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speare made the king's hunchback frightening, not funny, an outward sign of inner evil.

It was not until the 19th century that the handicapped regularly appeared in literature as major characters. At one extreme were the "twisted avatars of villainy": Quilp, the horrible dwarf who stalks Little Nell through Dickens's *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Captain Ahab in Melville's *Moby Dick*, Long John Silver in Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. At the other extreme were such idealized objects of pity as Tiny Tim in Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*.

Such characters evoke in audiences both fear and its companion, pity—and force them to confront their complex feelings about "subhuman" beings. The evil cripples of the 19th century have their counterparts in today's horror movies, notably in Goldfinger and other sinister folk in the James Bond movies who use their artificial limbs as instruments of mutilation and murder. But the modern-day Tiny Tims, Fiedler says, are the "super-beautiful super-jocks and jockesses" seen in such television dramas as *The Other Side of the Mountain* and *Ice Castles*. Such superhuman characters "turn upside down" the "sense of immitigable difference which lies at the root of our troubled response to the disabled," evading the issue altogether.

In an ideal world, the arts would represent the disabled not as "some absolute, unendurable other," but simply as one pole in the spectrum of human variety. Meanwhile, Fiedler concludes, "we will have to exorcise our ambivalences toward the afflicted . . . by turning not to *ersatz* paeans to the heroism of the crippled, but to [the] disturbing mythic literature" of the past, which forces us to recognize our range of negative emotions.

The Fop's Role in Society

"A Few Kind Words for the Fop" by Susan Staves, in *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* (Summer 1982), Rice University, P.O. Box 1892, Houston, Tex. 77251.

To today's theater-goers, the fops (or dandies) who appear in 17th- and 18th-century English comedies seem absurd. Yet Staves, a Brandeis literary historian, argues that fops were "early champions of new values," whose roles reflected changing attitudes about masculinity.

The typical fop—Sir Fopling Flutter in George Etherege's *Man of Mode* (1676), Sir Novelty Fashion in Colley Cibber's *Love's Last Shift* (1696)—was obsessed by fashion in clothes and manners. He refused to "kill, brawl, curse, consort with lewd women, or get stinking drunk," says Staves. Stage fops were effeminate and likely to faint at the prospect of violence, but they were not homosexuals.

The dandy was not just a theatrical character. Real-life fops paraded daily on the streets of London. Actors and playwrights took pains to keep their characters in tune with the latest fashions. Critics chided the stage dandies for failing to capture such details of the fop's life as the

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Colley Cibber (1671–1757), a London playwright who played fop roles on stage, was also a fop in real life.



correct way to take snuff.

At first, fops were objects of disdain. An essayist in *The Gentleman's Magazine* asked whether "any thing that is Noble or Brave can be expected from such Creatures, who, if they are not women, are at least hermaphrodites?" But as table manners, civility, and sanitation took on more importance towards the end of the 17th century, fops appeared in a different light. Once mere foils for rakish heroes, they became well-rounded characters sympathetically portrayed. For example, the dandy Clodio married an attractive heroine in Cibber's *The Fop's Fortune* (1700) without the customary repudiation of his foppish ways. While audiences might still laugh at the fop, they did not despise him.

Fops disappeared from the casts of new plays during the 18th century, yet the qualities they embodied reappeared in far more admirable characters in the sentimental stage dramas of the latter half of the century. Indeed, says Staves, "the so-called effeminacy of these old fops was an early if imperfect attempt at the refinement, civility, and sensitivity most of us would now say are desirable masculine [qualities]."

Of Art Films and Plastic Sharks

"Fassbinder and the Bloomingdale's Factor" by Richard Grenier, in *Commentary* (Oct. 1982), American Jewish Committee, 165 East 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

Americans who regularly see foreign movies seem to believe that Europeans produce more intelligent, sensitive, and somehow "better" films than Hollywood does. Grenier, *Commentary's* movie critic, notes that