

## What is in a Heroine's Name? Beatrice-Joanna in *The Changeling*.\*

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According to William Power's well-known interpretation of Beatrice-Joanna's name in *The Changeling*—cited, for instance, in Joost Daalder's *New Mermaids* edition of the play—the name's use is ironic, since, rather than “being ‘she who makes happy’ (Beatrice) and ‘the Lord's grace’ (Joanna), Beatrice-Joanna brings misery upon her father and her husband, death to De Flores and to the man she was to marry, moral destruction and death to Diaphanta, and to herself death and (as at least she thinks) damnation.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, *The Changeling*, Ed. Joost Daalder. 2nd Edn. New Mermaids. London: A & C Black, 1990. 3. Daalder cites William Power, “Middleton's Way with Names,” *Notes & Queries* 205 (1960): 26-9, 56-60, 95-8, 136-40 & 175-9. Textual references to *The Changeling*, incorporated in the essay, are to Daalder's edition.

The ironic inversion inherent in the rogue-heroine's naming is manifested in the oft-noted parody of the ideal of Courtly Love enacted by De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna (Eaton 372; Haber 92). In this regard, Robert Ornstein has also identified parodic parallels with *Romeo and Juliet* (Ornstein 173). Indeed, identifying such a role-reversal, another critic has stressed Beatrice-Joanna's culpability as the play's "Satanic figure," who "unleashes uncontrollable appetites" in De Flores (Crupi 144-45).

However, the present paper aims to demonstrate that there is further significance attached to Beatrice-Joanna due to her actual naming. As will be argued, a number of allusions—some literary, and another historical and exacerbated by already recognized issues of political succession and a proposed marriage alliance with Spain—arguably contributed significantly to the Beatrice-Joanna figure in both *The Changeling* and in its contemporaneous source, a tale in a collection titled *The Triumphs of God's Revenge* (1621) by John Reynolds, an English merchant who resided in the Spanish city of Alicante, which, of course, is also the setting of both the tale in question and of *The Changeling*.

### **From Florence with Love: Beatrice in Dante's *oeuvre*.**

The heroine's name—certainly ironic, and not solely due to the literal meanings noted by Power and restated by Daalder—binds together contradictory ideas about women. As will be shown, Beatrice-Joanna's name was inspired by Dante's *oeuvre*, Beatrice being, of course, the name of Dante's beloved, celebrated in *The Divine Comedy*, and ultimately elevated to an angelic position in heaven, where Dante made her the epitome of the courtly love mistress, in an act of "exaltation" that Harold Bloom has labelled "sublimely outrageous" (Bloom 76-77). Thus, whereas Dante's Beatrice guides the poet to heavenly love and salvation, her

near-namesake, Beatrice-Joanna, by contrast, leads her admirers along the path to perdition.

Throughout his work, Dante revisited his suggestively religious awakening as Love's devotee on the occasion of his original, childhood encounter with Beatrice—an event parodied in both Reynolds' tale and in *The Changeling*. Even near the end of *Paradiso*, Dante refers to his eternal love: "From the first day that I saw her face / In this life, until that sight of her" (Dante. *The Divine Comedy: Paradiso*. xxx. 28-29). Dante's first account of that meeting, however, is not found in *The Divine Comedy*, but in the *Vita Nuova*:

At that moment ... the vital spirit ... that dwells in the most secret chamber of the heart, began to tremble so violently that even the least pulses of my body were strangely affected ... from that time on Love governed my soul (Dante. *Vita Nuova* 2.4).

*The Changeling's* opening lines, in which Alsemero describes his own first meeting with Beatrice-Joanna, echo Dante's suggestively blasphemous apotheosis of earthly love: "'Twas in the temple where I first beheld her, / And now again the same" (1.1. 1-2), on which Alsemero elaborates with a neophyte's enthusiasm:

The place is holy, so is my intent:  
I love her beauties to the holy purpose,  
And that, methinks, admits comparison  
With man's first creation, the place blest (1.1. 5-9).

Although that meeting in Middleton and Rowley's source is in third-person-narrative-form, Alsemero, in similar fashion, is described as "rauished and vanquished with the pleasing obiect of this Angelicall countenance," and "can no more resist either the power or passion of loue"

(Reynolds 109). Indeed, the *Vita Nuova* also lay suggestively behind Reynolds' description of Alsemero's conversion to the worship of Love in the passage below:

*Alsemero* hath sweetnesse of her beautie so deeply ingrauen in his thoughts, and imprinte in his heart, that hee vowes *Beatrice-Ioana* is his Mistresse, and hee her seruant: yea, here his warlike resolutions haue end, and strike sayle. And now hele aues *Bellona* to adore *Venus*, and forsakes *Mars*, to follow *Cupid* (Reynolds 110).

Moreover, that these are ironic allusions to Dante is doubly clear, since both parts of Beatrice-Joanna's name are, in fact, found in the *Vita Nuova*, in which *Joan*, or *Joanna*—*Giovanna*, in the original Italian—is Beatrice's "much-loved" friend, who walked towards Dante, foreshadowing his first adult encounter with Beatrice (Dante. *Vita Nuova* 24.51).

The irony of naming a Jacobean tragic heroine after these Dantean figures—especially Beatrice—is that Dante ultimately exalted his mistress as a spiritual guide, described by Count Corso in *Purgatorio* as she "who lights the intellect to truth" (Dante. *The Divine Comedy: Purgatorio* xxx. 45). Indeed, even the allusion to Dante's *Joanna/Giovanna* carries religious implications, as Dante compared her to John the Baptist, given her role as precursor to Beatrice, whom he, in turn, likened to Christ himself (Dante. *Vita Nuova* 24.51). To love Beatrice-Joanna, on the contrary, is to court death and damnation, as witnessed by the fates of Piracquo—murdered by De Flores at her behest—the pain and suffering of Alsemero and Vermandero, and even the fate of the "tool villain", DeFlores. In thus referring to the latter, I borrow a term used by M. C. Bradbrook, in her classic *Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy* (1935), to describe one of "the stock subsidiary characters" which "Jacobean developed", figures not generally noted for specific character-development; for as Bradbrook observed, the

"role" of such a character typically "depended upon the narrative rather than upon his character", the function of "minor villains" being *essentially* to be "played off against each other", so as to produce a dramatic conflict, or what she termed, the play's "imbroglio" (Bradbrook 54). This is not to say, however, that De Flores is not an interesting, unique character, but if we do consider his role within the play's plot, he *does* dispose of various "minor characters", who stand as obstacles, or threats, to his sexual liaison with Beatrice-Joanna, including the unfortunate Diaphanta—whose services once fulfilled, as a confidante to the play's she-villain, having substituted Beatrice-Joanna in bed, being a virgin, to trick the latter's husband, Alsemero (5.1.1-76), and now become a liability to both Beatrice-Joanna and to DeFlores, the pragmatic villain gets rid of the maid through a pretended accidental house fire: "*The piece goes off*" (5.1.93b). In the process, we witness not only the viciousness to which Beatrice-Joanna is a party—in sharp contrast to what she seems to others, and to early modern patriarchal ideals of femininity—but also how, fable-like, Diaphanta's seemingly far more innocent *self-indulgence* attracts the play's draconian punishment of death, as part of an implicit patriarchal cautionary lesson by the dramatists, when Diaphanta yields to her own sexual desires by staying in bed with Alsemero longer than Beatrice-Joanna intended her to—prompting the latter's fear of exposure, as well as her implicit sexual jealousy, as suggested when she exclaims in exasperation, as the night wears on, Diaphanta having remained for hours in the bedchamber with Beatrice-Joanna's bridegroom:

One struck, and yet she likes by't! - O my fears!  
 This strumpet serves her own ends, 'tis apparent now,  
 Devours the pleasure with a greedy appetite,  
 And never minds my honour and my peace,  
 Makes havoc of my right. But she pays dearly for't: (5.1. 1-5).

The embodiment of female desire—or, rather, of the desiring female subject, upon the stage is agreed by scholars of early modern English theater to have undergone a sudden transition upon the death of Elizabeth I, so that, in Leonard Tennenhouse's formulation, for example, "the unruly woman of Elizabethan comedy was criminalized and the world of inversion and of the carnivalesque took on sinister features as they appeared on the Jacobean stage" (Tennenhouse 153). Along with the prevalence of tragic plays, in which women were largely polarized, becoming either pathetic victims—such as Desdemona, or Ophelia—or demonized viragos—such as Lady Macbeth—feminine desire was rendered problematic—and presented as potentially unnatural or monstrous.

Even Desdemona's virtuous, monogamous desire for her husband in Shakespeare's *Othello*, thus, becomes the key to her destruction when Iago convinces Othello—tragically initiating the hero's self-debasement into the *monstrous* jealousy, precisely through the masochistic self-hate which Iago devilishly sows in his mind—that Desdemona's breach of patriarchal expectations that a woman passively await her father's choice of a marriage partner, and, moreover, her crossing of racial boundaries, indicates "a will most rank, / Foul disproportions, thoughts unnatural!" (*Othello* 3.3.237-38). In these terms, Jack D'Amico observes that Othello's "lowering of his own image to something subhuman sinks his own twin as well, for Desdemona can only appear vicious if her affections were aroused by something low" (D'Amico 189).

In turn, a woman's desire may, once un-circumscribed by patriarchal authority, may be deemed, in Othello's own words a case of "nature, erring from itself" (*Othello* 3.3. 232)—which Iago quickly seizes as a "point" (3.3. 233), and one which he figuratively will *sharpen* further, as a weapon to drive into his victim's much too gullible (and, thus, vulnerable), ear. The play, of course, is named after its male hero—though how much his adversary, Iago, that "demi-devil" (*Othello* 5.3. 306-7), manages to steal the

play from him, is fascinating in itself—but, it is also the tragedy of, not one, but *two*, good, innocent women, and of these, Desdemona's maid, Emilia, whose only error—a *tragic* one, at that, and she a significant if minor contribution to the roll of Tudor-Stuart tragic heroes, as Penny Gay has argued—is that she is very much unlike the villainous man to whom she is married (Gay40-47).

### **The French Connection: Joan of Arc in *Henry VI, Part I***

The name "Joanna", a female form of "John", carries the sense of "God's grace", noted by Power and Daalder, but it also has significant literary associations. For Jacobean playgoers, "Joanna" probably suggested a Spanish—or loosely *Italianate*—variant of "Joan"—and would also have recalled Joan of Arc as depicted in Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part I*. A deceitful witch, promiscuous woman, virago, and, lastly, an impotent scold, Joan embodied the essentially transgressive character of the demonized, unruly woman of the Elizabethan imagination. In fact, it has been argued that she functioned as a "projection" of "hatred and pent-up resentments"—particularly those of militant Protestants—which were "impossible to vent directly against the English monarch" (Marcus 80). For Shakespeare's audience, Joan stood for a threat not only to the male authority of the French monarchy, but also to the English nation, its territorial integrity, and the prowess and survival of its *masculinized* armies.

First portrayed as a woman of genius, Joan initially presents a dangerous attraction for the audience. Like most Shakespearean arch-villains—from Aaron (*Titus Andronicus*; c.1588-1592) and Richard Gloucester (*Richard III*; c.1592) to Iago (*Othello*; 1604) and Edmund (*King Lear*; 1608)—she possesses great energy, and holds centre-stage, until her witchcraft, her wiles—and, finally, her promiscuity—are exposed. Thus, she

introduces herself as a simple “shepherd’s daughter” (*1Henry VI* 1.2. 51), and is dubbed a “holy maid” at the French Court (1.2. 30); while, being a “woman clad in armour” (1.7. 3), her enemies immediately perceive her implicitly masculine qualities as incompatible with sexual virtue, as shown when Bedford exclaims in disbelief: “A maid! and be so martial!” (2.1. 21). In *Engendering a Nation*, Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin provide a context for this perspective, observing that, in the early modern period, female unruliness was equated with a woman’s being Amazonian or ““masculine,”” and, by extension, linked to the expectation that such a woman would be promiscuous, or “sexually transgressive” (Howard and Rackin 204). In other words, *transgression*, where gender—or gender-norms, of conduct, and so forth—was understood as something not only essential but also broadly significant for an individual, so that a woman who lacked modesty by speaking in public, or before a gathering of strangers, for instance, would have been suspected of, or expected to be, sexually unchaste. In Karen Newman’s formulation: an “open mouth and immodest speech [were] tantamount to open genitals and immodest acts” (Newman 11). Worse still, such a woman was deemed capable of other transgressions—just as the audience witnesses Lady Macbeth’s ready progression from being a shrew, who implicitly speaks too freely to her husband with whom she assumes a dominant, traditionally *masculine* role, to conjuring like a witch, and participating in a treasonous assassination. Thus, the unruly woman was deemed unnatural *in every respect*. Once she crossed the boundary that separated *wicked women* from their virtuous sisters, she was assumed to be, at once, immodest in thought and speech, as well as in her actions; by extension, other misdeeds beyond sexual impropriety, and associated with *masculinity*—and, hence, contrary to a woman’s *nature*—were considered possible.

In a near analogy, As Alan Bray explains, the discourse of sodomy in the period was anything but marginal; on the contrary, sodomy held



tremendous symbolic status, as it was associated with the betrayal of other types of norms, so that, for example, there was "the familiar Elizabethan stereotype that the man guilty of 'unnatural filthiness' would be also very likely a traitor" (Bray 3, 9).

This is also why Shakespeare's Joan of Arc—or, Joan *La Pucelle*—is exposed *multivalently*, not merely as someone who breaches patriarchal expectations of female modesty by speaking and presenting herself in public, though she is a young, unmarried woman—and also by transgressing the boundary between masculine prowess and feminine weakness by being a successful military leader—but is subsequently revealed as a trickster and a witch, as well as being the Dauphin's mistress. But, in the end, Shakespeare's Joan served patriotic purposes, in a period of national tension and around the years of the Spanish Armada invasion attempt of England—and this patriotic message was articulated in terms of gender-through contrast, and gender-conflict, between a masculine English *Self*, and a feminized, foreign *Other*; for, what was acted onstage was the humbling, or humiliation, of the once-proud Joan, who is ultimately reduced to the demeaning role of a woman of ill-repute, and one who is rejected and sneered at by the gathered men of England *onstage*, whom Shakespeare made to stand as *mediators* for the English spectators who stood or sat before them, witnessing what amounted to a *de facto* ceremony in honor of the then-nascent, or emergent nation-state, in its court-capital of London.

To continue with *1Henry VI*, Talbot's insulting epithets for Joan illustrate the range of negative associations of female unruliness, as he calls Joana "Devil or devil's dam" (1.7. 5), a "witch" (1.7. 7), and—hence, as was automatically expected, as is explained above—a "high-minded [I. e.: *proud*, and *ambitious*; not *diffident*, or *modest*] strumpet" (1.7. 12). Other characters, in turn, assume that there must be improper relations between her and the Dauphin, long before these are, in fact, confirmed—with sardonic overkill—

at the end of the play. In these terms, Burgundy boasts that he has caused the flight from the battlefield of “the Dauphin and his trull” (2.2. 28), and calls the latter a “vile fiend and shameless courtezan!” (3.5. 5).

Joan’s subversive attractiveness is stripped away, a dramatic shift initiated when she takes the town of Rouen by devious means, passing off her troops as “Poor market folks that come to sell their corn” (3.2.14), which Talbot denounces as “treachery” (3.4. 2). Clearly, this stratagem—feminized as a *woman’s wiles*—is meant to present a contrast with the *masculine* prowess of the English.

At the play’s climax, Shakespeare appeals to the probable jingoism and masculine animosities of the original, London audience, appeasing the anxieties which that audience may have arguably shared with Talbot. Indeed, Joan cannot even be allowed a loose woman’s physical charms, but, rather, after some successes through her secret activities as a witch, she is abandoned by her familiars, and is, then, captured in battle by York, who scoffs that “*the ugly witch*...doth bend her brows” at him (5.4. 5; emphasis mine).

As Gabriele Bernhard Jackson, this unruly woman’s discomfiture is complete when she is reduced to farcical attempts to escape burning at the stake by claiming to have fallen pregnant to a succession of French leaders, which completes Shakespeare’s “feminization” of Joan, intended to undermine the subversive power she has represented for much of the play (Jackson 61); the process, Jackson further explains, illustrates the early modern “need to neutralize the virago ... even the admired virago” (Jackson 59).

However, in contrast to Talbot, who defies her unto death, the audience watches the surrender of French, male, aristocratic authority when Charles, blinded by Joan, calls her “Divinest creature, Astraea’s daughter” (1.8. 4), and proposes an implicitly ignoble subversion of his realm’s patriarchal and Christian foundations:

'Tis Joan, not we, by whom the day is won;  
For which I will divide my crown with her,  
(...)  
No longer on Saint Denis will we cry,  
But Joan la Pucelle shall be France's saint.  
(1Henry VI 1.8.17-18,28-29).

While Dante crossed the line of religious orthodoxy in his praise of Beatrice, his adoration of the idealized mistress of the Renaissance imagination was, nevertheless, underpinned by a belief in the woman's purity—exalted as angelic, or divine—by the idealistic love poet. This is precisely what is reversed in Joan and in her near-namesakes, the Beatrice-Joanna figures in Reynolds' and Middleton and Rowley's works, both being equally unworthy of the devotion which they inspire, a fact accentuated, moreover, by their shared status as foreigners from nations which were traditional enemies of England.

Beatrice-Joanna in *The Changeling*, though no warrior, defies male authority, and, as with Joan, her foreignness would have appealed to the audience's nationalistic, if not downright xenophobic, sentiments. In this regard, Beatrice Joanna's negative appeal was accentuated by the context, noted by such scholars as Christina Malcolmson, in which this unruly female figure appeared on stage even while the British crown was involved in negotiations concerning a proposed marriage between the future Charles I and the Spanish *Infanta* (Malcolmson 320-339).

In their article, "Does Beatrice Joanna have a Subtext", Roberta Barker and David Nicol question the prevailing view of Beatrice-Joanna's subconscious desire for De Flores; arguably too dismissive of what they label "the reviewers' Beatrice", Barker and Nicol object that this Beatrice-Joanna is "a spoilt child, never quite aware of what she is doing", and, thus, someone who:

embodies a fantasy of woman as both virgin and whore, unconscious yet culpable, lacking in agency yet still sinful ... the childlike *femme fatale*, object of a brutal masculine lust that is legitimated by her responsive capacity for evil (Barker and Nicol).

I must, however, agree with those so-called “reviewers”; for it is precisely such a contradictory nature that is implicit in the heroine’s very name, as the present paper contends. After all, Beatrice-Joanna is the character, who, having arranged the murder of her betrothed, protests against the sexual demands of De Flores, by exclaiming “Why, ’tis impossible thou canst be so wicked,/ Or shelter such a cunning cruelty,/ To make his death the murderer of my honour!” (3.4. 120-22). Labelled “the deed’s creature” (3.4. 137), she is, then, forced to face the absurdity of her moral pretensions, when De Flores tells her: “Push, you forget yourself! / A woman dipped in blood, and talk of modesty?” (3.4. 125-26).

Beyond this, it is worth emphasizing such a dichotomy *within* the character of Beatrice-Joanna – with particular regard to her name. In terms of such self-division, N. K. Sugimura argues that Beatrice-Joanna’s efforts “to distance herself from her own collusion ... invokes both a proto-Freudian Unconscious that performs dark deeds and an Active Consciousness that refuses to acknowledge its participation in these acts” (Sugimura 246). Sugimura points out the connection between this binary, fragmented aspect of Beatrice-Joanna to her double name, which is split, at a climactic moment in Act V, by the frantic Vermandero; when Beatrice-Joanna is brought in, fatally wounded, “her father cries out in astonishment both to a ‘Beatrice’ and also to an unknown, already dead ‘Joanna’ (V.iii. 148)” (Sugimura 258).

In fact, I would underline the audience’s relief elicited at this tragic moment, namely, the impression that Beatrice-Joanna’s evil side has been purged, or excised, from her personality, as suggested by the repentant

*Beatrice's* concern for her father—perhaps the first sign of altruism in an otherwise essentially egotistic figure:

O come not near me, sir; I shall defile you.  
I am that of your blood was taken from you  
For your better health. Look no more upon 't,  
But cast it to the ground regardlessly (5.3.149-52).

As I have argued above, this dichotomy is, moreover, underpinned by the historical and literary associations of Beatrice-Joanna's double name; "Beatrice"—the angelic, *virgin* side, beloved by her fatuous, deluded father—being an ironic allusion to Dante's apotheosized mistress; "Joanna", the part of the name associated with female deviant unruliness—and accentuated through probable allusion to Shakespeare's Joan, a multifarious, unruly woman of the early-modern imagination, who combines sexual promiscuity, witchcraft and the warlike virago's threat to normative, patriarchal masculinity—and all accentuated by her foreignness as a threat to masculinized English nationhood.

In briefly considering Beatrice-Joanna, to whom we will return later, in more detail, we might also consider her progression from being a sexually chaste young woman, whose initial abandonment of the patriarchal principle of feminine obedience, in seeking to arrange to marry a husband of her own choice—a breach of a maiden-daughter's passive obedience of her father—leads first to her sexual corruption through the act of premarital fornication with De Flores, and later, a rapid slide into further deceptions and complicity in multiple murders, ending only with her own death, and most likely spiritual damnation.

### **The Spanish Contexts of *The Changeling*: the *Italianate* Convention in Tragedy, and the ‘Spanish Match’ Crisis.**

It is worth stressing, here, how important foreign settings—often stigmatized, if not downright demonized as hotbeds of corruption, treachery and murder—which is how the geographically vague, Catholic *Italianate* dramatic world was typically defined, were to early modern English drama. Elizabethan dramatists, such as Thomas Kyd, Christopher Marlowe, and, of course, Shakespeare, established conventional dramatic scenarios (settings and character-types), which ultimately reinforced powerful ideological constructs, a good three decades before Middleton and Tourneur produced the late-Jacobean tragedy presently under discussion. For, as Wendy Griswold notes, “revenge tragedies suggested the contrast between the foreign horrors—dynastic struggles, intrigues, bloodshed at court—and the English self-conception, fostered by the Protestants and used by Elizabeth, of order, stable central government, and peaceful succession” (Griswold 74). The relevance of this to *The Changeling*, a play written almost twenty years after the death of Elizabeth I is patently clear; similarly, to understand the importance of *The Changeling*’s Spanish setting, and its full significance for the original audience, one should arguably also look at those Elizabethan originals, which later dramatists continued to emulate; what is more, indeed, some key plays with Spanish, or loosely *Italianate* settings—such as what was, perhaps, the most influential of Elizabethan revenge tragedies, Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* (c.1587-88; first pub. 1592)—were not only imitated, but, in some cases, remained extremely popular in their own right, both on the stage and in print, literally for decades.

One of the most commercially successful of Elizabethan plays, Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*, specifically, became a perennial favorite for playgoers, and was also successful in print, not simply published in an initial quarto

edition in 1592 ("Q1"), but also reedited in 1594, 1599 and 1602—the last edition ("Q4"), which featured "five additions"—was, in its turn, reprinted several times over the following thirty-odd years, until 1633 ("The Spanish Tragedy." *Wikipedia*).<sup>2</sup>

Essential to a proper understanding of how to situate *The Changeling* contextually, and just how relevant—and certainly not forgotten—plays as old, or older, than Shakespeare's *1Henry VI*, were to Middleton and Tourneur's original audience, we will now address the function of foreign settings in the English drama of that period—and, in particular, those set in Catholic Southern Europe, settings loosely subsumed under the term *Italianate*, which also could be used as a pejorative adjective to describe the character, or nature, of its inhabitants.

The *Italianate* dramatic world, a vague geographical construct, designed to ascribe a perfidious nature to Protestant England's religious foes, could include—besides the Italian Peninsula and its proximate island of Sicily—also more traditionally Hellenic territories, such as the island of Cyprus, as shown in Shakespeare's *Othello, the Moor of Venice*; by the same means, it could embrace the political and military affairs of both Spain and Portugal, as it does in *The Spanish Tragedy*, which opened by regaling the original English audience with the spectral report conflict, mayhem and death among England's foes, from the mouth of the ghost of a Spanish courtier, who announced his identity in a way, which, along with something akin to the style of Marlowe's self-assertive, larger-than-life heroes', helped to establish the popular acclaim of the Elizabethan theater:

When this eternal substance of my soul  
 Did live imprisoned in my wanton flesh,  
 Each in their function serving other's need,

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<sup>2</sup> "The Spanish Tragedy." *Wikipedia: the Free Encyclopedia*. 28 Oct. 2011, cites: E. K. Chambers. *The Elizabethan Stage*. 4 vols. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1923. Vol. 3. 395.

I was a courtier in the Spanish court.  
My name was Don Andrea (Kyd 1.1. 1-5).

In this play, which set something of a pattern for revenge tragedies, and for the idea of the cruelty, corruption and malice of Catholic Southern Europe, Don *Andrea* further provides the distinctly *Italianate* detail of bearing the Italian form of Andrew, rather than the Castilian Spanish, which is *Andrés*.

On the concept of “Italianate—and untoward”, or devious, behavior, Curtis Brown Watson observed that “ordinary” people in early modern England “did not abjure revenge as such”, nor shrink from violence, *perse*, but found it “despicable…when the *more treacherous and Italianate* features were added” (Watson 128).<sup>3</sup>

Jacobean revenge tragedies—many given Italianate settings to associate Catholicism with dissimulation, perfidy and murder—often play on common themes and figures, including the malcontent, the type of the disappointed courtier, whose frustrated aspirations turn him into a willing participant—as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern become in conspiring with Claudius against their former schoolfellow—in the villainous actions, of those whom we might, *amorally* call—in the sardonic spirit of such dramatic works, and of such characters—*his betters*. Such is the fate of Bosola, in Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi*, who attempts, too late, to make up for his evil deeds, and while Ferdinand, emerging to enlightened self-knowledge only briefly in the moments before his death, from the maze of madness to which his subconscious, incestuous desires had conveyed him (Rose 158)<sup>4</sup>—exclaims: “My sister, o! my sister, there’s the cause on’t (Webster 5.5.

<sup>3</sup> Watson 128, cites Fredson Bowers. *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1940. 37.

<sup>4</sup> Representing the scholarly tradition that Ferdinand’s rage at his sister’s remarriage is produced by sexual jealousy which drives him insane, Mary Beth Rose explains that “Ferdinand’s pathology is rooted in a residual exclusivity that now appears



70), makes an epigrammatic observation which is representative of the whole subgenre of the revenge tragedy plays, and of the fatally doomed characters that people them:

*Whether we fall by ambition, blood, or lust,  
Like diamonds we are cut with our own dust* (Webster 5.5. 71-72).

Such belated, fatalistic self-discovery, akin that of Oedipus in Classical tragedy, which brings no relief, is also the fruit of experience for the she-villain of *The Changeling*; for while De Flores is lured into crime by his desire for her, so, too, must she come to understand her own debasement, as she becomes akin to the man whom she had loathed to look upon, her tool villain-turned-rapist-turned lover, at once seemingly softened by the experience of contact with another, and, yet, as she reveals her mind, a sentiment shallow and founded on self-interest, still the childish egotist, only more brutal, as she shockingly expresses her love for De Flores in response to his officiously setting out to murder Diaphanta in her service, at which Beatrice exclaims:

Already! How rare is that man's speed!  
How heartily he serves me! His face loathes one,  
but look upon his care, who would not love him? (5.1. 69-71).

Only when her death is near will Beatrice-Joanna demonstrate something closer to real self-knowledge, a sense of disgusted disillusion, as she understands her own moral foulness, gaining only then a proper understanding that the criminal means she has taken to attain her freedom to make her own choice of a husband has, not only enslaved her to De

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deranged, an obsessive pride in purity of blood that becomes the basis of an incestuous attachment to his sister" (Rose 158).

Flores, the loathed man whom she merely wanted to make use of, but, moreover, has made her the moral equal of that man, her accomplice in murder, and a man whom she had found too repugnant to look upon.

Beyond the dramatic conventions of a demonized Spanish-*Italianate* world, Spain and Spanish courtly affairs were also topical matters for Middleton and Rowley's original audience. As Christina Malcolmson has shown, *The Changeling* responded to (or, to be precise, participated) in the controversy) which contemporaries labelled the "'Spanish Match' crisis" – namely Protestant animosities provoked by a proposed marriage between the future English king, Charles, and the Spanish *infanta*, Maria – whereby, *The Changeling* reflects widespread opposition to "James's plans for a Spanish marriage" (Malcolmson 320). Malcolmson identifies Protestant fears, not only in the play's "portrait of Spanish degeneracy", but also in its "questioning of those in power, whether master, father, husband, or king" (Malcolmson 321). Vermandero's lack of "control over his daughter" – and over his "citadel" – therefore, caters to English Protestant anxieties that such foreign women would prove unfaithful "to the English cause", manifested, namely, in the "powerful suspicion that the Infanta would be politically and religiously, if not sexually, unfaithful to her husband" (Malcolmson 330, 334).<sup>5</sup>

A well-known libel against the Spanish match, titled "Poor silly wight that carkes in the night", illustrates, precisely, such fears of a return of Catholic persecution of English Protestants – along with those anxieties about the loyalty of the *infanta* discussed by Malcolmson:

god save us from the Spanish infection  
The Divell, the Pope, the Masse, and the Rope,

---

<sup>5</sup> As Malcolmson further explains, *The Changeling*, thus, "attempts to ward off the disorder that could result from such marriages as that ... between Prince Charles and the Infanta of Spain", whereby marriage to a "'... masculine woman' could challenge the foundation of English national strength" (339).

Together with Preistly correction

And graunt that shee prove as true as her love  
as she is of royall desert (Anon. "Poor silly wight." 26-30).

Nationalist sentiments are expressed in another poem, "All the newes that stirringe now", which typically voices its loyalty towards England's "King & Prince", even while it curses "their foes/ And all that are Hispanioliz'd / And would their Country loose" (Anon. "All the newes." 49-52). The following pages aim to show that this context of topical national anxieties – ultimately figured as fears of female unruliness – had an important bearing on the naming of Beatrice-Joanna in *The Changeling*. In the context of the highly topical "'Spanish Match' crisis", the name of the she-villains in Reynolds' tale and in the Middleton-Rowley play, specifically *Joanna*, potentially involved allusions to another Spanish royal, the hapless Castilian queen, *Juana la loca*, or "Joanna the Mad" (1479-1555).

There is, of course, a danger in overstating the importance of *The Changeling's* Spanish setting. John D. Sanderson, a critic and translator of the play into Spanish, has been criticized for his contention that *The Changeling*, to paraphrase, *reflects Alicante, and Spain, by extension, as an ethical paradigm* (Nisa Cáceres; emphasis mine); the edition in question – commissioned by the provincial government of Alicante – is described as arguing too close an identification between that city's well-known landmark, the Castle of Saint Barbara, and the arguably generic, symbolic citadel in the play and in Reynolds' original tale (Nisa Cáceres 146).

Nevertheless, it is possible that Reynolds' experience as a merchant in Alicante influenced his choice of the heroine's second name, "Joanna." The life of Spain's mad queen, *Juana la loca* – "Joan(na) the Mad" – was worthy of a work of Jacobean drama – and also offers an abundance of material for feminist historical analysis. As such, it presents significant common points

with *The Changeling*.

The eldest daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella—commonly referred to as the Catholic Monarchs—Juana was the older sister of Henry VIII's first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and the mother of Charles V; Juana might have become a match for her indomitable mother—had it not been for her mental illness, traditionally attributed to *love madness*, and, more recently, to schizophrenia (Aram 2). Her experiences illustrate the intersections of patriarchal power and royal authority, at a time when religious change was accentuating cultural differences among European nations and their courtly milieus.

There was Juana's descent into madness, aggravated by the death of her husband, Philippe, of whom she had been violently—though, perhaps, justifiably—jealous (Aram 76); before that, Juana had been “the central pawn” in her parents' efforts to force Philippe “to side with Spain over France” (Aram 63); during Philippe's life, there were the conflicting aspirations of husband and father, both of whom coveted the Castilian crown, which she, in due course, would inherit from her mother (Aram 80); following the deaths of Philippe and Isabella, came Juana's efforts to frustrate her father's ambitions, in favour of her infant son's claims to that kingdom (Aram 96-97); in the most macabre episode, Juana refused to be separated from Philippe's corpse, leading a lengthy funeral procession to Granada—Isabella's resting place—behaviour, attributed to love madness by Juana's detractors, as they destroyed her waning public credibility, leading to the queen's lifelong seclusion (Aram 96-98).

Significantly, in the context of *The Changeling's* production in the 1620s and of the contemporaneous “Spanish Match” controversy, Juana herself had been the object of marriage negotiations between England and Spain, as Henry VII—his son, later Henry VIII, being already married to Juana's sister, Catherine—insistently sought the hand of the widowed Juana. Indeed, he proved such an “aggressive suitor”—his courtship foiled by her father,

Ferdinand, who himself desired continued control over his daughter's kingdom—that the English monarch even considered invading Castile (Aram 102).

There is, therefore, a possible subtext, which, while deviating from the particulars of the main plot of *The Changeling*, does include the topical elements of the proposed marriage-alliance with Spain. Besides the element of the macabre, and the heroine's defiance of patriarchal authority, the play deals explicitly with love and madness in the subplot, arguably contributing to a subtle, implicit warning against a marriage with Spanish royalty.

To conclude, we must return to the names. The name of the historical figure, *Juana*, corresponds to "Joanna" in the Middleton-Rowley play. Indeed, while the Castilian pronunciation of her name is "Juana" (I.P.A.: "xwa:na:"; approx.: "hwana"), Reynolds lived in Alicante, on Spain's eastern coast, where Valencian—closely related to Catalan, used further north—is traditionally spoken. Indeed, in contrast to *The Changeling*, much of the tale—following the marriage of Beatrice-Joanna and Alsemero—unfolds in Valencia proper, the groom's hometown. In that region of Ferdinand's Aragonian domains, his daughter's name would have been rendered "Joana" (IPA: "dʒɔɑ:nɑ:", or "ʒɔɑ:nɑ:")—therefore, presenting close affinities with the English form of the name (IPA: "dʒouənnɑ:"), but having only one "n", which is how Reynolds, in fact, spelled his heroine's name: "Beatrice-Ioana."

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**ABSTRACT**

**What is in a Heroine's Name?  
Beatrice-Joanna in *The Changeling*.**

**Ivan Cañadas**

This article discusses the significance of the name of the female protagonist of Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling*, and addresses the play's engagement with early modern discourses of gender, patriarchal authority, rank and national identity. It identifies literary allusions, both to Dante's Beatrice, and to Joan of Arc, as depicted in Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part I*. It considers *The Changeling* (1622) in relation to the revenge tragedy subgenre for which Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (ca. mid-1580s; pub. 1592) had established a pattern for dramatists around thirty years prior to the writing of *The Changeling*. That Kyd's play also shares *The Changeling's* Spanish setting – within a tradition of perverse, *Italianate* settings in English drama – is of considerable importance to a proper understanding of the Middleton-Tourneur play, its plot, and the villainous couple at its heart: De Flores and the female villain, Beatrice-Joanna.

Such dramatic conventions involving the setting were, moreover, topically aggravated through widespread Protestant animosities against a proposed marriage alliance – the 'Spanish Match' crisis – between Spain and England in the 1620s, as noted by other critics.

Lastly, a case is presented, involving the historical, Spanish queen figure of Juana *la loca* – Joan(na)the Mad (1479-1555) – which highlights the roles of gender-conflict, madness and marriage alliances with England, pertinent in the context of *The Changeling's* themes and of the play's setting in Alicante, also the place of residence of the English merchant, John Reynolds, author of the play's source.

**Key Words** | Thomas Middleton, William Rowley, *The Changeling*, Beatrice-Joanna, literary naming, Jacobean drama, the unruly woman, marriage alliances, royal succession, 'Spanish Match' crisis, Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, *Vita Nuova*, John Reynolds, *The Triumphs of God's Revenge*, Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part I*, Joan of Arc, Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, Shakespeare, *Othello*.