation, he holds out the belief that she will choose him over the “daintier,” something that he attributes to generalized female pique. Frank Whigham argues that “this vocabulary of odd feeding repeatedly presents itself to Renaissance dramatists as a language for inappropriate desire”⁴⁶; but it is not exactly clear on what grounds the play asks the audience to consider that this desire is “inappropriate.” Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores are at different places in their sense of the bargain they have just made; I am suggesting that this mismatch of plot proceeds from their different valuations of the meanings of ugliness, an especially tenuous bodily sign. It is as if Beatrice-Joanna has been reading Thomas Hill, and De Flores has been reading Richard Burton: she understands the “notes” of his bad face to invite repulsion that moves inexorably into a judgment of the whole person as ugly, while De Flores insists upon the possibility that his “bad” face is not necessarily an impediment to desire. He is using his appearance to court her, and far from enacting submission, he marks their encounter as the beginning of reciprocal attraction.

A few scenes later, their opposed understandings come into volatile view. When De Flores has committed the murder Beatrice-Joanna commissioned and returns to her brandishing the Piracquo's finger, this misunderstanding takes shape around the problem

of recompense. Beatrice-Joanna understands this to be a matter of material compensation and De Flores understands it as a matter of honor: where she sees a contract, he sees a pledge. Beatrice-Joanna brings the problem of payment to the forefront of the discussion immediately, assuring him that the ring “‘tis not given / In state of recompense” (3.4.49-50) and “Tis resolved then. / Look you, sir, here’s three thousand golden florins; / I have not meanly thought upon thy merit” (3.4.60-2). De Flores has promised “contempt” if he is underpaid, and when Beatrice-Joanna offers him the money, his rejoinder, “What, salary? Now you move me” (3.4.63), prompts the immediate response, “How, De Flores?” (3.4.63). His next question aims at the slight of the proffered payment:

Do you place me in the rank of verminous fellows
 To destroy things for wages? Offer gold?
 The lifeblood of man! Is anything
 Valued too precious for my recompence?
(3.4.64-7)

The “rank” of “verminous fellows” that De Flores protests is language that describes with accuracy Beatrice-Joanna’s assumptions, based on his face and service, about his motivations and actions. She thinks of him as a tool to accomplish her aims and refuses to acknowledge that he will insist on speaking back. Her responses, “I understand thee not” (3.4.68) and “I’ll double the sum, sir” (3.4.73), miss the point because they presume the transactional basis of their interaction, but not until she begs him, “I prithee make away with all speed possible” (3.4.77) and “prithee take thy flight” (3.4.81), does she begin to comprehend their different perspectives. As I read their exchange, the first moment in which Beatrice-Joanna is confronted with their conflicting points of view is when De Flores responds, “You must fly too, then” (3.4.81). Her “I?” in response acknowledges, for the first time, both her complicity in the deed and her dawning

awareness of involvement in the implications. But she still seems unwilling to imagine the sexual innuendo with which De Flores urges “Nor is it fit we two, engaged so jointly, / Should part and live asunder” (3.4.88-9); she responds “How now, sir?” (3.4.89) and “He’s bold, and I am blamed for’t!” (3.4.97). When she still protests, “Think but upon the distance that creation / Set ’twixt thy blood and mine, and keep thee there” (3.4.130-1), I hear not only the imposition of status (“blood”), but also the suggestion that the natural order can be accounted in the body, that the stamp of distance is marked in the appearance.

De Flores picks up on her insistence on a natural distinction that divides them, but he rejects this attempt to distinguish, on the basis of either the surface ugliness or social status, between them:

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.

(3.4.132-8)

When De Flores urges her to examine the “book” of her “conscience” to see that he is her “equal,” he uses the language of the “deeper deformity” to describe their co-engagement. This scene has been taken by critics as an exchange that radically upends social status; Jonathan Dollimore argues that “an act of transgression and its consequences actually disclose ‘blood’ and ‘birth’ to be myths in the service of historical and social forms of power, divested of which Beatrice-Joanna becomes no more than what the ‘act’ has made her.”⁴⁷ Yet in doing so, the play reaffirms misogynist logic in De Flores’s assertion that Beatrice-Joanna is “no more” and thus subject to him; Christina Malcolmson argues that

“the play’s most radical moment about the class hierarchy, it is also most traditional about the sexual hierarchy...Beatrice-Joanna begins the scene by commanding, but ends by kneeling to her new master.”⁴⁸ I do not mean to deny the troubling gender politics of the play: the rape scene, suggested here (and then reprised in Alsemero’s closet), the assertion of patriarchal authority, and the revelation that the beautiful woman has been “deformed” all along.

But what also seems important about this scene is that the deed, not their appearance, aligns them. De Flores, affirms the radical contingency of actions to unsettle status in order to force Beatrice-Joanna’s complicity, and thus, submission. For De Flores, the choice to kill Piracquo was a decision; he chose to commit the murder as an act of agency, not abjection, and now he wields the power over her. When De Flores insists that Beatrice-Joanna identify herself as the “deed’s creature,” the image of the monstrous birth undoes not only her sense of status but also her assumption that surface ugliness corresponds to the “deeper deformity,” by claiming that she should recognize evil instead in herself. Beatrice-Joanna is confronted with the revelation that De Flores is looking at her, while she had been used to issuing the judgments about appearance and designating the ugly body in the play. As Beatrice-Joanna agonizes over consequences she never envisioned, her shock is not only her new understanding that she is complicit in the deed she outsourced but also that the body that she believed could be so interpretable is, in fact, no more so than her own.

While in the source text, Beatrice-Joanna is matched with De Flores first through contract and then through confidence, by the end of *The Changeling*, what she shares with De Flores is the language of ugliness. Alsemero accuses her: “You are a whore”

(5.3.32), and Beatrice suggests that the “horrid sound” of the word “blasts a beauty to deformity; / Upon what face soever that breath falls, / It strikes it ugly” (5.3.33-5).

Lamenting that “Oh, you have ruined / What you can ne’er repair again” (5.3.35-6), Beatrice-Joanna rues the permanence of the ugliness the title bestows upon her. This “deformity,” echoed in Alsemero’s exclamation, “Oh, thou art all deformed!” (5.3.81), is again the “deeper” deformity that Montaigne suggests, to which De Flores has already insisted that Beatrice-Joanna acquiesce. The critical commonplace here is that De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna are now the same, both ugly. But the play, I think, troubles this juxtaposition in De Flores’s resolute resistance to reading moral deformity into a face termed ugly, in contrast to Beatrice-Joanna, who is undone by the accusation.

But this denunciation is curious, too: the play does not stage evidence of discovery for the audience. Alsemero pronounces Beatrice-Joanna’s “deformed” ugliness on the basis of accusations, before she has confessed. The scene opens with a conversation between Jasperino and Alsemero, who wait for Beatrice-Joanna to enter in order to accuse her, and modern editors of the play often add an explanatory note with conjecture about what must have happened, because nothing is staged for the audience that suggests that Alsemero has encountered convincing proof of Beatrice-Joanna’s unfaithfulness.⁴⁹ When Jasperino suggests that the “prospect from the garden has showed / Enough for deep suspicion” (5.3.2-3), Alsemero responds:

The black mask
That so continually was worn upon’t
Condemns the face for ugly ere’t be seen—
Her despite to him, and so seeming bottomless.
(5.3.3-6)

The moment in which Alsemero believes Jasperino's suggestion that Beatrice-Joanna has transgressed with De Flores is not made available to the audience (unlike, notably, the extended scenes of the virginity test). This same offstage displacement of a crucial event in the plot occurs in the conflation of rape and murder in the final scene of the play, in which Alsemero, having locked first Beatrice-Joanna and then De Flores in his "closet," makes the place of private knowledge a site of punishment at once imminent and removed from the audience. Beatrice-Joanna's cries, "Oh, oh, oh" (5.3.139) that issue from behind the locked door are ultimately undecidable.

When the door opens, De Flores has replaced the source text's Alsemero, fatally wounding Beatrice-Joanna and then killing himself—but not before they both have time to speak. Beatrice-Joanna's exclamation, "my loathing / Was prophet to the rest, but ne'er believed; / Mine honour fell with him, and now my life" (5.3.166-8), is often taken as retrospective understanding of the "fate" already pre-scripted for her. This phrase, however, does not clarify what should have been known from De Flores' face: *who* should have "believed" the "loathing"? What, exactly, was prophetic about her response to his face? The play, I am suggesting, refuses to answer the questions it prompts, because it dramatizes the inadequacy of ugliness to account for actions, either as predictive indication or retrospective confirmation. Beatrice-Joanna asks that her blood be "cast...to the ground regardlessly; / Let the common sewer take it from distinction" (5.3.161-2), which Gordon McMullan points out, insists "on *indistinction* as the only way to clean the stain of ugliness."⁵⁰ Alongside her plea, however, De Flores intends to die with the proclamation that his end matches the evil he himself has chosen. Michael Neill has argued that "De Flores' dying is marked by the unblinking straightness of a self-

inspecting gaze that compels not merely sympathetic involvement but grudging admiration from the audience.”⁵¹ While Beatrice-Joanna proposes an end to the distinctiveness, the judgment that she is “all deformed,” De Flores revels in the final triumph of singular possession, with the unrepentant confession: “But that pleasure; it was so sweet to me / That I have drunk up all, left none behind / For any man to pledge to me” (5.3.179-81). The “pleasure” he proclaims is at once the fulfillment of his desire and the distinction that sets him apart as the sole character who gets exactly what he wants in the course of the dramatic fiction.

The final scene further obscures rather than clarifies the signifying power of ugliness in the play. The figure that attempts to instate the long-awaited moral judgment is, of course, Alsemero, who rehearses the changes that characters have undergone:

Here's beauty changed
To ugly whoredom; here, servant obedience
To a master sin, imperious murder;
I, a supposed husband, changed embraces
With wantonness, but that was paid before.
Your change is come too, from an ignorant wrath
To knowing friendship. Are there any more on's?
(5.3.207-13)

This summation shifts the tragedy into an excerpt for a commonplace book, abstracting dramatic characters into didactic morals. Beatrice-Joanna is “beauty” that becomes “ugly,” while the punning “master sin” aligns De Flores’s obligation with his insurrection. The play thus ends with the unsettling sense that the changeling is everyone and everywhere, although Alsemero’s self-exculpation (as “that was paid before” elides Diaphanta’s death by fire into due punishment for the change she foisted upon him) reserves the fullest condemnation for De Flores, whose “ill-favoured” face suggests the substitution of the changeling child, and Beatrice-Joanna, in the misogynist logic of

female beauty, whose actions only turn out to underscore the evil beneath the veneer of her appearance. But in identifying De Flores specifically as *the* changeling of the play, as critics like Swinburne and Empson have done, we confirm the play's innovation of dramatic rather than narrative form. Relative to the source, *The Changeling* changes De Flores from a complicit gallant into a central character and does so by means of his ugliness. His irregular body appears to exempt him from desire within the dramatic fiction, functioning as an inscrutable sign for the audience offstage, who perhaps question, alongside Beatrice-Joanna, whether the ugly face can, in the end, reveal anything about moral deformity that may not be known from actions.

III. Deforming the Artificial Changeling

Thus the “changeling” of the play, I am arguing, yokes dramatic character to the theatrical power of ugliness. I want to turn briefly to a text that uses the “changeling” to think through the danger of the transformational powers of artifice, in order to explore one further conjunction of the changeling's ugliness and theatrical power. The full title of John Bulwer's *Anthropometamorphosis* gestures to the relentlessly expansive scope of his text. The subtitle reads: *man transform'd: or, the artificial changling: historically presented, in the mad and cruell gallantry, foolish bravery, ridiculous beauty, filthy finenesse, and loathsome loveliness of most nations, fashioning and altering their bodies from the mould intended by nature; with figures of those transfigurations. To which artificiall and affected deformations are added, all the native and nationall monstrosities that have appeared to disfigure the humane fabrick. With a vindication of the regular beauty and the honesty of nature.*⁵² Bulwer's insistent subtitle mounts an array of descriptions from which he will “vindicat[e]” the “honesty of nature.” For Bulwer, the

body *made* irregular is the offense, and implied in the problem of the “artificial” and “affected” changes is the idea that this body is deceptive. The text is organized as “Scenes of Man’s *Transformation* with “Table” at the beginning. The Table lists twenty-four scenes and includes a brief description of each, from “Certaine fashions of the Head” to “Monstrous conformations, properties, colours, proportions, and Fashionable affectations of the eyes” to “Cruell and fastasticall inventions of men, practiced upon their Bodies.” The structural framework for Bulwer is the “Nation,” a collective identity that gives rise to the “Fashions” practiced by various national groups.

But the conceptual organization of the text privileges a line of sight. Bulwer presents each transformation as a “scene,” drawing upon a basic unit of dramatic composition to distinguish between the parts of the body transformed. Caught between blazon, anatomy manual, and theatrical script in organization, the Scenes move progressively from the top of the body downward, from head to toe, focusing on a specific feature in each scene (i.e. the sculpted shape of the head). While Bulwer’s text—excessive, anxious, finicky, voluminous⁵³—deserves much longer scrutiny, I want to pursue briefly the concern with theatricality that recurs through Bulwer’s “Publique Paroxysme” (his own description of the book) in the opening pages. In the prefatory matter, Bulwer introduces the abiding binary of nature and art that occupies his pen, though Bulwer’s position on the superiority of nature over art is vexed throughout by the global scope of his survey: allowing for “nationall” variations, Bulwer has to acknowledge that beauty registers differently elsewhere, even if he means to dismantle artifice wherever it appears.⁵⁴ He confronts this difficulty by scrutinizing the discourse of “cosmeticall physic,” which shapes and alters the body in order to redress accidental

defects. The underlying problem for Bulwer's temporizing critique is his own inheritance of this branch of physis from classical authorities, because he cannot be quite sure where to draw the line between useful cosmetic changes and changes that "corrupt" nature through art. If the ugly face should, in physiognomic discourse, teach the viewer about the person, the problem for Bulwer's scenes is that the real horror is that the reader might not be able to tell where the natural defect of ends and the artificial defects begin.

The "Artificiall Changling" the title condemns is both the figure for the question of what counts as cosmeticall physis, and already an amalgam of these transformational practices. The long poem that prefaces Bulwer's dedicatory letter identifies this figure as the "Nationall Gallant," to whom the text will return as the "English Gallant" at the end of the book, the object of Bulwer's most extensive approbation. This appendix reflects the recursive instability of the work that the text has already done, for Bulwer matches current English fashions with the bodily mutilations practiced elsewhere that he has detailed in the book. Thus this opening poem sets out the text that follows as a prophylactic against future transformation, trying to suppress the innovation to which his own indictment—in the form of the massive illustrated tome he has compiled—may contribute by furnishing a great scope of examples. The opening poem summarizes these changes to the body, beginning with the command: "Stay, Changling *Proteus*! let me count the rapes / Made on thy Forme, in thy abusive shapes."⁵⁵ The "Changling" is figured as the self-defacing subject and the object of formal violence through the "Nature-scoffing art" which challenges "wise Nature's plastique hand" by "eradicating arts" or "Art-augmented" features.⁵⁶ Citing specific examples—horns implanted in the

head, noses pierced and cut off, cheeks bored through—the lines previews the sights to come.

Given the text's rejection of the Protean shape, we might imagine that Bulwer would link explicitly to anti-theatrical critique of the ever-changing figure of the actor, wary of the effects of visual display. Instead, however, he attempts to yoke the mirroring power of representation to his didactic aims. His letter of address explains that he will show the "*Practicall Metamorphosis*" that derives from "audacious phant'sies" of "*Specificall deformities*," which he then describes as a "corporall Apostacy," of "Monstrosities" that are "Native" rather than "Naturall," insisting that he will "lay them to the charge of man, discharging Nature from having any hand, or the least intention therein."⁵⁷ To make the case for this claim, however, his readers must depends not only upon text but upon image: "When you have well viewed the Scenes and Devillish shapes of this Practical Metamorphosis," the reader "will clearely see here" what happens when art takes over.⁵⁸ This emphasis on the necessity of sight is emphasized in one of the prefatory poems, which praises the effect of the book, for "men, who shall the bounds of Nature passe, / Mend their deformities by this thy Glasse; / So clear and wonderfull a *mirrour*, where / all the Monstrosities of Art appear."⁵⁹ The poem details a strategy of repair premised upon the idea that a reader can see the "Monstrosities of Art" and then "mend" the transformations of his own body.

Finally, the notion that seeing might re-route the artificing reader is again urged explicitly in the "Hint of the *Use* of the Treatise," the final moment of *parerga* that detains the reader before the scenes commence. The injunction (more than a "Hint") for "use" of the text describes the book as "*Corporall Philosophy* being an Historicall Tract

of the Use and Abuse of Parts” with the intent to “serve as a Glasse for the perniciously-affected Gallants of our time to looke in, and see the deformity of their Minds” in order that “men descending into themselves, may know themselves *to be men and not beasts*, and learne to order this August Domicil of man reverently to the health of the Body, and honour of the Soule.”⁶⁰ The looking-glass of “deformity” offers “Gallants” the chance to be reformed by seeing and the goal is to regain “order,” distinctively human and urgently wholistic in yoking the “health of the Body” and “honour of the Soule.” This emphasis on the necessity of sight implies a robust visual engagement; the reader does not simply engage a static image, but rather becomes implicated in the encounter with unforeseen, chosen, deforming bodily change.

This is to say: having structured the didactic power of the text around dramatic form, from the “scenes” of bodily change that Bulwer promises to the “Theatre of the World” he invokes, the *Artificiall Changeling* cannot shake the interactive experience of co-embodiment the text’s guiding metaphor hails. If, in Stephen Gosson’s anti-theatrical screed, the danger is the theater’s double remove from life, not necessarily the content of the play text—so that Gosson concedes that *some* plays may be read with profit—for Bulwer, the act of reading is prematurely unsettled by performance that erupts in the text’s very production. Where readers might expect to find a list of errata in the opening pages, the text offers instead a peremptory justification of print’s indefensibility against powerful artifice:

Note that the Errata’s are not to be charged upon the Presse, but upon the Transforming Argument of the Book, which being nothing but artificial Errata’s, and affected Deformities, drew in literall blemishes and misprisions of sense, by way of Analogy, insomuch as when they appear’d inevitable, it was conceived they might passe for a new Elegancy with the Pedantique Quixots of the Pen, who (indeed) are most concern’d in it.⁶¹

The “affected Deformities” of the bodies Bulwer describes infect the printed text that contains them. Or, to put it another way, the “Transforming Argument” of the book extends beyond the “artificial Errata’s” of the bodies the text both illustrates and, unaccountably, impersonates. The text operates as analogy at the level of form as well as content, mimicking the profusion of “literall blemishes” to the extent that errors proliferate. Upon “cursory perusal,” the passive narrative voice concedes, “these mistakes appeared, which may thus be corrected; the others being many, are referred from the indifferency of the Corrector to the humanity of the Reader, with an *Humanum est Errare*.”⁶² Yet if it is only human to err, what *is* despicable, within this paradigm, is to love the error, embracing the “misprisions” as “new Elegancy,” and Bulwer returns to these readers, doggedly set on new fashions, at the end with the full force of his ire. The fear of effortless transmutation is why theatricality is both the metaphor and the supreme fulfillment of Bulwer’s worries about artifice, and it dismantles his text in advance.

Bulwer ends, before his Appendix on the “English Gallant,” with the counterpart to the “artificiall” changeling he has discovered. He relates the “old Tradition...of some Children that have been surreptitiously taken away, and others put in their roome, which have been deformed Innocents, which we commonly call Changelings” (527-8) and then rehearses various reasons: is this “the power of the Devill” or is it “no one Child changed for another, but one Child on a sudden much changed from it selfe” (528)? The book, which has been so concerned to track the “artificiality” of the changeling figure, ends with the apparent *non sequitur* from his other advice: “All men therefore may learn hence, to order their Children religiously, and to consecrate them to God, and not to cast them away by Demoniacall maledictions” (528). Bulwer ends the text by asserting a

theological perspective, in which visible deformity is the work of the “Devil,” whether the changing of the person or the changing of the body. This “supernatural” changeling stands in uneasy relation to all of the text that precedes the figure: is this “commonly call[ed]” changeling the imagined end of the “artificiall” changeling’s labor to transform the self, or a distinct contrast meant to exonerate those with an “deformed” or “ugly” appearance that transpires naturally and might require some artful “cosmetical physic” to approach an ordered body. This brief moment, before Bulwer returns to his preoccupation with artifice, concedes the mutability of ugliness that that invites—but undoes—the pleasure of visual interpretation that the theater invites.

I have been arguing here that ugliness, discursively constructed as a pre-emptive aesthetic judgment is vexed by the problem of illegibility built into the interpretive framework itself. The problems of distinguishing the ugly face’s relation to the rest of the form of the body, of discerning between surface and “deeper” deformity, and of accounting for the discrepancy between natural shape and artful self-fashioning are nowhere more pressing than on the stage, which relies on synecdoche. As *The Changeling* dramatizes Beatrice-Joanna’s failure to think beyond a presumptive interpretation of De Flores’s “bad face” as negative, the play, if not exactly revaluing De Flores’s appearance, does entertain the possibility that the ugly body might be productively decoupled from moral suspicion. De Flores refuses to stay within the script of the body of which he “should” be ashamed, and this refusal motivates his character’s agency within the dramatic fiction. Staging the ugly body highlights how the attempt to distinguish between kinds and intensities of ugliness depends upon arbitrary measures, as the play withholds the satisfaction, for the audience (if they are aligned with Beatrice-

Joanna), of seeing De Flores either resentful or apologetic about his appearance. The lack of penitence the “Artificiall Changling” displays, which Bulwer aims to take down in his text, testifies to the disruptive power of uncertainty about the ugly body.

¹ Unattributed, *A Certain Relation...* (London, 1640), unpaginated.

² Alexander Read, *The Chirurgicall Lectures of Tumors and Ulcers* (London, 1635), 17-18.

³ Marcello Palingenio, “Cancer” in *The Zodiac of Life*, trans. Barnabe Googe (London, 1565), unpaginated.

⁴ *Huloets Dictionarie*, trans. John Higgins (London, 1572), 96.

⁵ Thomas Rogers, *A Paterne of a Passionate Mind* (London, 1580), 12.

⁶ Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*, trans. Charles Cotton (London, 1685), 467.

⁷ Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespeare’s Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012) 24, 26, 4.

⁸ Naomi Baker, *Plain Ugly* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2010), 69.

⁹ Baker, 71.

¹⁰ Read, 18. Read cites Aristotelian precedent from *Rhetoric. c. 5* and *Galen. ad Thraibulum*.

¹¹ Quoted in Baker, 72.

¹² *Ibid.*, 72.

¹³ Edward Phillips, *New World of English Words* (London, 1658), 59.

¹⁴ Quoted in Baker, 36.

¹⁵ Montaigne, 466. John Florio’s 1603 translation of the same passage reads: “This man speakes of an vnnaturall ill-favourndesse, and membrall deformity: but we call ill-favourndesse a kinde of vnseemelinesse at the first sight, which chiefly lodgeth in the face; and by the colour worketh a dislike in vs; A freckle, a blemmish, a rude countenance, a sower looke, proceeding often of some inexplicable cause, may be in well ordered, comely and compleate limmes” (596).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 466.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 466.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 466.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 467-8

²⁰ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1927), 497-8.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 498.

²² Baker, 79.

²³ Burton, 498.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 498.

²⁵ Gurr dates performance of *The Changeling* to 1622, at the Cockpit (*The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642* [London and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992], 142); the play was printed by Humphrey Moseley in 1653. John Greene, a student from Lincoln’s Inn, records seeing *The Changeling*, among other plays, in his 1634/5 diary (Andrew

Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* [London and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987], 195).

²⁶ For the fullest treatment of their writing partnership, see David Nicol's *Middleton and Rowley: Forms of Collaboration in the Jacobean Playhouse* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

²⁷ Arthur Little argues that, "more than identifying Beatrice's blood as feminine, the play indicts femininity as being a disease, a contagion...an infirmity whose convulsive display and sexual conspicuity have transshaped the female body in all its original illness into both a tragical and theatrical spectacle" ("Transshaped' women: virginity and hysteria in *The Changeling*" in *Madness in Drama*, ed. James Redmond [London and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993], 35).

²⁸ Baker, 84.

²⁹ Ian McMullan, "The Changeling and the dynamics of ugliness" in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy*, eds. Emma Smith and Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr. (London and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 222.

³⁰ Editions of Middleton and Rowley's play regularly mention the source text but rarely discuss the aspects of the source that the play bypasses or amplifies. Douglas Bruster, the editor for the mammoth Oxford edition of Middleton's work, notes, as an exception: "Middleton added the entire episode of the tests and the bed-trick, thereby making virginity and its overvaluation a central theme of his tragedy" (*Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007], 1633). Yet Reynolds' text was extremely popular, published in 1621, reprinted each year for the next three years (1622, 1623, 1624), and then reprinted thirteen more times before 1680.

³¹ John Reynolds, *The Triumphs of God's Revenge Against the Crying and Execrable Sin of Murder* (London, 1621), 54.

³² Ibid., 54.

³³ Ibid., 55.

³⁴ Ibid., 56.

³⁵ Ibid., 56. The sentence continues with a narrative editorializing that is temptingly close to commentary on the "hospital" plot of Middleton and Rowley's play: "but this is not the way to teach a woman chastity: for if faire words, good example, and sweet admonitions cannot prevaile, threatnings and imprisoning in a Chamber will never" (56).

³⁶ Ibid., 56.

³⁷ Ibid., 57.

³⁸ Algernon Charles Swinburne (1886), in *Ambrosia in An Earthen Vessel: Three Centuries of Audience and Reader Response to the Works of Thomas Middleton*, ed. Sara Jayne Steen (New York: AMS Press, 1993).

³⁹ William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (New York: New Directions, 1950), 50.

⁴⁰ A. L. Kistner and M. K. Kistner, "The Five Structures of *The Changeling*" *Modern Language Studies* 11(2) (1981): 40-53, 47. A similar sense of Beatrice-Joanna's "revulsion as caused by De Flores's face" persists in Joost Daalder and Antony Telford Moore, "'There's scarce a thing but is both loved and loathed': *The Changeling* I.i.91-129" *English Studies* 6 (1999): 499-508, 500.

⁴¹ Nancy Hirschmann, "Disability as a New Frontier for Feminist Intersectionality Research" *Politics & Gender* 8.3 (2012), 399.

⁴² Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2006), 9.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁴⁴ In T. S. Eliot's oft-cited phrase, "it is the tragedy of the not naturally bad but irresponsible and undeveloped nature, aught in the consequences of its own action... Beatrice is not a moral creature; she becomes moral only by becoming damned" (*Selected Prose*, ed. Frank Kermode [New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975], 190).

⁴⁵ Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama* (London and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 56.

⁴⁶ Frank Whigham, "Reading Social Conflict in the Alimentary Tract: More on the Body in Renaissance Drama" *ELH* 55(2) (1988): 333-50, 341.

⁴⁷ Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 178.

⁴⁸ "'As Tame as the Ladies': Politics and Gender in *The Changeling*," *Revenge Tragedy*, ed. Stevie Simkins (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 156. Malcolmson argues that the subplot "exposes the tyranny and injustice of gender relations in the main plot and in the Renaissance intuition of marriage" and this "analysis of sexual politics threatens continually to spill over into a generalised critique of hierarchical social relations" (149). Yet the play, she argues, "evades its own subversive critique of those in authority by representing the effects of rebellion as far worse than tyranny" (149).

⁴⁹ David Bevington notes, for example: "Evidently Jasperino and Alsemero have just witnessed a tête-à-tête in the castle garden between Beatrice and De Flores, convincing Alsemero that his testing of Beatrice's virginity in act 4, scene 2, was somehow defeated by her cunning" (1650).

⁵⁰ McMullen, 231.

⁵¹ Michael Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 171.

⁵² Bulwer published two more editions of this text, expanded in 1653 and, in 1654, with the title, *A View of the People of the Whole World; or, A Short Survey of their Policies, Dispositions, Naturall Deportments, Complexions, Ancient and Moderne Customes, Manners, Habits and Fashions*.

⁵³ Mary Baine Campbell describes the ranging preoccupations of the text: "In *Anthropometamorphosis* we find a tantrum marking the crossroads of a number of emergent social and intellectual structures, a text that might serve as magnetic center of several analyses: the histories of fashion, the body, anthropology, wonder-books, monstrosity, abjection, semiosis, plastic surgery, nationalism, commodity capitalism, and subjectivity meet up here, as well as histories of the concepts, central to all of these topics, of 'nature' and 'culture'" (*"Anthropometamorphosis: John Bulwer's Monsters of Cosmetology and the Science of Culture"* in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Cohen [Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996], 202-22, 203).

⁵⁴ Campbell summarizes the text's representational scheme as "England as Nature; Asia, Africa, and America as Culture; and the recent discovery of Fashion... as the corrupting effect on English Nature of its new commerce with foreign Culture(s)" (206). For Campbell, "gender is the snarl in Bulwer's argument" and he cannot maintain "the

dichotomy [of] natural/foreign in the face of that gender whose features and adornments are both English and unmasculine” (211).

⁵⁵ John Bulwer, *Anthropometamorphosis* (London, 1653), sig. A2v. Material prefatory to the main body of Bulwer’s work cited by individual footnotes; material from the text cited parenthetically by page number.

⁵⁶ Ibid., sig. A3r-v.

⁵⁷ Ibid., sig. *2r-v.

⁵⁸ Ibid., sig. *2v.

⁵⁹ Ibid., sig. *4v, lines 12-15.

⁶⁰ Ibid., sig. ***4v.

⁶¹ Ibid., sig. ****4v.

⁶² Ibid., sig. ****4v.

Coda: Performing the Irregular Body

A litany of bodily irregularity occupies the central scene of William Shakespeare's play, *King John*. Constance, exasperated by her son Arthur's attempt to calm her insistence on his claim to the throne, exclaims:

If thou that bidd'st me be content wert grim,
Ugly and sland'rous to thy mother's womb,
Full of unpleasing blots and sightless stains,
Lame, foolish, crooked, swart, prodigious,
Patched with foul moles and eye-offending marks,
I would not care, I then would be content,
For then I should not love thee, no, nor thou
Become thy great birth nor deserve a crown.
But thou art fair, and at thy birth, dear boy,
Nature and Fortune join'd to make thee great.
Of Nature's gifts thou mayst with lilies boast,
And with the half-blown rose.

(3.1.43-54)¹

Constance conjures a visually repellent body. The "slanderous" and "prodigious" aspects of the imagined figure point to a monstrous birth; the "ugly" features with "foul moles," "blots," "stains," and "marks" rely on discursive aesthetic judgments; the "lame" and "crooked" body associate physical deformity with medical and moral interpretations. Constance lingers over the body's many faults, diverting her claim about kingship but amplifying the forcefulness of her insistence through this body's appearance. The irregularities of this putative body are "eye-offending" and "unpleasing," inviting disgust in the viewer; yet the anticipated effect is more than just a reaction to the exterior because, like the "deeper deformity" of the previous chapter's discussion, the "sightless stains" hint at blemishes beyond the visible body, present but inscrutable.

This body provokes an excessive affective response that Constance understands, in other words, as the logical conclusion of the body's appearance. She "would not care"

about her son's advancement and "should not love" him if, indeed, Arthur "wert grim" and everything else that follows. The enumeration of these details enacts a tension between part and whole: it is hard to imagine what the aggregate of this imagined body might look like, because the distinctive markers of physical difference shift with each new attribute. The irregular body again (like the multiplying descriptions of Richard III, like the denotation of "lame Ralph) inspires irregular discourse. Constance's disproportionate description balances four lines of repulsion against her son's "fair" appearance, in yet another example of the asymmetry that describes irregular bodies to hyperbolic excess. Counterpoised as the privileged term of opposition, the "fair" body is constructed as an ideal that emerges out of the features that demarcate an irregular body.

The final thing to notice about this body is entirely in keeping with the representations of deformed, lame, crippled, and ugly bodies we have seen so far: disability is more than the sum of a body's irregularities. The exclusion of this body comes through the structure of kingship; were Arthur to look like this, his mother exclaims, his features would self-evidently prevent him from "becom[ing]" his nobility and "deserv[ing] a crown." The logic of this speech is meant to be politically efficacious. The fantasy of this body is not only that his features elicit an affective response of disgust, but also that such a body would obviously obscure his claim to the throne. This is an overt leap from a particular body to the political framework that enables or disables this body on the basis of appearance, not function. What matters, in her desire for visible legibility, is what this body looks like, not whether or how it is able.

This example, in a play concerned with the importance of interpreting bodily appearance, points again to the irregular body's significance within social formations that

we have seen throughout the previous chapters. I want to conclude by considering a moment in which the appearance of disability produces a crisis for theatrical performance. I end with this example—of several endings—to consider how the actor exits from the irregular body, a problem that suggests the stakes of the stage’s fascination with disability. In Ben Jonson’s 1605 play, *Volpone*, the eponymous title character counterfeits illness, a ruse he perpetrates from the comfort of his sick bed through his “feigned cough” and “gout,” his “apoplexy, palsy, and catarrhs” (1.2.125-6), in order to win a game of procurement in which Volpone delights in gaining wealth from the fawning pretenders who seek to inherit his fortune.² While the *Fair Maid of the Exchange* reflects Frank’s worries that his performance of Cripple might actually make his body “crooked,” Volpone spends most of the play confident in his ability to doff the disguise (his “sick dress,” makeup, and bodily gestures) no matter how fervently he has performed sickness. Yet the problem of subjugating the body to faked sickness to acquire gold, however, becomes apparent when the sick body intrudes upon his carefully constructed dramatic fiction.

The crucial moment of this performance of the sick body, within the dramatic fiction, is the first trial scene in the play. Bonario, the son of one of Volpone’s greedy gulls, seeks justice for Volpone’s attempted attack upon Celia. The Avocatori, charged with the legal responsibility of determining the truth, marvel over the singularity of this case: “The like of this the Senate never heard of” (4.5.1) and the case is “most strange” (4.5.2); Bonario’s father is “more unnatural” (4.5.5) and Corvino’s is “so monstrous” (4.5.6). The most appalling person, however, is Volpone himself, the “imposter,” whom

they describe as “a thing created / T’ exceed example” (4.5.8-9). Yet Volpone is absent from his own trial:

Third Avocatore:	Appear yet those were cited?
Notary:	All but the old magnifico, Volpone.
First Avocatore:	Why is he not here?
Mosca:	Please Your Fatherhoods, Here is his advocate. Himself’s so weak, So feeble—

(4.5.11-15)

Volpone’s ostensible illness is the reason for his failure to appear when “cited” at court. Pleading that he is “weak” and “feeble” and “not able to endure the air” (4.5.20), Voltore and Mosca attempt to convince the lawyers to let Volpone off. Bonario, however, exclaims that he will “beseech the court” that Volpone “may be forced to come, that your grave eyes / May bear strong witness of his strange impostures” (4.5.17-8). Volpone’s body is already the absent proof of his deceptions. Bonario’s plea, moreover, presumes the self-evidence of Volpone’s body. What they will see, he explains, is Volpone’s falseness. Even though Voltore protests “Upon my faith and credit with your virtues, / He is not able to endure the air” (4.5.19-20), the Avocatori insist “Bring him, however” and “we will see him” (4.5.21). Voltore claims “But sure the sight will rather move your pities / Than indignation” (4.5.23-4), and he goes on to plead for Volpone, “the aged gentleman, that had there lain bedrid / Three years and more” (4.5.81-2). Described by Voltore in his absence, Volpone enters into a setup in which his appearance is legal evidence, his physical state a witness to the impossibility of performing the crimes of which he is charged.

This first trial scene, then, depends upon aligning the legal and medical gaze. The device of the “public hearing” so central to Jonson’s dramaturgy is especially important

given this play's location in Venice, where the Avocatori were known for their legal acuity.³ Here, though, the "testimony" and the "evidence" are accomplished through inarticulate presentation, which—unexpectedly—appears more reliable than the verbal accounts. The sight of this body is more effective than its description. When partway through the next scene "Volpone is brought in, as impotent" (s.d. at 4.6.20), Voltore hails his entrance:

Here, here
The testimony comes that will convince
And put to utter dumbness their bold tongues.
See here, grave fathers, here's the ravisher,
The rider on men's wives, the great imposter,
The grand voluptuary! Do you not think
These limbs should affect venery? Or these eyes
Covet a concubine? Pray you, mark these hands:
Are they not fit to stroke a lady's breasts?
Perhaps he doth dissemble?

(4.6.20-9)

Volpone never speaks to the Avocatori: the convincing "testimony" that he offers is not a verbal witness, but a visual display, the evidence of his body. Voltore redirects their eyes ("See here" and "mark") to Volpone's "limbs" and "eyes" and "hands" in order to make the case that Volpone is incapable of performing the acts of which he is accused. What matters in this moment is not what the body can do; it is what the sick body cannot do: his inert form is evidence that he cannot "affect venery," "covet," or "stroke." Silent but apparent, Volpone's body replicates the "utter dumbness" Voltore claims his appearance will effect in his audience. The answer to Voltore's question "Perhaps he doth dissemble?" is, of course, yes. Volpone dissembles a healthy body under the sign of sickness in order to perpetrate the central ruse of the play, asking his onstage audience to make an epistemological judgment about what they can know from the appearance of this

body. The court of Venice confirms Volpone's deception, exonerating him on the appearance of his substantiating body and punishing Bonario instead. Voltore mocks Bonario's insistence that Volpone be "tried," in order to penetrate the disguise, because he depends on the affective power of a sufficiently repugnant sick body, and indeed, the court's scrutiny defers to this sight. Perhaps more than any other irregular body, the sick body constitutes *apparently* uncontestable evidence of disability as limitation.

Volpone's greatest enactment of the sick body is also the play's apparent ending. Critics have long noted the sense that this first trial scene divides the play. Famously, John Dryden claimed that "there appear two actions in the play; the first naturally ending with the fourth act; the second forced from it in the fifth."⁴ Stephen Greenblatt argues that the first trial scene gives the audience the "sense of an ending," because "what is at stake in the trial scene is not simply Volpone's con-game but the principle of theatrical illusion on which it is based."⁵ Volpone must be exposed, even as we "dread" that exposure, because in the false conclusion, he argues, Jonson "offers the audience as resolution precisely the reverse of the one he will finally provide" in order to move the audience to want to see Volpone's judgment at the end of the play. However, this "principle of theatrical illusion" is more crucially reconfigured, I want to suggest, in the scene that follows the trial. The real crisis in the play derives not from the body's appearance but from the possibility that the counterfeit sickness may overtake the counterfeiting body.

When he returns from his court appearance, Volpone confides:

Well, I am here, and all this brunt is past.
 I ne'er was in dislike with my disguise
 Till this fled moment; here 'twas good, in private,
 But, in your public—*cavé*, whilst I breathe.
 'Fore God, my left leg 'gan to have the cramp,
 And I apprehended straight some power had struck me

With a dead palsy. Well, I must be merry
 And shake it off. A many of these fears
 Would put me into some villainous disease,
 Should they come thick upon me. I'll prevent 'em.
 (5.1.1-10)

Taking his “bowl of lusty wine,” Volpone reasserts control over his body, but the speech belies his confident impersonation. The feigned disease has real consequences. Volpone plays at sickness and he does so in a site of legal authority that depends upon the practice of translating appearance into evidence. Volpone’s post-trial recollection expounds the danger of impersonation as clearly as Philip Stubbes, Stephen Gosson, or William Prynne—key figures in a long history of anti-theatrical writings—insist that pretending in a body carries the implicit threat of transformation. What seems to matter to Volpone, though, is not necessarily the duration or the intensity of the act, but the location: the *public* space. Scrutiny of his faked body creates the condition of uncontrollable response when he is out of the “private” house; his leg “cramp[s]” and a “dead palsy” strikes him. Volpone must now attempt to “prevent” the “villainous disease” that heretofore he had chosen only as a “disguise.” For Volpone, the sick body only becomes disabling when the sickness is actually out of his control.

At the end of the play, the court attempts to restore accuracy to public perception through Volpone’s punishment:

our judgment on thee
 Is that thy substance all be straight confiscate
 To the hospital of the *Incurabili*;
 And since the most was gotten by imposture,
 By feigning lame, gout, palsy, and such diseases,
 Thou art to lie in prison, cramped with irons,
 Till thou be’est sick and lame indeed.
 (5.12.118-24)

Judicial authority is completely undercut by the revelations of the avarice that motivates the Avocatori, as the dramatic fiction reveals the judges to be just as susceptible to the prospect of wealth and advancement as any of Volpone's daily visitors. Still, this final scene performs a fantasy of punitive correspondence between the transgression and the penalty.⁶ The decree strips Volpone of both gold and health, donating his money to the hospital and condemning Volpone to re-enact the "imposture" until he is "sick and lame indeed." The pun "to lie in prison" compresses Volpone's con game into a speech-act, breaking the illusion of illness by making Volpone's body sick in the deed of representation. The court, that is, tries to produce a legibly disabled transgressor, a body in which appearance and embodiment are completely aligned.

Yet if disability poses a crisis of perception (not only in the case of the sick body, but in the case of other irregular bodies, as we have seen: how to know if Cripple is really crippled? how to distinguish the ugly body if deeds determine ugliness?), this play suggests that this judgment is thoroughly implicated in the theater's fundamental tenet of embodiment. Volpone's epilogue, in which the Fox wriggles free of his captors to address the audience, restores the audience to their own bodies to close the play:

The seasoning of a play is the applause.
Now, though the fox be punished by the laws,
He yet doth hope there is no suff'ring due
For any fact which he hath done 'gainst you.
If there be, censure him; here he, doubtful, stands.
If not, fare jovially, and clap your hands.

(5.12.152-7)

The epilogue unmoors the actor-character relationship, because it does not exactly end the fiction of the play, nor does it quite restore the actor to himself again. The audience sees Volpone, yes, but it is not exactly Volpone, because the character exits with the

others, headed for his imprisoning fate. Nor, however, is it entirely the actor who returns, since he names the presence of the Fox (“here he doubtful stands”). The limit of the fiction is precisely what is on display, because while the body remains continuous, the audience is left uncertain about who addresses them (is it Burbage? is it Volpone?) with the plea for applause. To read the end of the play in relation to Volpone’s crucial admission after the trial is, therefore, to notice that the import of *Volpone*’s false ending is the extent to which the actor’s body is itself destabilized. To put it another way: if Volpone’s return to speak the epilogue disrupts dramatic character, his confession, at the outset of the final act, of the “palsy” and “cramp” that overtake his body, is either his character’s undoing as he experiences the consequences of theatrical behavior *or* a moment when the actor might be disclosing the risk of his performance in *Volpone*. The disabling possibility of sickness is at once immediate and unsettling because the audience cannot tell whether it is Volpone or *Volpone* that registers the startling uncontrollability of the body.

This disconcerting effect of the performed irregular body, I suggest, is one of the reasons these bodies fascinate the early modern stage. Irregular bodies push the theater, with its practices of producing characters through embodiment and description, to test the bounds of performance. One level, the risk of the irregular body is the potential mismatch between what spectators hear and what they see. If, for example, Arthur is not “fair” but marked with “foul moles,” the possibility, at the level of theatrical form, is that the audience snaps out of immersion in the dramatic fiction. Whether through curiosity sparked by the knowledge that this body is being performed (how does he *do* that limp? is he *really* crippled?) or a knowing wink at the possible gap between actor’s body and

character's irregularity (as when Richard Burbage, playing Richard III, describes his body as "misshapen" and "halting") the irregular body pushes the limits of what a body can feign.

Yet the risk of acting the irregular body, in this historical moment, is also the sense that the performed theatrical body might "take." The disabled body, the body that is *really* sick, or lame, or crippled, or deformed is both the possible result—and the limit—of impersonation. The risk of disabling transformation is shared by the audience, as anti-theatrical rhetoric in the period makes clear: from theater closures for plague outbreaks, to the material exchange of breath in the crowded enclosure, to the powerful mimetic effects inherent in the act of looking, the theater might endanger the body. These irregular bodies offer the delights of staring at bodily difference, or of marveling at the illusions of a stage property like a wooden leg or crooked habit to manipulate a character's body, but they also structure an encounter with potential disability that unsettles the representational distance we might otherwise expect. Uniquely situated within the signifying circuit, irregular bodies on the stage reveal the mechanisms that produce unacknowledged bodily norms. Because the crippled, lame, deformed, or ugly bodies that populate the stage are crucial to early modern social formations—not only medical knowledge or aesthetic standards of beauty, but also concepts of political power, citizenship, social status, and economic exchange—these figures ask us to notice the social structures that disable a range of bodies. Representing disability, the early modern stage draws attention to the culture that restricts and requires irregular bodies at the same time.

¹ This and all further quotations from *King John* in *The Norton Shakespeare*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, and Katharine Eisaman Maus. (W. W. Norton: New York & London, 1997) cited parenthetically in the text.

² This and all further quotations from *Volpone* (*English Renaissance Drama*, ed. Lars Engle, Katharine Eisaman Maus, and Eric Rasmussen [New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2002]) cited parenthetically in the text.

³ See Frances Teague, “Ben Jonson and London Courtrooms” in *Solon and Thespis: Law and Theater in the English Renaissance*, ed. Dennis Kazar (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

⁴ John Dryden, *Of Dramatic Poesy and Other Critical Essays*, ed. George Watson (London: Dutton, 1962), 61.

⁵ Stephen Greenblatt, “The False Ending in *Volpone*” in *Critical Essays on Ben Jonson* ed. Robert N. Watson (New York: G. K. Hall, 1997), 174.

⁶ The trial scenes, David Bevington argues, are necessary for this particular play, “written for a public theatre, away from the elite confines of the ‘private’ stage where satire generally reigns supreme...a play for public audiences, [in which] criminal behavior requires the intervention of the law” (76), though Bevington calls Jonson’s stance on the efficacy of law “deeply ambivalent at best” (77) (“The Major Comedies” in *The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson*, ed. Richard Harp and Stanley Stewart [London and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000]).

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