



# The Changeling

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A changeling is a fickle person, a waverer, a person posing as another person, or an idiot. The Changeling portrays them all. The play interchanges not only characters, but authors, too. Written in 1622, it is one of the most successful collaborations in the history of the theater.

## The Changeling Details

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Author : Thomas Middleton , William Rowley

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## From Reader Review The Changeling for online ebook

### Willow says

This was fabulously dark! The secondary plot in the madhouse is excellent and I really enjoyed the relationship between Deflores and Beatrice (even if it was creepy). A lot can be said on feminism, morality, and sex. Lots of sex.

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### Rachel says

Probably the best Jacobean tragedy ever written! Going to direct it for Caffeine Theatre next season. Yay!

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### Grace says

Beatrice-Joanna might be my favorite character of 2017 (so far). So nasty and terrible and reprehensible but still so sympathetic. I loved this shallow, naive, virginity-obsessed murderer. Make of that what you will, I'm pretty sure I'm an anomaly. But the way that Ford transforms the audience's perception of her, slowly putting her in this terrible situation and showing you the vile and cruel world that created her...I was obsessed. Beatrice's worldview is presented as amoral and nonsensical at the beginning, but it turns out that it isn't nonsensical at all--it's something closer to a survival tactic.

A pulpy, nasty, psychologically rich portrait of what the patriarchy does to people.

Note: There's a weird sub-plot involving a mad house that I didn't really like and that you can honestly skip if you feel like it. Otherwise, this would be 5 stars.

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### Laura says

Next on:

Sunday, 20:00 on BBC Radio 3

**Synopsis** A new radio production of Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's Jacobean classic, set in Alicante, Spain, in the 1920s.

Beatrice-Joanna is due to marry Alonzo e Piracquo, until she falls in love with Alsemero and seeks the help of her father's man, De Flores.

Beatrice-Joanna ..... Anna Madeley

De Flores ..... Zubin Varla

Vermandero ..... Nicky Henson

Tomazo de Piracquo ..... Alex Hassell

Alonzo de Piracquo ..... Alex Blake

Alsemoro ..... Simon Muller  
Jasperino ..... Nigel Hastings  
Diaphanta ..... Liz Richardson  
Isabella ..... Catherine Bailey  
Alibius ..... Philip Fox  
Lolloj ..... Stephen Hogan  
Antonio ..... Piers Wehner  
Franciscus ..... Joseph Cohen-Cole  
Pedro ..... Rhys Jennings

Directed and adapted for radio by Jeremy Mortimer.

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### **Esdaile says**

It is noteworthy and inspiring that the English drama of Shakespeare's contemporaries and the generation which succeeded him until 1641 has witnessed an upsurge in popularity in the last 30 years and never more than in these early years of this twenty-first century, with a theatre next to the Globe in London specialising in such drama. Perhaps, as someone suggested, the English plays of this period speak to an audience of our times more readily than to readers or theatre goers of the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries. Contemporary readers and theatre goers probably feel more empathy for the pessimism and crude cynicism of the seventeenth century than would the mannered observers of manners of the eighteenth century or the romantics and religious revivalists of the nineteenth. I have now twice seen Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling*. As in the tragedies of Webster and Tourneur, the grotesque, farcical and tragic are interwoven. Put simply, it is hard to know to what extent the tragic in "The Changeling" (and this can be said too of the plays of Webster and Tourneur and Middleton's other tragedies) is meant to be taken seriously. Taken seriously, we lose the comic effect, taken as comic, the intrinsic unpleasantness of the story and the events and the psychology of the two principle protagonists wipes the smile from our face and leaves us uncomfortably wondering what the matter is with us that we find all this bizarre skulduggery entertaining. Dominic Dromgoole's production in the Globe in 2015 did not attempt to resolve the dilemma (is it possible to do so?) but stressed the ludicrous and farcical elements of the play and revelled in them. Seeing the play for the second time, I was struck even more forcibly than the first time with the extent to which the writer(s) were influenced by Shakespeare and especially Othello, whose lines are echoed throughout the play, and also by Webster. Beatrice Joanna is Desdemona had Desdemona been the adulteress of Othello's desperate imagination; Beatrice is the very thing which Othello wrongly imagines Desdemona to have been. In other respects Desdemona and Beatrice are similar, in position, class and I am tempted to say character, at least in terms of their impulsive reaction to events which run out of their control. Beatrice employs Deflores (the name alone tells us that the authors will not allow us to take this play entirely seriously even if we wish to), a depraved Iago-Roderigo character to murder the man she does not want to marry in order to make the way clear for the man whom she does want to marry, at the price, as she with apparently unwitting irony puts it, of her "honour". "Gothic camp" is how a *Time Out* critic described the Dromgoole production, which is apt, but the bitterness of the underlying tale provides the play with more substance than many, including the *Time Out* theatre critic, seem to allow. There is an underlying resentment at the superficiality and barenness of wantoness, a puritan rejection of pleasure, a critique of the Latin style Spanish style court and intrigue, which it may not be fanciful to suggest, points the way to the Puritan revolution of 1641. Is this an explanation for the rift which underlies all Middleton's tragedies, I mean the rift between the enjoyment, the

relishing of presenting human folly (Deflores is a villain but a comic villain) for our entertainment and laughter, and literally in this play as in the Duchess of Malfi through the presentation of Bedlam, parallel with the deadly serious Biblical injunction to "mend your ways" "shun sin" and to know that "summum peccati mors est" ... the doomed Deflores and Beatrice die together at the end of this sordid but entertaining tale of lust, murder and chicanery, united in death in a cruel parody of Romeo and Juliet. Even the final words of the play record Shakespearean comedy, the final resolution, the completion of the circle. De Flores reveals

"I coupled with your mate at barley break; now we are left at hell." and that he earned love out of murder. This is neither entirely successful comedy nor entirely successful tragedy but it is successful literature and a fine piece of Jacobean drama, grotesque, threatening, hilarious, crude but never vulgar, and whatever its flaws and however excessive its parodying, fine theatre.

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### **Amy says**

I love this play, having studied it when I was studying it for A levels. For me it is more accessible than Shakespeare, and I think De Flores is one of all my all time favourite villains - he's so incredibly crude, creepy and unpleasant and yet there are times when I still feel sorry for him. My only criticism is that I find the subplot too literally mirrors the main plot so that it feels repetitious.

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### **Sarah says**

A re-read before seeing a performance of it. Trademark Middleton focus on sex and power and honour. Beatrice-Joanna is one of the most complex women in early modern drama - at once hopelessly naive, and then turns on a dime and becomes worldly and terrifyingly ruthless. DeFlores, likewise, is the villain certainly, but also convincing in his desperate obsession for Beatrice-Joanna and his earnest (but murderous) desire for her love. The psychology of these two and the ways they play off each other (and the potential for staging it) is endlessly compelling.

The subplot is a total mess and the ending of the play is kinda just thrown together, but the fascinating main characters make this worth reading - and seeing in performance. It's a deliciously fucked up play.

(Also, does no one ever blame Beatrice-Joanna's father for forcing her marry Piracquo, which kicks off the whole murder plot? Renaissance dads are the WORST.)

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### **Lexie says**

A captivating exploration of madness, deception and, above all, the danger of obsession and desire. Due to the element of disguise and pretense that underlines the entire plot, this play is overflowing with double entendres (most of which are pretty risque) and this layer of double meaning in almost every interaction made the play much more gripping and entertaining. As a play about changeability, it did not disappoint. It was fascinating how much could change over the course of the play and the highlight was definitely the relationship between De Flores and Beatrice: from his obsessive devotion to her and her intense hatred of him to her complete reliance and love for him, it was an unpredictable emotional journey. My only complaint

is that the ending somehow seemed too succinct to give justice to the complex characters and plots that evolved throughout. Perhaps I'm just not used to such a calm and resolved ending in Renaissance drama, but it felt like it could have been developed further. Sequel anybody?

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### **Katie says**

I really enjoyed this play; complex characters, interesting look at the concepts of love and revenge.

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### **Stephen says**

THE CHANGELING, to borrow an idea introduced to me by Lars Engle, is a female version of MACBETH. Whereas Macbeth is to some extent influenced by supernatural interlopers and his own ambitious wife, Beatrice in this strange tragedy by Thomas Middleton and William Rowley is master of her own ill-conceived and fatal attempts to engineer the life she imagines she deserves. Evil deeds beget more evil deeds, and soon she must abandon all pretenses of the beautiful, innocent, and respectable gentlewoman she once presumed to be. Middleton and Rowley's interesting twist on Macbeth is the addition of De Flores, a scary yet sympathetic servant who executes Beatrice's crimes out of a self-loathing devotion to her beauty and prestige. De Flores, helplessly ugly, servile, and hopeless, is nevertheless a man of great insight and foresight, which makes him an interesting accomplice to his powerful yet nearsighted mistress. His triumph over her is both gratifying and deeply horrifying.

THE CHANGELING is an interesting and bizarre play, with a “comic” subplot involving madmen and fools (I’m not quite sure what the distinction is) in a private asylum run by a physically abusive profiteer. The subplot is baffling and incomplete, but it adds a distinct flavor to a play about inversions, deceptions, and descents into madness.

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### **Roman Clodia says**

This is one of my favourite Jacobean tragedies with a fascinating woman at its heart in Beatrice-Joanna. Full of lust, desire, murder and blackmail, it feels very modern with its themes of sexual coercion and guilty conscience.

Middleton, who has only recently emerged as one of the most interesting dramatists of the period (some of his works were wrongfully attributed away from him), uses the play to reflect back on the revenge genre and twists some of its tropes in a strikingly self-conscious way. All the same, this still makes much use of stage conventions such as the ghost of a murdered man, 'bed tricks', and gory props such as a severed finger.

So this is dark and sometimes almost perverse - but in a good way!

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## **Marti Martinson says**

Sex, murder, and a mad house. You'd think it would be more interesting. The last scene was the best. I do think I'd rather WATCH this than read it.

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## **Bryn Hammond says**

Adore this play. De Flores is my favourite villain; De Flores and Beatrice an intense portrait of love-hate obsession. Dark Jacobean psychology at its sexiest; with a comic subplot in a madhouse that bounces about with the main plot's themes. Nifty work.

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## **Keith says**

The most interesting part of the play -- rife with murder, adultery, ghosts, and an insane asylum -- is the relationship between the beautiful Beatrice and the wretchedly ugly De Flores. Her supercilious manner and his deprecating neediness at the beginning evolve into his assertion of himself and her emotional decay (and love for De Flores).

But these insights are fleeting as we're presented an moderately entertaining story of murder and adultery, with a vaguely connected subplot about a man pretending to be insane so he can seduce the asylum operator's wife. (Only at the very end are these two stories connected, and only by the thinnest thread. Yes, many a PhD student has sweated over justifying the connection of these two plots, but as they say in politics, if you're explaining, you're losing. They simply don't make sense together and audiences have known that viscerally since it first hit the stage.)

The ending itself is an unsatisfying deus ex machina with Beatrice's sudden confession to her husband coming out of nowhere. And then there is the tenuous connection between the two plots.

All of that aside, there is a kernal of a story here that makes the play worth reading, and the verse is quite good. If you like verse drama, I recommend this memorable work.

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## **Kelly says**

The main story was ok but the sub plot was a bit pointless plus there was so much sexual innuendo it started to really do my head in. A bit disappointing.

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