

GREAT BELLIES AND BOY ACTORS:  
PREGNANCY PLAYS ON THE STUART STAGE, 1603-1642

BY

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DISSERTATION

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**“Great Bellies and Boy Actors: Pregnancy Plays on the Stuart Stage, 1603-1642”**  
**Abstract**

Before 1603, pregnant characters were seldom present on English stages; because of mounting anxiety over Elizabeth’s failure to produce an heir, representations of pregnant bodies were, perhaps wisely, rare. In contrast, after James’s succession, dramatists displayed a growing interest in staging visibly pregnant characters that drive dramatic action, despite prevalent notions of the motherless Stuart stage. For example, Felicity Dunworth has suggested that the staged mother all but disappears upon James’s arrival to the throne. Despite scholarly biases toward maternal erasure on English stages after Elizabeth’s death, I argue the gestating body was indeed a site of dramatic interest, evinced by the wide variety of pregnancy plays written by the period’s most prolific writers including Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and Heywood, to name a few.

In “Great Bellies and Boy Actors,” I analyze all twenty-two extant—what I term—“pregnancy plays,” first performed between 1603 and 1642. The defining characteristic of this dramatic subgenre is a pregnancy or pregnant character that drives the action of a plot in some significant way. Over the span of thirty-nine years, pregnancy became conspicuous in its representation on Stuart stages and this sudden increase in gestation’s visibility is deserving of significant critical consideration, though it has received scant attention from other scholars of early modern theatrical materials, prosthetics, or performed maternity. My work sheds light on this critical blind spot in early modern theatre history and drama that has emerged in the shadow cast by Queen Elizabeth and King James I.

Each chapter takes as its central focus a text or group of texts that represent a particular dramaturgical strain within the subgenre such as patricentric, prosthetic, or peripheral pregnancy plays. Chapter one, A Pregnant Performance: Wielding the Royal Reproductive Body in *The Masque of Blackness*, takes Queen Anna of Denmark’s painted pregnant performance in Ben Jonson’s *The Masque of Blackness* (1605) as its primary object of study. I examine how Anna made her pregnant body highly visible in *Blackness* to create space for her political influence in the newly minted English Stuart court.

Chapter two, *Patricentric Pregnancy Plays: The Problem of Opaque Bodies in Histories, Romances, and Tragedies*, illuminates a major dramaturgical trend in Stuart pregnancy plays—those wrestling with patriarchal anxiety produced by the unknown child concealed within the mother’s opaque belly. In these patricentric pregnancy plays, the gestating characters’ high-stakes pregnancies have the ability to secure or destroy their respective lineage. As such, I suggest these pregnancy plays tacitly hearken back to the anxiety-inducing matriarchal authority wielded by Queen Anna at the beginning of the Stuart reign.

Chapter three, *Prosthetic Pregnancy Plays: Materializing the Belly and Demystifying Gestation in Comedies*, centers on how comedies foreground the prosthetic and material construction of the “great belly” while simultaneously undermining the maternal authority asserted throughout chapter two’s patricentric pregnancy plays. In the comedies analyzed throughout chapter three, the pregnant characters lose the dangerous qualities they possess in Webster, Ford, and Shakespeare’s plays. Instead, Middleton, Jonson, and May stage the incontinent pregnant body that fails to contain its fluids, secrets, or authority through metatheatrical disruptions of recently established pregnancy performance conventions.

Chapter four, *Peripheral Pregnancy Plays: Marginal Gestation in Tragicomedies and Problem Plays*, explores how problem plays and tragicomedies relegate pregnant bodies and characters to the plays’ peripheries, while the pregnancy itself remains integral to the playwrights’ dramaturgy. I begin with Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* (1604) and *All’s Well that Ends Well* (c. 1606), in order to examine the ways in which pregnancy can be simultaneously crucial to the plays’ plot structure, yet peripheral to the overall action of the drama. Following these analyses, I reveal how Shakespeare’s early peripheral pregnancies influenced later plays by Webster, Heywood, William Rowley, and Thomas Middleton.

Finally, *Pageantry and Pregnancy: The Enduring Influence of Blackness*, examines two late pregnancy plays—Middleton’s *The Nice Valour* (1622) and Thomas Heywood’s *Love’s Mistress, or the Queen’s Masque* (1634). These two plays hearken back to Queen Anna of Denmark’s pregnant performance in *The Masque of Blackness*. Specifically, *Love’s Mistress* points to the lasting influence that Queen Anna’s painted pregnant performance had on the

cultural and artistic imagination of early modern London. However, where Queen Anna was able to use *The Masque of Blackness* to assert her matriarchal authority, Cupid's patriarchal dominance tames the disobedient Psyche in Heywood's masque.

Throughout this study, I establish pregnancy plays as a discrete subgenre of early modern drama through a dramaturgical analysis of pregnancies and gestating characters in twenty-two extant plays. In so doing, I spend a significant amount of time considering the material reality of staging pregnancy on boy actors' bodies, as well as the role the "great belly" plays in the Stuart theatre's *mise en scène*. These plays, which have never been considered as a distinct subgenre, gesture to a blind spot in scholarship that has emerged in the dual shadow cast by Queen Elizabeth and King James's respective influence on London's theatrical culture. By putting these plays in conversation, this study begins to fill a major gap in scholarship that ignores the rich and abundant presence of prenatal motherhood on Stuart stages, and further interrogates how Queen Anna of Denmark heavily influenced dramatic literature and performance practices. My close examination of pregnancy plays as a viable subgenre on the Stuart stage, as well as their (at times) explicit connection to the first childbearing Queen in two generations, troubles this binary categorization from maternal to paternal—from strictly matriarchal to wholly patriarchal. In other words, "Great Bellies and Boy Actors" challenges ideas of "Elizabethan" and "Jacobean" as categories of early modern dramatic literature. In so doing, I establish the pregnancy play as a subgenre of early modern English dramatic literature worthy of further investigation by theatre historians as well as early modern literature and maternity studies scholars.

*For my parents,  
Peri and Bill Taylor,  
for their unwavering support, love, and good humor.*

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## **PROLOGUE**

### *The Golden Age:*

#### Conceiving the Great Belly in Stuart Pregnancy Plays

Drawn from classical legend, Thomas Heywood's *The Golden Age* premiered at the Red Bull Theatre around 1610, first acted by the Queen's Men.<sup>1</sup> The play depicts a society of chaste nymphs who—dedicated to the goddess Diana—have forsworn the company of men. Among these nymphs is Calisto, pursued by Jupiter; despite her oath, Jupiter successfully seduces her and the nymph becomes pregnant. Heywood's narrator, Homer, informs the audience of this pregnancy when he observes that "Eight moons are fill'd and waned, when [Calisto] grows great,/ And young Jove's issue in her womb doth spring."<sup>2</sup> If the audience is aware of her pregnancy within the play's fiction, Calisto successfully hides this fact from her cohort until such time that she can no longer conceal it. At a crucial moment, the proof of her oath breaking becomes flagrantly visible and Calisto is banished from Diana's company.

Desirous of a "solemn bathing," Diana insists her nymphs join; a dumb show proceeds wherein the audience witnesses Diana and the nymphs undress. The stage direction reads:

*They unlace themselves, and unloose their buskins; only CALISTO refuseth to make her ready. DIANA sends ATLANTA to her, who, perforce unlacing her, finds her great belly, and shows it to DIANA, who turns her out of her society, and leaves her.*<sup>3</sup>

While no vocal reaction to Calisto's belly exists in the text, the stage direction suggests Diana, her nymphs, and the audience look on as Atlanta strips Calisto. Given the convention of the all-male stage during this time, Heywood's direction invites us to ask a question memorably posed by Peter Stallybrass with respect to boy actors and prosthetic breasts: "what did a Renaissance

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<sup>1</sup> The frontispiece the play's first publication notes that *Golden Age* had been "sundry times acted at the Red Bull, by the Queen's Maiesties Servants." The frontispiece goes on to note for William Barrenger printed and sold this edition beginning in 1611. I therefore date the play's first performance around 1610.

<sup>2</sup> Heywood, *The Golden Age*, E3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

audience *see* when boy actors undressed on stage?”<sup>4</sup> In Heywood’s mythical drama, a boy actor playing a pregnant nymph is undressed on stage only to have his belly exposed to the goddess Diana and, perhaps, the audience—a notion complicated by the boy actor seeking to maintain the fiction of advanced pregnancy.<sup>5</sup> Querying the intersection of the boy actor/female character’s body, Stallybrass calls our attention to the horizon of possibilities available to early modern theatregoers watching a boy actor disrobe on stage. While Stallybrass’s focus is the presence or absence of prosthetic breasts on boy actors’ bodies, in the case of this under-discussed but provocative moment from *The Golden Age*, Stallybrass might likewise suggest the audience is “asked not to *imagine* the boy actor as he is dressed *up*, but literally to *gaze* at him whilst he *undresses*.”<sup>6</sup> However, Stallybrass, nor any other scholar of early modern original performance practices, has taken up the question of how boy actors performed pregnancy or how the convention of boy actors enabled non-female performances of pregnancy on Stuart stages.

As unlikely as it seems, given recent attention to early modern stage materials and props, there is no extant study on pregnancy as a prosthetic reality or popular performance practice on seventeenth-century English stages.<sup>7</sup> I argue this existing gap in examinations of performed and prosthetic pregnancy result from the shadow cast by the twin suns of Elizabeth and James—the Virgin Queen and the Would-be Absolute Patriarch. Scholarly narratives continually contribute to the long-held belief that, once James took the English crown, playwrights ceased writing maternal and matriarchal figures, despite evidence to the contrary. Suzanne Penuel explores the

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<sup>4</sup> Stallybrass, “Transvestism and the ‘body beneath’: Speculating on the boy actor,” 64.

<sup>5</sup> Stallybrass, “*Transvestitism*,” 70. Considering the Red Bull was likely square in shape, like that of the Fortune, it would have been difficult to disguise the lack of a belly, given the prominence of the action along with the perpetual thrust configuration of the stage. See: Orrell, 151.

<sup>6</sup> Stallybrass, *Transvestitism*, 70.

<sup>7</sup> Outside of Alan Dessen and Leslie Thompson’s entry for “cushion” in *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama*, I have found no suggestion of pregnancy as a prosthetic performance convention (see: Dessen and Thompson, 63; 252-3).

turn toward “repaternalization”: the “conservative reestablishment of the father as the linchpin of society, burying the mother” in Stuart drama.<sup>8</sup> Mary Beth Rose famously asked, “Where are the Mothers in Shakespeare,” while feminist scholar, Coppélia Kahn names the absence of any mothers in *King Lear*, an “omission [that] articulates a patriarchal conception of the family in which children owe their existence to their fathers alone,” (35-6). While these instances of maternal erasure certainly exist throughout the early modern canon of dramatic literature, the presence of prenatal motherhood on Stuart stages is equally present. “Great Bellies and Boy Actors” sheds light on this blind spot in theatre history and dramatic literature to reveal a rich, nuanced subgenre of early modern drama.

### **A Dramaturgical Approach**

Between 1603 and 1642 I count twenty-two extant—what I term—“pregnancy plays.”<sup>9</sup> The present study establishes the pregnancy play as a viable subgenre within the canon of early modern dramatic literature. The defining characteristic of this dramatic subgenre is a pregnancy (whether visible or unknown to the audience) or pregnant character that drives the action of a plot in some significant way. Over the span of thirty-nine years, pregnancy became conspicuous in its representation on Stuart stages and the sudden increase in the visibility of gravid bodies is deserving of significant critical attention, though it has received little. I establish this subgenre through a dramaturgical analysis of pregnant characters within these plays, as well as the role of the “great belly” in the drama’s *mise en scène*. To elucidate on what I intend by this approach, I borrow Geoffrey Proehl’s apt definition:

Dramaturgy is the name given to that set of elements necessary to the working of the play at any moment in its passage from imagination to embodiment: its repetitions and patterns...; its unfolding narratives...; its unique world...; its characters...; its

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<sup>8</sup> Penuel, “Male Mothering and *The Tempest*,” 115.

<sup>9</sup> For a complete list of the pregnancy plays, see Appendix A: Extant Pregnancy Plays Discussed in the Study Organized in Approximate Chronological Order

spectacle...; its metatheater.”<sup>10</sup>

In this way, this study is not merely a literary analysis of pregnancy in early modern drama, but a recovery of the material strategies used to stage gestating bodies to reveal that pregnancy was a potent, popular, and pervasive visual phenomenon on early Stuart stages. I use the term “dramaturgical analysis” over “literary analysis” because the study of dramaturgy concerns itself not merely with the words on the page, but with their performance potentialities. In other words, even as I attend closely to the plays’ language, my primary focus is the potential embodied realities of their historic performances. While we cannot completely recover these plays as originally performed in their original socio-historical and cultural contexts—those possibilities are lost to us now—this methodological approach “reminds [us] to attend to the ways [this history] was embodied when the events unfolded,” to borrow an apt phrase from theatre historian, Charlotte Canning.<sup>11</sup>

My central concern in each of these plays is the function of the gestating character and the performed pregnant body within the play’s *mise en scène*, insofar as I can responsibly reconstruct it from extant texts. In so doing, I use Michael Shapiro’s influential monograph *Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage: Boy Heroines and Female Pages* as a model for my dramaturgical analysis. This approach necessarily requires some level of what Shapiro calls “imaginative reconstruction” based on “plausible models.”<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Jeremy Lopez imagines

early modern characters as actors and actors as necessary agents of theatrical meaning—much as we might think of words or scenes or props—so that we can begin to think more specifically about the effects of acting on an early modern audience.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Proehl, 19.

<sup>11</sup> Canning, 7.

<sup>12</sup> Shapiro, 11.

<sup>13</sup> Lopez, “Imagining the Actor’s Body on the Early Modern Stage,” 188. While many scholars have resisted any kind of speculation about early modern casting that is not backed up by empirical or archival evidence (of which there is little), Lopez suggests it is “important not to be overly cautious about identifying particular bodies to the extent that we simply go on forgetting that *some* bodies did in fact inhabit these roles” (188, original emphasis).

Like Lopez's study of early modern casting and doubling practices, I too "insist upon the value of speculation," in this dramaturgical analysis of extant pregnancy plays in performance.<sup>14</sup>

Andrew Sofer similarly engages in imaginative reconstructions of the multivalent meanings of theatrical objects in his influential 2003 monograph, *The Stage Life of Props*, wherein he successfully demonstrates that:

despite its limitations, the contextual reanimation of material stage objects is a legitimate exercise for scholars...and surely no less conjectural than an analysis, say, of Hamlet's unconscious life or Lady Macbeth's past."<sup>15</sup>

Like these scholars, I engage in "imaginative reconstructions," responsible "speculation," and "contextual reanimation" of stage materials through a careful excavation of pregnancy plays in their earliest published versions as my primary source materials. I highlight this fact to emphasize that, from the earliest publication of these plays, the "great belly" is a potent presence on the page *and* stage.

Likewise, I build my analysis of pregnancy plays—of boy actors and great bellies—upon the foundational knowledge collected by scholars of early modern original performance practices, as I reconstruct the possible methods and motivations whereby the "great belly" prosthetically materialized on the Stuart stage with such frequency. Throughout this study, I borrow Will Fisher's apt definition of "prosthetic" or "prosthesis": that which is simultaneously "integral to the subject's identity or self, and at the same time resolutely detachable or 'auxiliary,'" such as a character's wig (as in Jonson's *Epicoene*) or hat (as in Shakespeare's

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<sup>14</sup> Lopez, "Imagining the Actor's Body," 187. Lopez goes on to argue that, "given the state of the documentary evidence in the field, there is a point at which imagination must take over where evidence leaves off" (188-9).

<sup>15</sup> Sofer, 6.

female page plays).<sup>16</sup> In this way, I reconstruct the belly as a detachable, though integral, stage prosthetic.

At its foundation, “Great Bellies and Boy Actors,” is a project that recovers an early modern theatrical convention that has been under-analyzed, little discussed, and largely taken as self-evident by literary scholars and theatre historians: the prosthetic pregnancy belly.

Throughout this study, I use the comedies (discussed at length in chapter three) to provide prosthetic insight that I map onto the plays of other genres. As I reveal in more detail below, a cushion was likely the most common prosthetic used to create the illusion of the great belly under a boy actor’s gown. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “cushion” as both a “case of cloth...used to give support or ease to the body in sitting, reclining, or kneeling” as well as a “swelling simulating pregnancy: sometimes called *Queen Mary's cushion*, after Mary Tudor.”<sup>17</sup> Davies and Halliwell-Phillips’s *A Supplemental English Glossary* likewise notes, “Queen Mary was often mistakenly believed by herself and others to be pregnant; hence Queen Mary’s cushion=protuberance that produces nothing.”<sup>18</sup> I explore the implications of the cushion’s revelation in a number of plays to show that, for the belly to be exposed—for the cushion to be metatheatrically revealed—pregnancy would have to be a highly visible and ubiquitous prosthetic akin to other such provisions of player-made femininity including wigs, gowns, and cosmetics. This fact is significant because it tells us playwrights did not “erase” motherhood on Stuart stages, as many scholars contend, but highly conspicuous within the *mise en scène* of the early modern playhouse.

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<sup>16</sup> Fisher, 26.

<sup>17</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, original emphasis. The first quotation for this entry comes from Shakespeare’s *2 Henry IV*, which I discuss in greater detail during my analysis of *The Heir* in the third chapter of this study.

<sup>18</sup> Davies and Halliwell-Phillips, 167.

Before 1603, pregnant characters seldom trod the boards of English playhouses; because of mounting anxiety over Elizabeth's failure to produce an heir, representations of pregnant bodies were, perhaps wisely, rare. Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (c. 1591) illustrates this gestational erasure.<sup>19</sup> In act four, Tamora gives birth to Aaron's unnamed illegitimate son. However, Shakespeare indicates in neither stage directions nor the spoken text that Tamora is pregnant; it is only when the nurse announces Tamora's off-stage delivery in act four that the audience discovers the queen's pregnancy. If Elizabethan playwrights go so far as to mention a pregnancy in the playtext, they do not always clearly represent the gestational body in the playhouse. If a pregnant body does appear, as in Chapman's *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria* or Peele's *Edward I*, the pregnant character is not a major stakeholder in the play's action, or the pregnancy itself is incidental to the dramaturgical structure.<sup>20</sup> In contrast, after James's succession, dramatists displayed a growing interest in staging visibly pregnant characters that drive dramatic action, despite widely accepted narratives of the motherless Jacobean stage.

Despite rich literary analyses of pregnant characters in relation to social and cultural histories, there exists no extended exploration of the material realities of performing pregnancy in an all-male theatre, let alone an attempt to put these pregnancy plays into conversation with one another. Filling the gap left by studies of early modern theatre history, literary criticism, the performativity of pregnancy, and maternal history, this study recovers the figure of the pregnant mother on the Stuart stage, as well as the material strategies used to stage "great bellies" on boy actors' bodies. Through a reevaluation of the so-called "repaternalized" stage via a dramaturgical

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<sup>19</sup> For information on the play's date see: Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, 297.

<sup>20</sup> In George Chapman's *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria*, minor characters Samathis and Martia enter "with childe" within seventy lines of one another (F2-F3). A notable exception is, perhaps George Peele's *Edward I*, wherein Queen Elinor enters "in her litter borne by foure Negro Mores" (D3). Upon her arrival Elinor complains that her king, "[k]nowing his Queene to be so great with childe," beckons her to come with haste to Wales without an explanation (D5). Of course, in *2 Henry IV*, Doll Tearsheet fakes pregnancy in order to avoid arrest. I discuss this scene in chapter three.

analysis of pregnancy plays, this study recovers the ever-present maternal body in Jacobean and Caroline theatres, thereby shedding light on the blind spot that has emerged in the shadow of James I's succession of Elizabeth.

### **Maternity and Performance**

My intervention examines how playwrights incorporated the pregnant body into the early modern theatre's *mise en scène*, a convention consistently overlooked by scholars whose projects center on the presence of pregnant characters in early modern dramatic literature due to the assumed self-evident nature of staged pregnancy, as well as the prevalent bias toward the non-maternal Stuart stage. In Kathryn Moncrief and Kathryn McPherson's influential collection, *Performing Maternity in Early Modern England* (2007), the editors argue that maternity "—both public and private, physically embodied and enacted —must be considered performative."<sup>21</sup> Appealing to Butlerian conceptions of "performative gender" and gender construction, Moncrief and McPherson analyze performative maternity as a "*corporeal style*, an 'act'" that is "repeated and public."<sup>22</sup> While Moncrief and McPherson's collection has become a touchstone text for scholars interested in performances of maternity in early modern English drama, the essays in their volume lack any rigorous analysis of pregnancy as a performance convention, material sign, or prop, despite the editors' efforts to reveal how pregnancy remains an "obviously visible condition."<sup>23</sup>

This is likewise true for a number of other scholars who analyze performances of motherhood, maternity, and gestational bodies. For example, Sara D. Luttfring's 2016, *Bodies, Speech, and Reproductive Knowledge in Early Modern England*, analyzes the ways women challenged Jacobean and Caroline patriarchal authority through what Luttfring calls "bodily

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<sup>21</sup> Moncrief and McPherson, *Performing Maternity in Early Modern England*, 1.

<sup>22</sup> Butler, 140; qtd. Moncrief and McPherson, 3.

<sup>23</sup> Moncrief and McPherson, 1.

narratives”: the ways in which women make “reproduction legible through the stories they tell about their bodies and the ways they act these stories out, combining speech and physical performance.”<sup>24</sup> Luttfiring examines texts in which “women’s reproductive bodies evade men’s control and understanding,” focusing much of her analysis on women’s unruly speech and untrustworthy narration of their own embodied experiences.<sup>25</sup> Throughout her monograph, Luttfiring explores the dialogue between play texts, women’s bodily narratives, popular representations of reproductive bodies, and the way all of these challenge and transform “the discourses of law, medicine, political history, and misogynist satire.”<sup>26</sup> I am particularly interested in Luttfiring’s nuanced examination of the maternal body in *The Winter’s Tale*, *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore*, and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, and build on her discussion of performances of pregnancy through a more sustained consideration of the historical performance practices of these dramas as they pertain to staging the pregnant body.

In one of the few—albeit brief—direct comparisons of playwrights’ treatment of pregnancy, Gary Taylor and John Jowett discuss Middleton’s *More Dissemblers Besides Women* and Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure*, both of which receive an extensive discussion in chapters three and four, respectively. Taylor and Jowett argue that, for Shakespeare, pregnancy poetically “juxtaposes the woman’s vulnerability with the positively valued mystery of procreation.”<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, for Middleton, “pregnancy is an inevitable constituent of his satiric social realism, and is something to be presented on stage as a self-evident serio-comic comment on sexual indulgence.”<sup>28</sup> The authors continue, arguing that this “interest, where pregnancy is the determine consequence of sin, is practically non-existent in Shakespeare, but expresses itself

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<sup>24</sup> Luttfiring, 4.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>27</sup> Taylor and Jowett, *Shakespeare Reshaped*, 210.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

repeatedly in Middleton's works."<sup>29</sup> I will grant, this is partly true: in Shakespeare's work, we see mostly legitimate pregnancies; meanwhile, Middleton's pregnant characters are all illegitimately gravid. Nevertheless, to say that Shakespeare's characters never suffer the consequences of their sinful fecundity—whether real or imagined by the oppressive powers-that-be—is a gross over-simplification of Hermione's imprisonment in *The Winter's Tale*, or Juliet's anguish in *Measure for Measure*. Furthermore, Middleton's many staged pregnancies are anything but self-evident. Throughout most of his pregnancy plays, the gestating characters narrate the experience of their pregnancy and fecund bodies directly to the audience, as I reveal in further detail below. However, only through an extensive consideration of these pregnancy plays in conversation with one another do these tendencies become evident.

Despite this rich scholarly trove, previous studies of early modern theatrical materials and performances of maternal bodies neglect to offer any sustained consideration of pregnancy as a highly visible prosthetic practice in its own right, let alone on the bodies of young boy actors.<sup>30</sup> They do not consider how the sight of a pregnant belly on stage—that which signals both fecundity and abundant sexuality—effect the way we might read Hermione's "paddling palms" in *The Winter's Tale*, or the moment wherein the Duchess of Malfi ravenously devours Bosola's apricots as an embodied performance. Thomas Heywood's *The Golden Age*, discussed above, suggests that pregnancy was—in at least some instances—highly visible on the early modern English stage and crucial to the play's dramaturgical construction. Too often, scholars consider

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> For an extended discussion of the age of these boy actors see: David Kathman's "How Old Were Shakespeare's Boy Actors?", 220-46.

these moments only as literature, outside of their performance contexts or, worse yet, neglect the rich presence of pre-natal motherhood on Stuart stages all together.<sup>31</sup>

Although my project takes up popular professional drama, the work as a whole inevitably engages with the shadow cast by Elizabeth's virginity, James's patricentric stage, and the subsequent blind spot—perpetuated by literary critics and historians—who insist on maternity's conspicuous absence in Stuart drama. For example, Felicity Dunworth's *Mothers and Meaning on the Early Modern English Stage* (2010) examines a wide array of early modern dramatic literature from post-Reformation England through the end of Elizabeth's reign.<sup>32</sup> Dunworth terminates her study at James's ascension to the throne because, as she argues, the mother figure “found little function in this increasingly politicised drama influenced by a monarch who had rejected the mother/state analogy for a more congenial model of benign paternalism.”<sup>33</sup> She goes on to suggest that, with James's arrival in England, “the mother figure appears to become less

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<sup>31</sup> Pregnancy often becomes a useful metaphor in studies of early modern drama, literature, and history without an exploration of what performed pregnancy may have looked like to seventeenth-century London audiences. For example, Jacqueline Vanhoutte and Rachel Trubowitz's respective studies, they both examine appropriations of the motherhood trope as political tool and national emblem in sixteenth-century England. Vanhoutte's 2003 monograph, *Strange Communion*, explores Tudor appropriations of the “motherland” through its widespread use in sixteenth century literature and drama. Pointing out that “a number of Tudor writers—polemicists and dramatists—relied on maternal representations of the nation to evoke a sense of common purpose,” Vanhoutte engages early Tudor pamphlets and plays to investigate widespread “dissemination of nationalist sentiment” through the employment of maternal tropes, though her study lacks an extended consideration of pregnancy or maternity as performance (21). Similarly, Rachel Trubowitz's rich *Nation and Nurture in Seventeenth-Century English Literature* recovers the commonalities between Jacobean nation and nursing rhetoric. She demonstrates “the conceptual reformation of the nation and the revaluation of maternal nursing take place simultaneously” by showing that, at this time, maternal nurture “newly occupies a central if highly contested place in the early modern cultural imagination [...] when England undergoes a major conceptual paradigm shift” from the Tudors to the Stuarts” (4-5).

<sup>32</sup> Dunworth's work analyzes how mothers and motherhood, as categories of identity, were constantly in flux in dramatic literature. England shifted from a Catholic nation to a Protestant one, from a patriarchy, to a matriarchy, and back again; these political changes elicited drastic shifts in English conceptions of “mother” as a cultural and social metaphor in political discourse. Dunworth's extended examination of the multi-faceted meanings of “mother” aims to “rediscover the maternal figure as a successful and dynamic dramatic construct” and uncover the meaning of “mother” when the boy actor “playing the woman stepped on stage” (10). Although it seems, in her introduction, that Dunworth has ambitions to explore the theatrical and staging history of the many plays she analyzes, her study is primarily a dramatic analysis informed by social and cultural history.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

popular as a subject of dramatic interest.”<sup>34</sup> However, as I reveal throughout the present study, these assertions are patently false. The gestating body was indeed a site of deep dramatic interest, evinced by the wide variety of pregnancy plays written by the period’s most prolific writers including Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and Heywood, among several others. Dunworth’s suggestion that James’s presence on the throne diminished dramatic interest in pregnant and maternal characters reveals a larger bias toward the non-maternal, “repaternalized” Stuart stage.<sup>35</sup>

While Dunworth includes gestating characters in her study of maternity and Elizabethan drama, she neglects their rich presence after 1603. Similarly in Mary Beth Rose’s essay, “Where are the Mothers in Shakespeare?” precludes pregnant women from being identified as mothers, noting that among the playwright’s “romances, tragedies, and ‘problem plays,’ mothers are conspicuously absent.”<sup>36</sup> Rose includes *Measure for Measure* in her account of “motherless” dramas. However, early in Shakespeare’s play, authorities arrest Claudio when Juliet’s fecund body exposes their pre-marital sexual relationship. Angelo learns Claudio “got possession of Julieta’s bed” when the “stealth of [their] most mutual entertainment/ With character too gross is writ on Juliet.”<sup>37</sup> In other words: Juliet’s pregnant belly gives the couple away. Rather than the conspicuous absence of motherhood Rose suggests, the visible presence of Juliet’s maternal body is, in fact, crucial to the play’s action, as I illuminate in further detail below. For the purposes of this study, I make no denotative distinction between mothers and pregnant women, other than noting when a woman is a gestating or pre-natal mother, versus an antenatal or post-

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 222-3.

<sup>35</sup> See: Penuel, “Male Mothering,” 115.

<sup>36</sup> Rose, “Where are the Mothers in Shakespeare?” 292.

<sup>37</sup> Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, TLN 238-47; 1.3. Unless otherwise stated, I will be citing from first editions of Shakespeare’s plays in quarto or folio form. Where the First Folio is cited, I use through-line numbers (TLN) followed by act and scene numbers, where available.

partum mother. In so doing, I answer Mary Beth Rose's question, "Where are the mothers in Shakespeare?" quite succinctly: they are everywhere. Contrary to both Rose and Dunworth, I reveal that there are many compelling maternal figures dramatized during James I's reign, and into that of Charles I.

These depictions of fertile, childbearing bodies are worthy of study if we are ever to fully grasp the implications of pregnant representation on the early seventeenth-century stage. By revealing that the "great belly" was indeed a highly visible marker of embodied gender difference on London stages, I put extant pregnancy plays into conversation with one another via dramaturgical analysis of pregnant bodies on the stage and page, and establish "pregnancy plays" as a subgenre of early modern English dramatic literature and theatre history. In this way, "pregnancy play" becomes a useful way to discuss representations of the reproductive body as a particularized trend on early modern stages. Just as Farah Karim-Cooper establishes "cosmetic drama," and Michael Shapiro spends a great deal of time analyzing the commonalities among "female page/boy heroine plays"—just as city comedies and revenge tragedies are widely accepted categorizations of early modern drama—I reveal that pregnancy plays are a discrete subgenre worthy of extended analysis.<sup>38</sup>

### **Early Modern Theatrical Materials**

Contributing to the ongoing study of theatrical objects and materials in the early modern playhouse, I draw from canonical studies by Peter Stallybrass, Natalie Korda, and David Kastan while engaging recent scholarship on cosmetics and body paint by Andrea Stevens and Farah Karim-Cooper. Each of these works has successfully recovered the early modern stage as material-rich, yet none discuss pregnancy as a gendered prosthetic device. For example, in Kastan and Stallybrass's *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and*

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<sup>38</sup> See: Karim Cooper, *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama*; Shapiro, *Gender in Play*.

*Jacobean Drama* (1991), they examine gender as a prosthetic reality even though the collection's contributors spend precious little time exploring what prosthetics might be present underneath these clothes-as-properties.<sup>39</sup> In *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (2000) Stallybrass and Rosalind Jones assert the early modern stage was, "the site for the prosthetic production of the sexualized body," wherein boy actors continually made and unmade their own feminine subjectivity using gendered prosthetics such as gowns, wigs, and possibly breasts.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, their study lacks any discussion of prosthetic bellies or pregnant characters. Similarly, Jonathan Gil Harris and Natalie Korda's *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama* (2002) challenges the Romanticist myth of the bare stage, and dismantles notions of language's preeminence over theatrical spectacle that have emerged in the wake of the Renaissance stage's virulent anti-materialization.<sup>41</sup> The essays in Harris and Korda's collection range from studies of handkerchiefs, wigs, beards, and gowns as provisions of gender construction, but lack any discussion of pregnant bellies as a "stage property" or marker of gender difference. Likewise, Will Fisher's extensive 2006 study of the ways in which prosthetic devices constructed gender on early modern stages, offers no consideration of pregnancy alongside his detailed discussions of similar gendered prosthetics.<sup>42</sup> Andrew Sofer's 2003 *The*

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<sup>39</sup> The editors argue gender was, "manifestly a *production*, in which sexual difference was constructed and transformed. But this production was made visible upon the stage, where the maker of sexual difference was a question of clothes...Clothes, the most regulated symbols of gender in the Renaissance, became malleable props upon the stage" (8-9, original emphasis). In this way, clothes become objects worthy of study as the editors work to construct identity both on and off stage. Similarly, in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture* (1996), Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan and Stallybrass argue that from "the moment of its mid-nineteenth-century inception as subject-oriented, the Renaissance as Early Modern has given short and limited shrift to the object" (5). In other words, these scholars ask, "in the period that has from its inception been identified with the emergence of the subject, where is the object?" (2). The objects under consideration in this collection include stage properties and theatrical costume, but lack any sustained consideration of prosthetic devices.

<sup>40</sup> Jones and Stallybrass, 216.

<sup>41</sup> Revaluing the material, scholars such as Korda and Harris ask readers to consider the theatrical materiality of the early modern theatre by dismantling the so-called "bare stage's" hegemony (1-31).<sup>41</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Including, handkerchiefs, wigs, codpieces, and beards. Fisher, *Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture*.

*Stage Life of Props* has—perhaps more than any other investigation of early modern stage objects—framed the way in which contemporary scholars read and recover the materials of the early modern theatre. In an effort to “rematerialize” the lost meanings of these stage properties, Sofer explores “the power of stage objects to take on a life of their own in performance” through a refutation of text-based methodologies.<sup>43</sup> He does so to “restore to the prop those performance dimensions that literary critics are trained not to see.”<sup>44</sup> Like Sofer’s recovery of theatrical objects, I too refocus our attention on that which seems to have dropped out of sight by literary critics and theatre historians: the great belly.

In addition to investigations of theatrical prosthetic devices and stage properties, a number of scholars convincingly argue that boy actors used cosmetic paint to construct femininity, despite the practice’s relative inconspicuousness within dramatic texts and theatrical records. In Farah Karim-Cooper’s *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama* (2006), she argues that cosmetics had a “double prosthetic function on the stage: they are part of the wide array of objects necessary in the construction of femininity, but they are also stage props—‘propping up’ the action of certain plays.”<sup>45</sup> However, no cosmetics appear on any of Henslowe’s property lists; as result, Andrew Gurr and Mariko Ichikawa suggest this conspicuous absence likewise indicates the dearth of cosmetics on stage.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, Karim-Cooper counters this assertion, arguing the many instances throughout early modern drama “where cosmetics are

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<sup>43</sup> Sofer, 2.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Karim-Cooper, 114. In conversation with Karim-Cooper, Andrea Stevens continues to challenge narratives of Shakespeare’s bare stage by looking at what she calls the “ground zero of early modern theatrical illusion—the body of the actor” (6). Closely reading dramatic texts, court masques, Stevens not only explores the use of cosmetics within performance but also anti-cosmetic treatises that reflect contemporary anxieties about women’s ability to cosmetically alter their appearance. In this way, Stevens engages Karim-Cooper and Tanya Pollard’s respective studies on early modern cosmetics, which likewise recover theatrical cosmetics in conversations about prosthetically constructed gender on early modern stages. See: Pollard, “Beauty’s Poisonous Properties”: *Drugs and Theater in Early Modern England*.

<sup>46</sup> Gurr Andrew and Mariko Ichikawa, *Staging in Shakespeare’s Theatres*, 55.

crucial to the play's action, acknowledge their vital and spectacular presence on the stage rather than specify their absence."<sup>47</sup> Likewise, I argue that the absence of data with respect to pregnancy prosthetics on Henslowe's property lists or other extant primary source materials is misleading, as I excavate pregnancy as a materially constructed theatrical practice from a host of primary source data—namely, the plays themselves. Through an analysis of dialogue, asides, and stage directions present in the plays' earliest editions, I reveal the language and vocabulary of pregnancy, which often points to the presence of a visible, prosthetically constructed belly beneath boy actors' gowns.<sup>48</sup>

These studies on early modern theatrical materials are invaluable to our contemporary understanding of the early modern English stage as rife with props and prosthetics that create the fiction of gender. In conversation with these scholars of early modern materials, I suggest that these prosthetic enhancements allowed actors to perform gender, race, and class, but also the reproductive female body. As a result, the present study recovers the maternal body on the Stuart stage.

### **A Dramaturgical Organization**

I limit my study to the period that I call the "early Stuart reign" or "early seventeenth-century London": 1603-1642. I bracket my analysis by these dates because, as I mentioned above, before 1603 there were very few performances of pregnancy or representations of the gestational body on public stages. Felicity Dunworth, who terminates her study in 1603, has satisfactorily analyzed what pregnant characters do exist.<sup>49</sup> I begin "Great Bellies and Boy Actors" where Dunworth left off and reveal the bias toward reading the Stuart stage as absent of maternal bodies, through an analysis of nearly two-dozen extant pregnancy plays. As some of

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<sup>47</sup> Karim-Cooper, 136.

<sup>48</sup> See: Appendix B in this study.

<sup>49</sup> See: *Mothers and Meaning on the Early Modern English Stage*, 2010.

these dramas—such as Thomas May’s *The Heir* or Heywood’s *Love’s Mistress*—are little known or explored in contemporary criticism, they remain crucial turning points within the subgenre, as I reveal below in chapters three and five, respectively. I analyze all twenty-two extant pregnancy plays to successfully establish the subgenre and shed light on the critical blind spot in studies of early modern drama, literature, and historical performance practices.<sup>50</sup>

I organize this study into five chapters, each of which takes as its central focus a text or group of texts that represent a particular dramaturgical trend or strain within the subgenre such as patricentric, prosthetic, or peripheral pregnancy plays. Like Shapiro’s exhaustive examination of trends within the female page play subgenre, I find that the nearly two-dozen pregnancy plays in this study refuse “to fall neatly into temporal patterns,” let alone categorizations based on company, repertory, or playwright.<sup>51</sup> While I do draw some conclusions with respect to how these pregnancy plays shift their conventions over time to appeal to changes in public taste and expectations, it would be—at best—arbitrary to impose some kind of strict evolutionary theory on to these plays. Instead, this study follows these major dramaturgical strains and trends that

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<sup>50</sup> It should be noted that, while I write about all twenty-two pregnancy plays in some detail, there are plays featuring pregnant characters—or characters who feign pregnancy—that I do not include in this study. For example, in Ben Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), Win Little-Wit fakes pregnancy in order to go to the fair and gorge herself on roast pork. I do not include this play among the pregnancy plays analyzed in this study because Win’s pregnancy—fake or not—has little bearing on the play’s action or dramaturgical structure. Similarly, Dekker, Rowley, and Ford’s *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621) features an illegitimately pregnant woman, Winnifride, who disguises herself as a page. While I do briefly juxtapose this play with Middleton’s *More Dissemblers Besides Women*, I do not consider *Edmonton* a pregnancy play because Winnifride’s pregnancy, likewise, has little bearing on the play’s overall structure or plot. Finally, Middleton’s *The Family of Love* (c. 1608) features a cunning hero, Gerardine, who fools his beloved’s family into believing she has incestuously conceived her uncle’s child, thus making her unmarriageable. He deigns to accept Maria as his own wife despite this “blot” upon her reputation. However, the falsified rumors of Maria’s illegitimate, incestuous pregnancy are only one part of Gerardine’s conspiracy to win her hand in marriage against her uncle’s will. Middleton’s pregnancy rouse in this play is certainly worth noting, but does not strictly qualify as a pregnancy play as Maria’s imagined gestational body—let alone an actual pregnancy—never becomes a central focus for the play. Nevertheless, *The Family of Love* does anticipate Middleton’s experimentation in the pregnancy play subgenre later in the period, beginning with *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*.

<sup>51</sup> Shapiro, *Gender in Play*, 9.

nevertheless reveal the presence of pregnancy as an established theatrical convention on early Stuart stages.

I likewise organize my analysis of pregnancy plays dramaturgically rather than generically (via tragedies, comedies, histories, etc.) to avoid arbitrary categorization and focus on the dramatic function of each pregnancy or pregnant character. However, as these various thematic strains emerged, it became evident that these groupings nevertheless roughly conform to generic categorization. Predictably, in tragedies and histories, the plays' pregnant characters are under constant surveillance by the plays' ruling patriarchs, and are often subject to physical violence. These patricentric pregnancy plays focus on the effects that the gestating-body-in-question has on the plays' men and, by extension, the stability of the patriarchal society at-large. Meanwhile, most of the comedies treat the prosthetically manifested pregnant body as an object of mockery, scorn, or parody, thereby defusing the patriarchal anxieties ever-present throughout pregnancy histories and tragedies. Finally, the peripheral pregnancy plays discussed throughout chapter four are all problem plays and tragicomedies. Just as the dramatic structure of each of these plays is tonally perplexing, sometimes leaving behind an ambiguously "happy" ending, so too is pregnancy treated ambivalently, often relegated to each play's periphery. The fact that dramaturgical treatment of the pregnant body roughly follows traditional generic conventions should perhaps be unsurprising. Just as in non-pregnancy play tragedies, female bodies are typically subject to surveillance and violence. Similarly, in many comedies feminine bodies are disrupted by male disguise or comedic grotesquery. I argue that the fact pregnancy plays tend to follow widely accepted conventions of early modern generic categorization and dramaturgical construction suggests their commonplace and popularity within the early modern playhouse.

What we have here is not a group of plays that are outside the norms of Stuart playwriting, but very much in line with popular drama and performance practices.

Conceptually, I limit my analysis to performances by boy actors in London's commercial playhouses. Largely, I do not engage court performances or other performative activities—where female actors and dancers commonly participated—so as to focus on pregnancy as a prosthetic reality on boy actors' bodies. This is, of course, save for one crucial exception in the first chapter, wherein I analyze Queen Anna of Denmark's painted pregnant performance in Ben Jonson's *The Masque of Blackness* (1605). I define *The Masque of Blackness* as a pregnancy play because the masque had a conspicuously pregnant body at its center, and afforded Queen Anna an opportunity to showcase her gestational body to an international audience.<sup>52</sup> At the time, Anna was pregnant with—not merely the first Stuart child to be born on English soil—but the first royal child born in England since Edward VI in 1537.<sup>53</sup> In *Blackness*, Queen Anna painted her skin a surprisingly dark shade, and made her pregnant body hyper-visible in this performance, perhaps implicitly threatening poison, miscarriage, or even miscegenation to the first English-born Stuart child.

Taking *The Masque of Blackness*, as its primary object of study, chapter one, “A Pregnant Performance: Wielding the Royal Reproductive Body in *The Masque of Blackness*,” analyzes the political and dramaturgical function the Queen's pregnant body likely played in *Blackness*. Drawing from Martin Butler's claim that the court masque is a “vehicle through which we can read the early Stuart court's political aspirations and the changing functions of royal culture,” I examine how Anna made her pregnant body highly visible in *Blackness* to make

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<sup>52</sup> Following Leeds Barroll, aside from direct quotations and titles, I refer to the queen consort as Anna instead of Anne. Barroll notes that, in the few cases Anna's name appears in writing—such as her signature in a letter to James as well as her oath of office—she refers to herself as “Anna” (*Anna of Denmark*, 173 n1).

<sup>53</sup> Incidentally, Edward's birth is dramatized in Samuel Rowley's *When You See Me, You Know Me*, a play I discuss in chapter two.

space for her political influence in the newly minted English Stuart court.<sup>54</sup> Here, I define “political,” or “political action,” to be any behavior—subversive or overt—that participates in, resists, or comments upon the present ruling government. Anna’s transgressive performance of painted blackness on top of this high-profile pregnancy elicited patriarchal anxiety over her maternal agency and her reach toward matriarchal authority in ways that I reveal below.

Throughout this study, I use the term “patriarchal anxiety” to indicate the disquiet that arises due to the tension between female self-realization—via assertion of maternal agency and matriarchal authority—and male control of public and private spaces.<sup>55</sup> I distinguish maternal agency as that which asserts a woman’s private control over her reproductive body, whereas matriarchal authority indicates a public expression of political power via the maternal body. This distinction is clearest in Queen Anna of Denmark’s pregnant performance, analyzed in chapter one, and serves as a useful prologue to the plays discussed in chapter two, “Patricentric Pregnancy Plays: The Problem of Opaque Bodies in Histories, Romances, and Tragedies.”

Chapter two analyzes Samuel Rowley’s *When You See Me, You Know Me* (1604), Shakespeare and Fletcher’s *Henry VIII* (1614), *The Winter’s Tale* (c. c. 1611), John Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* (c. 1614), and finally, John Ford’s Caroline pregnancy play, *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore* (c. 1630). Putting these five plays into conversation with one another, I illuminate a major dramaturgical trend in Stuart pregnancy plays: those wrestling with patriarchal anxiety produced by the unknown child concealed within the mother’s opaque belly. In all five plays, the gestating characters’ high-stakes pregnancies have the ability to secure or destroy their respective lineage. As such, I suggest these pregnancy plays tacitly hearken back to the anxiety-inducing

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<sup>54</sup> Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque*, 1.

<sup>55</sup> I adapt this concept from Martin Butler’s discussion of Anna of Denmark’s masquing career, wherein he notes the Queen does “not exhibit outright subversion so much as an ongoing tension between female self-assertion and male control, a dialectic which is conditioned by anxiety about the power of the feminine at the same time as it creates a space for feminine self-realization” (Butler, 131).

matriarchal authority wielded by Queen Anna at the beginning of the Stuart reign, while reflecting generalized patriarchal anxiety prompted by the opaque pregnant body in seventeenth-century London.<sup>56</sup> However, while I meditate on how pregnancy plays might reflect contemporary social concerns about the female body's inherent opacity, those questions are ultimately outside the scope of this study. "Great Bellies and Boy Actors" is primarily a dramaturgical analysis of performed pregnancy on early modern public and private stages. While the question of *why* this abundant body of work emerges at this moment in English theatrical and

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<sup>56</sup> For my reading of the pregnant body as a threat to patriarchy and the discursive imagination of the state, I am indebted to Janet Adelman's *Suffocating Mothers* (1992), a psychoanalytic reading of corrupt and absent maternity in Shakespeare's works. Adelman argues that, following *Hamlet*, the dangerous, toxic and emasculating mother becomes a touchstone of Shakespearean drama and investigations of virility. In an oft-quoted passage, Adelman asserts that mothers in post-*Hamlet* works must repeatedly "pay the price for the fantasies of maternal power invested in them," as witnessed by the harsh treatment of gestational bodies throughout the patricentric pregnancy plays (10). Often this "price" involves violence against the maternal body, its erasure from the stage, or perhaps even the absence of a mother all together. While Adelman's text, a touchstone for early modern maternity scholars, focuses on the text of the plays with some acknowledgement of performance potentials and the pregnant body, she nevertheless, examines the pregnant body as female, rather than a prosthetic construction place on top of a male body (*Suffocating Mothers*, 219-27). Additionally, I engage Katharine Maus' compelling study of interior subjectivity as a subject of distress for early modern English people. Specifically, I look to Maus's suggestion that the widespread interest in an illegible inwardness resulted in a pervasive distrust in the mysterious, opaque female body. Discussing male appropriations of the female reproductive system, Maus asserts that many male poets conceptualized the emergence of their "genius" from a metaphorical womb. The intellectual issue of men, however, was distinct from the visceral births of women "whose bodies, unreadable from the male point of view, figure[d] a kind of anarchy," Maus suggests (*Inwardness and Theater*, 193). As the plays analyzed in chapter two will show, this fixation manifests in anxieties over hidden pregnancies, illegitimate progeny, and the unreliability of women's wombs to bring forth a suitable male heirs. My interpretations of these patricentric pregnancy plays are similarly informed by several social and women's histories, including Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford's *Women in Early Modern England* as well as Valerie Fildes' collection, *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England*. More specifically, I am indebted to Gail Kern Paster's influential *The Body Embarrassed*, wherein she historicizes representations of the female body using humoral theory and dramatic literature, and argues that the leakiness of the feminine body—while talking, during coitus, and throughout childbirth—threatened patriarchal autonomy and authority. I build upon Paster's study by considering how troublesomely fecund bodies were brought under the purview of patriarchal discourse, reflected in representations of pregnant characters between 1603 and 1642. In conversation with Paster, Laura Gowing's *Common Bodies* explores the social capital (or, perhaps, the lack thereof) of pregnant, birthing, and nursing, mothers in post-Elizabethan England. Gowing's cultural and social history examines lived experiences of poor, common laborers and servants, rather than the elite and highborn; however, for Gowing, the titular "common bodies" of her study also point specifically to women's reproductive bodies. As she explains: "The female body was a public affair, the target of official regulation, informal surveillance, and regular, intimate touch by women and men [...] This tension between secrecy and openness, between tangibility and opacity, made for irreconcilable tensions both in how women's bodies were imagined, and how they were lived" (*Common Bodies*, 16). Engaging Foucauldian theories of social construction, Gowing's study seeks to understand how "common" women in seventeenth-century England understood and experienced their own bodies as objects of commodified knowledge. Gowing's work has influenced the ways in which I read the broad dramaturgical trends and changes throughout the pregnancy play subgenre, particularly throughout chapter two.

cultural history is certainly an important one, my project first shows *that* these plays exist at all in a coherent and discrete dramatic subgenre, and that these playwrights were knowing participants in a popular, dramatic, materially constructed staging convention.

Chapter three, “Prosthetic Pregnancy Plays: Materializing the Belly and Demystifying Gestation in Comedies,” centers on how comedic pregnancy plays foreground the prosthetic and material construction of the “great belly” while simultaneously assuaging the patriarchal anxieties present throughout chapter two. In Thomas May’s *The Heir*, Ben Jonson’s *The Magnetic Lady* (1632), and three Middletonian works—*A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1613), *The Witch* (c.1616), and *More Dissemblers Besides Women* (c. 1619)—pregnant characters lose the dangerous qualities she possesses in Webster, Ford, and Shakespeare’s plays through metatheatrical disruptions of, and self-reflexive gestures toward, the boy beneath the belly. In these comedies, Middleton, Jonson, and May stage the incontinent pregnant body that continually fails to contain its fluids, secrets, or authority.<sup>57</sup> The stakes of metatheatrically disrupting the illusion of pregnancy throughout these comedic pregnancy plays is two-fold. Firstly, they suggest that the convention is well enough established to be humorously and self-reflexively deconstructed. Secondly, it communicates that these playwrights kept these agential mothers at bay, by self-consciously pointing to the boy beneath the belly. This revelation is most explicit in Thomas May’s *The Heir* (1620), wherein the playwright stages a metatheatrical reveal of the prosthetic pregnancy device—the cushion—to prove that one of the characters is faking a pregnancy. While playwrights like Shakespeare, Webster, and Samuel Rowley established and popularized pregnancy as a theatrical convention, Middleton, Jonson, and May destabilize it—

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<sup>57</sup> Speaking of tendencies toward metatheatricity in female page plays, Shapiro notes “one of the most important tactics for containing the power of the cross-dressed heroine [...] involved self-referentiality, reminding the spectators that this female character who was assuming a false male identity was being played by a male performer,” thereby creating a safe distance from which to view these “feminine” transgressions” (6).

making it novel for experienced London theatregoers. This self-conscious borrowing, tweaking, and renewing of pregnancy as a performance convention in a relatively short period suggests its popularity and prominence in London playhouses. As a result, I contend that the pregnant mother does not “become less popular as a subject of dramatic interest,” as Dunworth suggests, but rather, becomes a conspicuous and popular dramaturgical device throughout Stuart drama.<sup>58</sup>

Chapter four, “Peripheral Pregnancy Plays: Marginal Gestation in Tragicomedies and Problem Plays,” explores how these plays relegate pregnant bodies and characters to the plays’ respective peripheries, while the fact of the pregnancy itself remain integral to the playwrights’ dramaturgy. It seems fitting that these peripheral plays, with their ambivalent attitudes toward the pregnant body, also feature ambiguously “happy” endings. I begin with Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* (1604) and *All’s Well that Ends Well* (c. 1606), two of this study’s earliest pregnancy plays, in order to examine the ways in which pregnancy can simultaneously be crucial to the plays’ plot structure, yet peripheral to the overall action of the drama. Following this analysis, I reveal the ways in which Shakespeare’s early peripheral pregnancy plays influence later dramas by Webster (*The Devil’s Law Case*, c. 1619), Heywood (*A Maidenhead Well Lost*, c. 1634), as well as William Rowley and Thomas Middleton (*A Fair Quarrel*, c. 1617).<sup>59</sup>

Finally, chapter five, “Punishment, Pageantry, and Pregnancy: Queen Anna’s Enduring Influence,” examines punishment and pageantry in two final pregnancy plays—Middleton’s *The Nice Valour* (1622) and Thomas Heywood’s *Love’s Mistress, or the Queen’s Masque* (1634). These two plays both hearken back to Queen Anna of Denmark’s pregnant performance in *The Masque of Blackness*, echoing the use of pageantry and spectacle to display the pregnant body on

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<sup>58</sup> See: Dunworth, 222-3.

<sup>59</sup> Here I find myself similarly influenced by Shapiro’s *Gender in Play*. The final chapter in his study, “From Center to Periphery” analyzes how the female page became “less of a focus in her own right and more of a figure in the dramatist’s design” (174).

stage. Specifically, *Love's Mistress* features the mythical Psyche, who willfully disobeys the commandment laid out by her god-husband, Cupid. As a result, he punishes her with a sudden advanced pregnancy and dark leprosy spots, a moment haunted by Queen Anna of Denmark, predecessor to Heywood's patron, Queen Henrietta Maria. I suggest that *Love's Mistress* in particular points to the lasting influence that Queen Anna's painted pregnant performance had on the cultural and artistic imagination of early modern London. However, where Queen Anna was able to use *The Masque of Blackness* to assert her matriarchal authority, Cupid's patriarchal dominance tames the disobedient Psyche, perhaps a nod to anxieties over Charles I's inability to assert a conservative, centralized patricentric state.

Despite this study's resistance to a chronological organization, I analyze the bulk of the pregnancy plays throughout chapters two, three, and four in roughly chronological order to highlight the relationships among the plays, namely, the ways they borrow from, haunt, echo, and ghost one another. Marvin Carlson defines "ghosting" as the "process of using previous encounters to understand and interpret encounters with new and somewhat different but apparently similar phenomena" which he describes as both "fundamental to human cognition" as well as integral to the practice of creating and viewing theatre.<sup>60</sup> Naming the theatre a "memory machine," Carlson is interested in the almost unconscious and uncanny way audiences psychically connect seemingly disparate performances, thereby assessing "complex interweaving[s] of space, memory, and cultural and geographic ghosting when they visit the theatre."<sup>61</sup> For Carlson, the text, playhouse, actors, clothing, and props activated by the performers have the ability to generate a ghosting effect for the audience, calling forth shadows of past performances. Each component of the theatre-making process holds the memories of

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<sup>60</sup> Carlson, 6-7.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

previous performances. Like a poltergeist, certain texts, actors, and properties continue to haunt the playhouse. Throughout this study, I appeal to Carlson's theory to illuminate the myriad ways in which performances of pregnancy and the function of gestating bodies continue to ghost later pregnancy plays in the period. Among pregnancy plays, writers repeat, recycle, and reinvent various pregnancy plot points, themes, and situations that likely proved popular among London audiences. Anxiety about the birthing room echoes repeatedly throughout the drama in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, and Jonson's *The Magnetic Lady*, among others. Similarly, Heywood's *The Golden Age* and Thomas May's *The Heir* both wrestle with a preoccupation with the belly as a prosthetic device and its visibility, thereby metatheatrically disrupting the plays' fiction of gender, while producing comedy. These repetitions, commonalities—these ghostings—suggest conscious borrowing on the parts of pregnancy playwrights throughout early Stuart drama and, therefore, conscious participation in a theatrical convention, as this study reveals.

I end this work in 1642, the start of the English Civil War, because it traditionally marks the end of early modern theatre in London as scholars presently define it. With Charles I's execution in 1649, and the subsequent closure of the public theatres, performance was largely dormant or private, and always illicit. Then, of course, upon Charles II's Restoration, theatrical practices changed entirely. Women began to legally perform in English playhouses. Their performance of pregnancy—and, possibly pregnant performances—though a fascinating area of study, is nevertheless outside the scope of how “great bellies” materialized on boy actors' bodies. I conclude in the Epilogue by gesturing to the ways in which this study can perhaps influence further research in early modern theatre, and examinations of pregnant performances by Restoration actresses, as well as how “Great Bellies and Boy Actors” is in conversation with

recent work on pregnancy and celebrity culture. For now, I turn my attention to Queen Anna of Denmark and matriarchal authority through pregnant performance in Ben Jonson's 1605 *The Masque of Blackness*.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **A Pregnant Performance:**

#### **Wielding the Royal Reproductive Body in *The Masque of Blackness***

On 19 February 1594, King James VI of Scotland and Queen Anna of Denmark welcomed their first child into the world.<sup>62</sup> Two days after Henry's birth, the government signed the infant Prince over to a legal guardian, as was common practice in Scotland; the honor was bestowed upon the Earl of Mar.<sup>63</sup> The Queen, displeased with this custom, sought custody of her firstborn for nine years without success, continuing to press the issue despite James's rebuffs.<sup>64</sup> In May 1595, Anna raised a faction against the King to support her claim. The couple dropped the issue-at-hand several weeks later; nevertheless, an August report to Robert Cecil noted Scotland remained "now constantly divided into two factions, one for the King and another for the Queen."<sup>65</sup> These potent factions would lay dormant, coming to a head once again when James prepares to ascend to the English throne nine years later.

Queen Elizabeth died in March 1603 and James was named her successor. The King left for England in April and his family was to follow in due course.<sup>66</sup> On 4 May 1603, a week before Anna was to begin her progress from Scotland to England, the Queen trekked to Stirling with a full complement of nobility supporting her claim to Prince Henry, the newly made heir apparent to the English throne. Per James's command, Mar's family denied Anna access to the

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<sup>62</sup> Following Leeds Barroll, aside from direct quotations and titles, I refer to the queen consort as Anna instead of Anne. Barroll notes that, in the few cases Anna's name appears in writing—such as her signature in a letter to James as well as her oath of office—she refers to herself as "Anna" (*Anna of Denmark*, 173 n1).

<sup>63</sup> Barroll points out, "Mar's nomination to the office was predictable, even routine, since his father and grandfather had served as royal guardians before him" (*Anna of Denmark*, 20).

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-24.

<sup>65</sup> Qtd. Barroll, *Anna of Denmark*, 24.

<sup>66</sup> Barroll, *Anna of Denmark*, 41.

Prince and turned the Queen away.<sup>67</sup> Three days passed while Anna remained near Stirling in a standoff with the Earl's agents. The King's supporters grew anxious as Anna's doggedness threatened to overshadow James's impending accession to the English throne; they feared Anna's behavior would publicly exhibit the unresolved conflict between the royal couple that began nine years earlier.<sup>68</sup>

At the time of this confrontation, Anna was four months pregnant. It was important that she leave Scotland because she carried what was to be the first child born to a ruling English monarch since King Edward VI's birth in 1537, a fact Barroll neglects to mention in his influential study of the Queen. The timing of Anna's pregnancy was indeed auspicious, as she would arrive as the literal gateway through which the new Stuart line would continue to regenerate, secure the throne, and forge alliances with foreign powers for England. After two generations of childless rule, Anna's fertile body would indeed be a welcome presence on the English throne. In this moment, England prepares to shift from the vexation brought on by an unproductive, barren monarch, to the anxieties brought on by a pregnant Queen. Although the swift change in reproductive potentialities is a major part of the Tudor-Stuart regime shift, this narrative has been lost in favor of the move toward male authority after Elizabeth's death. In this way, James's presence has overshadowed the complicated arrival of a royal, reproductive body in the English court.

On 10 May, a week after the standoff began, David Calderwood (Stuart contemporary and historian for the Kirk of Scotland) reported in a public statement that Queen Anna "went to

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<sup>67</sup> The Earl of Mar was in England with James at the time. Anna was turned away by Lady Mar and the Lord of Keir, Mar's mother and brother respectively. The Earl would not return to Scotland until two days after Anna's miscarriage (Barroll, *Anna of Denmark*, 28).

<sup>68</sup> Barroll, *Anna of Denmark*, 28.

bed in anger and parted with child.”<sup>69</sup> However, on 18 May the Venetian ambassador reported in a private—and, consequently, perhaps more candid—letter to the doge that Anna “flew into a violent fury, and four months gone with child as she was, she beat her own belly, so that they say she is in manifest danger of miscarriage and death.”<sup>70</sup> Likewise, John Spottiswood reports that that upon the House of Mar’s denial of the Queen’s request to take Henry away, Anna “became so much incensed, as falling into a fever, she made a pitiful Abortion.”<sup>71</sup> Following Anna’s possibly induced miscarriage, she refused to travel to England until she gained custody of Henry. The King relieved Mar from his duty as royal guardian. On 1 June 1603, Anna and Henry set sail for England together.<sup>72</sup>

Although it is unclear as to whether Anna purposefully ended her pregnancy in this conflict with Mar, the fact that the Venetian ambassador’s letter privately reported that the Queen “beat her own belly,” while Calderwood’s public announcement is much less direct, suggests those close to the action’s center understood her miscarriage as intentionally abortive. Even if it is not true—even if Anna’s miscarriage was spontaneous and had nothing to do with her own actions—it is telling that the Venetian ambassador would assume Anna capable of ending her own pregnancy through sheer brute force. Furthermore, the fact that this event was corroborated by a Scottish historian in a separate—decidedly more public—document suggests there may be some truth to the report, thereby implying those around the Queen understood her

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<sup>69</sup> Calderwood, 6:23.

<sup>70</sup> *Calendar of State Papers... Venice*, 10:40.

<sup>71</sup> Spottiswood, 477. Spottiswood notes in his *History of the Church of Scotland* that he had just been named the Archbishop of Glasgow, to replace the recently deceased James Beaton. The King sent Spottiswood to Scotland to accompany Anna on her progress to England. He makes note of her trip to Striveling (Stirling), “of mind to bring away the Prince her Son, and carry him along with her self to England” (477). This suggests that Spottiswood, if he was not in Stirling with the Queen, was near enough to receive reports of the Queen’s behavior.

<sup>72</sup> Clare McManus spends a great deal of time framing this event within the context of Henry’s 1594 baptism at Stirling. See: *Women on the Renaissance Stage*, 81-87. McManus argues that this baptismal ritual performance “contributes to our wider understanding of the performance career of Anna of Denmark; it is extremely important,” McManus continues, “to recognize that the Stirling entertainment [at Henry’s baptism] operated as a context for the later Jonsonian masque” (87).

to be a strong political force, evinced by her previous faction-raising in the Scottish Stuart court, along with her attempts to secure custody of her eldest son.<sup>73</sup> What's more, the Duke of Sully later reported that, upon the Queen's initial arrival to London, she brought both Henry and the body of her miscarried fetus—"a male child of which she had been delivered in Scotland, because endeavours had been used to persuade the public, that his death was only feigned."<sup>74</sup> Sully's report suggests that the Queen not only brought her prize, but the weapon she used to win custody of the English heir apparent. If Sully's report were accurate, it certainly would not be the last time that Anna used visual spectacle to make her maternal labor hyper-visible to the newly established English Stuart court. Even if this is mere gossip, Sully's report intimates those surrounding Anna understood her as willing to hold her own maternal body—and its contents—hostage for the sake of gaining access to Henry.<sup>75</sup> This politically adept Queen knew what cards she had available to entice the King into negotiations: her own role as Stuart progenitor.

The 1603 conflict between James and Anna set a precedent wherein Anna would continue to use her reproductive body as a bargaining chip in court politics. The Queen's miscarriage and preceding factional activities threatened to overshadow James's accession to the English throne. Consequently, James relinquished a facet of his patriarchal authority in order to woo Anna to England, thereby smoothing over the event before he took his position as England's new monarch. James—despite imagining himself as an absolute ruler over a soon to be united Scotland and England—was obliged to contend with the factional conflicts raised by his

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<sup>73</sup> See Barroll, *Anna of Denmark*, 14-35.

<sup>74</sup> Sully, *Memoirs*, 3:58.

<sup>75</sup> While this appears to be the only extant report of this event, we must accept that it might be merely a rumor or, at very best, hearsay, as Sully was not in England when Anna arrived to London (Barroll, 182 n.63).

“unmanageable wife,” to borrow Stephen Orgel’s phrase.<sup>76</sup> In a continued effort to recover Anna’s political agency, I argue that this is merely one way in which the Queen wielded her royal maternity—specifically, her maternal body—in an effort to carve out her own space in the soon-to-be-established English Stuart court, despite James’s insistence on the patricentricity of his rule.

In Leeds Barroll’s extensive study of Queen Anna of Denmark, we find several of these important facts about Anna: her custody battle, her pregnancies, her political activities, and the odd circumstances of her 1603 miscarriage. However, none of these facts get connected with and are missing as context for *The Masque of Blackness*. In this chapter, I use her 1603 miscarriage to frame my reading of her 1605 painted pregnant performance in the Twelfth Night festivities. In chapter one of this study, I analyze the centrality of the fecund female cure in *The Masque of Blackness* by exploring the myriad ways in which Queen Anna of Denmark made use of her maternal body to assert her political autonomy through her matriarchal authority.<sup>77</sup> While royally patronized playwrights certainly appealed to James’s interest in absolute patriarchal rule, as many scholars point out, I argue that we can likewise trace depictions of gestating characters back to Queen Anna of Denmark’s pregnant presence in court.<sup>78</sup> Connecting several events in Anna’s life and tenure as Queen, I reveal the ways in which the first English Stuart matriarch exercised power by using her maternal body as a bargaining chip in court politics. The 1603 conflict between James and Anna is the framework through which to read Anna’s performance in the first pregnancy play under consideration in this study: *The Masque of Blackness*. In this 1605

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<sup>76</sup> Orgel, “Marginal Jonson,” 146. In similar fashion, Orgel diminishes Anna’s political agency by foregrounding Jonson’s work, and insisting on Anna’s body as mere spectacle: “for Jonson the dances were requirements imposed by an agile queen and a king who liked to watch her” (*The Jonsonian Masque*, 116).

<sup>77</sup> I borrow the concept of the centrality of the female body in Stuart masques from Sophie Tomlinson’s influential study of women performers in Jacobean and Caroline drama. See: Tomlinson, 19.

<sup>78</sup> See for example: Dunworth, 222-6; Olchowy, 197-209; Penuel, 115-27; Rose, 294-6; 301-10.

Twelfth Night celebration, the Queen danced before the Stuart court and their international guests while wearing blackface; she was six months pregnant at the time.

In part one, I analyze the methods whereby the Queen drew attention to her gestational body using Ben Jonson's text, Inigo Jones's design, and her own reproductive history. Given her 1603 miscarriage, the child Anna carried during *The Masque of Blackness* was to be the first royal infant born on English soil in sixty-eight years. Anna made use of this fact in the ways she commissioned the work from Ben Jonson, cast the masque, and oversaw its aesthetic execution. This study is thus the first time these two events—Anna's 1603 miscarriage under ambiguous circumstances and then her 1605 public performance while visibly pregnant—have been brought to bear on a reading of *The Masque of Blackness*. As I argue below, Anna cannily used her own reproductive body to exercise political power.

Part two contextualizes Anna's participation in court performance within James's own political theories of patriarchal governance. I detail Anna's performance in *The Masque of Blackness*, analyzing how the Queen placed her own body at the center of the Twelfth Night festivities, despite the event's patricentric political agenda. *The Masque of Blackness* offers valuable insight into how the mysteries of the pregnant body simultaneously signal the security of peaceful dynastic succession while threatening the monarchical absolutism avowed by James. Anna's gestational body represents this nexus of ideas as she asserts herself as the guarantor of the Stuart dynastic line and, by painting her exposed skin a shockingly dark shade, made her pregnant body hyper-visible in this performance, perhaps implicitly threatening poison, miscarriage, or even miscegenation to the first English-born Stuart child. The historical record indicates that Anna at least threatened miscarriage as a way of exerting control over her eldest child. I'll elaborate below on the well-known associations of cosmetics and poison, but it's

possible that the choice to wear blackface paint had a further consequence beyond hyper-visibility: to illustrate that she alone has bodily control over the child she carries—which is to say, the first Stuart child to be born on English soil. In addition, this image—the black pregnant body—totally overturns Elizabeth’s own iconographic representation as the red and white virgin queen, and secures Anna’s own powerful role on the national stage. Finally, part three explores the afterlives of *The Masque of Blackness*, including the ways in which Anna continued to use masque performances to showcase her relationship with Henry, the English heir apparent, until his untimely death in 1612.

Finally, I conclude that Queen Anna’s own conspicuous performances of maternity during the first ten years of James’s reign strongly influenced the dramaturgy of nearly two dozen pregnancy plays performed in private and public Stuart playhouses through the reign of Charles I. These events, and Anna’s public status as the first childbearing Queen on the English throne in two generations, coincide with a growing interest in writing about and performing the pregnant body on public stages, as the rest of this study reveals. I argue that these two seemingly disparate movements—Queen Anna’s pregnant performances and players’ public performances of pregnancy—intertwine in important ways. Through an examination of Anna’s maternal presence in the royal court, I reveal that her influence on the popular English stage—and the subgenre of pregnancy plays in particular—is much greater than previously recognized by early modern theatre historians and literary critics. Put differently, this chapter addresses two significant holes in scholarship. The first neglects Anna’s willingness to use her reproductive body as a tool in court politics, and the second ignores an entire dramatic corpus. These gaps are the result of two enduring myths: the legacy of Elizabeth I, the “Virgin Queen” and the idea of James as the country’s new father/absolute patriarch. Between these two narratives, scholars

have overlooked the rich presence and nuanced functions of pre-natal maternity on the public stage and at the Stuart court.

### **Part 1** **Queen Anna as Auteur: Making the Belly Visible**

Whitehall Palace, 6 January 1605: Queen Anna of Denmark performs in *The Masque of Blackness*, written by Ben Jonson and designed by Inigo Jones to celebrate Twelfth Night. While *The Masque of Blackness* was neither Anna's first court commission nor her performance debut in England, it was the first collaboration between the Queen, Jones, and Jonson. Additionally, *The Masque of Blackness* remains unique as the first time the Queen consort publicly danced in painted blackface. Ben Jonson notes in his preface to the printed edition of the masque that the Queen requested she and her ladies be "Black-mores," and so the artists—Jonson and Jones together—executed this conceit accordingly.<sup>79</sup> The fact of Anna's temporary blackness has been amply discussed: what has not been sufficiently considered, however, is that Anna was also six months pregnant with Princess Mary, the first royal child born in England since 1537.<sup>80</sup> Using the masque as a vehicle for her own agenda, Anna paraded her pregnant body in the public arena to assert her political weight as Stuart matriarch.<sup>81</sup>

Martin Butler argues that there were many reasons to attend and enjoy a court masque other than the work of the poet—much to the Jonson's chagrin, no doubt.<sup>82</sup> Butler shows that most of the time in a masque's performance "was given over to dancing, and the effect of the music, costumes, and spectacle must have been overwhelming. Ambassadors' reports and domestic feedback suggest that the poets' contributions were often misunderstood, inaudible, or

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<sup>79</sup> Ben Jonson, *The Characters of Two Royall Masques*, A3.

<sup>80</sup> As noted above, this honor would have been granted to the child Anna carried in 1603, if not for her self-induced miscarriage at Stirling.

<sup>81</sup> Those in attendance for *The Masque of Blackness* include many French nobles, as well as the Venetian and Spanish ambassadors. See: Carleton, 68.

<sup>82</sup> Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque*, 2-3.

ignored.”<sup>83</sup> While many scholars have assessed *Blackness*’s formal qualities, I suggest it is important to consider that Jonson’s text—while crucial to understand as it participates in James’s pet political project as I discuss below—was not likely the primary takeaway from the Twelfth Night celebration. Instead, the overwhelming spectacle of Anna’s pregnant blackened body, perhaps serving as a symbolic threat to the continuation of the Stuart line, sits at the masque’s dramaturgical core.<sup>84</sup> As such, this section will examine Anna’s curatorial and performative influence on the spectacle of *Blackness*.

Queen Anna’s masquing career, and the political milieu in which the consort embedded her performances, has been the subject of many studies over the past twenty-five years. Butler’s comprehensive study of the ways in which court performance reflected and participated in the political discourses of seventeenth-century London is an invaluable contribution to the field of early modern English court politics.<sup>85</sup> Butler carefully details the relationship between Stuart court masque performances and the surrounding political climate. As such, his analysis expands upon Clare McManus’s work, which takes Anna of Denmark’s masquing career as its central object of study.<sup>86</sup> While McManus spends some time discussing Anna’s performance of racial difference in *The Masque of Blackness*, Kim F. Hall, Hardin Aasand and Mary Floyd-Wilson put racial tensions and imperial ambitions at the center of their respective studies.<sup>87</sup> In addition, Andrea Stevens discusses at length the cosmetic construction of blackface on early modern

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, Butler agrees that, despite the focus on the visual spectacle of masques, with a de-emphasis on text, it is “clear that masques always had some explicit political function” and there was “often a mechanism to ensure the spectators understood the fable” (Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque*, 3 n.4).

<sup>85</sup> Martin Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture*, 2008.

<sup>86</sup> See: McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage*.

<sup>87</sup> See: Hardin Aasand’s “To blanch an Ethiop and revive a corse’: Queen Anne and *The Masque of Blackness*”; Mary Floyd-Wilson, “Temperature, Temperance, and Racial Difference in Ben Jonson’s *The Masque of Blackness*”; Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness*, 128-40; McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage*, 1-17, 43, 75. McManus also briefly engaged Anna’s pregnancy as a marker of “dangerous and open sexuality” in *Blackness* (15). I engage these scholars’ arguments in more detail below.

stages, wherein she takes up Queen Anna as one of her subjects.<sup>88</sup> Carol Chillington Rutter looks to Queen Anna's pregnant performance in *The Masque of Blackness* as a possible model for Shakespeare's Cleopatra, but interrogates the intersection of Anna's pregnancy and blackness all too briefly.<sup>89</sup> The only scholar to consider Queen Anna's pregnancy in the context of this masque is Anne Cline Kelly; for Kelly, however, Anna's pregnancy merely serves as evidence of Jonson's artistry.<sup>90</sup> She suggests that by "locating *Blackness* in Africa, Jonson is able to superimpose Africa's associations of fertility and creation onto James' court [...] to praise in particular the most important masquer, Queen Anne, who was literally 'full of life.'"<sup>91</sup> My reading of *The Masque of Blackness* resists Jonsonian exceptionalism in order to assert that Anna purposefully placed her pregnant body at the center of *The Masque of Blackness* to draw public attention to her gestating body in this seemingly straightforward propagandistic display of Jacobean power. She did this by becoming a kind of "auteur" for the 1605 Twelfth Night performance, insisting upon what Hardin Aasand calls indulging in "untraditional aesthetics."<sup>92</sup>

Throughout her short tenure as a masquer in the Stuart court, Queen Anna established a number of performance conventions that lasted throughout the reign of her successor, Henrietta Maria.<sup>93</sup> Before James and Anna's arrival to the throne, court masques were typically ventures for young marriageable noblemen of the court. Anna's first masque, Samuel Daniel's *The Vision of Twelve Goddesses*, definitively departed from this loosely established custom.<sup>94</sup> It featured

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<sup>88</sup> Andrea Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin*, 88-100.

<sup>89</sup> Referring to Anna "generative bounty," Rutter suggests that the Queen's "maternal abundance, figuring as a trope of 'government' ... puts Anna ... in the place of opposition to James" (98). See: Rutter, *Enter the Body*, 98.

<sup>90</sup> Ann Cline Kelly, "The Challenge of the Impossible: Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness*," 1976.

<sup>91</sup> Kelly, 344.

<sup>92</sup> Aasand, 273.

<sup>93</sup> Henrietta Maria was Queen to King Charles I, James and Anna's eldest surviving son and successor to the English throne.

<sup>94</sup> For this information I am indebted to Leeds Barroll's essay "Inventing the Stuart Masque" wherein he spends a significant amount of time analyzing Anna's selection of ladies to appear with her in this masque. He ultimately

twelve noblewomen (herself included) who danced publicly, whereas custom previously relegated female dancers to private engagements. For *Twelve Goddesses*, Anna gave no attention to the marital status of the ladies she chose to dance beside her, but instead selected women who were closest to her: those of her Bed and Drawing Chambers in addition to a number of visiting noblewomen favored for their families' social or political positions. She did likewise for *Blackness*: within the text one can find imbedded a *dramatis personae* listing the ladies who danced in the masque, as well as the nymph with whom they were associated.<sup>95</sup> Those of note include Ladies Elizabeth Howard and Mary Wroth; the queen herself again handpicked the eleven noblewomen with whom she danced in *Blackness*, regardless of their marital eligibility and, in some cases, with careful attention to their relation to the Essex circle.<sup>96</sup> Given the high profile of the masque's dancers, the boundary separating the performer from the character blurred; this muddling of fictional and noble persona is fostered by the performance itself and the Queen's pregnancy.

In *Blackness* Queen Anna played Euphoris, a fertility nymph. While other nymphs carried hieroglyphs of bare feet in a river (symbolizing purity), or a cloud full of rain (education), the Queen consort carried a golden apple symbolizing her character's (and her own) fruitful bounty.<sup>97</sup> Considering Anna had a hand in every other element of the production—commissioning the masque from Jonson as well as selecting the ladies with whom she would dance—it is reasonable to assume that Anna deliberately cast herself to play the fertility nymph. She neither sought to hide nor have her audience ignore her pregnancy, but instead aimed to

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concludes that the women who performed with Anna were there because *she*, not James, wanted them beside her. See: 124-27 and 132-35.

<sup>95</sup> Jonson, *The Characters of Two Royall Masques*, B4.

<sup>96</sup>Barroll, "Inventing the Stuart Masque," 124-7; 132-5. For further discussion of Anna and James's connections to the Essex circle, see: Barroll, *Anna of Denmark*, 47-65.

<sup>97</sup> Jonson, *The Characters of Two Royall Masques*, B4.

highlight it within the fiction of the masque. With Jonson's help, the Queen was able to incorporate her pregnancy into the visual rhetoric of the Twelfth Night performance. In addition, thanks to her collaboration with Inigo Jones, the masque's designer, Anna and her fellow performers wore revealing garments, which allowed the Queen to display her pregnancy while resisting the conventions of standard feminine dress. While there is only one surviving rendering of the nymphs' costume, we can use it as an indication of Anna's appearance onstage because Ben Jonson notes in the preface that the "attire of the masquers was alike in all, without difference; the colours azure and silver, their hair thick, and curled upright in tresses, like pyramids...interlaced with ropes of pearl."<sup>98</sup> Jones's design challenged the restraint with which courtly women typically conducted and adorned themselves.

The ladies' gowns were of particular note to Sir Dudley Carleton who witnessed the event first-hand. He observed the ladies' apparel was indeed "rich, but too light and curtizanlike" for ladies of their stature.<sup>99</sup> He goes on to assert their "black faces, and hands which were painted and bare up to the elbows, was a very loathsome sight," which indicates the women's skin, upper extremities, and faces were visible to the audience.<sup>100</sup> In her discussion of Anna's performance in *Blackness*, Clare McManus argues that Francesco Barbaro's early fifteenth-century treatise, *On*

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<sup>98</sup> Jonson, *The Characters of Two Royall Masques*, A4.

<sup>99</sup> Carleton, 68. It is worth noting that Carleton's negative responses—both of which are pieces of private correspondence to John Chamberlain and Ralph Winwood—to the performance seem to stand alone, perhaps due to his distaste for the newly established Stuart court (Floyd-Wilson, 196). The Venetian ambassador in attendance likewise reported in a private correspondence with the Doge that he found the performance "very beautiful and sumptuous." Others report hearsay of the "sumptuous show [which] represented the Queen and some dozen ladies all painted like blackamoors" (qtd. Orgel, "Marginal Jonson," 149). For an extended account of further responses to *Blackness* see: Barroll, *Anna of Denmark*, 103. David Lindley similarly points out "it is important to recognize that continental observers were untroubled by the disguise or dress, praising instead the lavishness of the display" (Jonson, *Cambridge Works of Ben Jonson*, 505). Although Carleton found the aesthetic of the masque transgressive and distasteful, the Queen and her ladies set a trend for future masquers. This fact is evinced by the naturalization of similarly flowing, thin and gauzy fabrics, seen in later masque design renderings including: *The Masque of Queens* (1609), *Tethys' Festival* (1610), and *Love Freed From Ignorance and Folly* (1611). See: McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage*, 122-35 for an analysis of these costumes that exposed the breast and transformed costumes into "scenery."

<sup>100</sup> Carleton, 68.

*Wifely Duties*, helps contextualize Carleton's discomfort at viewing the ladies' extremities.

Barbaro writes:

It is proper ... that not only arms but indeed also the speech of women never be made public; for the speech of a noblewoman can be no less dangerous than the nakedness of her limbs.<sup>101</sup>

Although Barbaro's treatise predates *The Masque of Blackness* by nearly two-hundred years, McManus suggests this statement remains representative of prevalent attitudes towards women in the early seventeenth century" encapsulating "the perceived connection between public female speech and a dangerously liberated female sexuality in the open display of the gendered body."<sup>102</sup> Carleton's commentary reveals his preoccupation with the ways in which Anna and her ladies exhibited their bodies for public consumption. However, it is important to point out Carleton does not take issue with the fact *that* these women were performing, but rather their appearance while dancing. The thin, gauzy garments revealed their bodies in ways that were too "curtizanlike," or courtesan-like, for ladies of such stature. However, Carleton does not direct his criticism at Jones, the designer, but the noblewomen wearing the garments and the royal Queen herself. This is, perhaps, due to Anna's recently established reputation as an auteur, even at this early point in her English masquing career.

Anna not only commissioned masques and provided the performers, but she had a strong hand in the design aesthetic of her performances as well. We have many surviving renderings from Inigo Jones in addition to his designs from *The Masque of Blackness*. With the exception of the two extant renderings from *Blackness*, he completed many of his costume designs in monochromatic tones of brown and gray accompanied by marginal annotations noting the garment's color scheme. However, Orgel speculates that the marginalia on the designs do not

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<sup>101</sup> Barbaro, *On Wifely Duties*, 205.

<sup>102</sup> McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage*, 6.

necessarily correspond to the realized garment in which the Queen or her ladies danced, but are merely Jones's own suggestions for a color palette.<sup>103</sup> Orgel goes on to suggest that Jones submitted the designs to his patron (in this case, the Queen) who then made changes to the design as she desired. While surviving *Blackness* renderings do appear in color, there is reason to believe the Queen provided feedback to Jones at some point. Together with her casting practices and commissioning of the masque, this evidence suggests *Blackness* was not a masque merely provided for Anna by the genius of Jonson and Jones's theatrical innovation, but an event curated by the Queen herself.

Not only were these women's faces and bodies visible in *Blackness* but the sheer "curtizanlike" costume would have done a poor job of concealing the fact Anna was rounding apace, a result she likely desired given what we know about her oversight in the overall aesthetic of the performance. The erotic exoticism of the ladies' gowns would have been amplified by Anna's visible pregnancy, the sight of which gestured toward her fruitful womb or, as Orgel puzzlingly deems in one of his only acknowledgements of the Queen's pregnancy during *Blackness*, her "aggressive display of sexuality."<sup>104</sup>

What is perhaps most striking in Jones's sketch is the dark pigment of the lady's skin: their "painted" face and arms, as Carleton notes. Anna, along with the other ladies from her personal court, played these "Black-mores": the twelve daughters of Niger. In Jonson's preface to the masque's 1608 printing, he pointedly notes "because it was her majesty's will to have [the performers] Black-mores," he dutifully presented her with a masque conforming to the stipulation of her commission.<sup>105</sup> However, Orgel is quick to remind us that "Queen Anne's

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<sup>103</sup> See: Orgel, "Marginal Jonson" 152-53.

<sup>104</sup> Orgel, "Marginal Jonson," 150.

<sup>105</sup> Jonson, *The Characters of Two Royall Masques*, A3.

bright idea for a ‘masque of blackness was by 1605 a very old one.’<sup>106</sup> McManus likewise points out—in perhaps less condescending terms—that blackness was a popular motif in the Stuart Scottish court.<sup>107</sup> It was not the mere fact of playing a moor that flouted previous court performance practices, but the Queen’s manifestation of blackness.

As many other scholars of Stuart court masques have pointed out: blackness was traditionally portrayed with the use of gloves, masks and stockings that gave the illusion of blackness, but did not physically alter the performers’ skin.<sup>108</sup> However, Andrea Stevens notes in her study of body paint on medieval and early modern stages, the manifestation of Anna’s blackness was not unique in its representation, but in its “material methods.”<sup>109</sup> For *Blackness*, Anna and her ladies darkened their skin with paint similar to that used by professional actors in public playhouses. Questioning the type of pigment Anna and her ladies used in order to darken their flesh, Stevens offers that both Inigo Jones’s extant costume rendering for *Blackness*, as well as Henry Peacham’s sketch of Aaron the Moor, suggest that an extremely dark pigment was used to achieve a blackface effect. Appealing to studies by Sarah Carpenter, Meg Twycross and Farah Karim-Cooper, Stevens seems to agree with the notion that “players may have applied the same pigments to their bodies as they did to the walls of the playhouse.”<sup>110</sup> Barbara Ravelhofer suggests that the ladies’ blackness may have been achieved with the use of woad, a dark bluish substance that was often used to dye fabrics; woad was later superseded by the use of indigo.<sup>111</sup>

While Jonson’s notes about *Blackness* do not indicate whose decision it was that cosmetic paint ought to do the work of clothing, it seems clear the choice must have been Anna’s

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<sup>106</sup> Orgel, *Jonsonian Masque*, 34.

<sup>107</sup> McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage*, 74; 81-7.

<sup>108</sup> See: Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, 244-5; Stern, *Making Shakespeare*, 9; Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin*, 88;

<sup>109</sup> Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin*, 88.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 93. See: Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama*, 136-7; Twycross and Carpenter, *Masks and Masking*, 317.

<sup>111</sup> Ravelhofer, *The Early Stuart Masque*, 173.

as well. Queen Anna-as-auteur curated a grand spectacle for the English court and their guests, while placing her own gestational body at the center of this public display. While Tudor masques often involved a climactic unmasking of the nobles, marking the final moments of the event, this Stuart masque blurred the lines between performer and character, conflating them into a single body. Because cosmetic paint rather than fabric masks created the illusion of blackness, the ladies could not “unveil,” as they may have done in Elizabeth’s court.<sup>112</sup> The nymphs come face to face with the “sun” who possesses the power to wash them white, yet do not complete their transformation until 1608 in Jonson’s *The Masque of Beauty*. In all likelihood, this was because the paint was difficult to completely remove from the ladies’ skin during the performance.

Considering the use of paint, the performer (Queen Anna) and the character (Euphoris) become difficult to disentangle both in the imagination of the audience, exhibited by Carleton’s critique that the black paint “was disguise sufficient, for [the ladies] were hard to be known,” as well as in a literal, material sense.<sup>113</sup> Stevens reads Carleton’s report regarding the “disguising element of blackface” as a suggestion that “Anna might equally have been attracted to the prospect of temporarily negating her identity as much as asserting it.”<sup>114</sup> However, I argue that, given combination of Anna’s second trimester pregnancy and sheer garments—along with the fact she played the nymph of fertility—it is difficult to believe Anna sought to disguise her identity or her gestational body throughout *Blackness*. Nevertheless, the stakes of separating the pregnant performer and the character prove quite high when considering the caustic qualities of the paint used for stage performances. Tanya Pollard considers anticosmetic sentiments rampant in early modern England, noting:

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<sup>112</sup> See: Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque*, 117-18.

<sup>113</sup> Sawyer, *Memorial of Affairs of State*, 2:44.

<sup>114</sup> Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin*, 92-3.

Renaissance writers asserted that cosmetics themselves were innately poisonous. A glance at their chemical ingredients suggests that these claims were, for the most part, not unfounded. Most cosmetic foundations were made of mercury sublimate and ceruse, or white lead.<sup>115</sup>

The symptoms of prolonged or intense exposure to these compounds include kidney dysfunction, hair loss, skin discoloration, and neurological degeneration. While both mercury and lead whitened the skin, cosmetics and body paints that darkened the skin were not immune to scrutiny by anticosmetic treatises. As Tonya Pollard suggests, “anxieties about cosmetics and painted bodies call attention to early modern assumptions about the inseparability of external from internal, of material from immaterial.”<sup>116</sup> According to these anti-cosmetic sentiments, it becomes clear that paint was thought to not only impress itself upon the body, materially corrupting the skin due to its caustic properties, but also had the power to contaminate the soul and physical interior of the painted person.

This fear becomes particularly potent when considering the imagined permeability of gestating bodies in seventeenth-century popular thought; specifically, Queen Anna’s painted pregnant body. Revealing the ways in which the pregnant body was surveilled due to its imagined permeability and impressionability, Laura Gowing explains how the health of the fetus was the sole responsibility of the mother. The infant’s well being depended on the mother’s inner life—her thoughts, desires, and longings—as well as her interaction with the external world.<sup>117</sup> As a result, pregnant women were warned to maintain control over their tempers and passions, as well as limit physical contact with toxic or dangerous substances (such as cosmetics) lest they should bring harm to their unborn child, according to the ancient theory of maternal

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<sup>115</sup> Pollard, “Beauty’s Poisonous Properties,” 190.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>117</sup> Gowing, 127.

impressions—also known as “psychic imprintings,” a principle which Martin Luther called “one of the most certain principles in medicine.”<sup>118</sup>

The theory of maternal impressions stipulates that, while pregnant, a mother has the ability to transmit her own sensory experiences, thoughts, and feelings, to the fetus in her womb; these experiences could then impress themselves upon the child’s skin. Laura Gowing points out this theory supported the possibility that women were even able to change their child’s skin color through impassioned longing or fear.<sup>119</sup> One such instance occurs in a tale told by Saint Jerome, among others, wherein Hippocrates’s testimony frees a Greek noblewoman accused of adultery when her child is born black. Hippocrates explains that during the child’s conception and throughout the woman’s pregnancy, she wistfully gazed upon the portrait of a Moor in her bedchamber. Because of this maternal longing, the child bore the black skin of the man in the portrait.<sup>120</sup> While Jan Bondeson notes that this story is most likely apocryphal, it reflects how the doctrine of maternal impressions worked upon the cultural imagination of the seventeenth-century English population.<sup>121</sup>

Steven Connor notes the “longing mark” results from something “seen and desired at a distance rather than something felt on the skin,” although touch was also a powerful influence on fetal imprintings.<sup>122</sup> Detailing this alternate strain of the theory of maternal impressions, Connor turns to Daniel Turner’s *De morbis cutaneis* (1714). Turner tells the stories of women who encountered various animals, such as apes or lizards, whose children were born having the

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<sup>118</sup> See: Connor, 103; Bondeson, 146-7.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>120</sup> See: Gowing, 133; Bondeson, 144.

<sup>121</sup> Bondeson, talking about the theory of maternal impressions, notes that in Martin Luther’s tract on Genesis, he wrote “it should be considered one of the most certain principles in medicine” (146-7).

<sup>122</sup> Connor, 103-4.

appearance of those creatures.<sup>123</sup> Nicolas Malebranche's own theories on maternal impressions suggest that, because the mother and fetus share the same skin and other modes of sensory intake, the child feels what the mother feels. As Connor articulates, the "child's body, being softer, cannot resist the impact of these sensory images" and transmits their effects "to the outward portions of its body," whereas the mother is left unchanged.<sup>124</sup> While there is no evidence to suggest the black paint caused any damage to Queen Anna's skin, or to the fetus she carried, those present may have similarly considered the infant she carried to be more delicate and impressionable *in utero*. Bondeson furthermore argues that it "was generally believed that if the pregnant woman longed for or was frightened by some object, and simultaneously touched some part of her body, the child would have a birthmark on the corresponding part, a kind of 'psychic tattoo' of where the object in question."<sup>125</sup> In the case of Queen Anna, the object was black paint, and the part of her body it touched was her skin.

I suggest that, in performing the role of the Nigerian nymph of fertility, Euphoris, Anna symbolically threatened the racial purity of the royal child in her womb using paint over the more conventional application of black fabric and masks. Similar to the Greek woman who gazed upon the Moor's portrait, Queen Anna longed to perform the part of a moor: according to Jonson, Anna specifically commissioned the masque, requesting that she and her ladies could dance the part of "Black-mores." In order to play the part, the Queen unconventionally employed the use of black cosmetic paint, making direct contact between her own skin and the black cosmetic material. Many of those present for *Blackness* perhaps understood this implicit threat to the child she carried, hearkening back to her induced miscarriage two years earlier. If we take into consideration Anna's consistent exertion of political power through maternal control, it is a

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Connor, 115.

<sup>125</sup> Bondeson, 147.

reminder that *she* is the vessel for this child, and a rejection of Elizabeth's choice iconography in pretty flagrant terms. Keeping in mind the theory of maternal impressions, courtiers, diplomats, and nobles in attendance for *The Masque of Blackness* may have been surprised by this risk of miscegenation on Anna's part—even if only a symbolic one.

The risk of miscegenation was not—at least for Carleton—merely symbolic. After all, it was not necessarily the use of paint that shocked Carleton in his response to the masque, but rather the *color* of the cosmetic alteration. In his criticism of *Blackness*, Carleton makes a point to contrast the “troop of lean-cheeked Moors” with the more attractive “red and white” to which he and others in attendance were accustomed.<sup>126</sup> Here Carleton refers to the cosmetic paint typically used by men and women in public and private playhouses, as well as court performances, to lighten the skin and balance the whiteness with the appearance of healthy rosininess on the lips and cheeks.<sup>127</sup> This combination of red and white reflects the standard of beauty popularized in poetry, dramatic literature, and cosmetic manuals.<sup>128</sup> Carleton, revolted by the ladies' “black faces, and hands [...] a very loathsome sight,” goes on to insist upon its threatening nature. The “troop of lean-cheeked Moors” had the potential to contaminate the dancing partner's skin, especially one who deigned to kiss the ladies' blackened hands, as the Spanish Ambassador did.<sup>129</sup>

Again, we see this implicit fear of miscegenation: the Queen's blackened pregnant body had the ability to contaminate both her internal and external spaces. In his discussion on the use of black paint, Stephen Orgel points out the “black makeup no doubt did represent a problem for

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<sup>126</sup> Sawyer, 2:44.

<sup>127</sup> For a discussion of the use of red and white paint in cosmetics see: Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama*, 7-15.

<sup>128</sup> For extended discussions of cosmetic paint in early modern theatre see: Drew-Bear, *Painted Faces on the Renaissance Stage*, 1994; Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama*; Pollard, *Drugs and Theater in Early Modern England*, 81-100; Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin*.

<sup>129</sup> Sawyer, 2:44. See also: Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin*, 94.

a partner, but hardly a new one” as ladies and regularly used white cosmetic paint on their exposed body parts – “not only faces and bosoms, but hands and forearms as well.”<sup>130</sup> However, Orgel neglects to consider the hyper-visible transfer of blackness from partner to partner that Carleton dreaded. Due to its conventionalization in court masquing, white face paint offered invisible neutrality, which the Queen’s blackness actively resisted.

Moreover, Carleton’s criticism of the Queen and her compatriots is wrapped up in racialized and gendered language; they are “lean-cheeked Moors” and “courtesan-like.” Hardin Aasand argues,

Carleton’s inspection of Anne’s body is...a cultural reading of her social form—the garments and cosmetics which adhere to her physical body and to the body politic—and his disparaging response to her Ethiopian adornment ought to be read as entirely fitting in its repudiation of untraditional aesthetics.<sup>131</sup>

For Aasand, Carleton’s criticism of the Queen’s appearance expresses an anxiety that the distasteful garments and cosmetics the Queen places on her own skin transmits to the country’s “body politic.” In this sense, the “untraditional aesthetics,” as Aasand calls them, are what bring the court’s attention to the swollen, fecund body beneath her “curtizanlike” gown and create angst about her ability to pollute the body politic and, implicitly, the child she presently carries. Carleton’s negative response of the performance forces us to recognize the tension offered by the Queen’s provocative, blackened, pregnant body in motion.

Considering the control Anna maintained over the masque’s production elements, I argue that the Queen sought to accentuate her pregnancy, drawing attention to her body as the biological gateway through which the English monarchy would regenerate. It would only be through her body that the new Stuart dynasty could secure the throne for future generations while birthing “extra” Stuarts to act as living peace treaties through foreign marriages. Painting her

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<sup>130</sup> Orgel, “Marginal Jonson,” 146-9.

<sup>131</sup> Aasand, “To blanch an Ethiop,” 273.

pregnant, exposed skin a shockingly dark shade, Anna made her body hyper-visible in this court performance. Imagining her conspicuous blackness as a communicable infection or an agent of racial contamination, Carleton feared the use of paint over black fabric would soil those with whom the painted Queen and her dancing “blackamoor” nymphs came into direct contact. In this way, Anna’s pregnant body—perhaps quite literally—left her impression on the English court.

The Stuart court performed their masques, renowned for their costly displays of bounty, to celebrate holidays and weddings, as well as visits from foreign diplomats and royalty.<sup>132</sup> As Carleton notes in his letter to John Chamberlain, those in attendance included the “Spanish and Venetian ambassadors...and most of the French about town.”<sup>133</sup> As such, these masques not only entertained, but also advertised the country’s economic stability, cultural vibrancy, and rising imperial ambitions to England’s global competitors; this is especially true of *The Masque of Blackness*.<sup>134</sup> While court performances were surely not the only method whereby James promoted his imperial aspirations, analyzing *Blackness* and its stage history closely, it becomes clear this performance was not merely a sumptuous exhibition of wealth, but also a deeply politically minded, propagandistic display of power, for James as well as Anna. The problem here, of course, is that their propaganda is at odds.

## **Part 2**

### **“I am the Husband, and all the whole Isle is my lawfull Wife”:**

#### ***Blackness as a Political Project***

While most of Queen Anna’s political actions in England appear domestic on the surface, when we look to her assertions of matriarchal authority, we can see that “it seems impossible to

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<sup>132</sup> When James suggested another holiday entertainment at court after *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*, the Privy Council informed him this would cost somewhere in the neighborhood of £4000, a hefty bill James was not prepared to foot (Orgel, “Inventing the Stuart Masque,” 131).

<sup>133</sup> Carleton, 68.

<sup>134</sup> As Kim F. Hall notes, *The Masque of Blackness* “is filled with references to the new status of England as the seat of a growing empire and the significance of its identity as Britannia” (133). I will discuss *Blackness*’s imperial motivations below.

separate her maternal and political instincts,” as Leeds Barroll observes.<sup>135</sup> In this section, I analyze *Masque of Blackness* as a piece of propaganda and the ways in which Anna subverted this project by drawing public attention to her darkened, fecund body as a political tool in Stuart court politics.<sup>136</sup> Martin Butler argues, because masques were typically only seen once and performed before relatively small audiences, they did not “function as political propaganda and information management in the way in which we understand those things today.”<sup>137</sup>

Nevertheless, he concedes that, because these spectators “were drawn from the social elites [who] channeled royal authority into the realm at large,” these masques were indeed “an important point of contact between the crown and its political class.”<sup>138</sup> However, despite these broad opportunities for contact at and through masque performances, Butler holds fast to the notion that Anna of Denmark was apolitical while in England, a myth long-dispelled by scholars including Leeds Barroll, Clare McManus, and Sophie Tomlinson.<sup>139</sup> Failing to consider work that recovers Anna as an important political actor in the Stuart court, Butler instead insists that “Anna’s masques were never explicitly political: they made no attempt to allegorize alternatives to James’s policies. Her masquing was always framed within his British project.”<sup>140</sup> While *The Masque of Blackness* is most definitely part of James’s British project, as I discuss below, by juxtaposing the King’s stated political goals with *The Masque of Blackness* and Anna’s performance efforts, it becomes clear that the Queen was indeed an active political agent. The

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<sup>135</sup> Barroll, 33.

<sup>136</sup> As mentioned in the Prologue, I define “political,” or “political action,” to be any behavior—subversive or overt—that participates in, resists, or comments upon the present ruling government.

<sup>137</sup> Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque*, 2.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> See: Barroll, *Anna of Denmark*; McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage*; Tomlinson, *Women on Stage in Stuart Drama*.

<sup>140</sup> Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque*, 132.

Queen's efforts to pull public attention away from James's project and to her blackened, swollen belly is an act rife with political motivation.<sup>141</sup>

Bearing in mind Butler's shortsighted definition of what constitutes political action in the Stuart court, part two examines the ways in which *Blackness* constructs "Britain" as a political ideal, alongside the methods whereby Anna distracts from that project.<sup>142</sup> Using James's own political theory—namely, the notion of the king's two bodies, as a lens to explore the ways he sought to subdue Anna's political activities in England, I show that Anna resists his efforts to erase her courtly presence with *The Masque of Blackness* performance.

The theory of the king's two bodies, a school of thought that codified the rightful rule of kings, came to prominence in Europe during the twelfth century. At its core, the theory articulates that monarchs possess a "body natural" while simultaneously ruling the "body politic."<sup>143</sup> The body natural is subject to illness and old age, whereas the King and his subjects in a single mystico-corporeal unit make up the entire undying body politic. For my purposes, I am concerned with how James understood his own bodies natural and politic to govern England, and the ways in which his Queen intervened in that ideal during her *Masque of Blackness* performance.

In James I's political treatise, *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* (1598), he imagines himself simultaneously as a father to his children-subjects, as well as the head of the body politic:

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<sup>141</sup> Butler goes on to argue that Anna spent her time promoting "friendship with Spain and ensur[ing] marriages for her children that built ties between England, Spain, and Denmark" because "her circumstances did not allow her to pursue political objectives in any sustained or systematic way" (133). Here Butler seems to suggest that management of foreign relations and alliances is an apolitical action, a notion which is particularly baffling.

<sup>142</sup> Although Butler suggests Queen Anna never engaged in political action, he nevertheless neglects to offer his own definition of what would constitute such behavior.

<sup>143</sup> For an extended discussion on the history of the king's two bodies, see: Kantorowicz and Rolls.

The King towards his people is rightly compared to a father of children, and to a head of a body composed of diuers members... And the proper office of a King towards his Subjects, agrees very wel with the office of the head towards the body, and all the members therof: For from the head, being the seate of Iudgement, proceedeth the care and foresight of guiding, and preuenting all euill that may come to the body of any part thereof. The head cares for the body, so doeth the King for his people.<sup>144</sup>

Although James imagines his Kingship as both head and husband to the country and its subjects, his own wife forced James to reconcile a split within his court.<sup>145</sup> While Anna previously exhibited signs of willingness to undermine or subvert James's rule in Scotland before 1594, the custody battle over Prince Henry created a deep rift between James and Anna that never healed.<sup>146</sup>

After succeeding Elizabeth in 1603, James continued to imagine his kingship in absolutist terms. However, upon moving from the Scottish to the English court, he was confronted by yet another separate "body" with which he was forced to contend. Speaking before Parliament in May 1604, James sought to negotiate its role in his absolute monarchy:

And here I must craue your patiences for a little space, to giue me leau to discourse more particularly of the benefits that doe arise of that Vnion which is made in my blood, being a matter that most properly belongeth to me to speake of, as the head wherein that great Body is vnited.<sup>147</sup>

If in his earlier writing James understood himself (the head) and his subjects (the body politic) to be separate but connected entities, here James absorbs the body politic. In so doing, he centralizes the seat of power within himself to wrestle influence from Parliament. Despite James's theoretical merging of his bodies natural and politic, his monarchy remained

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<sup>144</sup> James, *Political Writings*, 76-7.

<sup>145</sup> As Leeds Barroll notes, while in Scotland Anna emerged "as a person of substance with a strong sense of her royal position and with so acute an urge to define and maintain it that her efforts constantly caused political problems for King James VI. In fact, as a political force, Anna often required James's full attention, and it is this Anna who can credibly be imagined as insisting on a royal presence in England." (Barroll, *Anna of Denmark*, 15).

<sup>146</sup> For a discussion of Anna's time in the Scottish court, "largely configured [...] not by her friendships but by her enmities," see: Barrol, *Anna of Denmark* 17-35.

<sup>147</sup> James, *Political Writings*, 135.

fragmented. The split between James I of England's body politic and James VI of Scotland's was a division the King sought to reconcile.

One of James's major objectives as king was to bring together England and Scotland under a single banner: "Great Britain." In his first address to Parliament on 19 March 1604, James states, in no uncertain terms, his ambition to unify the two countries, proclaiming he will not be head to two nations, but to a single unified body politic:

I am the Husband, and all the whole Isle is my lawfull Wife; I am the Head, and it is my Body... I hope therefore no man will be so vnreasonable as to thinke that I am a Christian King vnder the Gospel, should be a Polygamist and husband to two wiues; that I being the Head, should haue a diuided and monstrous Body.<sup>148</sup>

Later that year on 20 October, less than three months before Anna would present *The Masque of Blackness*, James proclaimed his intention to become "King of Great Brittain, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith."<sup>149</sup> Although "Great Britain"—as a term or officially recognized nation—was neither legalized, nor realized, until 1707 under James's great-granddaughter, Queen Anne. Nevertheless, the designation remained "the site of much discussion and debate over England's imperial growth and identity" according to Kim F. Hall.<sup>150</sup>

*The Masque of Blackness* participates in the nation-making ideals James I encourages in his writings and Parliamentary addresses. Although the Queen was the one to commission *The Masque of Blackness* from Ben Jonson, the Twelfth Night masque sought to propagate an idea of the unified "Great Britain" imagined by James. At the start of *The Masque of Blackness*, Niger reports his twelve daughters have been exposed to the works of "some few/ Poor brainsick men, styled poets" of Europe who sing the praises of their "painted beauties."<sup>151</sup> The nymphs, who once believed their darkness to be evidence of the sun's affection, now fear they cannot compare

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<sup>148</sup> James, *Political Writings*, 136.

<sup>149</sup> Crawford, 1:116.

<sup>150</sup> Hall, *Things of Darkness*, 133

<sup>151</sup> Jonson, *The Characters of Two Royall Masques*, B2.

to the fair-skinned foreign beauties whose virtues these poets extol. Like Plato's "Allegory of the Cave," once the nymphs see the sun they cannot return to darkness.

Bathing in a moonlit lake, Niger's daughters are greeted by a vision telling them they "a land must forthwith seek,/ Whose termination (of the Greek)/Sounds *-tania*" in order to find he "[w]ho forms all beauty with his sight."<sup>152</sup> Having traveled to "Black Mauretania," "Swarth Lusitania," and "Rich Aquitania," with no luck, the nymphs and their father fear they will never reach the elusive "*-tania*." Just as they begin to approach the shores of England, a goddess appears, welcoming Niger and his daughters to "Britannia, whose new name makes all tongues sing."<sup>153</sup> Pursuing the sun "Whose beams shine day and night and are of force/ To blanch an Ethiop and revive a cor's," they find James I.<sup>154</sup> To illustrate the complexity with which *Blackness* addresses James's pet project, I turn to Mary Floyd-Wilson's reading of this line, perhaps the masque's most famous.

In Floyd-Wilson's analysis of the masque, she contextualizes the juxtaposition between whiteness and blackness in Jonson's text by revealing how he plays on seventeenth-century understandings of geography, complexion, and Scottish rule. Floyd-Wilson argues *The Masque of Blackness* "forecasts the eventual construction of racialism" and "precipitates formation of racial identity" rather than participating in a cultural ideological binary that was yet to be wholly established in Europe.<sup>155</sup> In an effort to resist popular scholarly narratives of the overt racism associated with *The Masque of Blackness*, Floyd-Wilson notes the etymology of "blanch" is more complex than the mere juxtaposition between white and black. She points out that Scottish

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<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, B3. This "new name" is in reference to the newly coined and conceived "Great Britain."

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, While the "bright sun" grants the African princesses their wish to be washed in the beauty of whiteness, the transformation would not be complete for another three years. Anna and her chosen entourage of court ladies performed *The Masque of Beauty* on 10 January 1608. In *Blackness*'s "sequel," the daughters of Niger are washed white.

<sup>155</sup> Floyd-Wilson, 186.

law permits the king to “blacken” or “black-ward” a Scotsman, thereby conscripting him to military duty.<sup>156</sup> Alternatively, as a “Scottish legal term, “blanching” refers to the king’s ability to transform a subject’s material debt to the crown into a merely ceremonial display of allegiance.”<sup>157</sup> In other words, the King has the ability to transform a debt of military service into a fee or payment of honor, a “civilizing process” as Floyd-Wilson puts it.<sup>158</sup> James states as much in *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*:

the whole subjects being but his vassals, and from him holding all their lands as their over-lord, who according to good services done unto him, changeth their holdings from tacke to feu, from ward to blanch, erecteth new Baronies, and uniteth old, without advice or authoritie of either Parliament of any other subaltern judicial seat.<sup>159</sup>

In this way, the nymphs desire to be materially whitened, and incorporated into the royal body politic of the Stuart crown.

Floyd-Wilson’s reading suggests the Stuarts contracted *Blackness* in order to display Stuart power, means, and political authority by promoting a sense of joining cultures, rather than subsuming them.<sup>160</sup> However, Floyd-Wilson largely bases her examination of the masque on the formal aspects of Jonson’s text in relation to Stuart political culture, thereby largely disregarding the material reality or impact of blackness as spectacle on the Queen’s pregnant skin. Floyd-Wilson convincingly argues that the differences between blackness and whiteness in the masque’s text do not fall along the same racialized divide we understand today, but instead anticipate these imperial constructions of race that accompany British colonial expansion. Nevertheless, she neglects existing cultural constructions that associated whiteness with beautiful civility and blackness with ugly barbarity. Carleton does insist, after all, that one “cannot

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 191 n.25.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> James, 73.

<sup>160</sup> While Anna commissioned the masque and stipulated the performance constraints, James paid for the Twelfth Night entertainment at a price hovering around £4000. See: Barroll, *Anna of Denmark*, 100.

imagine a more ugly sight than a Troop of lean-cheek'd Moors.” Likewise, Tiffany Stern shows that a “blackened actor, irrespective of character, had an immediate resemblance not just to a stage devil but also to the condemned traitors” whose blackened, disembodied heads appeared over London Bridge during Elizabeth’s reign.<sup>161</sup> Stevens also suggests “during Tudor times, the fact that fools, devils, and damned or spotted souls all wear blackface helps to explain the masque’s negative reception from its English audience.”<sup>162</sup> A recognition that physical blackness connoted ugliness, barbarity, and evil for the court audience goes unacknowledged in Floyd-Wilson’s analysis of the masque.

While Floyd-Wilson reframes *Blackness* as a propagandistic political project that promoted English-Scottish unification, rather than a mere fable of white supremacy via white/black-beautiful/ugly-civilized/primitive binaries, the spectacular performance of the masque and the iconography of blackness must have shifted the focus of this project toward the black bodies on stage. As Kim F. Hall notes, *Blackness* “inaugurated a new era in the English court, which demonstrated a renewed [rather than ‘new’] fascination with racial and cultural difference and their entanglement with the evolving ideology of the state.”<sup>163</sup> In other words: it *matters* that the pregnant Queen plays a black nymph who tries and fails to attain white beauty. The representation of the colonized black body seeking refuge from a colonizing white body (i.e. the King) defies any reading that insists that *Blackness* was merely a vehicle for James’s English-Scottish unification project. Instead, I suggest—along with Hall—that *Blackness* actively participated in constructing cultural conceptions of white supremacy.

Clare McManus suggests that when Niger and his daughters arrive on the shores of Britannia, “the colonized” come to the colonizer, thereby complicating “the imaginative equation

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<sup>161</sup> Sawyer, 2:44; Stern, *Making Shakespeare*, 9.

<sup>162</sup> Stevens, 92.

<sup>163</sup> Hall, 128.

between the female body and territory found in the sexualised images of early modern colonial discourse” by perhaps “constituting an assertion of female and colonial independence” (*Women on the Renaissance Stage*, 43). If we imagine the royal gravid body as part of the masque’s *mise en scène*, McManus’s reading becomes even richer. James’s growing issue marks Anna’s body as royal property. However, Anna—painting her skin a color associated with ugliness, barbarity, and lasciviousness—reinvents the meaning of the blackened body in performance. Rather than tool of the colonizer, Anna resists ownership claiming authority over her own skin and everything beneath it. As such, I suggest that *The Masque of Blackness* displayed Anna’s matriarchal authority, challenging any reading that insists upon *Blackness* solely as a vehicle for James’s patriarchal agenda.

Notwithstanding James’s interest in English-Scottish unification, the reality of his own marriage exposed a proximal threat to his ideally cohesive body politic. Fortunately, the King had a provision for just such a situation: amputation. In another address to Parliament, James asserts it is up to the head to determine when a member of the body has become corrupt and requires “amputation,” lest it contaminate the rest of the body:

And lastly, as for the head of the natural body, the head hath the power of directing all the members of the body to vse which the iudgement in the head thinks most conuenient. It may apply sharpe cures, or cut off corrupt members, let blood in what proportion it thinkes fit, as as the body may spare, but yet it is all this power ordained by God *Ad aedificationem, non ad destructionem.* (182)

When Anna finally left for England with Henry in 1603, James commanded all of her political supporters to remain in Scotland, as he sought to cut her off from her rabbleroising allies. To avoid similar factional activity in England—largely a more conspicuous stage than the Scottish court—James sought to “amputate” Anna’s sources of power and factional support, thus erasing her from the political equation in England.

Despite James's efforts to isolate her, Anna was able to build her own sphere of influence on the English political (and court) stage. For the first time in fifty-six years, England had a consort who established her own separate royal space; James's body politic had, in effect, two heads with two courts. As Barroll notes, "in Queen Elizabeth's time there was only one 'court': a metaphysical area, wherein only the actual, physical presence of the sovereign brought to life a locale."<sup>164</sup> However, upon the establishment of the Stuart court, James and Anna often separated. James would depart on hunting sojourns whereas Anna would establish residence at Greenwich; she wintered at Somerset House, later renamed Denmark House in honor of her homeland.<sup>165</sup> Whereas in Scotland, Anna raised political factions against other peerage contingents to wield her influence, in England she was able to establish her own courtly entourage. This autonomous space "effecting a physical separation from the ambience of James's monarchic court" consisted of women and men chosen for their political influence and familial connections.<sup>166</sup> As mentioned above, handpicked members of the Queen's court then danced alongside her in many of her court performances, including *The Masque of Blackness*.

By participating in the construction of "Great Britain" as a political and national ideal through *The Masque of Blackness*, Anna created visibility for herself in the English court despite her husband's interest in depleting her political capital. Throughout preparations for the masque, Anna behaved as an auteur of sorts as she sought to parade her pregnant body in a conspicuously public arena and assert her position as Stuart matriarch. Anna's involvement in the commissioning, staging, and performing of *The Masque of Blackness* suggests the Queen sought

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<sup>164</sup> Barroll, *Anna of Denmark*, 38.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 39. Denmark House would become the space for an important performance of a pregnancy play, presented twice before King Charles I and his wife, Queen Henrietta Maria. Thomas Heywood's *Love's Mistress, or the Queen's Masque*, had its court premiere at Denmark House on 19 November 1634. This pregnancy play is deeply influenced by Queen Anna of Denmark's masquing career, particularly *The Masque of Blackness*, as I discuss at length in chapter five.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

to focus attention on her own conspicuously pregnant body during the Twelfth Night festivities, despite James's interest in employing the masque as a vehicle to promote British unity and nationhood. Flouting Elizabethan court performance norms in her 1605 Twelfth Night performance, Anna focused attention to her exposed, blackened, expectant skin, placing herself at the center of this conspicuous holiday revelry and performance.

Again wielding her maternal body, as she did with her 1603 miscarriage, the Queen disrupted the unification aspirations the King had for *Blackness* by dancing at court while carrying the first English born Stuart child; if Anna had not induced miscarriage at Stirling in 1603, that child would have filled this important role. As such, the sight of Anna's pregnant body at court asserted not only the continued fruitfulness of the new Stuart monarchy, but more poignantly, Anna's role—and control—in the propagation of the royal *English* line. In this way, the Queen doubled the King's court while the Queen's (literal) two bodies became a crucial component of the Twelfth Night revelry. Pregnancy and politics, intrinsically intertwined throughout *Blackness*, assert Anna's maternal and political labors simultaneously, perhaps troubling the national unity and monarchical absolutism James desperately sought. As such, upon James's 1603 ascension to the English throne, Anna's pregnant body in performance comes to signify not only the promise of peaceful dynastic perpetuation, but also maternal power eliciting patriarchal anxiety.

Although Butler aims to recover Stuart masques as “acts of power as much as aesthetic performances” by recovering “the complexity of the masques' politics,” he overlooks the opportunity to dig in to the complexities of Anna's masquing as political action.<sup>167</sup> It seems he suffers from that malady too often born by English court historians: the devaluation of women's work and alternative forms of political participation, which includes the coded subversion in

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<sup>167</sup> Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque*, 5; 4.

which Anna engages throughout *Blackness*. What's more, if Stuart masques always, in Butler's own words, possess "some explicit political function" then Anna's hand in commissioning, casting, producing, and dancing in *The Masque of Blackness*—an undeniably political fable—must constitute a political action.<sup>168</sup>

### **Part 3**

#### **Anna's Masquing and Maternity: *Blackness* and its Afterlife**

Although Anna was deeply influential in developing Stuart masquing conventions, as we now understand them to have emerged, court performance proved more than a mere creative venture for the Queen consort. Rather, Queen Anna's masques, particularly *Blackness*, were an exercise in raising her own profile in English politics along with that of her eldest son, Henry. In 1604, a year after arriving in England, Anna assumed total custody of the young Prince for whom she allegedly sacrificed her pregnancy.<sup>169</sup> In 1607, the Venetian ambassador to England, seeking private counsel with the Prince, reported Anna was "devoted to [Henry] and never lets him away from her side"; Henry travelled with the Queen's court wherever she went as she was jealous of both his time and attention.<sup>170</sup>

Nearly ten years of factional conflicts in Scotland over Henry's custody suggests that Anna, like her mother, Sophia, daughter of Ulric III, Duke of Mecklenburg, sought control over her children's upbringing. Queen Anna invested in Henry's future patriarchal power as the heir apparent to the Stuart line by keeping her eldest son within her own sphere of influence.

Similarly, when Anna's father died, Queen Sophia's mission to take charge of educating her seven children seemed to pay off.<sup>171</sup> Anna's mother exercised her role as primary caretaker by

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<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>169</sup> As Barroll notes, "there was one person who, when Henry was ten and a half, finally gained complete control over Henry's education and the selection of his companions. That person was his mother" (*Anna of Denmark*, 73).

<sup>170</sup> *Calendar of State Papers... Venice*, 11:10.

<sup>171</sup> Anna's father was Frederick II, King of Denmark and Norway.

attempting to rule Denmark as dowager queen until her eldest son, the future King Christian IV, came of age. Sophia also tried to secure lands for her other children by dividing the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein<sup>172</sup> While Sophia ultimately failed in both of these attempts, she maintained some sense of political influence long after her husband's death, under the rule of her eldest son. Queen Anna's own need to regulate the rearing of her children, especially Prince Henry, perhaps reveals her interest in having a similar "insurance policy" to protect her against both James and his eventual demise should he predecease her.

Exercising her maternal agency and authority Anna sought to secure her place in a foreign patriarchal regime. As a Danish Queen consort to two foreign countries—Scotland and England—her political capital would diminish if she did not tie herself to a patriarch who ruled the country by blood-right. When Henry turned sixteen he received his own palace, court, and the title—Prince of Wales—Anna sought to maintain her influence over the future King. The complex intertwining of this influential mother-son duo is most clearly exhibited through two masquing events: the 1610 *Tethys' Festival* and the following 1610/11 Christmas celebration which included both Queen's and Prince's masques, performed together in an uncustomary fashion.<sup>173</sup> The Queen commissioned *Tethys' Festival* from Samuel Daniel and performed in it to glorify the newly named Prince of Wales. She did so while simultaneously celebrating herself "as queen of England and the creator of a royal race," to borrow Barroll's phrase.<sup>174</sup> Prince Charles and Princess Elizabeth, the Queen's only other two surviving children, joined her in this masque. This moment perhaps served to remind the court—the King and the heir apparent in

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<sup>172</sup> Barroll, *Anna of Denmark*, 16.

<sup>173</sup> This was the first time, since Anna's performance in Daniel's *The Vision of the Twelve Goddess* in 1604 that anyone other member of the royal family other than the Queen performed to celebrate the winter holidays. Barroll suggests that the 1610/11 winter performances signaled that "as Henry was accumulating influence, not only was Anna paying public deference to him, but he himself seems to have been making a point to recognize the royalty of his queen mother" (*Anna of Denmark*, 130).

<sup>174</sup> Barroll, *Anna of Denmark*, 123.

particular—that it was through Anna’s body-as-royal-progenitor that the English Stuart dynasty would continue.<sup>175</sup>

Where Anna previously raised political factions against her husband in order to gain custody over the heir apparent, the Queen now curated and starred in theatrical displays for audiences composed of international guests and domestic nobility. Simultaneously introducing Henry to the world of artistic patronage and public performance, the Queen consort developed a sphere of influence in which she could embroil her eldest son, securing a place of authority for herself in the English court regardless of her husband’s desire for her political erasure. It is therefore no coincidence that Anna’s participation in masquing diminished drastically upon Henry’s untimely death in 1612 when the prince succumbed to typhoid fever.<sup>176</sup> As Barroll argues, Anna “was a woman who thoroughly understood the political power of ceremonial display, and who self-consciously exploited it for her own ends as long as it proved useful.”<sup>177</sup> While Anna’s interest in performing at court shifted away from her own performance after her investment in Henry failed to pay off, before to 1612 her masquing served as one of the outlets for her political endeavors.<sup>178</sup>

The emergence of pregnancy plays and the arrival of England’s first childbearing Queen in sixty-six years happened almost simultaneously. From the time James I took the English

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<sup>175</sup> For an extended discussion of the *Tethys’ Festival’s* performance see: Barroll, *Anna of Denmark*, 123-4; McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage*, 127; Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque*, 134-5, 183-8.

<sup>176</sup> Anna died of dropsy seven years later on 2 March 1619. Clare McManus notes, in the Queen’s final years “she was marginalized from political and cultural authority” further revealed by the fact her funeral was delayed for a “month longer than tradition dictated” due to a looming fiscal crisis (202). Having established her English political presence through the ceremonial displays, even this was taken from her in death.

<sup>177</sup> Orgel, “Inventing the Stuart Masque,” 136.

<sup>178</sup> That is not to say that the Queen removed herself from the world of court masquing all together, as McManus points out. Anna’s final court commission, *Cupid’s Banishment* by Richard Browne, performed at Greenwich Palace on 4 May 1617, two years before Anna’s death. McManus reads “Anna’s withdrawal from performance and her unprecedented assumption of the coveted centre-point of power at the head of the hierarchy of the masquing hall” for this performance a “sophisticated performative compensation for her” failure to gain more official influence elsewhere at court (*Women on the Renaissance Stage*, 180).

throne until Charles I's overthrow in 1642, maternal bodies became a major source of dramatic interest on public, private, and court stages. During her tenure, Anna found ways to draw public attention to her reproductive body and role as Queen mother. It seems clear she seemed to understand that her ticket to security in the Stuart court was through an assertion of her role as royal progenitor and *The Masque of Blackness* perhaps represents Anna of Denmark's most public and well-documented assertion of matriarchal authority. Anna's 1605 Twelfth Night masque not only elicited reactions from courtiers in attendance but also continued to reverberate early modern performance for the first half of the seventeenth century.

If during Elizabeth's childless reign representations of the pregnant body on stage were rare, during the Stuart regime, I count twenty-three such extant pregnancy plays from a wide array of prominent early modern playwrights including Shakespeare, Heywood, Middleton, and Jonson, some of which are haunted by Queen Anna's performance in *Blackness*.<sup>179</sup> I suggest Anna's performance in *The Masque of Blackness*, as well as her many other public assertions of matriarchal authority, influenced—and perhaps even inspired—the increased representations of prenatal motherhood on seventeenth-century English stages, thereby placing the gestational body at the heart of Stuart drama in seventeenth-century London playhouses. While London's leading playing companies performed a great number of pregnancy plays during the early Stuart reign, these dramas nevertheless follow four distinct dramaturgical trends: patricentric, prosthetic, peripheral, and punishing pageant pregnancies. In the next chapter, I examine the first of these through an analysis of five dramas, each wrestling with the anxiety-inducing opacity of the pregnant body. In these pregnancy plays, the patriarch (or the patriarchal figure) and his anxiety over the trustworthiness of the pregnant body make up each play's core conflict.

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<sup>179</sup> As McManus astutely points out: see *Women on the Renaissance Stage*, 174.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Patricentric Pregnancy Plays:**

#### **The Problem of Opaque Bodies in Histories, Romances, and Tragedies**

Patricentric pregnancy plays have, at their center, a high-stakes pregnancy that draws the attention and, in some cases, the ire of the narrative's ruling patriarch. These gestational bodies become a threat to each play's patriarchal security for a number of reasons including: questions over paternity, the danger of incest, anxieties regarding the female body's ability to disassemble, or safely deliver a viable male heir and secure the nation's stability. As a result, the ruling patriarchs (or patriarchal figures) in these plays pursue methods of erasing, purifying, and containing the fecund female form, depending upon their generic orientation. The histories, tragedies, and romances considered in this chapter disclose the threat posed to the patriarchal regime by the pregnant body.

Genre is important in this chapter because it signals the fate of the pregnant character. In history pregnancy plays, the King, rather than the gestating Queen, is the source for all anxiety related to the pregnancy. In both Rowley's *When You See Me, You Know Me*, and *Henry VIII*, the last Tudor King frets over his respective wives' ability to successfully produce a male heir who can secure the royal line. All concern over the pregnant or laboring body is filtered through Henry and the audience only ever comes to know the pregnancy through his perspective while the pregnant Queen is effectively silenced once she delivers her child. Meanwhile, in tragic pregnancy plays, pregnant women attempt to control their own destiny yet fall victim to the machinations of their respective patriarchal counterparts. These mothers are murdered as a result of their disobedience and unwieldy maternal bodies. Similarly, pregnancy plays that commonly fall under the umbrella of a "romance" see the deaths of pregnant characters, but resist the trappings of tragedy by resurrecting these mothers once they are sufficiently de-sexed by middle

age. Shakespeare's *Pericles*, provides an example of the ways in which romantic patricentric pregnancy plays erase, then resurrect the maternal body.<sup>180</sup>

The King's Men first performed *Pericles: Prince of Tyre* at the Globe Theatre in 1607 or 1608; Shakespeare's late romance then received its first publication in 1609. The play was apparently quite popular as the title page notes it was "various and sundry times acted by his Majesty's Servants, at the Globe on the Bankside."<sup>181</sup> In addition, Roger Warren notes in his introduction to the play that *Pericles* received several printings, thereby "suggesting an exceptional public demand."<sup>182</sup> Midway through the play, the titular character's pregnant wife, Thaisa, enters. In a dumb show, Pericles receives news that he can now return safely to his kingdom; he plans to set off immediately. Meanwhile, his new bride enters "with child" accompanied by her nurse, Lychorida.<sup>183</sup> The stage directions here suggest the audience would have taken note of this pregnancy, as discussed in the Prologue to this study.<sup>184</sup> If, perhaps, audience members failed to take notice of Thaisa's abundant fertility, Gower explicitly makes note of her belly when he states that Pericles's "Queen with child" insists she will accompany her husband on his voyage to reclaim the throne of Tyre.<sup>185</sup> This is the only point at which Thaisa appears on stage when pregnant. While it is not clear how far along Thaisa is at this point or how large the prosthetic belly appears beneath the boy actor's gown, the stage directions in the first play's original publication, and Gower's explicit reference to Thaisa being "with child," indicates that pregnancy is crucial to the play's *mise en scène* in this moment.

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<sup>180</sup> I borrow the concept parental erasure from Marie-Hélène Huet. See: *Monstrous Imagination*, 1-10.

<sup>181</sup> Shakespeare, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*. London: 1609. *Early English Books Online*. Accessed September 4, 2016. Title page.

<sup>182</sup> Shakespeare and George Wilkins. *A Reconstructed Text of Pericles, Prince of Tyre*. Ed. Roger Warren. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. 1. Warren notes that *Pericles* received printings in 1611, 1619, 1630, and 1635 (See: 1 n2; 71-71-80).

<sup>183</sup> Shakespeare, *Pericles*, E1.

<sup>184</sup> See the discussion of Heywood's *The Golden Age* in the Prologue, 1.

<sup>185</sup> Shakespeare, *Pericles*, E1.

On their voyage, a violent tempest captures Pericles's ship. Gower notes Thaisa, frightened by the storm's ferocity, falls into labor.<sup>186</sup> Lychordia, entering with the King's infant daughter, reports Thaisa died while delivering their daughter.<sup>187</sup> The nurse brings Pericles a "piece of [his] dead queen," then reveals the limp body of Pericles's deceased wife.<sup>188</sup> The superstitious sailors on board convince Pericles that the dead "queen must overboard," or the storm in which they are presently embroiled will never cease.<sup>189</sup> Pericles consents, places her limp body in a trunk, and mournfully tosses her overboard with enough money for a burial should she ever arrive on shore. In only a few moments the audience witnesses the death of the pregnant-turned-laboring woman, her enclosure within a casket that will hopefully contain whatever influence she has over the violent storm, and her subsequent erasure from the play, at which point the sea supposedly quits its violent raging. Despite this tragic burial at sea, Thaisa never really died; nevertheless, she resurrects at the end of the play. After the sailors throw Thaisa overboard, she awakens on the shores of Ephesus when her casket washes up on the beach. She becomes a chaste acolyte to the goddess Diana, having lost her husband and her child. Many years later—near the play's end—Pericles and their teenage daughter, Marina, discover Thaisa at Diana's Ephesian temple. The family is fully restored when the mother is fully revived, a moment Shakespeare echoes in *The Winter's Tale* (1611), discussed in detail below. Likewise, the moment Lychordia announces Thaisa's death and Marina's birth, the infant replaces the mother; the chaste, enclosed, and knowable infant replaces the sexualized, leaky laboring body. Samuel Rowley anticipates this moment in the history play, *When You See Me*,

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<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, E2.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

*You Know Me* (1604). Shakespeare and Fletcher likewise echo the pattern of Thaisa's pregnancy, enclosure, and erasure in *Henry VIII* (1613).

In what follows, I examine how the representation of pregnant bodies in patricentric pregnancy plays evince a widespread mistrust in the female body's latent ability to contaminate family bloodlines, corrupt dynastic prospects, and disrupt the best laid plans of men. Ultimately, the fate and dramaturgical function of each pregnant character follows generic convention, as discussed above, and I organize the chapter accordingly. In part one, I put Samuel Rowley's *When You See Me, You Know Me* (1604) and Shakespeare and Fletcher's *Henry VIII* (1613) into conversation with one another. While many scholars have studied these plays together, there exists no extended discussion regarding the performance of queenly fecundity, or their dramaturgical significance in relation to the dramatized Henry VIII's anxiety over securing a viable heir.<sup>190</sup> While Henry commands Katherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, and Jane Seymour's respective wombs to produce male heirs capable of sustaining the Tudor legacy, he nevertheless exhibits frustration over the queens' potential disobedience. In both plays, the King's angst is inseparable from his distrust in the female body's ability to secure suitable progeniture. Throughout *When You See Me, You Know Me* and *Henry VIII*, the King projects his anxiety directly on to the pregnant skin of these queen mothers, who are eventually erased in favor of the infants their bodies produce. In my analysis of *When You See Me*, I will especially attend to such

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<sup>190</sup> Gaywyn Moore's recent study argues that together, *When You See Me* and *Henry VIII* "expose the dismantled position of the Renaissance English queen at the historical moment that medieval Queenship fails and highlight the unstable and reduced position that future English queens would inherit" (28). However, the plays' pregnancies are peripheral to her overall project. Much of the critical attention paid to Rowley's lesser-known history play contrasts *When You See Me, You Know Me* with *Henry VIII*, arguing the play evinces Shakespeare's superiority over his contemporaries. In Kim H. Noling's 1993 article, "Women's Will in *When You See Me, You Know Me*," she similarly observes these trends, noting all "significant criticism in English of Rowley's play uses it primarily to understand and value Shakespeare's play" (339, n1). More recently, Warren Chernaik's 2007 *Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare's History Plays* calls Shakespeare's Henry "a more complex, enigmatic figure than Rowley's" (176). Despite the history of Bardolatry surrounding *When You See Me*'s critical reception, Rowley's historical drama has inherent value as it illuminates rich possibilities with respect to early modern casting practices and representations of the pregnant body in Stuart drama.

material factors as casting practices in order to explore the ways in which this maternal erasure may have been enacted literally on the bodies of boy actors.

In part two, “Bodies in Crisis: Acts of Violence against the Pregnant Body,” I analyze Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*, Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* (c. 1614), and Ford’s *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore* (c. 1630), each of which feature pregnant protagonists who similarly find their bodies under the intense scrutiny of their respective patriarchal counterparts. As a result, the women in these plays suffer death at the hands of those who control their fecund bodies under surveillance and control. The heroines of these three plays—Hermione, the Duchess, and Annabella—each suffer under the duress of men who try to contain and comprehend their unwieldy maternal bodies. Whereas Hermione resurrects at the end of *The Winter’s Tale*—a romance akin to *Pericles*—both the Duchess and Annabella succumb to the violence that dictates their tragic ends. I organize my analysis of these plays in roughly chronological order, while attending to the ways in which genre continues to dictate the dramaturgical function of pregnant characters.

### **Part 1**

#### **“One phoenix dying, gives another life”: Maternal Erasure in Two History Plays**

In seventeenth-century London the pregnancy of a married royal or noblewoman was often cause for celebration. The visibly pregnant belly could signal the husband’s virility, the wife’s fertility, the marriage’s functionality, and the peaceful continuation of the dynastic line. Perhaps most importantly, a noblewoman’s pregnancy heralded another private world inside her own body—one impenetrable to the male gaze. Building on Gaywyn Moore’s recent argument that “these plays represent Henry VIII’s family, household, and court as disordered and

destabilized by the changing definition and body of England's queen," I provide a more sustained consideration of early modern original performance practices.<sup>191</sup>

The pregnant queen's body represents a liminal space between the present rule of the body politic and the kingdom's future governance, because the potential of a male heir exists from the moment a queen announces her pregnancy. As Karen Newman points out, early obstetrical images "present an ideology of gender—the stereotypically passive female body-as-vessel and a conversely active, always-represented-as-male fetus."<sup>192</sup> In other words, the fetus was male, and perhaps heir, until proven otherwise. Despite this sense of maternal "passivity," many thought the mother to have great influence over her child's health and appearance *in utero*, as discussed in chapter one. In this way, the queen's corporeal presence acts as an autonomous extension of the king when she grows and sustains the heir who will secure the body politic's health. In both *When You See Me, You Know Me* and *Henry VIII* this reality troubles the King's ability to imagine himself as absolutely and singularly powerful.

### **When You See Me, You Know Me, William Rowley (1604)**

First published in 1605, *When You See Me, You Know Me* was originally performed in 1604 by "the high and mightie Prince of Wales his servants," formerly known as the Admiral's Men.<sup>193</sup> Samuel Rowley's historical drama tells the story of Henry VIII's life events between 1537 and 1546: from Prince Edward's birth by Jane Seymour, to the arrest of Henry's sixth and final wife, Katherine Parr. Over the course of Rowley's drama, the future King Edward VI grows from a spirited boy, evading his tutors in order to play tennis with his friends, to a bold and

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<sup>191</sup> Moore, 51.

<sup>192</sup> Newman, 33.

<sup>193</sup> Rowley, *When You See Me*, frontispiece. The initial performance of *When You See Me* occurred at the Fortune in 1604 after James awarded The Admiral's Men a new patent on 19 February, at which point they were re-named The Prince's Men (Gurr, *Shakespearean Companies*, 114). The company performed no plays from March 1603, when the queen died, until late autumn that same year. Taking this into account along with the claim of patronage on the title page, the play's initial performance would have occurred after receiving their new patron.

courageous young man, standing up to the King when Henry threatens the life of Edward's stepmother. The play's expansive plot aims to balance Henry's personal and political conflicts by giving nearly equal stage time to Cardinal Wolsey's Popish machinations. Despite the religious conflicts in which the drama is embroiled, the play's subtitle, *With the Birth and vertuous Life of Edward Prince of Wales*, suggests Prince Edward's arrival in the world and, thus, Queen Jane's pregnancy, remain important to considerations of this play's performance history.

While Kim Noling argues, "Queen Jane commands little dramatic interest except insofar as her troubled labor allows Rowley early in the play to confront the significance of a woman's reproductive power to Henry VIII," I suggest Jane commands a great deal of dramatic interest within the pregnancy play subgenre.<sup>194</sup> Jane is the only pregnant character who explicitly sacrifices her life for the sake of the child, thus appearing the perfect mother and English citizen. After this early pregnancy play, most gestating characters are represented as unwieldy and untrustworthy creatures, many of whom are accused (or even guilty) of hiding a pregnancy, faking a pregnancy, conceiving an illegitimate child, or failing to provide a suitable male heir on command. The representation of pre-natal motherhood throughout the remainder of the Stuart reign present women who challenge, defy, and resist the government of their respective patriarchs, whereas Jane self-consciously fulfills her role as the gateway through which the Tudor line will sustain itself. What's more, I speculate that throughout *When You See Me*, Jane's maternal body, though neutralized of its opacity and mystery through labor and death, continues to "command dramatic interest" by reanimating on the body of the boy actor who played Prince Edward, England's future King.

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<sup>194</sup> Noling, 328.



Although a common exclamation of his throughout the play, Henry's invocation of "Mother of God" in this moment reflects his hope that Jane carries a son who will be King: God's anointed sovereign ruler.<sup>200</sup>

Throughout this scene, Henry obsesses over Jane's swelling body. Pregnancy after disappointing pregnancy has left him with two daughters; Jane perhaps carries the male child the Tudor line so badly needs. Whatever Henry's hopes, Jane's body nevertheless behaves as an independent and unpredictable extension of the king's body politic when she carries the would-be prince in her womb. The Queen's pregnant body disrupts Henry's ability to imagine himself as an absolute sovereign while Jane who grows and carries the future of the state inside her opaque body. Regardless of his desperation for a male heir, Henry's first moments onstage reveal a Tudor King who appears the perfect husband as he dotes on his soon-to-be-laboring wife.

The Queen goes into labor before the French can arrive to court. The King, conscientious of and cautious with Jane's potentially precious cargo, nervously commands the gossips and midwives to attend on the Queen. Here we see the beginnings of the gynocentric birthing ritual. In early modern England, a laboring mother retreated into a private chamber as the moment of birth drew near. It was in this enclosed space that the gossips and midwives for which Henry calls would construct "a coherent system for the management of childbirth, a system based on their own collective culture and satisfying their own material needs," as Adrian Wilson tells us.<sup>201</sup> In this exclusively feminine space, heavy curtains were hung to keep out both light and air while a group of women—a midwife, a nurse or two, as well as adult women from the community—surrounded the laborer in order to witness the birth.

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<sup>200</sup> Seen again a few lines later: God-a-mercy, Jane, reach me thy princely hand:/Thou art now a right woman, goodly, chief of they sex,/Mother o' God, this is a woman's glory,/Like good September vines, loaden with fruit" (A5).

<sup>201</sup> Wilson, "The Ceremony of Childbirth," 70.

As Jane makes her final departure, Henry suddenly turns to his Queen and commands her body to bring forth his heir.

Now, Jane, God! bring me a *chopping boy*,  
Be but a mother to a *prince of Wales*  
And a *ninth Henry* to the English crown,  
And though mak'st full my hopes.<sup>202</sup>

Henry not only demands a “chopping boy” but also stresses the need for an heir: a “ninth Henry” and “prince of Wales” who can secure the Tudor dynasty. When the moment of Jane’s labor arrives, the King’s vexation over the sex of their baby explicitly links to his anxiety over England’s future. What’s more, when Henry places this demand on Jane’s body, he attempts to regain the Kingly agency and sovereignty currently held hostage by the Queen’s womb, while simultaneously railing over his own lack of control over the situation. Facing the limitations of his own Kingship, Henry recognizes that he is unable to force his wife’s body to provide the son he needs.

Not long after Jane begins her labor offstage, Lady Mary enters with bad news for the King. The Queen’s labor has proven difficult and while the midwives are yet unsure of the baby’s sex, Henry must choose between saving his queen or the life of his unborn child and potential heir. In this moment, the lives of the Queen and the Prince become mutually exclusive: the Queen must die for the sake of the child, or the child must die so the mother may live. Unsure of what course to take, the king weighs his options:

And should I lose my son (if son it be)  
That all my subjects so desire to see,  
I lose the hope of this great monarchy.<sup>203</sup>

Without an heir, the King fears for the continuation of his dynasty and England’s peace should Henry die without a male heir. Notwithstanding these high stakes, Henry instructs Mary to “let

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<sup>202</sup> Rowley, *When You See Me*, B1 (emphasis added).

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, B3.

the child die, let the mother live” and prays “Heaven’s powerful hand may more children give.”<sup>204</sup> This moment seems surprising to contemporary readers given Henry’s historically ruthless characterization where his wives are concerned. Noling suggests that, with *When You See Me, You Know Me*, Rowley sought to “refute a charge quite easily lodged against Henry VIII: that he exploited his queens so ruthlessly to produce male heirs that Jane Seymour died to satisfy his patriarchal urge.”<sup>205</sup> Instead, we see a Henry who struggles to decide in which way he will disrupt his home, court, and country. Once the King renders his decision, he tries to find sense in the possible death of his only son, reasoning God took the child because he would be too weak to maintain the Tudor legacy:

Perhaps he did mould forth a son for me  
And see (that sees all in his creation)  
To be some impotent and coward spirit,  
Unlike the figure of his royal father,  
Has thus decreed, least he should blur our fame,  
As whilome did the sixth king of my name  
Lose all his father (the fifth Henry) won;  
I’ll thank the heavens for taking such a son.<sup>206</sup>

The threat of international war and internal conflict without a clear line of succession was an immediate threat for any monarch, but especially Henry VIII. While his father, Henry VII, came to the throne after defeating Richard III in battle, Henry’s reign marked the first peaceful succession after a long line of martial kings.<sup>207</sup> While Henry VIII freely chooses to save Jane at the risk of ending the Tudor line, he nevertheless frets over his decision that implicitly condemns

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<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> Noling, 328.

<sup>206</sup> Rowley, *When You See Me*, B3.

<sup>207</sup> The irony here, of course, is that Edward *was* indeed a feeble and sickly king, with a short rule marked by social and political unrest. This foreshadows a moment of which the English public was aware: Edward, dying at fifteen, would fail to reach adulthood, and propel the nation into religious and political unrest after Henry left behind only daughters of multiple faiths and debatable sovereignty due to his colorful marital past. Although Edward named Lady Jane Grey as his successor, Edward’s half sister, “Bloody” Mary deposed her almost immediately.

“thousands [to] die” in the war of succession surely following his heirless reign.<sup>208</sup> Henry’s own sense of powerlessness is apparent in this moment when he finally acknowledges he has neither the authority nor the ability to save both his wife and potential heir.

Despite Henry’s labored verdict to save Jane, the Queen intervenes and sacrifices herself so their child may live. Jane gives over her own life and body for the security of the state, reporting she cannot bear to “behold the infant suffer death” while she is able to offer her own life in exchange.<sup>209</sup> In this moment, Jane becomes the idealized martyred mother, giving up her own life for the sake of her child, King, and country in the tradition of a popular strain of English ballads.<sup>210</sup> As such, Jane becomes the perfect sacrificial English citizen, perhaps in direct opposition to the reigning Queen, Anna of Denmark, who showed herself capable of terminating the life of her unborn child to gain political ground and access to England’s heir apparent.

Disobeying Henry’s orders to let the child die, Jane brings forth the “chopping boy” initially demanded by the King. The Countess of Salisbury soon enters presenting Henry with a “goodly son” his own “flesh and bone!”<sup>211</sup> Distraught after hearing the news of Jane’s death, Henry takes comfort in the body of his newborn son. Noticing the strong resemblance between Jane and the infant Prince, Henry attests:

She’s left part of herself, a son to me,  
[...]  
The perfect substance of his royal mother,  
In whom her memory shall ever live  
[...]

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<sup>208</sup> Rowley, *When You See Me*, B3.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, B3.

<sup>210</sup> Noling points out that Rowley borrows from an English ballad tradition that likely emerged soon after Jane Seymour’s demise in 1537. The ballads’ central conflicts center on Jane convincing the surgeon to perform a Caesarian section, thereby ending her long labor and saving the child’s life. These ballads “flourished despite common knowledge that Jane died twelve days post-partum. What is remarkable in the ballad tradition is that it apparently invents the poignant situation of the child’s surviving directly at the mother’s expense,” thereby deflecting blame away from Henry VIII’s reputation of ruthless heir-seeking (Noling 330).

<sup>211</sup> Rowley, *When You See Me*, B4.

One phoenix dying, gives another life:  
Thus must we flatter our extremest grief.<sup>212</sup>

Jane leaves a “part of herself,” her “perfect substance,” within whom “her memory” will live. Imagining his wife and son as a phoenix—an intrinsically tied duality of death and rebirth—the king readily takes one in exchange for the other. However, despite the physical similarities between Edward and Jane, there seems to be no anxiety on Henry’s part that the child is not stamped with the King’s own likeness. Given the explicit invocation of the striking resemblance between the infant Prince Edward and the late Queen Jane, it is pertinent to briefly consider the casting possibilities of this play.

A heavily pregnant Jane appears on stage only briefly in the beginning of the play before she is spirited away to die in labor. From the moment the Queen is ushered offstage to give birth, she falls silent. While her gossips report on her progress, the audience neither sees nor hears Jane again. Despite the maternal body’s absence from the rest of the play, the King’s emphasis on the physical similarities between Jane and Edward suggests the Queen, at least figuratively, reanimates and ghosts the presence of the delivered Prince. However, perhaps these echoes also occurred materially on the boy actor’s body.

Queen Jane dies in birth within the first quarter of the play and Prince Edward arrives on stage as a young man, appearing in only four total scenes in the play’s second half. Given the size and types of these roles it is feasible that a young apprentice actor was capable of playing both mother and son—both Queen and Prince. Asking the question, “How Old Were Shakespeare’s Boy Actors?” David Kathman analyzes playhouse archives and dramatis personae in order to cross-reference them with English baptismal records. Throughout this study Kathman locates evidence to suggest that “boy” actors were played by young apprentices “no younger than

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<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

twelve and no older than twenty-one.”<sup>213</sup> Considering Kathman’s findings, a boy actor apprenticing with the Prince’s Men in this age range would have been an appropriate choice for doubling as Queen Jane Seymour and the petulant Prince Edward in Rowley’s play.

Furthermore, the Prince’s/Admiral’s Men had a history of casting young apprentice actors to double as both male and female characters within the same play, revealed by surviving Tudor plots.<sup>214</sup> While only a few of these plots remain extant, most of them come to us from plays performed by the Admiral’s Men.<sup>215</sup> For example, the extant plot fragments from *The Battle of Alcazar* (1598) names ten company sharers, seven to eight hired men, and about seven boy actors—some of whom played female parts.<sup>216</sup> The Admiral’s Men plots indicate the company not only engaged in the practice of doubling—as all of the commercial playing companies did—but they also had a history of casting apprentices as both male and female characters within a single performance.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Kathman, 228. Kathman, pointing to “Mr Jones his boy” from *Troilus and Cressida*, as well as Dick Jubie and Jeames from *The Battle of Alcazar* plot, argues these apprentices “must have been teenagers or young men rather than prepubescent children” (228). In his extensive research, David Kathman finds no evidence to support the idea that adult sharers sometimes played more complex or difficult female roles. Instead, he finds these women’s parts were only portrayed by young apprentice actors.

<sup>214</sup> These theatrical “plots” are, as W.W. Greg defines them: “documents giving the skeleton outline of plays, scene by scene, for use in the theatre...to remind those concerned when and in what character they were to appear, what properties were required, and what noises were to be made behind the scenes. The necessity for some such guide would be evident in a repertory theatre, and we may feel assured that the Plot was exhibited in a place convenient for ready reference during performance” (qtd. Bentley 211). While we have no surviving plot for *When You See Me*, the text calls for more than forty speaking roles; however, the play’s action only calls for around fifteen actors on stage for any single scene. It seems quite clear from what we now know about historical company practices and repertory customs that the Prince’s Men did not employ forty actors for a single performance. It is more reasonable to suggest that many of the sharers, boy actors, and hired men featured in this drama played multiple roles throughout the course of the dramatic action.

<sup>215</sup> Most of these plots come from performances at the Rose during Elizabeth’s reign.

<sup>216</sup> Greg, *Henslowe Papers*, 138-41.

<sup>217</sup> For example, in the surviving *Troilus and Cressida* stage plot (Admiral’s Men, Spring 1599), Cressida enters with a waiting maid, “given as ‘Mr Jones his boy’” Later in the play Cressida re-enters with beggars, one of whom is likewise identified as “‘mr Jones his boy’” (Greg, *Henslowe Papers*, 142). The “Mr. Jones” in question is most likely Richard Jones, a sharer of the Admiral’s Men. Jones’s apprentice, James, was evidently capable of playing a waiting maid, as well as a male beggar during the course of a single performance. Similarly, in *Frederick and Basilea*’s plot a boy named “Dick” plays the titular female character. This is presumably the same “Dick Jubie” who, a year later, played both Queen Abdula Rais and a young courtier named Christoporo de Tauora in the Admiral’s Men’s *The Battle of Alcazar* (Greg, *Henslowe Papers*, 138-9). Similarly, a boy named “Jeames” is listed

In *When You See Me, You Know Me*, the maternal body acts as a vessel for the propagation of English patriarchy, perhaps emphasized through the Prince's Men's performance choices. Whether the replacing of Queen Jane's maternal body with Edward's is merely enacted through the substitution of the gravid for the newborn, or literally performed through doubling the roles of mother and son, the potential threats offered by the opaque pregnant body are effectively neutralized when the boy inside the woman materializes. The earlier anxiety over the queen's opaque body quells once Henry's son is born. While the husband mourns the loss of his wife, the King celebrates the arrival of England's future patriarch.

Thus, the play's action actively erases the fecund female body. The Prince and future King of England replaces Queen Jane, a possibility for which she freely sacrifices her own life. This moment of artistic invention helps paint Jane as a heroic and patriotic maternal figure who willfully disobeys her King for a chance to secure the Tudor line.<sup>218</sup> Nevertheless, while Henry acquires the heir for whom he hoped, the audience would have known this "goodly son" would not reach maturity. Edward VI's short rule (1547-1553) and untimely death would bring five years of conflict and confusion to the throne until Elizabeth I came to power in 1558.

### **Henry VIII, William Shakespeare and John Fletcher (1613)**

The King's Men first performed Shakespeare and Fletcher's *Henry VIII* at the Globe, nearly a decade after Rowley's lesser-known history play.<sup>219</sup> While *When You See Me* begins

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in the plot as both Ruben, a widow, and a Page. This evidence indicates that it was possible—even customary—for a young apprenticing player to perform both female and male roles within a single play. For further discussion of early modern casting and playing company practices see: Stern, *Making Shakespeare*; Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*; Kathman, "How Old Were Shakespeare's Boy Actors?"

<sup>218</sup> Although Rowley has Jane die in childbirth as a result of her own will to give her life for that of her child, the historical figure died of postnatal complications about two weeks after Edward was born.

<sup>219</sup> In a letter from Sir Henry Wotton to sir Edmund Bacon, on 29 June 1613, Wotton writes that he was present for a play called "*All is True*, representing some principal pieces of the reign of Henry VIII, which was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty." One such "circumstance" was the performance of a masque at Cardinal Wolsey's house wherein "certain chambers being shot off at his entry, some of the paper...did light on the thatch." The fire was said to have consumed "within less than a hour the whole [play]house to the

with the birth of Prince Edward, Shakespeare and Fletcher’s play opens on Henry VIII’s impending divorce from his first wife, Katherine of Aragon. The play continues through to Henry’s subsequent re-marriage to Anne Boleyn and the birth of their child: the future Elizabeth I.<sup>220</sup> Nearly ten years separate the writing and staging of these historical dramas, during which time the depiction of Henry VIII shifts drastically. Whereas Henry tried to sacrifice his heir to save Jane’s life in *When You See Me*, both Katherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn find their reproductive bodies subject to more intense patriarchal scrutiny and ruthless demands for a viable male heir.

The historical Katherine initially married the King’s elder brother, Prince Arthur of Wales. While Arthur died in 1502, just five months after their wedding, Katherine remained at court until Arthur’s successor came of marriageable age; Henry VIII and Katherine married in 1509. Katherine bore the child who was to become Mary I of England, but no surviving sons. The King took this opportunity to break from the Catholic church, and divorce Katherine in 1533 to marry Anne Boleyn.<sup>221</sup> In Shakespeare and Fletcher’s dramatization of these events, Henry justifies his request for separation because Katherine was widow to Henry’s elder brother Arthur. As a result, the king attests God punishes them for their incestuous marriage by refusing to grant them a viable male heir:

KING HENRY	First, methought I stood not in the smile of heaven, who had Commanded nature that my lady’s womb, If it conceived a male child by me should
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grounds” (see: Gurr, *The Shakespeare Company*, 255-6). As Tiffany Stern shows: “During Shakespeare’s lifetime, the play called in the folio *Henry VIII* and situated amongst the history plays was, in at least one of its manifestations, called *All is True*, for that play was in performance when the first Globe theatre burnt down and its topic and title appear in letters and gossip of that time” (156). For the purposes of this study, I use the title *Henry VIII* as it appears in the First Folio.

<sup>220</sup> While Catherine of Aragon spelled her name with a ‘C,’ I use ‘K’ as it appears in the First Folio.

<sup>221</sup> For a detailed discussion of the shifts in Queenship between Katherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn—the first Renaissance Queen—along with their representation on stage, see: Moore, “‘You Turn Me into Nothing’: Reformation Queenship on the Jacobean Stage.”

Do no more offices of life to't than  
The grave does yield to th'dead. For her male issue  
Or died where they were made, or shortly after  
This world had aired them.<sup>222</sup>

Unable to produce a living son, Katherine's womb becomes an easily identifiable threat to the continuation of the royal dynasty, doing "no more offices of life" to Henry's potential heirs than the "grave does yield to the dead." Wielding the Queen's opaque, mysterious, and barren figure as evidence of God's displeasure over the King's coupling, Henry claims Katherine's body is the tomb in which the Tudor line will be buried unless he can take another wife. A spy's report affirms the King's paranoia. In the previous act Henry learns the Duke of Buckingham announces daily: "if the King/ Should without issue die, he'll carry it so/ To make the scepter his."<sup>223</sup> Henry's rhetoric, as well as the impending threats from within and without English borders, renders imminent the danger presented by the Queen's inability to provide a male heir. Consequently, the King divorces Katherine and remarries a younger, more "fruitful" woman.

The historical Henry and Anne Boleyn married 25 January 1533. Anne's coronation took place on 1 June 1533 and Princess Elizabeth was born in September. According to this timeline, Anne Boleyn was pregnant when she married Henry and six months pregnant during her coronation. While, historically, Anne Boleyn's pregnancy was likely visible during her coronation, *Henry VIII's* text does not explicitly state whether or not the actor playing Anne is intended to appear "great-bellied" during the silent procession across the stage in act four.<sup>224</sup> Nevertheless, the play's text alludes to Anne's pregnancy when three men discuss the events of the coronation.

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<sup>222</sup> Shakespeare, *The Norton Facsimile, First Folio: Henry VIII*, TLN 1555-9; 2.4. When Shakespeare's First Folio is cited, I use through-line numbers (TLN) as well as act and scene numbers, where available.

<sup>223</sup> TLN 473-5; 1.2.

<sup>224</sup> Moore similarly notes, "Anne Boleyn would have been about seven months pregnant, and visibly showing, at the time of her coronation" (55 n.66).

Recalling Queen Anna of Denmark's pregnant performance in *The Masque of Blackness*, Anne Boleyn's coronation ceremony becomes a fertility celebration.<sup>225</sup> An eyewitness to the day's events describes the throngs of people there to celebrate their new Queen, including a great number of expecting mothers:

THIRD GENTLEMAN

Great-bellied women,  
That had not half a week to go, like rams  
In the old time of war, would shake the press,  
And make 'em reel before 'em. No man living  
Could say 'This is my wife' there, all were woven  
So strangely in one piece.<sup>226</sup>

The reporter observes that the "great-bellied women" who attend Anna's coronation are "woven/ So strangely in one piece," an image simultaneously sensual and grotesque in its depiction of feminine fecundity. These heavily pregnant women entangle themselves such that it is impossible to tell them apart—or see where one begins and the other ends—as they cheer and strive to catch a glimpse of their new Queen's fertile body. Regardless of whether Anne's pregnancy was conspicuous in *Henry VIII*, these "great-bellied women" celebrate Anne Boleyn's fecundity while calling to mind anxieties over the troubling multiplicity inherent in the Queen's pregnant body.

Shakespeare and Fletcher's play marches on toward its inevitable conclusion: the birth of the future Elizabeth I. Echoing Rowley's Henry in *When You See Me*, Shakespeare and Fletcher's King paces the stage while Anne is in labor, and anxiously awaits good news from the midwife. For all of his power and authority Henry remains helpless in this moment. The exclusion of fathers from the birthing chamber—and the anxiety it doubtlessly produced—has

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<sup>225</sup> For further discussion of Anne's coronation as a "fertility celebration," see: Moore, 45.

<sup>226</sup> TLN 2496-501; 4.1.

lead many scholars to question the ways men sought access to information passed between gossips in the birthing room; one such way was through the midwife in the King's employ.<sup>227</sup>

Given the enclosed space of the feminine birthing chamber, would-be fathers were dependent upon midwives' reports and powers of infiltration to determine whether the child to whom their wife gave birth was, in fact, trueborn issue. As Janelle Jenstad points out: "The midwife was a dual figure, responsible for keeping secret what actually happened within the gynocentric space, yet also given a testamentary function in ensuring the mother's truth about the paternity of her child."<sup>228</sup> While the midwife was sworn to maintain the confidence and modesty of the laboring woman, she was also required to report any suspicion that the new mother named a false father to the child, ultimately making "the midwife the agent of patriarchy."<sup>229</sup> When Anne finally delivers her child, the midwife enters to report on the outcome of the Queen's birth:

KING HENRY	Now by thy looks I guess thy message. Is the Queen delivered? <i>Say 'Ay, and of a boy.'</i>
OLD LADY	Ay, ay, my liege, <i>And of a lovely boy.</i> The God of heaven Both now and ever bless her! <i>'Tis a girl</i> <i>Promises boys hereafter.</i> Sir, your queen Desires your visitation, and to be Acquainted with this stranger. 'Tis as like you As cherry is to cherry. <sup>230</sup>

In this moment, the Old Lady communicates that the child, although a girl, is certainly the King's true issue. Aristotle attests in his *Generation of Animals* that monstrous progeny are those who fail to resemble their fathers. As we now know, children can appear different from their

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<sup>227</sup> See: Bicks, "Midwiving Virility in Early Modern England"; Gowing, *Common Bodies*; Jenstad, "Smock-secrets"; Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*; Wilson, "The Ceremony of Childbirth and Its Interpretation," and *The Making of Male-Midwifery*.

<sup>228</sup> Jenstad, 89.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.* This was done under the assumption that "[s]tate officials relied on the notion that a woman in the throes of labor would be likely to utter the truth about her child's father," as noted by Caroline Bicks (49-50).

<sup>230</sup> TLN 2966-75; 5.1, emphasis added.

parents due to a number of reasons including birth defects, a lie about the child's true paternity, or even recessive genes. Regardless of the cause of the "deformity," children who do not immediately appear to share their father's genes are, by Aristotle's definition, monsters. The most common monstrosity, of course, is the formation of a "deformed male" in the mother's womb: that is, a female child.<sup>231</sup> Aristotle nevertheless admits female births, deeply flawed as they may be, are necessary "since the race of creatures which are separated into male and female has got to be kept in being."<sup>232</sup> For Aristotle, female bodies are useful, necessary vehicles for the continued propagation of male children who will eventually wield patriarchal authority. Despite this allowance, Marie-Hélène Huet reminds us that, in Aristotle's estimation, the "monster and the woman thus find themselves on the same side"; they are both decidedly undesirable.<sup>233</sup> Though the midwife verifies her report by appealing to the physical likeness between the King and his daughter, asserting his paternity had not been "erased" or deformed by Queen's corruptible and corrupting womb—the child is, nevertheless, a girl.

Upon learning Anne Boleyn's troublesome, disobedient body failed to deliver the heir the king commanded, Henry angrily dismisses the midwife and hurriedly exits. Although the midwife assures Henry his daughter is trueborn, her birth is nevertheless a devastating blow to the King and a disruption to his plan to secure the royal line. As the audience would have known, Elizabeth's childless reign ended the Tudor dynasty, fulfilling Henry's greatest fears, as represented by Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Rowley, respectively.

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<sup>231</sup> Aristotle, 175.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 401-3.

<sup>233</sup> Huet, 3.

Elizabeth's christening and Cranmer's blessing ends the play. Queen Anne is noticeably absent from this event; she may have continued her recuperative lying-in until her churching.<sup>234</sup> Regardless of the historical reasons for her absence, Shakespeare and Fletcher, like Rowley before them, repeat the erasure of the maternal body as soon as birth neutralizes the potential threat offered by the secretive belly. Interestingly, Queen Anne's feminine presence is not the only one the playwrights erase during Elizabeth's baptism, but the infant Princess's as well. Blessing the future Queen of England, Cranmer simultaneously prophesies the coming of her successor. This moment activates the memory of Elizabeth's non-childbearing body and asserts James's rightful rule—not as her child but as a phoenix emerging from the ashes of the final Tudor monarch.

CRANMER

[...] when  
 The bird of wonder dies – the maiden phoenix –  
*Her ashes new create another heir*  
*As great in admiration as herself,*  
 So shall she leave her blessedness to one,  
 [...]  
 Who from the sacred ashes of her honour  
 Shall star-like rise as great in fame as she was,  
 And so stand fixed. Peace, plenty, love, truth, terror,  
 That were the servants to this chosen infant,  
 Shall then be *his*, and like a vine, grow to him.  
 Wherever the *bright sun* of heaven shall shine,  
 His honour and the greatness of his name  
 Shall be, and *make new nations*.<sup>235</sup>

Through Cranmer, Shakespeare echoes Jonson's *Masque of Blackness*. The "new nations" Cranmer prophesies echo Jonson's "Britannia, whose new name makes all tongues sing."<sup>236</sup> The "bright sun" that shines "his honour and...greatness of his name" recalls the sun whose "beams

<sup>234</sup> In order to be welcomed back in to society, a woman went through the final step in the birthing process after she recovered from the birth. This event—ritual churching—was common practice among Catholics and Protestants. Along with giving thanks, the churching ceremony was also sometimes the first time that the child was brought out into public to receive the blessing of the church and be baptized. Once a woman was sufficiently churching her body was, once again, fit for both public and carnal consumption (see: Paster, 185; 194-97).

<sup>235</sup> TLN 3410-23; 5.4, emphasis added.

<sup>236</sup> Jonson, *The Characters of Two Royall Masques*, B3.

shine day and night and are of force/ To blanch an Ethiop and revive a cor's."<sup>237</sup> Cranmer's entire prophesy looks forward to James, who, "star-like rise[s]" from Elizabeth's ashes to usher forth the Stuart regime for the English people.

Simultaneously, Shakespeare and Fletcher echo Rowley's own evocation of the phoenix/newborn dynamic after Jane Seymour's death. Just as Edward replaced Jane, Elizabeth replaces Anne Boleyn. In turn, Elizabeth's future successor replaces the infant princess in the audience's imagination during the child's baptismal blessing. In this King's Men play, the infant Elizabeth's greatest value is in her ability to "promise boys hereafter," bringing forth the future King James I: the first of the Stuart line and, significantly, the company's royal patron. In this way, the dramatic assertion of the rightful Stuart rule neutralizes the unpredictable pregnant body and the question of the corrupting potential of biological maternity. This matrix of embodied and imagined substitutions help keep the rightful rule of the present patriarch in the forefront of the audiences' minds.

Finally, Cranmer's blessing calls to mind the homage paid to James in *Macbeth's* "Show of Eight Kings." Like the coming of James after Elizabeth in *Henry VIII*, Hecate and the Weird Sisters prophesy the potent absence of the unreliable maternal body. In *Macbeth*, the titular character sees a line of kings "stretch out to th' crack of doom."<sup>238</sup> In this world of kings begetting kings—of monarchs sexlessly begetting monarchs—the anxiety-inducing maternal body is effectively expunged. Similarly, the romantic, historical dramatization of Henry's rule and Elizabeth's birth presents James's ascension to the throne as divinely ordained. The first Stuart King will come to the throne not through Elizabeth's troublesome and unpredictable womb, but as a mythical phoenix rising from the Tudor ashes.

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<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>238</sup> Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, TLN 1664; 4.1.

In the historical pregnancy plays discussed above, the fecund Queen problematically multiplies the body politic: when a queen conceives and carries the (potential) future sovereign in her womb, a battle ensues over the child *in utero*. Combatting this patriarchal angst, Rowley, Shakespeare, and Fletcher effectively expunge the fecund feminine bodies from the play, and replace them with the presence (or idea) of the next male monarch. Whereas *When You See Me* and *Henry VIII* wrestled with anxiety directed toward the sex of the unknown child and the resulting political fallout in the wake of a “deformed” birth, the remainder of this chapter will critically examine male disquiet over the opaque female body and her imagined ability to maliciously disrupt the carefully crafted patriarchal state. In the history plays discussed above, the playwrights more or less follow the historical record, while emphasizing the importance of (male) monarchy’s stability with respect to the line of succession. In the romance and tragedies that follow, this anxiety extends not only to the mysteries held within the mother’s womb, but the secrets she is thought to willfully hide within her heart and mind. Whereas Hermione is able to successfully (and mystically) reanimate in the spirit of Shakespeare’s late romances, the pregnant body in tragedy—namely *Duchess* and *’Tis Pity*—are subject to overbearing patriarchal surveillance and gruesome violence.

## **Part 2**

### **Bodies in Crisis: Violence and the Pregnant Body in Romance and Tragedy**

The numerous patriarchal figures in Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*, Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* and Ford’s *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore* obsess over the readily permeable yet troublingly opaque female body; especially her ability to pollute the bloodline, thereby perverting the dynastic state through her secretive womb. In other words, the kings, husbands, fathers, and brothers in these three plays are obsessed with what they cannot see. The remainder of chapter two examines the ways in which Shakespeare, Webster, and Ford write this patriarchal

anxiety into their pregnancy plays by staging gestational bodies imagined to hide truths, deceive men, and contaminate dynastic lines.

While Anne Boleyn and Jane Seymour's pregnancies are important to their plays' respective plots, the pregnant characters themselves are not central to the action of each drama; rather, the dramatic focus is on the children inside their bellies and Henry's anxiety with respect to the child's sex. In contrast, the pregnant characters in *Winter's Tale*, *Duchess of Malfi*, and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* are each protagonists in their own right. The circumstances (or suspected circumstances) of their pregnancies drive the plot, action, and conflict of these three pregnancy plays. Despite the structural and generic divergences amongst these dramas, the patriarchal figures in each push to neutralize the maternal agency asserted by Hermione, the Duchess, and Annabella. These destructive patriarchs accomplished this through violently imprisoning the fecund female body. Once contained, these women find themselves attacked through various means in an effort to open the private pregnant body to public, patriarchal investigation. This fact is most explicit in Ford's Caroline tragedy, but nevertheless present in Shakespeare's romance.

### ***The Winter's Tale*, William Shakespeare (1611)**

*The Winter's Tale* was popular in its day with six recorded performances by The King's Men between 1611 and 1633; at least four of these presentations were at court.<sup>239</sup> Shakespeare's late play features a manic and paranoid ruler who suffers greatly throughout the play for his sudden fit of jealousy. In addition, the audience witnesses a magical resurrection and outwardly

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<sup>239</sup> While it is likely that *Winter's Tale* was performed at both the Globe and Blackfriars, as the space became available for the King's Men use in 1608, the only positive association we have is between *Winter's Tale* and the Globe. In his journal, Simon Forman recorded that he was in attendance at the Globe on Wednesday, May 15<sup>th</sup> 1611 where he witnessed a performance of *The Winter's Tale*. See a reproduction of his account in: Stephen Orgel, *The Winter's Tale*, 233. The first time *The Winter's Tale* played at court fell on 5 November 1611, the sixth anniversary of an assassination attempt on the King's life: the Gunpowder Plot. Perhaps the threat to and reestablishment of the patriarchy in Shakespeare's late play served as welcome reassurance of the monarchy's stability for James. For an account of *The Winter's Tale* performances, see: *The Dramatic Records of Henry Herbert, master of the Revels*, 18, 25, 51, 54; *Extracts from the accounts of the revels at court, in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James I*, xlv, 210, 226. See also: Gurr, *Shakespearean Stage*, 298; Bartholomeusz, 12.

defiant female characters—one of whom is heavily pregnant with a suspected “bastard” at the start of the play. In *The Winter’s Tale*, Hermione (perhaps Shakespeare’s most prominent pregnant character) directly challenges her husband’s ability to imagine himself as an autonomous sovereign, both through her conspicuous pregnancy as well as her refusal to beg for her own life when charged with adultery and treason. Instead, Hermione takes charge of her own bodily autonomy, shutting her husband out at every turn. Emasculated by Hermione’s layers of enclosure, Leontes nevertheless imagines her body as an easily penetrable threat to the stability of his kingdom. It is therefore curious that James, with his historical reputation of misogyny and deep-seated fear of witchcraft, so strongly preferred *The Winter’s Tale* to have it play at court with such frequency.

I suggest that the boy actor who played Hermione possessed a conspicuous belly beneath his gown, for a number of reasons. At the start of the play’s second scene, Polixenes, King of Bohemia, bids farewell to the pregnant Hermione and her husband, King Leontes of Sicilia. Polixenes pointedly announces that “Nine changes of the wat’ry star hath been/ The shepherd’s note since” he left his Bohemian throne without burden.”<sup>240</sup> Unlike Henry’s overt gestures toward Jane’s gestational shape in Rowley’s *When You See Me*, Shakespeare only implicitly signals to Hermione’s pregnancy with Polixenes’s opening line. Nevertheless, the immediate invocation of his nine-month stay would likely set off alarms for the audience.<sup>241</sup> As Stanley Cavell notes in his analysis of knowledge and skepticism in *The Winter’s Tale*, Shakespeare carefully coordinates Polixenes’s arrival with Hermione’s conception, thereby capitalizing on the

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<sup>240</sup> Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale*, TLN 50-2; 1.2.

<sup>241</sup> The length of gestation was common knowledge by the play’s first performance, evinced by the widespread publication of biological, anatomical, and midwifery texts. In *The Expert Midwife*, Jakob Rüff notes the gestation period is nine to ten months long, depending on the sex of the fetus. According to Rüff, male children are born at nine months gestation, while “maiden-children, for the most part, are born the tenth Monthe” (41-2).



speculate that Hermione's belly was, in fact, an important component within the spectacle of *The Winter's Tale*. Practically and materially speaking, Hermione shifts from being pregnant to not pregnant during the course of the play. From her arrest in act two, scene one to her trial in act three, scene two, Hermione begins the play "rounding apace" into a "goodly bulk," to being barred from her postpartum "childbed privilege," before recovering from the physical trauma of giving birth.<sup>246</sup> It therefore seems logical that there is some visible change for the actor in performance. What's more, if the actor does appear "great bellied," as I suggest, Shakespeare's latently sexualized language choices paired with the fecund gestational body on stage, encourage the audience to anticipate the dramatic importance of Hermione's pregnancy within the world of the play, as well as the impending conflict that will arise over the unborn child's true parentage. In other words, if Shakespeare immediately, though implicitly, links the length of Polixenes's stay in Sicilia to Hermione's pregnancy while the Queen herself appears a shameless flirt, the audience is perhaps likewise encouraged to associate Hermione's pregnancy with Polixenes's visit.

If Hermione appears visibly pregnant in the play, when Leontes's suspicion over his wife's fidelity is explicitly expressed toward her maternal body later in the same scene, the audience can more easily understand the King's central concern: the enemy has plundered his wife's body, formerly valued for its ability to bring forth true-born heirs. There is "No barricado for a belly," as he insists; "It will let in and out the enemy/ With bag and baggage."<sup>247</sup> Leontes is not concerned that his wife's affections have been lost, but rather that his property—her body—has been raided by the enemy camp. Leontes imagines Hermione's body as an easily permeable

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what she says, the more the verbal evidence, as much as the visual, seems inconclusive, and only increases our—and Leontes's—uncertainty." See: Felperin, "Tongue-tied our Queen?" 194-5.

<sup>246</sup> TLN 607-12; 2.1; 1285; 3.2.

<sup>247</sup> TLN 86-7; 1.2.

territory that allows the enemy “in and out”—an overtly sexual image—and yet the King cannot know what his rival left behind. In a matter of moments, his wife’s body transforms from a regal, queenly container of royal progeniture into a plundered public space that remains open to the enemy’s penetrative campaigns. In Michelle Ephraim’s analysis of *The Winter’s Tale*, she suggests that Shakespeare’s romance fails to completely affirm a “patriarchal fantasy of social surveillance, but instead calls our attention to the competing cultural discourses that simultaneously encourage and assuage contemporary fears about the pregnant woman’s sexual autonomy.”<sup>248</sup> I argue that Hermione’s “great belly” exemplifies this vexing sexual and maternal autonomy as it signals feminine inwardness and unknowability. Her body, which may or may not contain Polixenes’s bastard, is a world inaccessible to the patriarchal gaze or Leontes’s interrogation.<sup>249</sup>

It is not until act two that Shakespeare gives the audience any explicit reference to Hermione’s pregnancy. When the Queen complains she is too exhausted to entertain her energetic son, her handmaidens explain the source of her fatigue. Describing her body to Mamilius, they tell him to observe how his mother “rounds apace” and “spread[s] of late/ Into a goodly bulk.”<sup>250</sup> Within this private gynocentric space, Hermione’s handmaidens describe the shape of her fecund body for the first and only time in the play. The fact this scene takes place within Hermione’s closet is significant because it—like her own pregnant body—is a cloistered, enclosed chamber that creates space for these moments of feminine privacy while nevertheless residing inside the public patriarchal domain of Leontes’s court.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Ephraim, 48.

<sup>249</sup> For an extended discussion of feminine interiority and the concept of inwardness in the early modern period, see: Maus, “A Womb of His Own Male Renaissance Poets in the Female Body,” 182-209

<sup>250</sup> TLN 607-12; 2.1.

<sup>251</sup> For a discussion of the significance of the ladies’ closet see: Molekamp, 58.

If, as Huet argues, fathers feared mothers' ability to "erase paternity" during gestation, that threat continues to present itself during the child's life, proving a powerful motivation to remove royal male children from their mothers' sphere of influence.<sup>252</sup> When Leontes invades Hermione's chamber to accuse her of treasonous adultery, he observes Mamillius, his sole heir, absorbed in the feminine space of his mother's closet, entertaining the women who dote on him. Drawing on Freud, Cavell suggests that this image of the pregnant Hermione holding Mamillius in her lap recalls the flirtation he just witnessed between his wife and Polixenes.<sup>253</sup> Leontes, infuriated by this sight, lashes out at Hermione. Snatching the boy from his mother, Leontes directs his vitriol directly at Hermione's maternal body:

LEONTES                    I am glad you did not nurse him.  
                                   Though he does bear some signs of me, yet you  
                                   Have too much blood in him.<sup>254</sup>

Leontes expresses gratitude that, though Hermione has tainted their son with her presence, she has not permanently defiled Mamillius by feeding him from her own breast.<sup>255</sup> Newly jealous, wildly suspicious, and fuelled by the news that Polixenes fled Sicilia, Leontes whisks his son away in hopes that ripping Mamillius from Hermione's guileful feminine influences will purge the boy of all duplicitousness associated with the female space and body. In a moment recalling Anna's inability to access Prince Henry in 1603, Leontes attempts to limit the power of his

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<sup>252</sup> Huet, 1-10.

<sup>253</sup> Cavell, 196.

<sup>254</sup> TLN 655-7; 2.1.

<sup>255</sup> In Valerie Fildes's history of infant feeding, she analyzes the claim that breastfeeding women not only provided nourishment for children, but also transmitted their "ideas, beliefs, intelligence, diet, and speech, [along with] all of her other physical mental, and emotional qualities" purported by early modern conduct and birthing manuals (Fildes, *Breasts, Bottles and Babies*, 99). In other words, some thought the infant would drink in in the wet-nurse's nature along with her breast milk, thereby undoing efforts put toward the child's good breeding. Maternal breastfeeding is debated in Erasmus's 1526 colloquy, "The New Mother," wherein Eutrapelus argues with the title character about the dangers of allowing wet nurses to feed her newborn son. Fabulla, following the accepted custom, sees no problem with hiring another woman to nurse her child while Eutrapelus argues that when Fabulla allows the wet nurse to breastfeed the baby, Fabulla abdicates her role as the child's mother and permits the nurse to divide her son's nature (272-3).

wife's reproductive body and stem the tide of matriarchal authority, thereby fulfilling his own fantasy of an absolute patriarchy.

While Hermione's closet symbolizes her secret, dark, and murky womb, the King's penetration of her chamber highlights his desire to inspect the contents of his wife's pregnant belly, a space presently unavailable to patriarchal inspection. To compensate, Leontes rips Hermione from her cloistered gynocentric space and swiftly tosses her into a prison cell. When the Queen goes into early labor due to the stress of her situation, she gives birth in an open, public place as opposed to the enclosed, private space of the birthing chamber or personal closet. Where she should have found herself surrounded by midwives and other women offering support and community, Hermione likely delivers her daughter in the company of the male prison guard. The violation of these birthing practices and the humiliation Hermione is forced to endure was perhaps potent for a Jacobean audience; particularly the court audiences for which this play performed on at least four separate occasions.<sup>256</sup>

Although Hermione is "something before her time delivered," her baby thrives in adverse conditions. Paulina, bringing news of the alleged bastard child's delivery, attempts to prove

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<sup>256</sup> Conventional pre- and antenatal rituals were swiftly established by the Stuart regime. On 8 April 1605 Queen Anna gave birth to Princess Mary, the child with whom she was pregnant when she danced in *The Masque of Blackness*. Sir Dudley Carleton reported to Mr. Winwood on 10 March there was "much ado about the Queen's lying down, and great suit made for offices of...holding the back of the chair, door-keeping, cradle rocking, and such like gossips tricks" in preparation for the Queen's labor (Nichols, 1:499). On 28 March Samuel Calvert likewise reported to Winwood there was "great preparation of Nurses, Midwives, Rockers, and other officers, to the number of forty or more" who waited on baited breath for the Queen to begin her labor (1:500). Calvert reports in another letter dated 6 April that prayers were "daily said everywhere for [the Queen's] safety" while a "great preparation for the christening chamber, and costly furniture provided for performance of other ceremonies" (1:505). These details stand in sharp contrast to Hermione's treatment at her own husband's hands. Of course, many women were not fortunate enough to have the luxury of a relatively comfortable birthing bed, an extended lying-in, or even a private birthing room. Gowing shows that in seventeenth-century London "those who were excluded from the civilizing rituals of birth in private were the poor and the single [...] the poorest women gave birth in the fields on the city's borders, or the 'cages' that functioned as local prisons" (151). Surely aware of common birthing practices in his own city, Shakespeare strips any remaining dignity Hermione has left when Leontes forces his wife to give birth not as a Queen, but a pauper.

Hermione's daughter is trueborn. Just as the Old Woman in *Henry VIII* points to Elizabeth's likeness to the King, Paulina calls attention to the physical similarities between infant and father.

PAULINA	<p style="text-align: right;">It is yours; Behold, my lords, Although the print be little, the whole matter And copy of the father – eye, nose, lip, The trick of's frown, his forehead, nay, the valley, The pretty dimples of his chin and cheek, his smiles, The very mold and frame of hand, nail finger.<sup>257</sup></p>
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Believing Paulina a “most intelligencing bawd,” Leontes pays no mind to the visual evidence set before him.<sup>258</sup> This interaction echoes a moment of similar doubt from act one, scene two when Leontes questions Mamillius's “breeding.” Pulling his son aside in order to scrutinize his physical characteristics, Leontes goes in search of any sign of his own paternity on Mamillius's face.

LEONTES	<p style="text-align: right;">Mamillius, Art thou my boy?</p>
MAMILLIUS	<p>Ay my good lord.</p>
LEONTES	<p>[...] What? Hast smutched thy nose? They say it is a copy out of mine. Come, captain, We must be neat – not neat, but cleanly, captain. And yet the steer, the heifer, and the calf Are all called neat [...] Art thou my calf?</p>
MAMILLIUS	<p>Yes, if you will, my lord.</p>
LEONTES	<p>[...] they say we are Almost alike as eggs. Women say so, That will say anything.<sup>259</sup></p>

Again, the playwright endows Hermione's pregnant body with dramatic weight: by questioning Mamillius's paternity, Leontes expresses newfound anxiety with respect to the “calf” presently gestating in Hermione's womb; later brought before him at court by Paulina.

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<sup>257</sup> TLN 1018-25; 2.3.

<sup>258</sup> TLN 983; 2.3.

<sup>259</sup> TLN 192-207; 1.2.

Hermione, made to give birth in a prison cell without any semblance of a recovery period, stands trial before Leontes and the entire court of Sicilia. Having been denied the “childbed privilege” and brought to court “i’th’open air” before she has regained “strength of limit,” Hermione stands before her king and husband as a leaky vessel, overflowing as her post-partum body expels its natural fluid.<sup>260</sup> As she stands in Leontes’s court Hermione musters the strength to speak out against the King’s censure despite her physical fragility. She claims the royal court, following “rigour and not law,” condemning her “upon surmises” of the King’s “jealousies.”<sup>261</sup> The key moment during her trial, however, comes when Hermione refuses to beg for her life so long as she is “barred” from her children “like one infectious.”<sup>262</sup> While Leontes exerts his patriarchal control over his wife’s unwieldy and illegible maternal body, Hermione confounds his efforts by resisting his monarchical authority.

Throughout *The Winter’s Tale*, Shakespeare endows Hermione with the ability to resist her King and husband in order to assert her primary role: mother. Although Paulina soon brings Leontes a report that Hermione died of grief upon learning of young Mamillius’s sudden demise, the Queen resurrects when the time comes for her to reassert her maternal agency: Perdita’s return. It is only when her long-lost child returns—rather than when Leontes repents—that Hermione reanimates in the Sicilian court. Following the practice of Shakespeare’s other late plays—the romances—Hermione’s revivification allows for the re-establishment of the patriarchally dominated family unit at the play’s conclusion.

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<sup>260</sup> TLN 1282-5; 3.2. Perdita was taken from Hermione’s arms immediately after birth, thus she has no way of relieving her body of the colostrum that fills her breasts after labor, although there is no evidence to suggest a boy actor would have simulated this phenomenon on stage. Similarly, as Dunworth argues, the title character of Thomas Dekker’s *Patient Griselda* is stripped of her motherhood and denied her maternal identity; she “literally overflows with grief as tears and milk pour from her” (127).

<sup>261</sup> TLN 1292-3; 3.2.

<sup>262</sup> TLN 1277; 3.2.

Like Hermione, the maternal body and titular character in John Webster's tragedy, *The Duchess of Malfi*, willfully resists the restrictions laid upon her. Her domineering and obsessive brother command their sister to never re-marry and bear children. She defies them on both counts in order to assert her dominance. Nevertheless, the Duchess is trapped by the confines her the play's genre. She is eventually captured, imprisoned, and murdered by her brothers and their need to maintain patriarchal control over her willful fecund body. Turning to Webster's tragedy, I examine the ways in which this pregnant character defies the patriarchal authority wielded over her reproductive body.

### ***The Duchess of Malfi*, John Webster (c. 1614)**

The King's Men performed *The Duchess of Malfi* both "privately, at the Black Friars and publicly at the Globe" according to the frontispiece of the play's initial 1623 printing.<sup>263</sup> Webster's tragedy, first performed no later than 16 December 1614, remains one of the playwright's most frequently remounted works—as was true during his own lifetime.<sup>264</sup> *Duchess* is distinct as one of the few early modern texts to possess a *dramatis personae* that includes not only the original cast, but subsequent replacements as players died, grew out of their parts, or stopped acting all together. We therefore know that Richard Burbage was the first to play the Duchess's brother, Ferdinand; Joseph Taylor remounted the role sometime after Burbage died on 13 March 1619.<sup>265</sup> *Duchess* was again remounted in 1630 at Whitehall in the Cockpit-in-Court for Charles I.<sup>266</sup> The "Malfy Dutches" was later mentioned in William Heminges's 1632 comedic poem, "The Elegy on [Thomas] Randolph's finger," only to be granted a second edition printing

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<sup>263</sup> Webster, John. *The Tragedy of the Duchess of Malfi*. London: 1623. Frontispiece.

<sup>264</sup> In the first printing of *The Duchess of Malfi* in 1623, two actors are named to have played Antonio. William Ostler who died 16 December 1614 first played the role. Robert Benfield played the role thereafter (Webster, frontispiece; Nungezer 42-43; 261-62).

<sup>265</sup> Webster, *Duchess*, *dramatis personae*; Nungezer, 69; 366-68.

<sup>266</sup> See: Gurr, *The Shakespeare Company*, 305; Astington, 258.

in 1640.<sup>267</sup> The continued revival and re-printing of Webster's tragedy suggests *Duchess*, like *The Winter's Tale*, remained a popular pregnancy play in pre-Commonwealth Stuart London.

Prior to Theodora Jankowski's 1990 intervention, critical unease with a female character who pursues political and sexual independence resulted in what she calls, "criticism that focuses primarily on the Duchess's private roles of wife, mother, unruly widow, or victimized woman."<sup>268</sup> Following Jankowski's study, several feminist scholars have sought to recover the Duchess's role as a political figure.<sup>269</sup> In my examination of the Duchess, I examine the ways in which she uses these private, domestic roles—mother, lover, and wife—to seize political power and assert matriarchal authority over the Duchy of Amalfi, even after her death.

In Webster's tragedy, based on William Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*, the Duchess defies her scheming brothers by marrying and bearing three children by her lowborn but worthy steward, Antonio.<sup>270</sup> Immediately preceding the Duchess's first entrance, Webster foretells the trouble that will soon emerge from her womb, likening her body to a Trojan Horse:

FERDINAND	You are a good Horse-man, (Antonio); you have excellent riders in France. What do you think of good horsemanship?
ANTONIO	Nobly, my lord. As out of the Grecian horse issued many famous princes, so, out of brace horsemanship arise the first sparks of growing resolution, that raise the mind to noble action.
FERDINAND	You have bespoke it worthily.

*Enter Cardinal, Duchess, Cariola [with Attendants].*<sup>271</sup>

Before the audience knows of the Duchess's affections for Antonio, or indeed of his for her, Webster foreshadows that Antonio and Ferdinand will continue to antagonistically engage one another throughout the play through the playwright's use of language that is at once militaristic

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<sup>267</sup> Morley, 417.

<sup>268</sup> Jankowski, 223.

<sup>269</sup> See: DEB, "Transgressive Sexuality"; Haslem, "Troubled with the Mother"; Ray, "So troubled with the mother."

<sup>270</sup> For a detailed discussion of *Duchess* in relation to its source text, see: Sid Ray, "'So troubled with the mother': The Politics of Pregnancy in *The Duchess of Malfi*."

<sup>271</sup> Webster, *Duchess*, B3.

and erotic. Speaking of his time spent in battle, Ferdinand acknowledges Antonio is an accomplished equestrian, yet this image of Antonio skillfully riding on back of a horse simultaneously gestures toward his ability as a lover. Most importantly, the Trojan Horse allusion perhaps signals the audience's to consider the role of woman as container—a dangerous vessel which may “issue many famous princes” who have the ability to topple Ferdinand's supposedly impenetrable fortress, from the inside-out.

Throughout the play, the Duchess's brothers attempt to maintain control of her sexual and reproductive body, forbidding the young widow to remarry and bear more children. Before their departure from court, both Ferdinand and the Duchess's elder brother, the Cardinal, bully her into agreeing never to take a husband. Although the Duchess placates Ferdinand and the Cardinal as they bully her into submission, she is unhampered by her brothers' intimidation tactics. Rather than allow her brothers to cloister her fertile, sexual body or sell her at market to the highest bidder, the Duchess chooses a partner for herself. The Duchess usurps whatever patriarchal authority they imagine they possess over her reproductive body, and chooses a partner for herself; she makes quick work of wooing, wedding, and bedding the worthy Antonio. The Duchess quickly becomes pregnant but, as their marriage is a secret from her brothers, the child must remain so as well.

Ferdinand hires the morose Bosola to keep watch over his sister. Although unaware of the Duchess's marriage to Antonio, the ever-diligent Bosola easily reads the drastic changes in the Duchess's behavior, body, and style of dress as signs of gestation. At the opening of act two, Bosola directly addresses the audience in order to confide his suspicions. Making the audience confederates in his plotting and surveillance, Bosola encourages them to take note of the signifiers of concealed gestation upon the Duchess's entrance.

BOSOLA

I observe our Duchess  
Is sick o' days, she pukes, her stomach seethes,  
The fins of her eyelids look most teeming blue,  
She wanes in the cheek, and waxes fat i'th' flank,  
And (contrary to our Italian fashion)  
Wears a loose-bodied gown—there's somewhat in't!<sup>272</sup>

Bosola frankly communicates to the audience what outward signs of pregnancy the Duchess exhibits. Echoing Guillemeau's *Child-birth of the Happie Deliverie of Women*, Bosola points to her swelling stomach, as well as other tolls pregnancy has taken on her body: while her belly "seethes" with new life inside, her cheeks have become sunken and the skin around her eyes is becoming dark, and her eyes "teeming blue."<sup>273</sup> The ease with which Bosola reads the Duchess's hidden pregnancy suggests that these more obvious signs (i.e. her loose-bodied gown that hides her "fat flanks") were conspicuous to the audience as well. Furthermore, as the Duchess is indeed hiding a pregnancy, it seems reasonable to suggest that when Richard Sharpe re-entered the stage, he would have done so while conforming to Bosola's vivid description of the Duchess's rapidly changing body.<sup>274</sup> Throughout this scene, Webster works to make the Duchess's gestating body visible while the character does her best to deflect attention away from the belly she hides beneath the "loose-bodied gown." While this line necessitates a costume change from the Duchess's first scene on stage in act one, the text is unclear as to how different boy actor's "maternity" costumes appeared from typical on-stage women's dress.

The many extant pregnancy portraits produced by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, which date from the late 1580s through the 1630s, suggest that maternity gowns of some kind did exist for noblewomen. For example, in *Portrait of an Unknown Lady* (1595) and *Portrait of a Woman*

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<sup>272</sup> Webster, *Duchess*, D2.

<sup>273</sup> In addition to the obvious signs of pregnancy ("her belly swells and grows bigger, her hips...are enlarged; her courses appeare not"), Guillemeau explains the more subtle cues, echoed by Bosola: "their eyes be more hollow, and sunke inward; and the white is turned bluish" (5).

<sup>274</sup> According to *Duchess's* first printing, Richard Sharpe was the first actor to play the Duchess. See: Webster, *The Duchess of Malfy*, dramatis personae.

*in Red* (1620) the subjects wear gowns with high waistlines that create room for the ever-expanding body while a protective hand rests on top to signal the expectant mother's fruitful womb. So too does this gesture appear in Robert van Voerst's *Charles I and Henrietta Maria* wherein the French Queen consort supports the underside of her belly with a protective maternal gesture (1634).<sup>275</sup> It is also possible that the Duchess of Malfi's loose-bodied gown, pointedly observed by Bosola, may have looked more like that worn by the so-called "Persian Lady" in Gheeraerts's *Portrait of an Unknown Lady*, as opposed to the portraits above.<sup>276</sup>

From these portraits, it seems evident that the gestating body required room to protrude although Karen Hearn notes that "surviving accounts are devoid of references to alterations being made to formal gowns in relation to maternity [and] specific rich maternity wear is not known to survive."<sup>277</sup> Nevertheless, it stands to reason that pregnant women possessed methods to accommodate their ever-expanding bodies.<sup>278</sup> What's more, comparing pregnant and non-pregnant portraits it is easy to see a shift away from the rigid, elongated stomacher that noblewomen typically wore, as in Gheeraerts's portrait of Queen Anna, to a raised waistline that makes room for a pregnant woman's distended belly.

Gheeraerts's pregnancy portraits communicate how early modern audiences may have seen boys costumed while performing pregnant noblewomen, such as the Duchess or Hermione, even considering these plays take place in Italy and Sicilia, respectively. As Peter Hyland points out:

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<sup>275</sup> See also: Hearn, 40-51.

<sup>276</sup> As Hearn notes, the "Persian Lady's" loose gown "might suggest to the modern viewer that the lady is pregnant" (36). Nevertheless, Pamela Allen Brown points out that "evidence exists that a loose robe might suggest precisely that to a curious or hostile early modern eyes as well [*sic*]" (182). Employing evidence from Janet Arnold's 1988 *Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd*, Brown continues: "gowns without tight waists...were considered both stylish and comfortable in the late Elizabethan court. Such gowns were often worn as nightgowns and as maternity wear, though women who were not pregnant also wore them in public and. The Virgin Queen herself had such gowns in her wardrobe" (*ibid*).

<sup>277</sup> Hearn, 46.

<sup>278</sup> Hearn, 46.

[On the] early modern stage there was little attempt to create accurate visual representations of other places and times. Costumes were based on contemporary styles, and indeed some of them were the cast-off clothing of powerful aristocrats that came to the acting companies in direct or indirect ways.<sup>279</sup> (3-4)

With this in mind, Bosola's comment that Duchess's gown is, "contrary to the Italian fashion," was factually accurate. The audience would have seen a male actor in a contemporary Jacobean gown, likely similar in style to the gowns featured in the Gheeraerts paintings above.

Despite the ease with which Bosola seems to read the Duchess's signs of pregnancy, he nevertheless pursues indelible proof of her rebellion against her brothers. Notwithstanding Bosola's persistence, the Duchess continues to deflect his insinuations with respect to her pregnancy. When Duchess carelessly complains about how "fat" and "short-winded" she has grown, she commands a, "[s]uch a one as the Duchess of Florence rode in," to carry her about. Bosola pointedly responds the Duchess of Florence only did that "when she was great with child." Seeming to dismiss Bosola as a credible threat, the Duchess pointedly responds, "I think she did," before turning to address one of her handmaidens about the state of her ruff.<sup>280</sup> In this moment, Bosola attempts to gain proof regarding his suspicions while the audience watches the Duchess defiantly assert her own wherewithal, dismissing Bosola out of hand. Nevertheless, he successfully reasserts control over the situation when he induces her labor, thereby gaining the proof he requires.

Before the Duchess has a chance to leave without revealing too much of her condition to Bosola, he offers her several apricots, which he earlier confided to the audience, would aid in confirming the Duchess's pregnancy. At the mere mention of the apricots "her colour rises."<sup>281</sup> The Duchess, so desirous of the fruit's flesh, devours the apricots without paring or cleaning

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<sup>279</sup> Hyland, 3-4.

<sup>280</sup> Webster, *Duchess*, D2.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, D3.

them while Bosola notes “[h]ow greedily she eats them.”<sup>282</sup> At this point, the spy is wholly convinced of the Duchess’s gravidity. He again addresses the audience directly:

A whirlwind strike off these bawd farthingales,  
For, but for that and the loose-bodied gown,  
I should have discovered apparently  
The young springal cutting a caper in her belly.<sup>283</sup>

Despite the fact that Bosola is about to have the evidence he needs to crack the case, he nevertheless rails against the artifices of women, cursing the qualities of the Duchess’s clothing that prevented him from discovering the “young springal cutting a caper in her belly” sooner. Bosola’s anti-feminist critique of women’s clothing and cosmetics—the “scurvy face-physic,” as he calls face paint—further reflect this play’s preoccupation with male frustrations over their own inadequacies in the face of women who employ materials, such as a “loose-bodied gown” to maintain their privacy, bodily autonomy, and accordingly, sexuality and reproduction.<sup>284</sup>

Feminist scholars have tried to recover the Duchess’s sexual and political agency through declarations of independence from her would-be patriarchal suppressors. Sid Ray calls the Duchess’s “display of her pregnant body . . . a defiant demonstration of gynaecratic power” while Jankowski argues the Duchess “challenges Jacobean society’s views regarding the representation of the female body and woman’s sexuality.”<sup>285</sup> Despite these scholars’ rich and detailed readings of Webster’s text, it is worth remembering that these transgressions and expressions of patriarchal anxiety nevertheless played out in the “safe space” of the early modern playhouse. Whereas Queen Anna of Denmark’s pregnant performance in *The Masque of Blackness* may have been read as a symbolic—though potent—threat to her unborn child, the Duchess was not played by a fertile female body, but by a boy. The fantasy of controlling or containing the female

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<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>284</sup> Webster, *Duchess*, D-D2.

<sup>285</sup> Ray, 24; Jankowski, 222.

reproductive body fulfills itself at the end of the evening when the boy actor sheds his gown, wig, and belly to re-inhabit his male body.

Bosola's obsession over the Duchess's reproductive body and her ability to hide it under a feminine gown is an extension of her brothers' preoccupation with policing and containing the her sexuality, as well as contemporary anxieties regarding capricious female bodies. However, it is not merely the Duchess's sexual autonomy that vexes her brothers, but the way her sexuality yields political influence. The violence perpetrated against her body when her brothers discover her "indiscretions" highlight these concerns. When Ferdinand and the Cardinal finally learn about the birth of the Duchess's offspring, they resolve to move against their sister. Although Ferdinand vows earlier that the Duchess will be "hewed...to pieces" by his own hand, when he finally faces his sister, he merely fulfills his desire from the beginning of the play: he imprisons her, keeping her body closed to and enclosed from the outside world.<sup>286</sup> Ferdinand, in a move analogous to Leontes's imprisonment of Hermione, hopes to neutralize the Duchess's sexual and maternal agency by quarantining her until he can take further action.<sup>287</sup> When Ferdinand finally orders her execution, it is by strangulation and not gruesome dismemberment as he earlier swore. Once dead, Ferdinand revels in imagining the Duchess's body as perfectly preserved and closed to outward corruption. Similarly, Leontes basks in the magnificence of his wife-as-statue in the final scene of *The Winter's Tale*. In Paromita DEB's study of corporeal punishment in early modern drama and culture, the author suggests, "incarcerated female characters, like the Duchess played a significant role in complicating and critiquing social and aesthetic attitudes towards the

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<sup>286</sup> Webster, *Duchess*, E4.

<sup>287</sup> In Paromita DEB's study of the role that tortured female bodies play in early modern drama and culture, the author suggests that "incarcerated female characters, like the Duchess"—as well as Hermione, before her and *'Tis Pity's* Annabella afterward—"played a significant role in complicating and critiquing social and aesthetic attitudes towards the female body," and continue to point to the patriarchal fantasy of containing the fecund feminine body (23).

female body,” while pointing to the patriarchal fantasy of containing the fecund form.<sup>288</sup> I suggest this is true for Hermione before the Duchess (and ‘*Tis Pity*’s Annabella after her). In these disparate moments, Leontes and Ferdinand idealize Hermione and the Duchess, imagining them as purified of their corrupting maternal agency and—by extension— their matriarchal authority in death. Nevertheless, both Hermione and the Duchess defy their own mortality and the fantasy of male containment, returning to the land of the living in various ways, to reassert their maternal agency.

Like the Duchess, Hermione’s troublesomely unknowable, fecund body is contained in the form of stony stillness. Leontes weeps and repents at the base of her dedicatory statue, an idealized replica of his late wife. In a sense, stoniness and fecundity diametrically oppose one another. As a statue, Hermione is still, predictable, knowable, and totally enclosed. As a living, breathing woman, she possesses not only a mental interiority—the like of which Leontes can never fully comprehend—but her fertile, fleshy body inspires anxiety as it constantly moves, shifts, grows and, perhaps most troublingly, creates.<sup>289</sup> Once Perdita returns to Sicilia sixteen years later, Hermione miraculously resurrects from the stature; she returns to life once again when her maternity is restored. While contemporary readers might understand motherhood to be another form of feminine subjugation, by analyzing these pregnancy plays together—particularly the patricentric pregnancy plays—it becomes apparent that these characters are politically empowered by and through their maternity.

Similarly, the Duchess continues to haunt her murderers after death but lacks the full resurrection enjoyed by Hermione. Briefly returning to consciousness after her strangulation, she inquires after her husband who cares for their only surviving child. Her final act of maternal care

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<sup>288</sup> DEB, 23.

<sup>289</sup> For an extended discussion of stoniness, cosmetic paint and liveness, see Stevens, “Stone: Lost Ladies,” in *Inventions of the Skin*, 121-52.

comes in the form of an echo emanating from her own grave. She tries to save Antonio's life, instructing him to "Be mindful of [his] safety," and "fly [his] fate!" so their child might survive—which he does.<sup>290</sup> (5.4.32-35). The Duchess's regenerative maternity continues to shape the political landscape of Amalfi. While she dies, her son will go on to rule the Duchy; as Ray articulates, through the Duchess's hard-won matriarchal authority, "her body politic (or mother's right) does indeed continue to exist" after her death.<sup>291</sup>

The central conflict in *Winter's Tale* and *Duchess* emerges from the fact these patriarchal figures—Leontes, Ferdinand, Bosola—try to control women's opaque, reproductive bodies. Hermione and the Duchess resist their surveillance and assert their maternal agency, figured here in the pregnant body. However, while Hermione and the Duchess affirm their matriarchal authority by publicly defying the men who push them toward their untimely demise, the final play under consideration in chapter two flips this paradigm. Although Hermione and the Duchess at various moments find their bodies enclosed—quarantined and imprisoned from the outside world lest they pollute the patriarchal state—the title character in John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* finds her pregnant body violently (and literally) opened to patriarchal investigation. Whereas Hermione and the Duchess's respective patriarchs enclose their bodies in order to control them, Annabella's brother usurps whatever autonomy she might possess and brutally dissects her pregnant body. Annabella does not have the opportunity to assert, let alone reassert, her maternal agency as Hermione and the Duchess do. Rather, Annabella's body becomes a territory over which the men in the play battle to assert their own patriarchal dominance. While the playwright's gruesome treatment of the maternal body in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* varies greatly from Shakespeare and Webster, Annabella's pregnancy similarly manifests anxiety for

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<sup>290</sup> Webster, *Duchess*, M4.

<sup>291</sup> Ray, 26.

the men in the play. Like Hermione and the Duchess, Annabella's "great belly" signals a private, interior world inaccessible to the male gaze, serving as a catalyst to the play's climax. To conclude this chapter, I consider John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* in relation to the growing popularity of pregnancy plays and early modern anatomy theatres to suggest that Giovanni's extreme violence against Annabella's pregnant body springs out, what Jonathan Sawday calls, a "culture of dissection."<sup>292</sup>

### **'Tis Pity She's a Whore, John Ford (c. 1630)**

*'Tis Pity's* title character, Annabella, is a young maiden whose father is in the process of finding a suitable husband for her among many eligible prospects. Rather than elevate the entire family's social standing by marrying a nobleman above her merchant-class station, Annabella, like the Duchess, chooses her own lover: her melancholic brother. Casting off familial expectations, religious doctrine, and social taboo, Annabella and Giovanni give in to their mutually felt romantic love for, and erotic attraction toward, one another.

In a moment of post-coital bliss, Giovanni turns to Annabella proclaiming:

GIOVANNI            I envy not the mightiest man alive,  
                              But hold myself in being king of thee  
                              More great than were I king of all the world.<sup>293</sup>

Despite Giovanni's radical rejection of traditional morality, he nevertheless reaffirms a conservative patriarchal ideal. Giovanni announces himself Annabella's dedicated patriarch and sovereign ruler. In this moment, Giovanni acts as the head of the body politic while Annabella becomes his wife and kingdom.

In the plays discussed above, the playwrights provide kings and noblemen as patriarchal rulers within the plays' hierarchies. However, Ford's counterpart to Henry VIII, Leontes, and

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<sup>292</sup> Sawday, 2.

<sup>293</sup> Ford, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, C3.

Ferdinand is Giovanni: a seemingly ambitionless despondent Hamletesque stoic, who fashions himself into a “king” ruling over his sister and newfound lover. Like Shakespeare and Webster’s analogous patriarchs, Giovanni displays a strongly held desire to control and maintain his sister’s corporeal borders. When their father puts Annabella “out to market,” Giovanni oversees the events with a scrutinous eye. He observes Annabella rebuff advances from Soranzo, a wealthy nobleman. Giovanni looks on from the sidelines, victorious in his dominance over Annabella’s body.

SORANZO	Have you not will to love?	
ANNABELLA		Not you.
SORANZO		Whom then?
ANNABELLA	That’s as the fates infer.	
GIOVANNI		[ <i>aside</i> ] Of those I’m regent now. <sup>294</sup>

Giovanni’s pride has grown so great that he believes himself not only king over Annabella, but supreme ruler to the fates themselves. Giovanni’s imagined authority over Annabella and her body eventually leads him to take her life into his own hands when she is threatened by Soranzo: his rival in love, sex, and patriarchal power.

During the course of Annabella and Giovanni’s secret sexual relationship, she becomes pregnant. Puttana, Annabella’s nurse, reveals Annabella carries her own brother’s child after Annabella publicly faints in act three. Puttana immediately and accurately assesses Annabella’s pregnancy, a diagnosis Giovanni immediately resists.

GIOVANNI	How dost thou know’t?
PUTTANA	How do I know’t? Am I at these years ignorant what the meanings of qualms and water-pangs be, or changing of colours, queasiness of stomachs, pukings, and another thing that I could name? <sup>295</sup>

Giovanni, self-proclaimed king over Annabella and regent to the fates, is oblivious to the inner-workings and outward signs of his sister-lover’s body. Meanwhile, Puttana asserts her feminine

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<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, E4.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, F.

authority and experience in this moment; by “coyly alluding to knowledge about the secret workings of Annabella’s reproductive body while at the same time withholding that knowledge, Puttana constructs a hierarchy of epistemological authority in which certain information is only accessible to those already in the know,” (i.e. experienced women) as Luttfiring argues.<sup>296</sup>

Fortunately for the sibling-lovers, the town doctor is actually Richardetto, a nobleman in disguise with no proper medical training. Richardetto, unable to correctly read the signs that her body provides, incorrectly diagnoses Annabella with “fullness of the blood,” suggesting she is in need of coital therapy made possible by marriage.<sup>297</sup> Annabella’s father, armed with Richardetto’s (inaccurate) report and afraid for his daughter’s health and safety, forces her into a nuptial agreement with Soranzo.

At this point, it becomes evident to Giovanni that he is not the only one vying for jurisdiction and power over Annabella’s body. Whereas Shakespeare gives Leontes to Hermione, and Webster burdens the Duchess with both of her brothers, Ford ups the ante. Annabella is pushed and pulled in every direction by numerous patriarchal figures: her brother, her (soon-to-be) husband, her father, the doctor who misdiagnoses her pregnancy; to say nothing of the other suitors who would gladly take Annabella as their wife and property. Fighting for authority over her body, these men ultimately destroy the territory over which they battle.

Ignorant of Annabella’s pregnancy, Soranzo marries her only to discover her carefully concealed belly on their wedding night. Dragging her on stage while “unbraced,” Soranzo directs

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<sup>296</sup> Luttfiring, 95-6.

<sup>297</sup> It was widely believed that young women who reached sexual maturity but who held their virginity in tact could become ill or, eventually, “hysterical.” In order to avoid this, they were married off so that they might stave off the “green sickness” or “fullness of the blood,” which was thought to accompany long bouts of abstinence past the age of sexual maturity. See: Gowing, 82.

his vitriol at Annabella's opaque, inscrutable belly. Attacking her "hot itch and pleurisy of lust," Soranzo questions why she chose *him* to cuckold:

SORANZO

And could none but I  
Be picked out to be cloak to your close tricks,  
Your *belly-sports*? Now I must be the dad  
To all that *gallimaufry that's stuffed*  
In thy corrupted, *bastard-bearing womb*.<sup>298</sup>

Understanding himself a victim to Annabella's lustful "belly-sports," Soranzo imagines the child in her womb to be a "gallimaufry": a kind of hash made of miscellaneous items with unknown origins. A child of uncertain pedigree would have been monstrous indeed, according to Aristotle's definition.

Although Annabella admits she is pregnant, she denies Soranzo's demand to reveal the child's true parentage. Instead, she tauntingly assures her new husband that she carries a "sprightly boy," confirming Soranzo's "heir shall be a son."<sup>299</sup> Soranzo, angered by the supposition that Annabella's bastard merchant-class child will be put forth as his noble heir, quickly corrects his wife in true Aristotelian form: he proclaims the child a "[d]amnable monster."<sup>300</sup> Echoing Ferdinand's ravings against the Duchess, Soranzo likewise threatens to "hew [Annabella's] flesh to shreds" and "rip up" her heart in search of the truth of her "monster's" paternity.<sup>301</sup> While the threat comes from Soranzo, Giovanni is the one to make good on it.

Soranzo, upon finally learning that Giovanni fathered Annabella's child, resolves to lock Annabella in her chamber while he hatches his revenge plot. Like Hermione and the Duchess, Soranzo quarantines Annabella until the moment of her death. Aware of Soranzo's plan,

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<sup>298</sup> Ford, *'Tis Pity Shee's a Whore*, G4. Emphasis added.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, H.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*

Giovanni and Annabella take comfort in one another. As they prepare for the moment of their demise, Giovanni rejects Annabella's desire to repent, confess, and atone for their sins.

Unwilling to make amends for their affair, Giovanni, quite literally, takes matters into his own hands. Mad with jealousy and grief, Giovanni embraces his sister one final time:

GIOVANNI	One other kiss, my sister.	
ANNABELLA		What means this?
GIOVANNI	To save thy fame and kill thee in a kiss.	<i>Stabs her</i>
	Thus die, and die by me and by my hand.	
	Revenge is mine; honour doth love command. <sup>302</sup>	

Claiming to save her "fame" by slaying her with his own hands, Giovanni murders Annabella and their unborn child in a single stroke, thereby refusing to allow her body to fall prey to Soranzo's lust for revenge.

The text is not explicit in exactly where Giovanni stabs Annabella and no scholars, to my knowledge, spend a significant amount of time analyzing the entry point of Giovanni's dagger. However, the placement of the actors' bodies in an embrace as Giovanni kills her "in a kiss," followed immediately by his lamentation over the "hapless fruit" that "Hath had from [him] a cradle and a grave" suggests he gruesomely stabs Annabella in her distended belly, perhaps even reaching the fetus inside.<sup>303</sup> This violent attack against the prosthetically constructed pregnant body reflects Giovanni's need to exercise control over her body and reproduction, while depriving Soranzo of the chance to exact his own revenge against the sibling-couple. Like a mad king defending his land, Giovanni would rather destroy Annabella than see her taken by the enemy. I suggest this moment wherein Giovanni kills and dissects his pregnant sister-lover's

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<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, K.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*

body is in direct conversation with what Jonathan Sawday calls the “culture of dissection” prevalent throughout early modern Europe.<sup>304</sup>

In 1540, Henry VIII granted the London Barber-Surgeons four corpses a year to dissect in order to further their analysis of human anatomy. These corpses were to be those of executed criminals fresh from the gallows. This tradition continued when Elizabeth I granted London’s College of Physicians the same privilege in 1565; both organizations continued to operate throughout the seventeenth-century, drawing public interest and audiences.<sup>305</sup> As Sawday shows, this “culture of dissection” captured the imaginations of London’s general population.<sup>306</sup> He goes on to suggest the worlds of criminal prosecution and surgical anatomization became inextricably linked in the minds of many early modern Londoners. The interest in human dissection “stretched into all forms of social and intellectual life: logic, rhetoric, painting, architecture, philosophy, medicine, as well as poetry, politics, the family, and the state.”<sup>307</sup> In conversation with Sawday, Hillary M. Nunn explores violence and enacted dissection in London playhouses. She argues these moments of carnage “call upon playgoers’ curiosity about the physical makeup of the human body”; as a result “Stuart playwrights capitalized on the similarities between anatomical and commercial theatres to add new layers of meaning to [...] the dramatic portrayal of physical mutilation.”<sup>308</sup> With Nunn and Sawday’s work in mind, I contend the consistent performance of pregnancy—and the violence enacted against it—on early seventeenth-century London stages participates in this culture of dissection. Specifically, Ford’s *’Tis Pity She’s a*

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<sup>304</sup> Sawday, 2. For more discussions of *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore* and Giovanni’s murder as dissection, see: Luttfriing, 77-124; Clerico, 425-34; Hopkins, 6; Peterson, 135.

<sup>305</sup> Hillary Nunn suggests “the demonstrations enjoyed considerable popularity among the citizenry, so much so that neither the Barber-Surgeons nor the Physicians could house the crowds of onlookers, many of whom had no professional involvement with these medical organizations, during the times of dissection” (5).

<sup>306</sup> Sawday, 2.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>308</sup> Nunn, 3; 2.

*Whore* echoes growing interests in anatomizing the mysterious functions of pregnancy and the widespread desire to open women's bodies to the public, patriarchal gaze.<sup>309</sup>

Written circa 1630 and printed in 1633, *The Queen's Men* first performed John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* at the Cockpit Theatre in Drury Lane. Also known as the Phoenix, the Cockpit was one of London's leading indoor playhouses, designed by famed architect and theatrical designer, Inigo Jones. However, Jones was not only associated with theatrical architecture and design. In 1636, the Barber-Surgeons Company of London commissioned Jones to design their anatomical theatre. For hundreds of years scholars assumed a set of unlabeled blueprints showed the interior of Jones's Barber-Surgeons' Anatomical Theatre. However, in 1969 D.F. Rowan pointed out that these blueprints could not be the Barber-Surgeons' Theatre as the blueprint in question predated Jones's commission by at least twenty years; in 1973 Iain Mackintosh argued these blueprints must be for the Cockpit/Phoenix Theatre.<sup>310</sup> Nunn posits the "similarities in Jones's architectural drawings suggest that public anatomies were taking on characteristics of staged drama [...] and that actors and anatomists played to similar audiences in similar venues."<sup>311</sup> Moreover, the pregnant body becomes particularly enticing in this culture of dissection because so few were available for anatomization; pregnant bodies were, as Sara

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<sup>309</sup> The widespread interest in making the female body transparent and knowable in early modern London has also been explored at length by such scholars as Chris Laoutaris, Laura Gowing, and Gail Kern Paster. The abundant publication of early modern dissection books as well as the growing interest in human anatomization as entertainment also points to widespread cultural desire to make the mysterious body—particularly the female body— legible, transparent, and easily accessible. The engravings of disemboweled female bodies included in these books indicate a need to reassert patriarchal authority over the female body in a post-Elizabethan society by opening it to male inspection. However, Laura Gowing notes that by 1610, a number of volumes on obstetrical literature were printed, endeavoring to make the processes of the female body more transparent, and yet, "the more texts tried to demystify it, the more awkward the opacity of the pregnant body became" (112). As Michelle Ephraim argues in "Hermione's Suspicious Body: Adultery and Superfetation in *The Winter's Tale*," the gestating body was imagined as an impenetrable fortress of willful, guileful deception (45-58).

<sup>310</sup> Nunn, 111.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

Luttfring so astutely articulates, “the holy grail of anatomical knowledge.”<sup>312</sup> When the already rare female bodies were completely unattainable, anatomists raided graves and tombs as well as intervened in gynocentric birthing room procedures, as Chris Laoutaris shows.<sup>313</sup> He argues,

Maternal knowledge was fashioned at the liminal instant in which the body was most mutable, unstable, fragmented, and equivocal, its ordinary biological processes always just beyond reach. The maternal body *known* was the maternal body in crisis.<sup>314</sup>

In order for surgeons, physicians, and anatomists to empirically observe the inner workings of the female reproductive system—to really *know* the functions of a woman’s body—that body would indeed have to be literally opened for examination. For this to happen, the body had to be one that was already dead (i.e. executed and given over to anatomists by the state). Otherwise, she would have to be on the brink of death due to illness or perhaps a traumatic childbirth.

Laoutaris convincingly argues that anatomists did not glean scientific knowledge about the inner-workings of the female interior by peering into the quotidian female body cavity, but the “body in crisis.” In *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore*, Annabella’s own body is no exception.

Ford’s bloody revenge tragedy sees the evisceration of a pregnant woman at the hands of her own brother-lover as he digs her still heart from her lifeless chest. In this climactic moment, pregnancy as a performance convention is in direct conversation with London’s culture of dissection. In 1628 William Harvey—physician to Charles I—published his discovery of the circulatory system. Divisive as his findings were, Harvey’s work makes apparent the body’s ability to behave as an ecosystem unto itself. For those who accepted Harvey’s findings, the pregnant body lost its sense of permeability as outlined in the theory of maternal impressions.<sup>315</sup> Therefore, a woman’s lies, impure thoughts, and bad behavior could no longer become visible on

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<sup>312</sup> Luttfring, 77.

<sup>313</sup> Laoutaris, 11.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>315</sup> See: Harvey, *Circulation of the Blood and Other Writings*.

the flesh of the child. *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* reproduces the intense angst surrounding Harvey's discovery of a contained circulatory system beneath the skin. The pregnant body, now understood to be an enclosed, self-sustaining organism, had the ability to lie with impunity and hide that which anxious patriarchs would make visible. We can see this anxiety clearly woven throughout the dramaturgy of Ford's play.

By 1630, Ford was able to play with the (by then) established convention of staged pregnancy in *'Tis Pity*. Not only does Annabella become pregnant during the action of the play, the entire span of her pregnancy—from discovery to termination—fits between acts three and five. What's more, *'Tis Pity* remains unique as the only play within the pregnancy play subgenre wherein a woman is murdered on stage while pregnant. However, Annabella is not merely slain but completely eviscerated. During Giovanni's final attempt to see what truly lies in Annabella's heart, he resolves to rip it from her chest to inspect it for himself.<sup>316</sup>

Entering Soranzo's birthday celebration "gilt in the blood/ Of a fair sister," Giovanni wields Annabella's skewered heart.<sup>317</sup> Giovanni, parading Annabella's offal on his dagger's point, asserts his authority as the only man who truly possessed and controlled Annabella through his act of anatomization. Although Luttfiring argues that Giovanni is ultimately unsuccessful in his attempt to glean knowledge from her heart, I suggest that his possession over her blazoned body nevertheless fulfills the ultimate patriarchal fantasy witnessed throughout the patricentric pregnancy plays discussed above: control and containment of the fecund female form.<sup>318</sup> When Giovanni announces he carries Annabella's now-legible heart upon his dagger, he spends a great deal of time explaining the ways in which he dug "for food/ In a much richer mine

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<sup>316</sup> This moment similarly calls to mind Harvey's demonstrations of the heart's active function within the body. He was known to perform vivisections on dogs in order to demonstrate the ways in which the heart circulates blood throughout the body. See: Wright, *William Harvey: A Life in Circulation*, xvii-xxi.

<sup>317</sup> Ford, *'Tis Pity Shee's a Whore*, K2.

<sup>318</sup> Luttfiring, 98.

than gold or stone,” and “ploughed up her fruitful womb.”<sup>319</sup> By dissecting her cavernous and unwieldy pregnant body, Giovanni not only asserts control over Annabella, but dominance over his rival, Soranzo. Finally, Giovanni announces that for “Nine months...in secret [he] enjoyed sweet Annabella’s sheets.” For “Nine Months” he lived “a happy monarch of her heart and her.”<sup>320</sup> It is in this moment that Annabella’s anatomized heart becomes a surrogate for her perpetually opaque and unknowable womb.<sup>321</sup>

*‘Tis Pity’s* rhetoric and action likens Annabella’s body to the executed criminals given over to the Barber-Surgeons Company. Just as the Barber-Surgeons collected executed criminals for anatomization, Annabella is slain, eviscerated, and tossed in the rubbish heap. While Hermione and the Duchess were given at least a modicum of respect after death—one through the erection of a memorial statue in her honor and the other through a mournful eulogy by her regretful murderers—*Tis Pity She’s a Whore* concludes with the Cardinal ordering Annabella’s body to burn outside the city gates. Whereas Shakespeare and Webster allow Hermione and the Duchess dramatic reprieves from the jaws of death, endowing them with space to assert their maternal agency, Ford grants Annabella no such opportunity and instead conflates the subversively pregnant and criminal bodies in the final moments of his tragedy.

In the plays under discussion throughout chapter three, the playwrights gradually escalate the violence directed toward the maternal body. In Rowley’s *When You See Me, You Know Me* (1604) Jane Seymour dies in childbirth, a common occurrence in seventeenth-century London. Seven years later, Shakespeare enables Leontes to throw Hermione in prison where she goes into labor prematurely, after which Leontes sentences the newborn to death. In Webster’s 1614

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<sup>319</sup> Ford, *‘Tis Pity She’s a Whore*, K2.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, K2.

<sup>321</sup> As Luttfiring astutely observes, “Like the blazon and the medical treatises, the impaled heart represents an attempt to gain mastery over the female body, an attempt that ultimately fails when confronted with the opacity of the pregnant womb” (98).

tragedy, Ferdinand and the Cardinal order Bosola to strangle their sister in order to neutralize and contain her unruly body. While the repetition of violence against pregnant bodies on seventeenth-century stages evinces its popularity as a theatrical convention, pregnancy's frequency necessitates novelty in order to keep audiences coming to the playhouse. Ford answers this call to novelty. Giovanni not only murders his lover-sister, but he also dissects her gestational corpse—plowing “up her too fruitful womb,” in order to retrieve her heart. His attack against and dissection of the pregnant body characterizes the male fantasy of feminine containment and control repeated throughout these patricentric pregnancy plays. Giovanni literally peels away Annabella's outward layers to see what lies beneath her skin—what truly rests in her heart-womb. His extreme act gestures toward the widespread patriarchal anxiety stemming from the secrets contained within feminine bodies, dramatized throughout these five plays.

Finally, the pregnancy plays under discussion throughout this chapter span from one of the earliest, *When You See Me, You Know Me*, to one of the latest ones available to us: *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. The establishment and development of staged pregnancy as a theatrical convention on the Stuart stage becomes evident through this span of plays, as does the cultural interest in (sometimes violently) uncovering and controlling that which the female body hides from view. Although the ultimate fate of the pregnant character in each of these plays follows generic conventions with respect to death, violence, and resurrection, in each of these tragedies, romances, and history plays, the fantasy of absolute patriarchy, as imagined by James I, continues to reassert itself. Through an exploration of the ways in which patriarchal figures in these pregnancy plays fret over the troublesomely opaque gestational body and the mysterious child contained within the womb, this chapter illuminates just one dramaturgical trend among the twenty-two pregnancy plays under discussion in this study. In the next chapter, I examine the

role gestation plays in the spectacle of comedies through an analysis of prosthetic pregnancy plays: those that foreground strategies of staging great bellies on boy actors. In so doing, I illuminate the material strategies used to stage pregnancy, as well as the ways in which pregnancy comedies satirize the patriarchal anxieties over maternal agency discussed in this chapter.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

#### Prosthetic Pregnancy Plays:

#### Materializing the Belly and Demystifying Gestation in Comedies

Turning now to the genre of comedy, this chapter examines how the convention of pregnancy works within prosthetic pregnancy plays. If, in the last chapter I pointed out how pregnancy histories, romances, and tragedies work through concerns about the stability of patriarchal rule via narratives about the opacity of gestational bodies, here I consider how material reality of the boy body on stage parodies and alleviates those patriarchal anxieties. The playwrights' work under discussion—three comedies by Thomas Middleton, *The Heir* by Thomas May (1620), and Ben Jonson's *The Magnetic Lady* (1632)—all transform the unknowable pregnant body into comedic characters that willingly open themselves up to patriarchal inspection, or find themselves betrayed by their own leaky bodies' inability to maintain its porous borders. Whereas patriarchal anxieties over the opaque, gestational body infuse the pregnancy tragedies, romances, and histories, comedies ease these concerns by satirizing feminine bodies and spaces, thereby opening them to public (i.e. male) inspection. Giving the audience opportunities to laugh at the inherent grotesque leakiness of pregnant bodies removes any sense of danger offered by the opaque gestating body, the central point of contention throughout the patricentric pregnancy plays in the previous chapter.

When playwrights satirize feminine spaces and bodies, they strip these women of their worrisome maternal agency, rather than treat them as legitimate agential threats. The incontinent fecund bodies studied in chapter three—who are each illegitimately pregnant—become the objects of derision and mockery within their respective narratives. Part of this process of mocking the pregnant body on stage is to foreground the material construction of the gestational body, thereby drawing the audience's attention to the non-threatening boy body beneath the

belly. In the last chapter I speculated that Hermione was visibly pregnant through the first two acts of *The Winter's Tale*. Most of the plays discussed in this chapter leave no doubt about the use of the convention of a prosthetic belly—the cushion—insofar that playwrights actively discuss, point to, and manifest this object within the play's fiction. Although chapter three focuses on the plays mentioned above, let me begin with a focusing example in William Rowley's comedy *The Birth of Merlin* (c.1620).

William Rowley's *The Birth of Merlin* tells the story of Uter Pendragon's rise to the throne.<sup>322</sup> As the title suggests, the mythic Merlin enters the world during the course of the play, carried and delivered by the simple country dweller, Joan Go-Too't. When the audience first encounters Joan, she enters the scene "great with childe." She chases her brother, Clown, who aims to lose her in the forest.<sup>323</sup> Joan needs her brother's help because, while she appears to be in an advanced stage of pregnancy, she does not know the identity of the man who fathered her child. Clown, horrified by the fact his unmarried sister managed to become pregnant by an anonymous "Gentleman," and disgusted by how Joan's body, "like a clew...spreads" with new life, he continuously ridicules the visual evidence of Joan's sinful nature.<sup>324</sup> The Clown repeatedly brings attention to Joan's "great belly," to suggest her body is merely an outward expression of her moral and intellectual failing.<sup>325</sup> Just as Joan's belly exceeds her body's

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<sup>322</sup> The frontispiece for Rowley's *The Birth of Merlin* notes that it was first published in 1662, although it was likely written and first performed around c. 1620-23 (See Rowley, 1989, 32). Although scholars such as Mark Dominik and Denise Coffey argue that Rowley and Shakespeare collaborated on this play, the evidence is scant. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that two actor-playwrights from competing companies (Rowley for the Prince's Men, and Shakespeare for the King's). For this study, I refer to the play as Rowley's. See: Dominik, *William Shakespeare and The Birth of Merlin*; Rowley, *The Birth of Merlin*, ed. R.J. Stewart, Denise Coffey, and Roy Hudd. For more in-depth analyses of the spuriousness of these claims to Shakespearean authorship see: Fleissner, 555-66.

<sup>323</sup> Rowley, William and William Shakespeare. *The Birth of Merlin: or, the Childe Hath Found His Father*. London: 1662. B3.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, B4.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*

boundaries, her brother's remarks suggest that her actions exceed the capacity of her own intellect.

Throughout the play, Joan configures her own personal worth by the value others place on her. Her brother tries to abandon her while nearly every other man she encounters treats her as an object of scorn, derision, physical abuse, mockery, or pity as she searches for her child's father or, at the very least, any father for her child.<sup>326</sup> Joan suffers a beating from the play's hero, Prince Uter, while a nobleman named Toclio knowingly taunts the senseless pregnant woman. A courtier, Sir Nichodemus Nothing, takes advantage of her naïveté and cheats her out of her money; another nobleman, Edwin, publicly labels her a whore. For the men throughout the play, Joan is at once strumpet, naïf, simpleton, master manipulator, and—to her soon-to-be-born-son—a Madonna. To the audience, she is a sweet dullard who elicits laughter because of her odd comfort with the state of these affairs.

When Joan finally gives birth to her child, Clown stumbles upon his sister with her newborn son. He is shocked to find that the “child” to whom Joan gives birth is a grown man with a full beard, whose buries his head in a book of magic: Merlin. Not believing this could be possible, the Clown pointedly asks: “Is your great belly gone?” which directs the audience to attend the changes in Joan's comportment and body.<sup>327</sup> No longer roaming about the countryside with her “great belly,” the naïve Joan proudly exhibits the “happy fruit” that sprung from her fecund womb.<sup>328</sup> It is clear in this moment that the “great belly”—the source of the Clown's anxiety and ire—is now absent, suggesting its conspicuity earlier in the play. The fact that the Clown remarks on the belly's absence, tells us that it was once a visible prosthetic component within the play's *mise en scène*.

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<sup>326</sup> For further discussion of Joan's role in *The Birth of Merlin*, see: Karpinska, 440-3.

<sup>327</sup> Rowley, *The Birth of Merlin*, E.

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*

Although the dimwitted Joan seems unfazed by the fact she delivered a full-grown man who—mere hours after birth—has the ability to converse and study, the Clown attests the child is “monstrous, and shames [their] kindred.”<sup>329</sup> Sujata Iyengar notes, a “monster was usually a baby born with some sort of deformity or unusual variation,” delivered as “as [a sign] of God’s...divine punishments for human sin and folly.”<sup>330</sup> As these faults of “sin” and “folly” fall on the impressionable and porous mother, Clown’s language imagines Joan is no doubt the culprit for Merlin’s monstrosity and, thus, responsible for the “shame” she brings upon their “kindred.” As it turns out, Joan’s pregnancy and “monstrous” birth is a result of her unknowing copulation with the Devil.<sup>331</sup> The Devil chose Joan as the incubator for his progeny, it would seem, because her trusting, naïve nature made it easy to take possession of her body. Joan’s ability to remain undaunted by the strange events surrounding her copulation, gestation, and parturition, coupled with her shallow intellect, make her porous vulnerable body an excellent candidate for the Devil’s misdeed. Despite Merlin’s strange appearance and true parentage, Joan

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<sup>329</sup> Rowley, *Birth of Merlin*, E2; Clown likewise calls Joan’s son a “Moon-calf,” meaning a “mole,” “abnormal mass within the uterus,” “a deformed animal; a monster,” perhaps recalling Caliban in *The Tempest* (E). These definitions from the *OED* are dated as 1372 and 1616, respectively. Delving into the etymology of “monster,” Marie-Hélène Huet points to the debate over the word’s origin. It possibly comes from the French *montrere*, meaning “to show” or “put on display,” although current etymological studies suggest “monster” derives from *monere*, meaning “to warn” or more specifically, “to prophesy” (Huet 6). It is possible that Rowley was familiar with this etymological derivation. In the play’s original printing, the dramatis personae lists Merlin as “The Prophet” (A2).

<sup>330</sup> Iyengar, 226-7.

<sup>331</sup> In chapter one, I suggested that the theory of maternal impressions perhaps led those present for *The Masque of Blackness* to receive Anna of Denmark’s painted pregnant performance as a threat to her unborn child. However, during the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries, the threat of psychic imprinting was only one of the ways people imagined women to corrupt their offspring *in utero*. Huet points out that, during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, a corrupt maternal imagination and unfulfilled maternal longings were just one of the many causes of monstrous births; “others included sex with the devil or animals, as well as defective sperm or a defective womb” (5-6). Although the theory of maternal impressions was the most resilient of these ideas, bestiality and demonic copulation also appear in dramatic literature of the time. During the early seventeenth-century, “many scientists rejected the old notions that the birth of monstrous children was due either to divine displeasure or to the mother’s copulation with a demon or an animal,” as Jan Bondeson notes (147). Nevertheless, William Rowley’s *The Birth of Merlin* features a character whose pregnancy is the direct result of copulation with the Devil.

attests that her son is “the happy fruit” of her “great belly,” while the Clown insists to the audience that the “fruit” is a deformed harvest indeed.<sup>332</sup>

Joan Go-Too’t’s pregnancy and newborn proves to be a danger to the state, recalling the plays considered in chapter two. The Devil intends his son to become his greatest weapon: the “fatal fruit” who will help to destroy the Britons.<sup>333</sup> Nevertheless, Merlin becomes a just and righteous advisor to the English monarchy. He helps secure the throne for Uter Pendragon, thereby betraying his father; finally, Merlin prophesies the coming of King Arthur. Although Joan brings forth the monstrous progeny of Satan incarnate, the powerful Merlin and wise King Uter are able to stem the tide of evil that threatens to engulf the country. As a result, they successfully counteract Joan’s troublesome reproductive body. Rowley accomplishes this by creating an inverse relationship between the size of Joan’s intellect and her “great belly,” and proceeds by mocking her inability to see potential drawbacks or consequences of giving birth to a full-grown man.

Like Joan, the pregnant characters considered throughout this chapter are often the butt of the joke, which diminishes any matriarchal authority their pregnancies might yield. If, in the histories, romances and tragedies discussed above, Jane, Anne, Hermione, the Duchess, and Annabella’s gestating bodies are figured as threats to the status quo because of the ways they wield their maternal agency, the pregnant characters under examination in these comedic prosthetic pregnancy plays dissipate patriarchal anxiety by becoming objects of derision and laughter. What’s more, the need to contain the polluting fecund body, or violently open it for inspection, is fulfilled in many of these prosthetic pregnancy plays when the reality of the boy actors’ materialized pregnancy becomes central to the play’s action.

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<sup>332</sup> Rowley, *Birth of Merlin*, E.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, D3.

Returning to the question initially posed in the Prologue: in the context of an all-male performance tradition, what do audiences see when they gaze at the boy actor's great belly? Chapter three takes up this problem as I examine prosthetically driven pregnancy plays that foreground the notable presence (or conspicuous absence) of a distended belly, thereby transforming the on-stage pregnant woman into a legible male body. In so doing, I reveal available methods of materializing pregnancy on seventeenth-century English stages to contend that, throughout the early Stuart reign, pregnancy as a theatrical convention shifts from a simple prosthetic convention to a nuanced staging practice, thereby signaling the device's prominence on London stages. Moreover, these shifts and satires of pregnancy communicate that there indeed exists a well-worn convention to challenge in the first place.

Working somewhat chronologically through the period, part one analyzes two of Thomas Middleton's plays: *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1613) and *The Witch* (c. 1616). I consider these Middletonian plays together because they satirize the patriarchal anxieties discussed at length in chapter two, thereby exposing the inner-workings of pregnant bodies, gynocentric spaces, and maternal minds. At the beginning of *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, the audience hears description of Mrs. Allwit's rotund, swelling body before they are able to clap eyes on her. It is clear from the text, as well as the play's action, that Mrs. Allwit must appear visibly, if not grotesquely, pregnant. After Mrs. Allwit gives birth, her bed emerges from backstage, thereby displaying her postpartum body while the character recovers from birth. Of all the extant pregnancy plays discussed throughout this study, *Chaste Maid* is distinct because of the playwright's explicit descriptions of the enormously pregnant body *and* public exhibition of the cloistered birthing chamber. I analyze the revelation of the childbed from the stage's discovery space as a moment of male fantasy through a symbolic reading of the discovery space: that which is inside, must

come out; that which hides, reveal itself. By pulling back the discovery space's curtains and thrusting out the bed, the private, gynocentric space becomes open to male inspection and investigation. Mrs. Allwit's grotesquely fecund body and mysterious birthing chamber expel their contents for public exhibition.

Middleton's tragicomedy, *The Witch*, features Francesca, a young woman who hides her illegitimate pregnancy from her family. However, unlike Mrs. Allwit or, indeed any of the other pregnant characters discussed up to this point, Francesca reveals her secret to the audience on her own terms, narrating the experience of concealing a pregnancy. In fact, Middleton's character verbalizes all of the signs others fail to recognize, reversing the dynamics of a play like *The Duchess of Malfi*, wherein the titular character hides her pregnancy while Bosola recounts her gestational signs and symptoms to the audience. Although *The Witch's* title page announces itself as a tragicomedy, I place it here amongst the prosthetic pregnancy plays because it wrestles with pregnancy as a conspicuous theatrical convention. In both *Chaste Maid* and *The Witch*, Middleton begins riffing on recently established conventions of staging pregnancy while implicitly calling attention to gestation as an outwardly visible physical condition that sometimes requires concealment. What's more, just as the dearth of great-bellied characters in Tudor texts highlight their plentiful representation after 1603, moments of hidden pregnancy throw into relief the numerous plays—such as *Chaste Maid*, *When You See Me, You Know Me* or *The Winter's Tale*—whose actions required boy actors to perform heavily pregnant bodies.

In part two, I turn to yet another Middletonian comedy, *More Dissemblers Besides Women* (c. 1619) and Thomas May's comedy, *The Heir* (1620).<sup>334</sup> Both of these plays

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<sup>334</sup> See Dramatic Records of Sir Henry Herbert, pg. 26. Calls *More Dissemblers* an "old play" when performed on 17 October 1623. John Jowett points out that the "date of the first performance has variously been conjectured as 1614, c. 1615, or 1619," he argues "the earliest year is perhaps in balance more likely" (*Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, 1034). Malone and G.E. Bentley similarly date the play c. 1615. See: Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*,

metatheatrically emphasize the gestating body, while revealing intricate methods of staging, disguising, and revealing pregnancy in performance in completely novel ways. In both plays, pregnant characters go into labor—in a manner of speaking—on stage, and find their secrets revealed in full view of the audience. *More Dissemblers Besides Women* presents a multi-layered disguise: a pregnant woman disguised as a boy page, who goes into labor on stage. In Middleton's *More Dissemblers*, the layers of disguise—gender on top of pregnancy—complicate the performance of gestation. I analyze the possible methods whereby these layers of biological camouflage materialized on the body of the boy actor along with early modern anxieties surrounding the fluidity of sex and gender—especially when theatrically constructed. I then move to Thomas May's *The Heir*. This play stages the dismantling of performed pregnancy by “delivering” a cushion to an expectant father. I balance this play against other revelations of prosthetically constructed gender and identity to suggest *The Heir* offers compelling evidence for common strategies of materializing pregnancy in performance.

Finally, part three analyzes Ben Jonson's *The Magnetic Lady* (1632). In Jonson's comedy, the aptly named Placentia attempts to hide her illegitimate pregnancy but goes into labor on stage when suddenly frightened. The other women in the play rally around her and conceal her birth from the men, lest she lose her inheritance for having pre-marital sex. Placentia's secret eventually reveals itself, thereby re-establishing the patricentric social order of the play. What is crucial about Jonson's treatment of pregnancy in *The Magnetic Lady* is that he both participates in existing conventions of staging pregnancy while challenging and resisting these very practices.

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4: 888-89. However, D.J. Lake convincingly argues for a date of 1619 for *More Dissemblers*. See: Lake, “The Date of *More Dissemblers Besides Women*,” *Notes and Queries*, 23: 5-6 (1976), 219-21. The frontispiece for *The Heir*, first published in 1622, notes it was “lately Acted by the Company of the Revels.” I date the play's first performance around that time.

While there are many themes these prosthetic pregnancy plays have in common—hidden illegitimate pregnancies, anxieties about the secrets of the birthing chamber, and the juxtaposition of public and private bodies—this chapter centers on the material strategies of staging pregnancy on Stuart stages as well as the ways in which this focus satirizes and challenges anxieties found throughout patricentric pregnancy plays. As a result, I establish the second major dramaturgical trend within the pregnancy play subgenre: prosthetic pregnancy plays, those that foreground the material strategies of staging pregnancy on boy actors' bodies and strip the pregnant character of her embodied mystery. By placing these comedies in conversation with one another, I show how these playwrights tweak the established conventions of performing pregnancy to surprise, shock, titillate—or, in Jonson's case, shame—the audience. I suggest these alterations signal the convention's ubiquity; the need to constantly renew a performance convention signals its popular use in the commercial playhouses of early modern London.

### **Part 1**

#### **“Like a moon at full”: Middletonian Materials in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* and *The Witch***

In the two mid-career plays by Thomas Middleton discussed in part one, the playwright pushes the boundaries of staging gestation by foregrounding pregnancy as a visually perceivable phenomenon. He does so in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* by prioritizing the visceral effect of Mrs. Allwit's pregnant body on the men around her. While, in Thomas Heywood's *The Golden Age*, the stage directions stipulate the revelation of Calisto's “great belly,” twenty-first century readers remain uncertain of what actually transpired in performance. What did the players reveal to the audience? How much did the spectators see? While Heywood leaves the modern reader puzzled, Middleton's characters explicitly discuss the intimate details of Mrs. Allwit's

gestational symptoms. It stands to reason the male actor playing Mrs. Allwit would have conformed to these descriptions in his performance, as Mrs. Allwit is quickly welcomed on stage so that the audience might confirm Allwit and Whorehound's observations.

The second half of part one analyzes Middleton's *The Witch* (c. 1616), wherein the character Francesca hides an illegitimate pregnancy from her family. What distinguishes this play from most of the pregnancy plays discussed throughout this study thus far is the fact Middleton endows Francesca with the ability to narrate her own experience of successfully concealing her pregnancy. Rather than hearing the news from a nurse or woman-in-waiting, as in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, the pregnant character in question confides in the audience on her own terms, through soliloquys and asides. I analyze these Middletonian pregnancy plays together to examine the various ways the playwright puts the pre- and post-natal body on display, simultaneously participating in, and disrupting earlier established conventions of staging the pregnant body. In so doing, Middleton foregrounds the visibility (or lack thereof) of the distended belly and calls the audience's attention to the material construction of pregnancy, and implicitly, the boy beneath the belly.

### ***A Chaste Maid in Cheapside, Thomas Middleton (1613)***

Originally performed by Lady Elizabeth's Men at the Swan in 1613, Middleton predicates his raunchy city comedy on spouse-swapping and voluntary cuckoldry.<sup>335</sup> In the play's second scene, the audience learns Mrs. Allwit prepares to enjoy yet another lavish lying-in after she gives birth to the newest edition of the Allwit brood. Talking to one of his servants, Mr. Allwit mentions his "wife's as great as she can wallow...and longs/ For nothing but pickled

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<sup>335</sup> Middleton, Thomas. *A Chast Mayd in Cheape-side*. London, 1630. Frontispiece. See also: Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, 289.

cucumbers.”<sup>336</sup> Allwit’s description of his yet unseen wife’s body paints her pregnancy as conspicuous—both corporeally and behaviorally—while encouraging the audience to anticipate that Mrs. Allwit’s pregnant belly will work its way into the play’s *mise en scène*.

Middleton quickly reveals that Sir Walter Whorehound, the city rake, is not only father to every Allwit child, but also the family’s benefactor; Sir Walter pays to feed, clothe, shelter, and staff the entire Allwit household (Allwit of course being a reversal of “wittol,” an acquiescent cuckold). When Sir Walter arrives to inquire after Mrs. Allwit’s well being, he learns her gravid body has transformed into that of a “tumbler” whose “nose and belly meets.”<sup>337</sup> Before the audience ever sees Mrs. Allwit, Mr. Allwit’s report leads them to believe she is a clownish fool who waddles and tumbles about the house in search of pickles to whet her voracious appetite. Here Middleton encourages the audience to imagine Mrs. Allwit as a comical buffoon, which takes away any power she might otherwise have to invoke patriarchal anxiety or concerns over cuckoldry. In this way, Middleton veers away from Shakespeare, Webster, and Ford’s pregnancy formulae. Whereas *The Winter’s Tale*, *Duchess*, and *’Tis Pity* take seriously, and then attempt to quiet male anxiety over the secret interior of women’s bodies, *Chaste Maid* parodies these concerns by giving the audience a grotesquely gravid body at which to laugh, thereby dissipating any possible power Mrs. Allwit might otherwise retain within the world of the play.

Mrs. Allwit, finally shuffling into the end of the scene, greets Sir Walter who inquires after her comfort:

SIR WALTER	How cheers my mistress?
MRS. ALLWIT	Made lightsome e’en by him
	That made me heavy.
SIR WALTER	Methinks she shows gallantly,
	Like a moon at full, sir.

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<sup>336</sup> Middleton *A Chast Mayd*, B4.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, C.

ALLWIT

True, and if she bear  
A male child, there's the man in the moon, sir.<sup>338</sup>

In this exchange, Middleton endows his characters with language that repeatedly defines Mrs. Allwit's corporeal girth. She describes herself as made "heavy," while Whorehound compares her body to the full moon. While Middleton echoes the practices of Rowley (*When You See Me*, Jane Seymour) and Shakespeare (*Winter's Tale*, Hermione) by including language that points to the pregnant character's increasing size, the playwright does so with more candidness.

Additionally, Sir Walter and Mr. Allwit discuss Mrs. Allwit's rounded body in the same way they might admire successfully impregnated livestock. All the while, Mrs. Allwit proudly displays her corpulent body to her husband, her lover, and the audience. While Mrs. Allwit's pregnancy may be transgressive in any of the plays analyzed in chapter two, here she proudly displays her body to her husband and her lover, who are in open dialogue about their financial arrangement. Mr. Allwit provides Whorehound open access to his wife, and Whorehound provides Allwit open access to his purse. Meanwhile, Mrs. Allwit enjoys her lavish lifestyle but possesses little maternal agency, let alone matriarchal authority.

The explicit vocabulary used in the characters' language to describe Mrs. Allwit's body and comportment makes it clear that her pregnancy necessitates visibility under the male actor's skirts. While Middleton may have intended the characters to describe Mrs. Allwit's pregnancy rather than make visible to the audience, this is unlikely given the playwright's dramaturgical employment of the pregnant body later in the play. If Mrs. Allwit does not appear as a "tumbler" whose "nose and belly meets," Mr. Allwit loses all credibility as a reliable narrator of his wife's bodily changes and expository source. The visibility of Mrs. Allwit's pregnancy upon her first and only entrance before giving birth is further necessitated by act three, scene two wherein a

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<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*, C2.

birthing bed is “thrust out upon the stage, [with] Allwit’s Wife in it.”<sup>339</sup> Juxtaposing Mrs. Allwit’s pregnant body in act one with her postpartum body in act three, one can conclude the actor must appear visibly pregnant prior to the lying-in scene for her maternal trajectory to remain coherent, similar to *Merlin*’s Joan Go-Too’t.

Middleton’s plays—pregnancy and revenge alike—are often self-consciously metatheatrical by foregrounding the work done by cosmetic and prosthetic materials. Throughout *Chaste Maid*, Middleton focuses on the grotesque corporeality of the pregnant body, evinced by the descriptions of Mrs. Allwit’s gestating belly and her own account of her “heavy” body. In addition, Middleton’s own playwrighting style suggests he would have taken advantage of the stock of properties and prosthetics available to him at the Swan. It is unlikely that Middleton, well known for availing himself of the playhouse’s theatrical materials, would shy away from doing so in *Chaste Maid*. For example in *The Revenger’s Tragedy* (c. 1606), Middleton incorporates a theatrical prop—a *Hamlet*-esque skull—into the central action of his satirical riff on the revenge tragedy subgenre.<sup>340</sup> Later, Middleton stages an execution-by-cosmetic-poison on the lips of the aforementioned skull. Indeed, Middleton even echoes his own work, recycling the poisonous kiss and death-by-corpse in *The Second Maiden’s Tragedy* (1611).<sup>341</sup> It is therefore reasonable to suggest Middleton’s 1613 audience at the Swan would have witnessed a male actor’s “great belly” as part of the play’s *mise en scène*, perhaps in some conspicuous and parodic way. This is perhaps most evident when Mrs. Allwit’s postpartum body is pushed on stage for her lying-in scene.

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<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, E4.

<sup>340</sup> See: Maus, Katharine Eisaman, ed. *Four Revenge Tragedies*, xviii.

<sup>341</sup> According to the inscription on the final page of the only extant *Second Maiden’s Tragedy* manuscript, George Buc licensed the play for performance 31 October 1611. See: Middleton, *Second Maiden’s Tragedy*, A Volume.

It is worth pausing here to meditate on the symbolism of the bed emerging from the discovery space, as well as the significance of a male presence in the traditionally gynocentric lying-in space. As we enter *Chaste Maid*'s infamous lying-in scene, Middleton's text reads: "A Bed thrust out upon the stage, Allwit's Wife in it, Enter all the Gossips."<sup>342</sup> The birthing bed, likely "thrust" from the stage's discovery space, suddenly appears while all of the gossips toddle on stage, carrying treats enjoyed during the lying-in. However, as Bruce R. Smith notes, the "one universally accepted piece of visual evidence about London's public theatres, Aernout von Buchel's copy of Johannes de Witt's sketch of the stage at the Swan Theatre in 1596" elides the presence of curtains or even a proper discovery space (see figure 3.1).<sup>343</sup> Nevertheless, Smith convincingly argues that we ought to "imagine woven hangings of some sort—arras, tapestry, curtain, traverse—as a frequent if not constant visual feature of stages in early modern London's outdoor theatres," among which we count the Swan.<sup>344</sup> Smith cites the eight hundred references to interior spaces detailed in Alan Dessen and Leslie Thomson's *A Dictionary of Stage Directions* (along with another ten that require a bed to be "thrust out" on stage), to argue for the presence of a discovery space from which surprises, delights, horrors, and beds may spring.<sup>345</sup> Middleton's plot, action, and the stage directions found in the *Chaste Maid*'s original printing, necessitate the presence of both the discovery space—the "further within"—and the curtains that conceal what initially hides from view. In conversation with Smith, I suggest that the "potentiality" possessed by cloth hangings "must have been as great as the potentiality of the stage doors that loom so large in De Witt's drawing."<sup>346</sup> Given the presence of the discovery space, and the attention given to Mrs. Allwit's gestating body earlier in the play, the audience

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<sup>342</sup> Middleton, *A Chast Mayd*, E4.

<sup>343</sup> Smith, *The Key of Green*, 211.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

must have eagerly anticipated who or what might emerge from the yonic enclosure; what secrets might that dark, cavernous, opaque space reveal during the course of the play? I read the curtained discovery space as a representation of the opacity offered by women's wombs to the male gaze. The "further within," from which the bed springs, parallels the mysterious "further within" of the female body. However, by drawing the curtain and revealing this private goings-on of the Allwit lying-in, Middleton comically dispels anxieties about feminine spaces and—by extension—bodies. Peering into the private gynocentric lying-in room, the audience symbolically peers into the feminine body's secretive and secreting interior.

When Middleton displays Mrs. Allwit's lying-in quarters, the audience witnesses her recovery from labor while she enjoys post-partum comforts and indulgences. The gossips gather around, guzzling wine and shoveling sweetmeats, while Sir Walter and Mr. Allwit push their way into the room bringing gifts for the child. The bacchanalia of feminine comfort and enjoyment in which Allwit and Whorehound are embroiled is bewildering to them. The women grotesquely guzzle up the gastronomic delicacies provided by Allwit and Whorehound, highlighting their baseness, thereby dispelling any fear as to their ability to subsume patriarchal authority.<sup>347</sup> In this way, when Mrs. Allwit's postpartum body is "thrust out," on her childbed, the audience is not only privy to a conventionally cloistered gynocentric space, but invited to laugh at it.<sup>348</sup>

When the curtains are drawn and Mrs. Allwit's bed emerges, the audience is perhaps encouraged to consider the resonances between the dark discovery space, and the opaque womb. Just as Mrs. Allwit delivered her child from her private womb to the public space, so too does

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<sup>347</sup> As Janelle Jenstad remarks in her analysis of this scene, the "function of this penetration of the childbed chamber is to dispel the fear of women's power over men by laughing at them" (92).

<sup>348</sup> For an extended discussion of *Chaste Maid's* lying-in scene and the role played by gossips in wealthy households, see Luttfiring 141-6.

Middleton deliver Mrs. Allwit's maternal body to public inspection. By discovering Mrs. Allwit in her lying-in bed, Middleton further reminds the audience of how transparent her sexual activities really are. Mr. Allwit is a willing cuckold to Whorehound, who joins Allwit in his wife's private chambers. In this scene, both men figuratively (and, at some point, literally) inhabit the same private, yonic space.

By foregrounding the visibility of the pregnant and post-partum body, Middleton allows the male audience members a peek inside private, feminine spaces. This complex and textured moment works to dispel any sense of Mrs. Allwit's agency or privacy by giving the men unparalleled access to this gynocentric enclosure. This is true not only for the lying-in scene, but also for the remaining plays analyzed throughout this chapter. However, while I argue *Chaste Maid* necessarily displays the pregnant belly for the audience's visual consumption, some pregnancy plays nevertheless require that the character's gestational status remain hidden from other characters on stage. Rather than serving as a counter to my argument regarding the conspicuity of the pregnant belly in plays like *Chaste Maid* and *Winter's Tale*, I suggest hidden pregnancies reveal that the visible belly was the norm by throwing into relief the convention of conspicuity in most pregnancy plays. In Middleton's *The Witch*, Francesca hides her illegitimate pregnancy while narrating her experience of concealing her distended belly. In so doing, *The Witch* juxtaposes *Chaste Maid* wherein the "great belly" is an integral component of the play's *mise en scène*.

***The Witch, Thomas Middleton (c. 1616)***

The King's Men first performed Thomas Middleton's *The Witch* at Blackfriars sometime before 1627, likely around 1616.<sup>349</sup> In *The Witch*, Middleton begins to experiment with staging hidden pregnancy. The unmarried Francesca confesses to the audience that she possesses a "concealed great belly," is "with child," and approximately seven weeks away from giving birth.<sup>350</sup> The audience for *The Witch* likely relied solely on Francesca's verbal cues to corroborate her gestational status in the absence of visual confirmation, unlike the pregnancy plays considered thus far wherein the play's speech and dialogue indicate that other onstage characters observe women's bellies.

In *The Winter's Tale*, Hermione's handmaids note the Queen, "spread[s] of late into a goodly bulk."<sup>351</sup> As discussed above, in *The Duchess of Malfi*, Bosola observes the titular character "waxes fat i'th' flank." *The Golden Age*'s Homer similarly narrates that Calisto "grows great," while Henry VIII observes his wife, Jane Seymour, "bears her burden very heavily" in Rowley's *When You See Me, You Know Me*. However, no other characters in *The Witch* seem to recognize Francesca's "condition," aside from Francesca herself. Given the absence of remarks regarding drastic changes in Francesca's physical appearance, clothing, or behavior from outsiders, it therefore stands to reason the actor did not possess the visible, distended belly necessitated by Mrs. Allwit's performance in *Chaste Maid*. This then requires us to ask the question: if the actor did not have a material belly of some kind, how does the audience know when Francesca is pregnant and when she is postpartum?

Middleton addresses this potential staging problem through the pregnant woman's confessional asides to the audience. Until the point when she leaves to secretly give birth,

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<sup>349</sup> Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, 298. For a lengthier discussion of the play's date see: Esche, *A Critical Edition of Thomas Middleton's The Witch*, 16-26. For information about the performance location, see: Middleton, *The Witch*, London: 1778, title page. See also: the epistle dedicatory footnote for *The Witch* in Bullen, 5: 355.

<sup>350</sup> Middleton, *The Witch*, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Taylor and Lavignino, 1.1.134.

<sup>351</sup> *Winter's Tale*, 2.1.19-20.

Francesca consistently remarks in asides to the audience that she conceals her belly although she is very “near [her] time.”<sup>352</sup> Francesca even confides her fear that a drink of wine will send her into her early labor, thereby revealing her “concealed great belly...Some seven weeks sooner” than she presently anticipates.<sup>353</sup> By her own calculations, Francesca calculates that she is around thirty-three weeks pregnant. When Francesca takes the audience into her confidence, these crucial moments remind them of her advanced pregnancy. This too suggests that the audience cannot visually perceive a belly beneath the actor’s skirts. For example, when Francesca’s sister-in-law, Isabella, enters she seems surprised that Francesca is alone. Francesca responds in an aside to the audience: “No, there’s another with me, though you see’t not.”<sup>354</sup> In the exchange that follows, Isabella makes conversation wherein she encourages Francesca to marry; all the while, Francesca anxiously confides to the audience she believes Isabella has surely discovered her pregnancy.

ISABELLA	Beside, it is comfort to a woman T’have children, sister, a great blessing certainly.
FRANCESCA	They will come fast enough.
ISABELLA	Not so fast neither
	As they’re still welcome to an honest woman.
FRANCESCA [ <i>Aside</i> ]	How near she comes to me! I protest she grates My very skin.
ISABELLA	Were I conceived with child, Beshrew my heart, I should be so proud on’t.
FRANCESCA [ <i>Aside</i> ]	That’s natural; pride is a kind of swelling And yet I’ve small cause to be proud of mine. <sup>355</sup>

Middleton attempts to bring the unborn fetus into the scene without giving away Francesca’s carefully hidden secret to the other characters. The playwright foregrounds Francesca’s pregnancy as a visual spectacle through her language, despite her belly’s

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<sup>352</sup> *Witch*, 2.1.40.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.1.133-4.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.1.65.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.1.94-102.

inconspicuousness. This suggests the audience understood pregnancy to be a visual phenomenon on female bodies. Although Francesca conceals her pregnancy successfully, the playwright nevertheless endows her with language that continuously appeals to the visual quality of pregnancy: her growing belly. Ben Jonson uses a similar tactic in *The Magnetic Lady*, discussed in detail below. Francesca's pregnancy requires consistent verbalization because, in the absence of a sonogram or other contemporary technology, the sight of the round, distended belly is what communicated a viable pregnancy and fruitful womb to early modern audiences, as it has in the other pregnancy plays up to this point.<sup>356</sup>

With a little over a decade of pregnancy plays featuring conspicuously gravid bodies preceding *The Witch*, Middleton challenges this convention of gestational conspicuousness, one in which he himself participated when writing *Chaste Maid*. I suggest this points to Middleton's interest in consistently reinventing established theatrical conventions, especially those that rely upon materials, properties, and prosthetics. Along with betraying Middleton's own interest in theatrical materials—or their conspicuous absence—the playwright's alteration to the pregnancy convention suggests the practice of staging gestation was well established enough to have gone stale or require revitalization of some kind. As discussed above, Middleton commonly overhauled well-trod practices and conventions to create new and enticing theatrical experiences.

This is a crucial moment to consider in the stage history of pregnancy plays. Middleton's *The Witch* features the first pregnancy in the subgenre wherein a woman successfully hides her pregnancy and reveals the fact of her secret delivery on her own terms. Nobody catches Francesca in the act. Nevertheless, her actions wrack her with guilt and she confesses to her brother, the play's patriarch, thereby assuaging any fears that a woman may actually succeed in

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<sup>356</sup> As Laura Gowing points out: “In a society which was accustomed to highly specified visual markers of gender, class and marital status, the physical signs of pregnancy were one more way of defining women and gauging their status through their appearance” (122).

hiding a pregnancy and secretly delivering an illegitimate child. While it is important Francesca's belly goes unnoticed by the other characters on stage, Middleton's dialogue in *Chaste Maid* clearly indicates Mrs. Allwit's pregnancy was an integral component of the play's *mise en scène*. Nevertheless, the question remains: how did actors manifest the "great belly" on their male bodies? Below, I address the question of material bellies in Thomas May's *The Heir* and Middleton's *More Dissemblers Besides Women*, two plays that examine pregnancy, prosthetics, disguise, and deception.

## **Part 2**

### **"Cushion come forth": Revealing Pregnancy and Gender Disguise in *More Dissemblers Besides Women* and *The Heir***

In what follows, I examine two peculiar pregnancy plays: Middleton's *More Dissemblers Besides Women* (c. 1619) and Thomas May's *The Heir* (c. 1620), both of which continue to challenge and reinvent the existing conventions of staging pregnancy discussed earlier in this study. Throughout Middleton's *More Dissemblers*, the material and dramatic strategies of staging gender and pregnancy disguise uniquely intertwine. In this comedy, a young woman disguises herself as a male page while concealing her pregnancy. Nevertheless, the Page reveals her secret when she goes into labor on stage during a dancing lesson. This moment, perhaps anticipated by the oft-recounted anecdote of Marie-Germain Garnier for contemporary readers, is distinct among the pregnancy plays, and highlights the anxiety surrounding gender fluidity in early modern Europe.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> Scholars of early modern sex and sexuality, including Laqueur and Stephen Greenblatt, often recount the story of Marie-Germain Marnier from the contemporary accounts of Ambroise Paré (chief surgeon to Charles IX of France) as well as Michel Montaigne. Marie Garnier was a young French person who, until the time of puberty lived and dressed as a girl. One day, while Marie was chasing pigs through a wheat field, she leapt over a ditch at which point "the genitalia and the male rod came to be developed [...] having ruptured the ligaments by which they had been enclosed" (Paré 31-2). Physicians believed that Marie's ovaries, too hot from the intense physical exertion, dropped from her body and became her testicles, transforming her into the male Germain.

In *More Dissemblers*—the third Middletonian play in this chapter—the audience observes while the playwright raises the stakes through a multi-layered gender/pregnancy disguise. Highlighting the sartorial complications that accompany gender and pregnancy camouflage, *More Dissemblers* emphasizes the importance of theatrical materials to performances of pregnancy. Simultaneously, Middleton’s comedy evinces the continued need to reinvent pregnancy play conventions, which evinces their popularity among English audiences and frequent recurrence on London stages. In my examination of Middleton’s comedy, I explore the ways in which the playwright riffs on two conventions at once: the female page and the disguised pregnancy.

The second half of part two analyzes Thomas May’s comedy, *The Heir*. This unique play features a fake pregnancy metatheatrically dismantled by one of May’s characters in full view of the audience. I argue *The Heir*’s disassembling of pregnancy’s primary visual cue—the “great belly”—signals popular material methods by which practitioners constructed the conspicuous belly. Analyzing this play through the lens of other such metatheatrical disruptions of gender and feminine identity, such as the removal of an important wig in Jonson’s *Epicoene*, I contend that May’s comedy is key in comprehending the material methods whereby great bellies appeared on the bodies of boy actors in seventeenth-century London theatres.

***More Dissemblers Besides Women, Thomas Middleton (c. 1619)***

Originally played by the King's Men (presumably at the Blackfriars), Middleton’s 1619 comedy emphasizes and comically explodes anxieties over gender identity and fluidity.<sup>358</sup> In this

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<sup>358</sup> For information on dating this play see: Dramatic Records of Sir Henry Herbert, pg. 26, where *More Dissemblers* is referred to as an “old play” when performed on 17 October 1623. John Jowett points out that the “date of the first performance has variously been conjectured as 1614, c. 1615, or 1619,” he argues “the earliest year is perhaps in balance more likely” (*Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, 1034). Malone and G.E. Bentley similarly date the play c. 1615. See: Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 4: 888-89. However, D.J. Lake convincingly argues for a date of 1619 for *More Dissemblers*. See: Lake, “The Date of *More Dissemblers Besides Women*,” *Notes and Queries*, 23: 5-6 (1976), 219-21.

play, the falsely pious and rakish Lactantio plots and schemes to take a rich wife—Aurelia—as well as secure an inheritance from his stodgy uncle, the Cardinal. The arrival of a young Page throws a wrench into Lactantio’s master plan when the feminine young boy announces that he is pregnant with the rake’s child. The Page is, of course, Lactantio’s former lover who followed him from Mantua in the style of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*’s Julia. After promising to marry her, Lactantio left her in the lurch (presumably to marry rich Milan). When the Page enters the play for the first time in the second scene, Lactantio recognizes her at once: “That’s she, she’s come” he confides in an aside to the audience. When Lactantio asks why the Page “look’st so pale,” she affirms perhaps his greatest fear: “I’m with child,” she tells him.<sup>359</sup> At this point, the fact of Lactantio’s name comes into play. Because of its undeniably purposeful allusion to lactation, the audience can have no doubt that he is truly father to the Page’s unborn child. Furthermore, spectators were perhaps encouraged to consider Lactantio’s own form of leaky secretion (i.e. his sexual incontinence), despite his claims to chastity where his uncle, the Cardinal, is concerned.

Although Lactantio initially seems unfazed by the Page’s news, his one concern is concealing the Page’s continuously swelling belly. He turns to the audience with his sartorial anxiety and begins devising a plan to hide her pregnancy. Lactantio determines he must “devise some shift” because when “she grows big/ Those masculine hose will shortly prove too little.”<sup>360</sup> Lactantio ultimately determines that he will send her to the Nurse’s house before the Page’s belly becomes conspicuous beneath her doublet and hose; the Page stands apart and weeps. Lactantio’s concern about hiding the Page’s belly when she grows too big suggests her gestational body remains undetected by the audience and other characters on stage. In fact, despite Lactantio’s immediate anxiety, it is perhaps unlikely the Page’s belly is ever visible to the audience. As the

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<sup>359</sup> Middleton, Thomas. *Two New Plays*, London: 1657. Act 1, scene 2, page 8.

<sup>360</sup> Middleton, *Dissemblers*, 3.1, 31.

Page appears only sporadically over the course of the play, Middleton constantly reminds the audience of what they cannot see: firstly, that the boy actor is actually playing a woman in disguise, a fact that requires constant narration as the audience would only see a young boy playing the part of a young boy. In order to maintain the fiction of disguised female gender, the apprentice actor (and those who surround him) consistently remind the audience of the “boy’s” perplexing femininity via lengthy anxiety-ridden discussions over the young boy’s overly girlish qualities. For example, when Dondolo, Lactantio’s servant, asks the Page to sing to him, the Page responds, “Alas, you know I cannot sing.” Annoyed at this response, Dondolo spits back, “I have known many a good gentlewoman say so much as you say now...O that a boy should so keep cut with his mother and be given to dissembling!”<sup>361</sup> Dondolo, annoyed at the Page’s lack of masculine qualities, later reports the Page “scarce knows how to stride a horse” and will not “put off his breeches” to “go a-swimming” with Dondolo.<sup>362</sup> Meanwhile, the Cardinal—Lactantio’s uncle—admires the Page’s good looks, calling him the “prettiest servant/ That ever man was blest with.”<sup>363</sup> Additionally, the Cardinal takes note of how easily Lactantio’s cruelty “Melts [the Page] into a woman”<sup>364</sup> Out of pity, the Cardinal takes the liberty of redistributing the Page to a gentler mistress, despite the Page’s desire to stay with the father of her unborn child.

In addition to others’ pointed anxieties over the Page’s lack of masculine qualities, Middleton offers many pointed allusions to her pregnancy throughout the play for the audience’s benefit. Dondolo, continuing their discussion of singing, laments the Page’s refusal to entertain him. When the Page refers to singing as a skill that (s)he lacks, Dondolo vehemently disagrees:

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<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.4, 17.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.1, 33-34.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.* 1.2, 8.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.1, 35.

A pox of skill... Why should not singing be as well got without skills as the getting of children? [...] You shall have a plain hobnailed country fellow marrying some dairy wench tumble out two of a year, and sometimes three.<sup>365</sup>

Dondolo's crude discussion of conception and birth points the audience's attention directly to the Page's secret gestation. This is a crucial moment because it is the first reference to the Page's pregnancy in act one, scene four. Without the visual evidence of femininity and pregnancy created through gendered prosthetics, the audience may easily forget that the boy—dressed and performing as a boy—is actually a pregnant woman in disguise.

The Page tries to draw the discussion away from these matters, but Dondolo is relentless. He goes on to rail against men who go without beards and wear long smocks instead of proper shirts. When the Page asks why this gender fluidity continues to vex Dondolo, he turns to a hypothetical situation in which a “young gallant lying abed with his wench, if the constable should chance to come up and search, being both in smock, they'd be taken for sisters... for I know many young gentlemen wear longer hair than their mistresses.”<sup>366</sup> This image of heterosexual lovers who appear to be homosocial bedfellows recalls the pregnant Page and her own male lover, Lactantio. Middleton, reminding the audience of the Page's gender and gestational status, deftly gestures to the theatrical materials necessary to stage femininity and pregnancy on the early modern stage without actually implementing them into the play's *mise en scène*. Instead, the playwright endows the audience with the ability to piece together what they do not see: a pregnant woman with a hidden great belly.

Despite the inconspicuousness of her pregnancy, the Page carries her baby to term, eventually going into labor on stage. When the Cardinal permanently reassigns the Page to serve the Duchess in act four, the Duchess enquires as to the Page's abilities in song and dance. Celia,

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<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.4, 18.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.4, 19.

handmaid to the Duchess, remarks the Page possesses a “pretty, womanish, faint, sprawling voice” that will “grow strong in time” with proper exercise.<sup>367</sup> Displeased with the Page’s lack of masculine physicality and performance prowess, the Duchess orders the young boy to commence with singing and dancing lessons. The Duchess’s insistence on the Page’s dancing lesson reflects a common belief at the time: heating the young male body had the ability to bring about sexual maturity as the testicles were forced to descend from inside the overly-hot body.<sup>368</sup> The Duchess and her dancing master, Cinquepace, hope to heat the Page’s body to bring about his masculinity. In other words, they hope that, like Marie-Germain Garnier, the Page’s testicles will descend once he sufficiently heats his body through physical activity.<sup>369</sup> However, just before exiting to prepare for her lessons, the Page takes a moment to remind us of her predicament and foreshadow the events to come. Nervously turning to the audience, the Page desperately confides that soon after meeting the dancing master, she will require “a midwife and a nurse.”<sup>370</sup> Here

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<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.3, 60.

<sup>368</sup> In his influential monograph, *Making Sex*, Thomas Laqueur argues sex, like gender, is a discursively and historically situated identity marker. In conversation with Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, Laqueur contends that sex, along with gender and sexuality, is a cultural construction. Delving into the historical making of sex, Laqueur asserts the Galenic one-sex model was the way in which Westerners understood their bodies, from ancient Greece through seventeenth century (11). The one-sex model states the female anatomy is the same as the male anatomy, only inverted; “the likeness of [the womb] is as it were a yarde reversed or turned inward, having testicles likewise,” according to Henry VIII’s own chief surgeon (Vicary 77). In other words, the uterus and ovaries are merely the penis and testicles turned inward. What prevented women from becoming men was their lack of essential heat. If a woman were to become too excited, lustful, or expend too much physical energy engaging with a masculine task—such as leaping or jumping—it was possible for her insides to become outsides, transforming her into a man. Laqueur goes on to argue this one-sex model was dominant throughout the seventeenth century and many scholars in areas such as Renaissance, Shakespeare, and gender studies have latched on to Laqueur’s argument with vigor. However, Janet Adelman warns us that by raising the one-sex model to hegemonic status, we potentially miss the possibility of unearthing the Renaissance’s “complex conversation about anatomical difference” (25). Despite Laqueur’s hefty claim that “Renaissance doctors understood there to be only one sex” (134), Adelman argues that according to her research, there is only one appearance of the Galenic one-sex model in 16<sup>th</sup> century English medical discourse, and it is a weak appearance at that. The document to which she appeals notes that ovaries are analogous to testes, but mentions nothing about the invertibility of the genitals and, so, the fluidity of sex (26-7). Adelman concludes, “there is little evidence of the [one-sex] model’s hold on the imagination” and cautions scholars and readers to be wary of the “assumption that there is one reigning model of sexual difference at any given time (39).

<sup>369</sup> See n. 357.

<sup>370</sup> Middleton, *More Dissemblers Besides Women*, 4.3.60.

Middleton entices the audience, encouraging them to anticipate a dramatic revelation of the Page's pregnancy.

Shortly before the Page's dance lessons commence, she receives a singing lesson to test the tenor of her too-feminine voice, presumably to measure the difference in her masculinity after the dancing lesson. During this precursor to the dance, the Page begins to complain of severe back and stomach pain—likely due to contractions as her body prepares to give birth. She calls out at various moments: “Oh my back! Oh my stomach!”<sup>371</sup> Nevertheless, her instructions commence and the audience remains tantalized over the stability of the Page's disguise. Once the lesson is underway with Cinquepace, he chides the Page's feminine style of movement. To begin the lesson, the Page absentmindedly curtsies, which brings Cinquepace's ire down on her head noting the Page “makes curtsy like a chambermaid.”<sup>372</sup> Following, Cinquepace forces the Page to begin “making legs” and dance the cinquepace, during which she attempts to keep her legs together. Undeterred by the Page's stubbornness, the instructor pushes the Page to spread his knees in hopes the young boy can engage through the masculine dancing style:

CINQUEPACE      Oh, oh, oh, oh [...] Open thy knees, wider, wider, wider, wider, wider! Did you ever see a boy dance clenched up? He needs a pick-lock [...] Come on, sir, now; cast thy leg out from thee, lift it up aloft, boy. A pox, his knees are soldered together, they're sewed up [...] I shall never teach this boy without a screw; his knees must be opened with a vice, or there's no good to be done upon him.<sup>373</sup>

This instruction becomes quite violent as Cinquepace, a dancing master turned obstetrician, pries apart the legs of a reluctant pregnant woman entering the early stages of labor.

Finally, Cinquepace instructs the Page to attempt a leap into the air as part of this dance. When the Page refuses, the instructor threatens “How! Such another word, down you're your

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<sup>371</sup> Middleton, *Dissemblers*, 5.1.65-6.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.1.71.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.1.72.

hose, boy,” presumably to discover whether he is actually male.<sup>374</sup> Realizing there is nothing to lose, the Page attempts the leap. She immediately collapses on the stage and calls out: “A midwife, run for a midwife!”<sup>375</sup> Those in attendance marvel at the topsy-turvy nature of these events. At hearing the Page call for a midwife, the bewildered Cinquepace declares, “the boy’s with child!” and muses, “Some woman is the father.”<sup>376</sup> Like Marie-Germain, the Page takes the leap with one sexed identity and lands with another. However, this moment inverts the heating process that makes men out of women. Rather than going from underdeveloped boy to masculine man, as the Duchess hoped—or even from female to male as Marie-Germain did—the Page transforms from boy to laboring woman. Where the Duchess hoped the boy’s testicles would descend, a child falls instead.

Given how this play so vividly addresses biological realities of gender and pregnancy, it is shocking that *More Dissemblers* has had no sustained analysis among scholars of motherhood and performance on early modern stages. While both Michael Shapiro and Regina Buccola address the subject of disguise at some length in *More Dissemblers*, scant attention is paid to the convention of staging pregnancy, or its material construction.<sup>377</sup> As rich and multi-layered as this gender confusion is—both throughout *More Dissemblers* in general, and in the dance lesson/labor scene in particular—it is important to keep in mind the fact a young boy, likely an apprentice actor, played the Page. So, rather than a woman performing pregnancy while disguised as an effeminate boy, Middleton of course staged a boy merely dressed as a boy, playing a pregnant woman in disguise. Although the Page returns to the stage in her woman’s clothes while carrying her newborn child at the end of the play, the reader is nevertheless left

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<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.1.73.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>377</sup> Shapiro, *Gender in Play*, 52-61. See also: Buccola, “Some woman is the father.”

wondering: what does a boy, costumed as a pregnant woman, and disguised as a boy, look like on the Stuart stage?

While Lactantio anticipates the need for new clothes that hide the Page's belly, arguing men's hose are not equipped to conceal pregnancy as women's "loose-bodied" do, this moment never arrives; the Page remains in men's clothing until she goes into labor. Nevertheless, the Page does indeed carry her baby to full term. This is made evident in the final scene when the Duchess insists Lactantio marry the Page, as their marriage contract was "made/ Near forty weeks ago" at the time they conceived their child.<sup>378</sup> Despite her necessarily advanced pregnancy, no characters took notice of her swelling belly before she went into labor. Together, all of this suggests the pregnant belly is likely inconspicuous beneath the Page's doublet and hose, but rather narrated to the audience in the style of Middleton's *The Witch*, offering a rich performance opportunity for the apprentice actor playing the Page.

Middleton includes constant reminders and allusions to pregnancy throughout the text to help the audience keep track of the Page's secret pregnancy, as discussed above. The Page herself often confides in the audience about hiding her pregnancy, narrating her own experiences, as Francesca does in *The Witch*. Perhaps this choice is merely pragmatic. The Page's storyline, a mere subplot in this play full of other gender and racial disguises, can easily become lost in the fray, especially if the pregnancy were inconspicuous. However, I suggest Middleton offers these moments up as gems of dramaturgical playfulness. These rapid shifts between boy page and pregnant woman produce what Shapiro calls "theatrical vibrancy," or the "layering of gender identity and the rapid oscillation between layers" in his influential study on the boy page in early modern drama. It is therefore strange that the category of the pregnant boy actor does not feature at length in Shapiro's otherwise exhaustive account of gender and

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<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.2.81.

performance.<sup>379</sup> In addition to the layering of gender identity, the playwright intertwines the spectral pregnant body experiencing the pangs of early labor, and the tantalizing possibility that the pregnant body will become “unmasked” in the tradition of female pages. This “rapid oscillation” affords the audience the opportunity to delight in the virtuosity of the boy actor and the playfulness of the poet, while reflecting on the theatrical materials that create gender, identity, and fecundity.

Buccola argues that Middleton’s pregnant Page “makes a mockery of the early modern theatrical convention of the lovelorn woman cross-dressed as the servant of her beloved by preposterously going into labor during a dance lesson,” although the author spends no significant amount of time wrestling with pregnancy as a spectacle or material convention.<sup>380</sup> Instead, Buccola’s comparative analysis of authorship in *More Dissemblers* and *Measure for Measure* focuses on Middleton’s Page as a satirical reinvention of the cross-dressed woman. While Lactantio immediately recognizes the Page as his former lover upon her first entrance, her disguise remains (more or less) in tact throughout the play until the dancing scene. While almost everyone comments on the Page’s femininity throughout the play, her gender/pregnancy disguise is only truly threatened when she goes into labor.

Shapiro suggests that *More Dissemblers* highlights Middleton’s “dramaturgical inventiveness” regarding theatrical representations and the female page, while observing that *More Dissemblers* features “the only female page in all of English Renaissance drama to be with child.”<sup>381</sup> Although Middleton’s pregnancy play certainly is distinct—and, to my knowledge, original—in its portrayal of a double gender/pregnancy disguise, the Page in *More Dissemblers* is not unique. Middleton repeats the disguise tactic later in his own work, *The Nice Valour*

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<sup>379</sup> Shapiro, 59.

<sup>380</sup> Buccola, 90.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*, 53; 55.

(1622), which I discuss in further detail in chapter five. In familiar fashion, *The Nice Valour* features a scorned and impregnated woman who chases after yet another rakish lover, aptly named The Passionate Lord. However, rather than serving the Lord as a page, the gestating woman disguises herself as Cupid and joins his traveling troupe of players. The repetition of this gender/pregnancy disguise suggests that Middleton found some success with the, to borrow Shapiro's phrase, "dramaturgical inventiveness" of *More Dissemblers*.<sup>382</sup>

Throughout *More Dissemblers*, Middleton repeatedly and knowingly challenges accepted theatrical conventions, drawing attention to the material artifice of stage identity. The fact of his doing so repeatedly throughout this career—and the echoes of his work in other playwrights' dramas—suggests he found some success with his metatheatrical critiques of stage conventions. While we can never be entirely sure how the boy actor's pregnant-disguised-as-male body actually materialized for the audience, it is apparent that Middleton was highly aware of the established theatrical and dramaturgical customs of his own performance culture, a fact evinced by his well-documented experiments with material conventions on the playhouse stage. If we read *More Dissemblers* as a pregnancy play—instead of merely a female page play—it becomes clear that Middleton's riff on gender construction is really a multi-layered playful critique of the inherent transparency of performed gender. *More Dissemblers*, like *Chaste Maid* and *The Witch*, reveal Middleton's interest in testing the boundaries of pregnancy as performance—hiding, revealing, and complicating the visibility of the belly in dynamic ways while metatheatrically gesturing to the conventions of materializing (or refusing to materialize) the pregnant body on

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<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*, 53. The pregnant female page makes another appearance in Thomas Dekker, John Ford, and William Rowley's *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621). While this play certainly features an illegitimately pregnant woman—Winnifride—who disguises herself as a page for safe passage with her bigamist husband, the pregnancy itself has little effect on the play's plot or overall dramaturgical structure. Although Winnifride speaks the play's moralistic epilogue, her pregnancy is ultimately lost among the other more tantalizing aspects of *Edmonton*. Nevertheless, the repetition of this plot device in *More Dissemblers*, *The Nice Valour*, and *The Witch of Edmonton*, suggests the pregnant page found some success with London audiences around 1620.

stage. Keeping this dramaturgical playfulness in mind, I now turn to Thomas May's *The Heir*, a play that springs quite naturally from the gauntlet thrown by Middleton's experiments in the playhouse.

***The Heir, Thomas May (c. 1620)***

*The Heir* premiered at the Red Bull around 1620.<sup>383</sup> In this under-studied comedy, Luce (who enters the scene “*gravida*”) and her lowborn lover, Francisco, reveal she has become pregnant in hopes that Luce's father will allow them to marry.<sup>384</sup> Unfortunately, the lovers' plan backfires. Concerned with public opinion and the denigration of his dynastic legacy, Franklin resolves to marry his daughter to Shallow, a dim-witted gentleman to whom Luce is already betrothed. While Luce's father is furious with her, he simultaneously appears amazed at her ingenuity; he demands to know how she managed to hide the pregnancy from him. Luce merely responds: “Fearing your anger sir, I strove to hide it,” suggesting the pregnancy appears difficult to conceal at this revelatory moment.<sup>385</sup> Franklin instructs Luce to continue to “hide” the fact she is “great with child by another man” a while longer until he develops a plan.<sup>386</sup> Luce's father proceeds to convince Shallow that he drunkenly consummated his relationship with Luce, thereby getting her with child. Having no memory of this event, Shallow takes one look at Luce, dimly affirms that her belly “swells” and resolves that Franklin's version of events is the only logical conclusion.<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> The frontispiece for *The Heir*, first published in 1622, notes it was “lately Acted by the Company of the Revels.” I date the play's first performance around that time. Thomas May, *The Heire*. London: 1622, frontispiece. For more information on the play's first performance location see: Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, 291.

<sup>384</sup> May, *The Heir*, B4.

<sup>385</sup> May, *The Heir*, B4.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, C.



boy beneath. In this way, theatrical prosthetics possess the power to make and unmake the subject simultaneously.

Employing Fisher's definition, I argue early modern theatre practitioners materialized pregnancy through the implementation of prosthetic pregnancy bellies beneath players' skirts. Similar to Epicoene's wig, the "great belly" becomes a major subject of dramatic action in Thomas May's *The Heir*, a play that illuminates strategies of manifesting pregnancy on boy actors' bodies. While it is difficult to know with complete certainty how femininity materialized on the male body, as Stallybrass acknowledges, pregnancy was, in many cases, highly conspicuous on the Stuart stage.<sup>393</sup> Playwrights and actors narrated, performed, and properly costumed pregnancy, making visible the pregnant belly when appropriate to the play's dramatic action. Similar to other such provisions of gender and identity construction (i.e. wigs, cosmetics, etc.), these bellies likewise manifested as theatrical prosthetics. I argue playwrights and players accomplished this through costumes and verbal descriptions of physical appearances, as discussed above, as well as by using common soft goods, such as pillows and cushions. I contend that physical bellies were one of the many essential material prosthetics necessary to make pregnant women out of boy actors on early modern stages, as in Thomas May's *The Heir*.

When Francisco exposes the material method of Luce's fabricated pregnancy, this moment from *The Heir* transforms into a metatheatrical revelation akin to Jonson's boy bride trick in *Epicoene*. Just as the removal of Epicoene's wig exposes a prosthetic technique integral to the construction of femininity, so too does the cushion illuminate pregnancy's material construction. Delivering the cushion for Shallow's paternal inspection, Francisco serves as midwife to the material truth of Luce's ingenuity as well as this theatrical pregnancy prosthesis.

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<sup>393</sup> Stallybrass acknowledges that it is impossible for us to know with any real certainty if boy actors wore prosthetic breasts, and, hence, what exactly Renaissance spectators saw when a boy actor undressed on stage. See: Stallybrass, "Transvestitism."

Similar invocations of the “cushion” appear elsewhere in sixteenth and seventeenth-century print. For example, in a series of combative letters between John Jewel, Bishop of Sarum, and Henry Cole, Jewel mentions to Cole that “hauing nothing to say, ye would seme to haue somewhat. As women y<sup>l</sup> woulde seme to be with child, sometimes rear vp their bellies with a cushion.”<sup>394</sup> As discussed in the Prologue to this study, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “cushion” both within the context of a pillow uses to support the body, as well as that which contributes to the construction of a false pregnancy.<sup>395</sup> This follows from one of the quotations in the *OED* entry, which comes from Milton’s 1649 *Eukonoklastes*: “And thus his pregnant motives are at last prov’d nothing but a Tympany, or a Queen Maries Cushion.”<sup>396</sup> As a result, Luce’s false pregnancy and Francisco’s calling forth of the cushion likely recalled and parodied Mary Tudor’s own “cushion”: her many false—possibly hysterical—pregnancies.<sup>397</sup> As such, the convention of falsifying or theatricalizing pregnancy with the use of a simple cushion was, I suggest, a popular method of materializing the “great belly” on stage, deconstructed unambiguously in May’s 1620 comedy.

A scene from Shakespeare’s *Henry IV, part 2* (c. 1597) anticipates this abortive moment from *The Heir* when an officer arrests Doll Tearsheet for accessory to murder.<sup>398</sup> Doll claims pregnancy in order to avoid legal censure; she threatens to miscarry the child currently inhabiting her womb if the officer drags her to jail. The officer asserts if Doll does miscarry, Mistress

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<sup>394</sup> Jewel, John and Henry Cole, *The true copies of the letters*, 58.

<sup>395</sup> As noted in the Prologue, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines ‘cushion’ within this context as well. A cushion is not merely a “case of cloth...used to give support or ease to the body in sitting, reclining, or kneeling” but also a “swelling simulating pregnancy: sometimes called *Queen Mary’s cushion*, after Mary Tudor” (‘cushion,’ *OED* online, original emphasis). Davies and Halliwell-Phillips’s *A Supplemental English Glossary*, notes “Queen Mary was often mistakenly believed by herself and others to be pregnant; hence Queen Mary’s cushion=protuberance that produces nothing” (167).

<sup>396</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, “cushion.”

<sup>397</sup> For extended discussions of Queen Mary Tudor, her reign, and her reproductive woes, see: Whitelock, *Queen Mary Tudor: Princess, Bastard*; Porter, *Mary Tudor: The First Queen*.

<sup>398</sup> Shakespeare, *Henry IV, part 2*, frontispiece. See also Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, 291.

Quickly “shall have a dozen of cushions again,” suggesting that the twelfth cushion is currently stuffed up Doll’s skirt to fake pregnancy and avoid prosecution. Written and first performed during Elizabeth’s reign, it anticipates the action of May’s comedy, and the deconstruction of the pregnancy convention. This moment from *Henry IV* suggests that audiences were well aware of the available pregnancy prosthetics in use to manifest great bellies on the bodies of boy actors—or anyone else who sought to appear “with child.”

When Francisco’s exposes the cushion beneath Luce’s skirt, this communicates a few key pieces of information to the contemporary reader. Firstly, the text clearly indicates Luce’s belly is visible. Not only does Shallow notes the changes in Luce’s belly, but Francisco demands to know how she hid such a swelling secret for so long. Furthermore, if the cushion were indiscernible beneath the actor’s skirts, there is little sense in removing it. Producing a cushion from beneath Luce’s dress without a visible protuberance of some kind proves nothing other than perhaps a strange proclivity toward household soft goods. Francisco finds it necessary to remove the cushion and fling it at Shallow, which communicates Luce, not only verbalized her pregnancy, but also manifested a visual cue signaling her fertility. In addition, Luce not only hoodwinks her father and fiancé by displaying a swelling belly, so too is the audience unaware her pregnancy is counterfeit until Francisco removes the prosthetic device. Luce never confesses her scheme to the audience, nor is the audience privy to any revelatory conversations between the conspirator-lovers. The audience, like Franklin and Shallow, find themselves in the dark regarding Luce’s false pregnancy. Therefore, the action of the play and the audience’s ignorance makes it clear that Luce’s pregnancy had to be visible to both characters and spectators.

Finally, the revelation of Luce’s virginity—the cushion’s “delivery”—suggests the conventionality of the prosthetic belly, just as the removal of Epicoene’s wig tells us of the

prosthetic's conventionality in the construction of femininity on playhouse stages. I suggest that, the cushion's delivery—not to mention the moment between Doll Tearsheet and the Officer from *Henry IV, part 2*—communicates that staging conspicuous pregnancy may have been as simple as collecting a suitable pillow or cushion from the tiring house and securing it beneath the player's gown. In this way, May's play explicitly foregrounds the material strategies of staging pregnancy by giving audiences a glimpse into the making, and unmaking, of theatrical gestation. Considering the playful ways May signals pregnancy—and non-pregnancy—in *The Heir*, I now turn to one final King's Men pregnancy play: Jonson's 1632 comedy, *The Magnetic Lady*, which continues to experiment with methodologies of staging the gestating body. In this comedy, Jonson presents a fecund female body that conceals her illegitimate pregnancy, while simultaneously foregrounding other outward signs of secreted gestation. Like Middleton, Jonson challenges conventions of staging great bellies on boy bodies, thereby satirizing pregnancy plays that obsess over women's internal secrets. In addition, Jonson, similarly satirizes the audience's dependence on spectacle. I now turn to *The Magnetic Lady*, which provides a kind of retrospective reading of the many ways the pregnancy convention has figured up until now.

### **Part 3**

#### **“The gentlewoman I do fear is leavened”: The Problem of Prosthetics in *The Magnetic Lady***

First performed by the King's Men in 1632, Jonson's *The Magnetic Lady* simultaneously disrupts and reaffirms established audience expectations of staged gestation.<sup>399</sup> Earlier pregnancy plays—such as *The Heir*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Golden Age*—rely upon the belly's visibility as an integral component of the play's *mise en scène*. However, unlike Shakespeare, May, or Heywood, Jonson depends solely upon aural cues and character observation to expose

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<sup>399</sup> Henry Herbert first licensed *The Magnetic Lady* on 12 October 1632. See: *Herbert*, 34. The play was first published in 1640. See: Ben Jonson, *The Magnetick Lady*, frontispiece. Although the date on the frontispiece states that it was printed in 1440 (M.CD.XL), Jonson's second folio was printed in 1640 (M.DC.XL). See also: Ben Jonson, *The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled*, ed. Harvey Peck, viii-ix.

Placentia's pregnancy, while simultaneously prohibiting the gestating character from acknowledging her fecundity—let alone narrating her own experience concealing her belly. Instead, Jonson metatheatrically berates the audience for failing to notice his cues regarding the heiress's pregnancy, simultaneously withholding the visual evidence that would indicate Placentia's being with child. Despite Jonson's best efforts to satirize the material practices of earlier pregnancy plays and avoid participating in the prosthetic construction of the gestational belly, he nevertheless firmly entrenches the play within the trend of prosthetically driven pregnancy plays. In part three, I analyze Jonson's characteristic ambivalence to cosmetics and prosthetics in order to understand how *The Magnetic Lady* responds to earlier pregnancy plays, especially in light of May's *The Heir*.

Taking a birds-eye view of the prosthetic pregnancy convention, it becomes clear that early pregnancy plays, such as *When You See Me, You Know Me* and *The Winter's Tale*, deal in relatively straightforward depictions of the gestating body while focusing on the patriarchal anxieties created by the "great belly" within the world of the play. Mid-period pregnancy plays—many of which are the comedies discussed throughout in this chapter—begin to challenge newly established conventions of staging pregnancy. The result is farcical parody, as in *The Heir*, *Chaste Maid*, and *More Dissemblers Besides Women*, seen above. However, by the mid 1630s, Jonson satirizes earlier pregnancy plays—especially the inept doctor from Ford's *Tis Pity She's a Whore* (c. 1630) and Bosola's obsessive interest in the Duchess's body (c. 1614)—with a watchful eye toward disrupting prosthetic practices and audience expectations.

### ***The Magnetic Lady*, Ben Jonson (1632)**

Throughout the first half of *The Magnetic Lady*, no one in the play seems aware that Placentia, the play's fourteen-year-old dim-witted and unmarried heiress, is pregnant. Echoing

*'Tis Pity's* Richardetto, Placentia's inept physician, Rut, misdiagnoses Placentia's symptoms, which include strange cravings for lime, hair, and soap-ashes; Peter Happé argues that Placentia's appetite may "accompany pregnancy, as Rut ought to know."<sup>400</sup> Similar to *Duchess* and *Chaste Maid*, unusual cravings appear as an outward sign of pregnancy. However, unlike Webster's heroine, Placentia's cravings and behavior go unrecognized as symptoms of pregnancy. These echoes of *'Tis Pity* and *Duchess* are important because they communicate that Jonson is directly engaging with these earlier playwrights, in particular the conventions of performing and revealing pregnancy on stage.

Polish, Placentia's lady-in-waiting (and—we later discover—her birth mother), easily recognizes her mistress's predicament, echoing *'Tis Pity's* Puttana.<sup>401</sup> Concerned for Placentia's health, Polish attempts to communicate to Rut the real issue at hand:

POLISH	The gentlewoman, I do fear, is leavened.
RUT	Leavened? What's that?
POLISH	Puffed, blown, and't please your worship.
RUT	What! Dark, by darker? What is blown? Puffed? Speak English—
POLISH	Tainted, and't please you, some do call it. She swells and swells so with it— <sup>402</sup>

Rut, too thick to comprehend Polish's cues, merely instructs that Polish give Placentia "vent/ If she do swell"; again echoing Richardetto, Rut prescribes a cure for Placentia's illness: "get her a husband."<sup>403</sup> Like *'Tis Pity*, the men in *The Magnetic Lady* are unable to clearly read the perplexing signs displayed by the feminine body, whereas other women translate Placentia's symptoms with ease.

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<sup>400</sup> Jonson, *The Magnetic Lady*. Ed. Peter Happé, act 2, scene 2, line 22. See also: page 84 n17.

<sup>401</sup> The character's name perhaps refers to her ability to smooth over difficult situations, or attempt to make bright, that which is common (i.e. her low-born daughter who she attempts to make an heiress to a noble family).

<sup>402</sup> Jonson, *The Magnetick Lady*, act 2, scene 3, page 22.

<sup>403</sup> *Ibid.*

However oblivious the other characters are to Placentia's pregnancy, Jonson clearly intended attentive audience members to take notice. Her emblematic name is, of course, a play on "placenta," the organ that connects a growing fetus to its mother's uterine wall to allow nutrient intake and waste disposal. Even without the use of a visible belly, a 1632 Blackfriars audience with access to almost 30 years of pregnancy plays likely recognized not only Placentia's name and symptoms, but also Polish's carefully chosen language. Jonson himself anticipated as much.

In act three, scene three, a fright sends Placentia into labor, at which point the women in the household rally around her, call for the Mistress Chair—an allusion to the role of the birthing chair in the labor ritual—and attempt to keep the illegitimate birth a secret from the men, lest Placentia should lose her inheritance for engaging in premarital sex. They, of course, do not succeed, and Jonson satisfactorily reestablishes patriarchal order by the play's end.<sup>404</sup> While Placentia's sudden contractions may surprise her, those around her, and perhaps the audience, Jonson quickly defends his own artistry.

Throughout the play, Jonson makes use of metatheatrical choral interludes that comment on the play's action and, appropriately, on Jonson's artistic merit. One of the characters is a fan of Jonson's work and the other one is not. During one of these interludes, the play's harshest critic—aptly named Damplay—asserts it was a "pitiful poor shift of [the] Poet to make his prime woman with child and fall in labour, just to compose a quarrel."<sup>405</sup> Here Damplay complains that Placentia's pregnancy was a surprise to him, and that it makes no sense in the world of the play.

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<sup>404</sup> As Janelle Jenstad articulates in her analysis of the play's birthing practices and feminine secrets, these women successfully maintain the secret of Placentia's illegitimate birth, and only fail "when Jonson himself takes over the midwifery function in the play (87). In this sense, Jonson as metaphorical midwife reveals the women's secrets through his metatheatrical choral interludes, thereby assuaging any lingering patriarchal anxiety with respect to opaque bodies and secret gynocentric spaces, as discussed above with respect to *Chaste Maid* and throughout chapter two.

<sup>405</sup> Jonson, *The Magnetick Lady*, act 3, Chorus, page 42.

Jonson's defender, Boy, counters this unfounded critique, insisting that Placentia's pregnancy and sudden labor pains ought not to have been a surprise to audience members who paid close attention.

BOY            The stream of the argument threatened her being with child from the very beginning, for it presented her in first of the second Act with some apparent note of infirmity or defect: from knowledge of which the auditory were rightly to be suspended by the author, till the quarrel...hastened on the discovery of it...wherein the poet expressed his prime artifice, rather than any error.<sup>406</sup>

Jonson's imbedded counter-criticism communicates the playwright expected the rapt aural attention of the audience in order to identify the conventionalized pregnancy coding expressed by Polish and enacted by Placentia throughout the play. Jonson pre-emptively chides the theatregoers, claiming they should have noticed the poet's "prime artifice" when Placentia's "note of infirmity or defect" became apparent to the play's most attentive hearers. Through the Boy's above metatheatrical intervention, Jonson pokes fun at the inept observers surprised by Placentia's pregnancy, as well as, perhaps his fellow playwrights who rely too much upon gross spectacle.

Nevertheless, Jonson undercuts his own argument. In an effort to reflect—or, perhaps perform—his own loathing for theatrical materials and conventionalized spectacle, Jonson in fact reinforces the tradition of the customarily visible belly.<sup>407</sup> Even when Placentia successfully hides her pregnancy, Polish uses language that describes gestation as that which is detected and diagnosed visually: Placentia's body is "leavened," "puffed," and "blown." The language with

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<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>407</sup> This is perhaps most evident in Jonson's introduction to *The Masque of Blackness* wherein he notes his motivations for publishing the masque: "The honour and splendor of these spectacles was such in the performance as, could those hours have lasted, this of mine now had been a most unprofitable work [...] In duty, therefore, to that Majesty who gave them their authority and grace, and no less than the most royal of predecessors deserves eminent celebration for these solemnities, I add this later hand, to redeem them from [...] oblivion" (Jonson, *Two Royall Masques*, A3). In other words, though a performance's spectacle is what will perhaps amaze people in the moment, it is only through the written text—the work of the poet—that these plays will be remembered.

which Jonson endows Polish communicates that pregnancy remains “an obviously visible condition” in the audience’s imagination, even lacking the conspicuity of a prosthetic belly.<sup>408</sup> If we consider *The Magnetic Lady* within its dramaturgical chronology, it becomes evident Jonson disrupts and satirizes a convention grounded in spectacle. Plays such as *The Winter’s Tale*, *When You See Me You Know Me*, and *The Heir* require a visible belly as noted in the text and by the play’s action. Middleton’s implementation of the pregnant body in *The Witch*, *Chaste Maid*, and *More Dissemblers* metatheatrically unsettles expectations of staged gestation, while remaining preoccupied with the visibility of the pregnant body. Contrarily, Jonson pedantically instructs playgoers to listen carefully; to follow the poet’s language intensely and marvel at his artistry.

Thus far, this narrative squares nicely with scholarly interpretations of Jonson as a paradoxically anti-theatrical dramatist. However, Farah Karim-Cooper deftly challenges these interpretations, putting Douglas Bruster in her cross hairs. Bruster claims, “Jonson retained a special animosity toward theatrical stuff, the stage objects and material practices that made the early modern theatre what it was.”<sup>409</sup> Karim-Cooper counters, noting Jonson’s comedies are in fact, “steeped in ‘theatrical stuff.’”<sup>410</sup> As such, she argues Jonson’s plays foreground the relationship between theatricality and cosmetic adornment throughout his cosmetic dramas, such as *Epicoene* or *The Devil is an Ass*.<sup>411</sup> For example, in Jonson’s 1616 Blackfriars comedy, *The Devil is an Ass*, the playwright engages the problem of theatrical gender. Distinct from *Epicoene*, wherein the title character dismantles his feminine identity on stage, in *The Devil is an Ass*, a young gallant named Wittipol constructs his feminine identity in front of the audience. Wittipol masquerades as “the Spanish Lady” in order to infiltrate an exclusive ladies club, arriving under

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<sup>408</sup> Moncrief and McPherson, 1.

<sup>409</sup> Bruster, 87.

<sup>410</sup> Karim-Cooper, 112.

<sup>411</sup> For an extended discussion of Jonson’s—to use Karim-Cooper’s term—cosmetic dramas, see: Karim-Cooper, “Jonson’s Cosmetic Ritual,” in *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama*, 111-31.

the auspices of showing the women how to prepare their cosmetics in the celebrated Spanish manner. Wittipol enters dressed as the Spanish Lady—donning a gown and wig—without having yet applied the cosmetic paint; the picture remains incomplete. The audience sees only half the illusion of gender and watches Wittipol craft the other half before their eyes. Cosmetics—like prosthetics—participate in the theatrical construction of femininity, while also propping up fictional womanhood as a theatrical display. In both *Epicoene* and *The Devil is an Ass*, Jonson makes use of theatrical cosmetics and prosthetics as objects contained within the play; however, like the characters themselves, these material methods of identity construction are also subjects of the dramatic action.<sup>412</sup> However, in *The Magnetic Lady*, Jonson turns away from implementing prosthetics. Instead, the playwright willfully, and, I suggest, playfully combats established conventions of materially constructed pregnant bellies.

Even in instances wherein a pregnant character successfully conceals her swelling body—suggesting the absence of a prosthetic device—playwrights nevertheless employ language that paints the boy actor as conspicuously gravid, seen not only in Jonson’s work, but in Middleton’s *The Witch* as well. Hidden pregnancies, and the playwrights’ attempts to draw the audience’s attention to the belly despite its disguise, communicate the very convention of materialization for which I argue in *The Heir*, *The Golden Age*, and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*. Moreover, in pregnancy plays, such as *The Magnetic Lady*, *More Dissemblers*, and *The Witch*, the playwrights’ insistence on pregnancy’s concealment merely throws into relief the belly’s conventional materialization.

Jonson, well known for his biting social commentaries, is equally renowned for his satires of theatrical conventions, particularly prosthetic and cosmetic practices.<sup>413</sup> I argue *The*

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<sup>412</sup> For further discussion of the cosmetics as dramatic subjects see: Karim-Cooper, 114.

<sup>413</sup> See: Karim-Cooper, 111-31.

*Magnetic Lady*—even in light of the prosthetic device’s absence—highlights Jonson’s multifaceted relationship with theatrical prosthetics. While Jonson’s text indicates the absence of a visible belly on the pregnant heiress Placentia, the playwright nevertheless consistently calls attention to pregnancy as an empirically observable visual phenomenon. By simultaneously concealing the belly, yet calling attention to its disruptive existence, Jonson deliberately foregrounds the conventional use of prosthetic bellies in Stuart pregnancy plays. Finally, Jonson’s intervention in pregnancy performance conventions suggests the “great belly” was not only a widely used performance prosthetic visible to the audience, but also perhaps—by 1632—a tired, worn-out plot device, especially in comedy.

The prosthetic pregnancy plays analyzed in this chapter each possess a dramaturgy driven by the theatrical materials required to stage pregnancy, as playwrights reinvent, reimagine, and redefine pregnancy performance for the Stuart theatregoers. Considering that roughly a third of the extant pregnancy plays discussed in this study foreground the prosthetic strategies of staging and concealing pregnancy, it stands to reason that the question of theatricalizing the pregnant body in the playhouse is one that loomed large for these playwrights. The pregnant body’s repeated use in plays by the period’s leading writers signals its popularity and commercial success, as playwrights and producers were uninterested in sinking their resources into an investment unable to pay dividends at the box office. As a result, I argue that the theatrical marketplace of Stuart London was one in which the maternal body emerged as a major source of dramatic interest on commercial stages. Each performance of pregnancy, ghosted by those that came before it, further solidified the convention within the visual vocabulary and theatrical landscape of the seventeenth-century playhouse.

In the next chapter, I analyze peripheral pregnancy plays, or those that relegate pregnant characters to the margins of the play's action. I suggest that the diminished focus on the gestating character or the pregnant body in these plays reveals a growing disinterest in fecund female bodies—or, at the very least—an inability for Stuart playwrights to sustain the novelty offered by boy actors beneath great bellies. Although peripheral pregnancy plays de-emphasize gestation or the pregnant body, I nevertheless label them “pregnancy plays” because the gestating characters—or at least the fact of their pregnancies—remain integral to the dramaturgical structure of each play, while deliberately engaging the many pregnancy plays that came early in the period.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Peripheral Pregnancy Plays: Marginal Gestation in Tragicomedies and Problem Plays**

In many of the pregnancy plays discussed above, such as *The Winter's Tale*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, or *The Magnetic Lady*, the pregnant character exists at the center of the action. In these dramas, the gestational body has a strong presence on stage and the pregnant character is a principle motivator of the play's action. However, several dramas in the canon of pregnancy plays analyzed throughout this study, place the pregnant body on the periphery rather than the core of the plot. In the plays to which I now turn, the pregnant body appears to have less influence on the play's *mise en scène* and, in some cases, even appears inconsequential to the main plot. However, I argue that upon a closer reading of the peripheral pregnancies in Shakespeare's problem plays *Measure for Measure* (1604), and *All's Well that Ends Well* (c. 1606), as well as three tragicomedies, *A Fair Quarrel* (Middleton and William Rowley, c. 1617), Webster's *The Devil's Law-Case* (c.1619), and Heywood's *A Maidenhead Well Lost* (c. 1634), one can see that the presence of pregnant characters on stage consistently reveals itself to be a crucial component within each play's dramaturgical structure. In this chapter I explore the ways in which these peripheral pregnancy plays influence, engage, and complicate gestation as a theatrical convention and dramaturgical function. In so doing, I return to Marvin Carlson's concept "ghosting" to refer to instances of significant repetition.

Peripheral pregnancy plays are those that seem to present an ambivalent attitude toward the pregnant character by placing her—or her pregnancy—on the outskirts of the play's action. Despite their seemingly peripheral nature, my analysis reveals that each of these pregnancies proves necessary to the overall structure of the play. Furthermore, by putting these plays into

conversation with one another, I highlight tropes that continually emerge and suggest conscious borrowing amongst the period's most prolific playwrights.

In order to illustrate the meaning of a peripheral pregnancy, I begin with Middleton's 1611 comedy *No Wit/No Help Like a Woman's*—a dramatic contemporary to Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*—wherein a secret marriage is in danger of producing an incestuous pregnancy.<sup>414</sup> In the opening moments of Middleton's comedy, the rakish Phillip Twilight has just returned from a trip wherein he was to rescue Lady Twilight from a gang of pirates who kidnapped her, and Phillip's sister, ten years earlier. Sir Oliver Twilight, Phillip's father, gets wind of his wife's location, and sends Phillip to rescue her with a large pile of ransom money. Rather than searching for his mother, Phillip drinks and whores in a nearby town where he meets and marries Grace, a young woman of unknown parentage. Phillip, out of both money and time, returns home with his new wife. Phillip tells his father that his mother is dead, despite never having sought her out, but consoles Sir Oliver with news that he returns with his long-lost sister. Phillip attempts to pass Grace off as his sibling throughout the remainder of the play.

When Phillip's mother, Lady Twilight, suddenly arrives on the scene, having procured her ransom and rescue elsewhere, she is stunned to hear reports of her own death. Phillip confesses the entire plot to his mother and begs her to publicly confirm that Grace is his sister. Lady Twilight agrees. She instructs their servant, Saviourwit, to call down Grace so that she can confirm her identity before Sir Oliver, thereby saving her son's honor. It is at this point that Saviourwit begins to deliver sexually suggestive jokes at Grace's expense, all of which allude to a pregnancy—unmentioned until now. When Saviourwit is instructed to call Grace downstairs, he remarks in an aside to the audience: "She's been too often down to be now called so./ She'll lie

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<sup>414</sup> Although Middleton did write plays for The King's Men, John Jowett suggests *No Wit/No Help* was a play for Prince Henry's Men (*Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, 779).

down shortly and call somebody up.”<sup>415</sup> Once Grace arrives, Saviourwit advises her to kneel “to save [her] belly harmless.”<sup>416</sup> Lady Twilight invites Grace to rise again with a “mother’s blessing,” at which point Saviourwit wryly observes, “All this while/ She’s risse with a son’s.”<sup>417</sup> The audience is encouraged to take notice of Grace’s pregnancy although it appears only Saviourwit—and perhaps Phillip—are aware of its existence.

Not long after Lady Twilight’s initial confirmation of Grace’s parentage, she is horrified to realize that Grace is truly the daughter from whom their kidnappers separated her ten years earlier, but no characters discuss Grace’s pregnancy further in any explicit terms. Nevertheless, the fact of it hangs in the air as Phillip wrestles with the newfound knowledge that he unwittingly married and conceived a child with his own biological sister. This anxiety is palpable for the young sibling-couple as well as for Lady Twilight. Although she is hopeful they have not yet consummated their marriage, Phillip confirms Lady Twilight’s worst fears: “I have known the way unto her bed these three months.”<sup>418</sup> Suddenly, Grace’s little discussed pregnancy becomes high-risk, as the specter of incest dampens the young couple’s happiness.

Of course, in the play’s final scene we learn that—though their parents raised Grace and Phillip as siblings before the kidnapping—Grace Twilight was indeed switched at birth with a neighbor-girl, Jane Sunset. Therefore, Grace and Phillip are not siblings after all. Their marriage is legitimate, and their unborn child safe from the taboo of incest. Despite the fact Grace’s pregnancy is discussed infrequently throughout the play, the fact of it serves to heighten the play’s stakes for the period that Grace and Phillip believe they are siblings.

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<sup>415</sup> Middleton, *No Wit/No Help Like a Woman’s*, act 4, scene 1, page 81.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>418</sup> Middleton *No Wit*, Act 4, scene 1, page 87.

In *No Wit/No Help Like a Woman's*, pregnancy is not a fundamental motivator of the play's conflict like it is in *The Duchess of Malfi* or *The Winter's Tale*. Nevertheless, the fact of Grace's pregnancy remains integral to the play's dramaturgy. In John Jowett's introduction to the play, first performed by The Prince's Men at the Fortune, he suggests *No Wit/No Help Like a Woman's* is made up of "two causally independent plots...the very idea of doubleness holds the play together."<sup>419</sup> In this way, Grace's pregnancy reflects Middleton's dramaturgical double vision. Grace is at once sister and wife, virgin and mother. While the allusions to Grace's pregnancy are very brief, this becomes a powerful moment once Middleton introduces the potentially tragic danger of incest, a possibility realized almost twenty years later by John Ford in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (c. 1630).

Grace's pregnancy, though important for the dramaturgical stability and richness of Middleton's comedy, is nevertheless peripheral to the play's action. This is likewise true for the five plays analyzed throughout chapter four. Part one juxtaposes two Shakespearean dramas: *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well that Ends Well*. While these are Shakespeare's two latest comedies (often called "problem plays"), they are two of the earliest extant pregnancy plays written after James's ascension to the throne. I examine the way in which these two texts are in conversation with one another, and analyze the gestation tropes they establish for later pregnancy plays. Part two moves on to three later texts, which I discuss in chronological order of performance: Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's *A Fair Quarrel* (c. 1617), John Webster's *The Devil's Law-Case* (c. 1619), and finally Thomas Heywood's *A Maidenhead Well Lost* (c. 1634). In each of these dramas, one finds echoes of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well*, which communicate conscious borrowing on the part of the playwrights, as I

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<sup>419</sup> Middleton, *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, 780.

reveal. I conclude by re-examining the peripheral quality of these pregnancies and what they tell us about the performed pregnant body on Stuart stages.

In these five peripheral pregnancy plays, the gestating body does not drive the play's action as it does in Jonson's *The Magnetic Lady*, nor do these plays ask the audience to engage with the boy actor's "great belly" in complex ways, as does May's *The Heir*. Nevertheless, the pregnant characters and their gestating bodies are integral to each narrative, distinctly binding together the playwright's dramaturgical structure. The plays that I discuss throughout this chapter bolster my earlier analyses with respect to the ways in which these playwrights are consciously participating in a theatrical convention, further establishing the pregnancy play as a subgenre of early modern dramatic literature.

### **Part 1**

#### **"One that's dead is quick": Problem Pregnancies in Problem Plays**

Scholars often discuss *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well that Ends Well* in tandem as they share many common attributes, including a surreptitious bed trick, a resourceful heroine, a wayward would-be husband, ambiguous dénouements, and, perhaps most importantly for the present study, pregnant bodies crucial to the dramaturgical integrity of the play. Often labeled "problem plays" or "problem comedies," these two Shakespearean dramas represent the playwright's last attempts at comedy before launching into the late romances of his career. For years, scholars have assumed *All's Well* was the earlier of the problem plays, written by Shakespeare around 1602/03, while *Measure for Measure* has a confirmed performance at court in 1604.<sup>420</sup> It is therefore common to see *All's Well that Ends Well* analyzed first, followed by

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<sup>420</sup> For a discussion of this shift in dating practices, see: Maguire and Smith, "Many Hands," <http://www.cems-oxford.org/projects/the-authorship-of-alls-well#7>

*Measure for Measure*, when these plays are placed in direct conversation.<sup>421</sup> However, based on recent scholarship and available evidence with respect to the plays' composition dates and dramaturgical styles, my discussion begins with an analysis of *Measure for Measure*'s peripheral pregnancy, followed by Helen's in *All's Well that Ends Well*.<sup>422</sup> I follow Quentin Skinner's argument that *Measure for Measure* was composed first, based on his analysis of the playwright's language practice within the context of Shakespeare's other late works.<sup>423</sup> I follow the study of *Measure* and *All's Well* with an exploration of the effect these two early pregnancy plays had on the representations of gestation in later Stuart drama.

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<sup>421</sup> For example, in Julia Briggs's 1994 essay on Shakespeare's bed tricks in these two texts, she points out that "*All's Well that Ends Well* has never been dated with certainty but is assumed to be the earlier" of the problem plays (Briggs, "Shakespeare's bed tricks," 293). Her analysis therefore discusses the *Measure for Measure* bed trick as following that of *All's Well*. Similarly, Janet Adelman's 1992 psychoanalytic analysis of desire in *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well* assumes a positivist progression from the former to the latter, citing how the "transformation of the pregnant Helena into the pregnant Juliet typifies the relationship between the two plays" (Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers*, 86).

<sup>422</sup> The date commonly held date for *All's Well* shifted from 1602-1604, to 1607/08 with MacDonald Jackson's 2001 essay, "Spurio and the Date of All's Well that Ends Well." Jackson posits that Shakespeare was familiar with Middleton's 1607 *Revenger's Tragedy* and his character Spurio, due to the dual mention of an unseen Spurio in *All's Well that Ends Well* ((See: Shakespeare, *All's Well that Ends Well*, TLN 643; 2.1 and TLN 2267; 4.3. Jackson, "Spurio and the Date of All's Well that Ends Well," 298-9). However, Jackson's argument rests on mere speculation that Shakespeare borrowed this name from Middleton. While there is nothing in his short article to definitively show that Middleton could not have taken the name from Shakespeare, or that Shakespeare could not have borrowed the name from a separate source all together, Jackson's theory gained "widespread acceptance" as Laurie Maguire and Emma Smith point out (Maguire and Smith, "Many Hands," <http://www.cems-oxford.org/projects/the-authorship-of-alls-well#7>). For example, when Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor revised the Oxford *Complete Works* in 2005, they accepted Jackson's dating of the play, proposing 1606/07 as the composition year (Wells and Taylor, *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, x). Many other scholars have followed suit including Lois Potter and Catherine Alexander (See: Alexander, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Last Plays*, xiii; Potter, *The Life of William Shakespeare: A Critical Biography*, 335; 358).

<sup>423</sup> In a 2013 rebuttal to Jackson, Quentin Skinner pushes back against what he calls Jackson's "unargued assumption," pointing out the lack of substantiated non-speculative evidence in Jackson's 2001 essay (Skinner, "A Spurious Dating for All's Well that Ends Well," 431). Skinner then goes on to offer his own evidence as to *All's Well*'s composition date, attempting to realign the comedy with *Othello* rather than link it to Shakespeare romances, as Jackson's argument does. Despite Skinner's well-founded retort to Jackson, he nevertheless concludes, "*All's Well* must have been written later than—but only slightly later than—*Measure for Measure*" (433). Skinner continues: "If we now recall the plotting and organization of the two plays, we come upon further evidence to the same effect. Both plots hinge around a bed-trick, with the exposure and humiliation of the victim occupying much of the closing scene. Several names of importance in *Measure for Measure*—Escalus, Lodowick, Mariana—recur more incidentally in *All's Well*, as if Shakespeare were simply re-using names already in his mind, while the character of Mariana figures in both plays as a means of commenting on the infidelity of men (433).

### *Measure for Measure*, William Shakespeare (1604)

As discussed throughout this study, many extant pregnancy plays depict visible gestational bellies, evinced by verbal descriptions detailing the size and shape of the conspicuously gravid body or the demands of the play's action. Early pregnancy plays, many of which are mid and late-career dramas by William Shakespeare such as *Measure for Measure*, are the most explicit in this regard. These plays, trailblazers in the early plays of this subgenre, worked to establish the conventions disrupted and reinvented throughout the texts analyzed in this chapter.

The dramatic action of Shakespeare's 1604 King's Men play, *Measure for Measure*, begins in earnest when a young unmarried couple are publicly shamed for their sexual transgressions despite their possession of "a true [marriage] contract."<sup>424</sup> The frigid Angelo, newly minted deputy to the absent Duke, discovers Claudio "got possession of Juliet's bed" when the "stealth of [their] most mutual entertainment/ With character too gross is writ on Juliet."<sup>425</sup> In other words, the visibility of Juliet's gestational belly exposes their pre-marital sexual activity. As a result, Angelo sentences Claudio to death while he spares Juliet, presumably due to her pregnancy. As such, the scene necessitates the presence of a distended belly, as its imperceptibility would mean a lack of evidence for Claudio's conviction and sentencing. Kathryn Moncrief suggests that Juliet's body stands as "the central representation of the uncontrolled sexual activity abundant throughout the city."<sup>426</sup> Building on Moncrief's analysis, I argue Juliet's body—"too visible" in her time on stage—simultaneously signals to Angelo the depravity of the entire city and, to the audience, the depravity of Angelo. For Angelo, Juliet's

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<sup>424</sup> Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, TLN 237; act 1, scene 3. Here Claudio refers to the fact that, though he and Juliet have pledged themselves to one another, and consider themselves husband and wife, they lack the legal marriage proceedings performed by a church official.

<sup>425</sup> TLN 238-47; 1.3.

<sup>426</sup> Moncrief, "'Show me a child,'" 35.

pregnant body is synecdochal for Vienna's carnal corruption. Although Juliet is not the only pregnant woman mentioned in the play, she nevertheless stands alone as a visual representation of the depravity Angelo tries to eradicate, even while he himself gives way to the temptations of sexual gratification.

The consistent descriptions of Juliet's pregnant body throughout act one corroborate the presence of a large, swollen belly for Juliet. Lucio, a local rake and friend to Claudio, reveals the situation to Isabella, Claudio's sister, in an effort to secure her aid. Lucio describes the physical evidence stacked against the young couple in explicit detail:

LUCIO           Your brother and his lover have embraced.  
                    As those that feed grow full, as blossoming time  
                    That from the seedness the bare fallow brings  
                    To teeming foison, even so her plenteous womb  
                    Expresseth his full tilth and husbandry.<sup>427</sup>

In order to make his point, Lucio fixates on the visual evidence of Claudio and Juliet's relationship: her protruding belly. He describes the roundness of Juliet's belly five times in as many lines, using words like "full," "blossoming," and "foison" to paint a clear picture for the virginal Isabella. Furthermore, the contemporary reader learns Juliet's pregnancy is quite advanced when, in act two, scene two, the Provost asks Angelo what is to be done with the "groaning Juliet?/ She's very near her hour."<sup>428</sup> Given these language choices, along with the fact Juliet is silent throughout her first appearance in act one, scene two—and nearly the entire play—the actor's prosthetically manifested belly must make a significant visual impression on the audience. The language of the play leaves little room for ambiguity as to the progress of Juliet's pregnancy, or the gravity of her situation.

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<sup>427</sup> Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, TLN 390-4; 1.5.

<sup>428</sup> TLN 753; 2.2.

The explicit descriptions of Juliet's body by other characters in act one and the play's dramatic structure necessitate the visibility of Juliet's pregnancy. After hearing Lucio's appeal, and the explicit description of Juliet's fecund body, Isabella agrees to beg Angelo for her brother's life. The moment Isabella agrees to speak for Claudio is the inciting incident of Shakespeare's play, igniting the dramatic momentum necessary to carry the story through to its conclusion. As such, the conspicuity of Juliet's pregnancy is so crucial to the structure of *Measure for Measure* that, without it, the play's central conflict lacks instigation.

Despite Juliet's importance to the dramaturgical integrity of the play, she appears onstage infrequently—only three times—and has little bearing on the action of the play outside of motivating the inciting incident. It would then seem that Juliet's effect on the action of the play, aside from her mere existence and conspicuous fecundity, is quite negligible. Compared to the pregnancy plays staged a decade later, including *The Winter's Tale* or *The Duchess of Malfi*, Juliet appears an insignificant and peripheral character whose pregnancy merely galvanizes the plot. Nevertheless, the young unwed mother's appearances occur at pivotal moments to remind the audience of the stakes at hand in Isabella's negotiations with Angelo.

After Juliet's shameful march through town with Claudio in act one, the next time the audience sees her is while she walks about the prison in act two, scene three. The Duke-as-Friar meets her there, prepared to receive her confession:

DUKE	Repent you, fair one, of the sin you carry?
JULIET	I do, and bear the shame most patiently. [...] I do repent me as it is an evil, And take the shame with joy. <sup>429</sup>

As the Duke mentions the sin Juliet carries, he speaks metaphorically of the heavy burden of un-Christian deeds, while simultaneously gesturing to the literal expression of that sin she carries:

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<sup>429</sup> TLN 973-92; 2.3.

Juliet's swollen belly and the child begot outside church-sanctioned wedlock. Juliet at once repents, yet announces she finds happiness in her "shame": the child of her betrothed, Claudio. This is the only scene in which Shakespeare empowers Juliet to speak for herself and, in so doing, draws the audience's attention to this important interaction. This scene becomes all the more crucial if one looks to the events that surround Juliet's appearance and confession.

Shakespeare bookends Juliet's jail scene, and her interaction with the Duke-Friar, with two pivotal events: Isabella's appeal to Angelo in act two, scene two and Angelo's indecent proposal to Isabella in act two, scene four. At the end of act two, scene two, Angelo soliloquizes about his sexual attraction to Isabella. The juxtaposition of Angelo's admission of unwholesome sexual desire with Juliet's admission of a loving consensual relationship with Claudio strike home when Angelo finally propositions to trade Claudio's freedom for Isabella's chastity. For the audience, Juliet's great belly stands alone as a startling visual reminder of the danger offered by the licentiousness and duplicity found among those who are at once absolute in their judgment of others, and morally relativistic in their own behavior. Shakespeare ties the image of Juliet's fecund body with Angelo's onstage action together. As a result, Juliet's body acts as a key reminder of the deputy's hypocrisy throughout the play.

As I mentioned above, Juliet's is only one of the pregnancies discussed in *Measure for Measure*. The other troublesome pregnancies include that of Kate Keepdown, a prostitute residing in Mistress Overdone's household, and Mistress Elbow, wife to the inept constable. At the end of the play, the newly returned Duke punishes Lucio's impertinence by forcing him to marry Kate Keepdown, "whom he begot with child," after which Lucio is to be "whipped and hanged."<sup>430</sup> Meanwhile, Pompey the bawd describes Mistress Elbow as "with child," and "great-

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<sup>430</sup> TLN 2910-2912; 5.1.

bellied,” while wandering into Mistress Overdone’s brothel, “longing for prunes.”<sup>431</sup> Sujata Iyengar notes in *Shakespeare’s Medical Language: A Dictionary*, that prunes “were both an aphrodisiac and a laxative, and thus particularly dangerous for the heavily pregnant Mistress Elbow,” while Katharine Maus notes that stewed prunes were “commonly served in brothels.”<sup>432</sup> The prunes in Pompey’s reports, though at the time to be an abortifacient, were presumably for the very purpose of terminating unwanted pregnancies in the brothels, anticipating Bosola’s apricot trick in *The Duchess of Malfi*. Together, all of this suggests Mistress Elbow’s pregnancy—like Kate Keepdown’s—was illegitimate or, at the very least, unwanted. While Kate Keepdown and Mistress Elbow’s offstage presence affects onstage action, these pregnant characters never appear in front of the audience. Rather, the nearly silent Juliet—and her betrothed Claudio—withstands the worst of Angelo’s scorn toward sexual incontinence and illegitimate pregnancy.

Juliet is indeed a peripheral character. Nevertheless, the fact of her pregnancy, as well as the visual evidence of it, supports the play’s action and dramaturgical structure, while acting as an important reminder of Angelo’s corrupt moral standards. This is most evident through an analysis of Juliet’s presence in the play’s final scene. Juliet’s final appearance in in act five follows on the heels of the long series of revelations: the Duke removes his habit, Isabella’s “bed trick” is illuminated, and Angelo’s licentiousness is exposed. Only after all of these events take place does Juliet enter. In the 1623 Folio, the play’s first publication, the stage directions stipulate that “Barnardine and Provost, Claudio, Julietta” enter.<sup>433</sup> Claudio is currently “muffled” in order to hide his identity, as Isabella, Angelo, and possibly Juliet, believe he is dead.<sup>434</sup> Aside

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<sup>431</sup> TLN 551-3; 2.1

<sup>432</sup> Iyengar, *Shakespeare’s Medical Language*, 2; Shakespeare, *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2040, n.6.

<sup>433</sup> Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, TLN 2875; 5.1.

<sup>434</sup> TLN 2885; 5.1

from this stage direction, there is no indication that Juliet enters with Claudio, et. al. Juliet has no lines and, according to the text, nobody on stage acknowledges her presence in the court.

However, once the Duke reveals Claudio's identity, and Claudio turns his back on Isabella who would not give her virginity to save his life, the importance of Juliet's pregnant presence in the scene becomes apparent.

Scholars now often refer to this play, originally categorized amongst the comedies in the 1623 Folio, as a "problem play," for good reason. Typically, comedies see the marriage of a happy couple or, in many cases, multiple marriages of several happy couples. However, Juliet and Claudio are the only ones who qualify for this designation. Against Angelo's will, The Duke compels him to marry the wronged Mariana. Shortly after, the Duke forces Lucio to marry the impregnated prostitute, Kate Keepdown. Finally, the Duke proposes marriage to Isabella who, just days before, was preparing to take the veil of holy orders. Shakespeare does not indicate either a refusal or a denial on her part, but as no one else in this scene has disobeyed the Duke, it stands to reason that Isabella capitulates to his will. However, when the Duke's pardons Claudio, he and Juliet—the woman whose gravid body stood for all of Vienna's corruption—become the play's only content, and consensual, couple. The moment the Duke reveals and pardons Claudio, Juliet's body transforms from a signal of corruption and licentiousness, to chastity and wholesome procreation. *Measure for Measure's* ending, a "problem" for Isabella, Angelo, and Lucio, satisfactorily reunites the separated lovers in the tradition of early modern comedy. With Shakespeare's conclusion, the condemned, shamed, illegitimately pregnant Juliet is, counterintuitively, the play's only comic emblem. In this way, Juliet's visible pregnancy continues to signal *Measure for Measure's* ambiguously tragicomic tone.

*Measure for Measure* appears early in the canon of Stuart pregnancy plays, before the period's leading companies and writers established gestational conventions and tropes in the Stuart period. The first mention of the King's Men performing *Measure for Measure* is at court on St. Stephen's Night, 1604.<sup>435</sup> *Measure for Measure* precedes Anna of Denmark's pregnant performance in *The Masque of Blackness* by roughly two weeks, and is one of the earliest pregnancy plays I consider in this study, second only to Samuel Rowley's *When You See Me, You Know Me* (1604). As such, the conventions of staging pregnancy discussed throughout chapters two and three had not yet been firmly established. While loath to engage in the practice of Shakespearean exceptionalism, it does appear that his late comedy anticipates the impending abundance of pregnancy on Stuart stages. As I will reveal below, one can find echoes of *Measure for Measure* throughout peripheral pregnancy plays performed later in the period, including Webster's *The Devil's Law-Case* and Heywood's *A Maidenhead Well Lost*.

I now turn to another Shakespearean problem comedy. In the last scene of this early pregnancy play, Helen reveals to Bertram that she is pregnant. Unlike *Measure for Measure*, whose pregnancy ignites the play's action, Helen's announced gestation serves as a conclusion to *All's Well*. Analyzing the function of pregnancy in the dramatic structure of *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well that Ends Well*, I put these two Shakespearean problem plays into conversation. I then reveal the influence of these early problematic peripheral pregnancies on later works by Thomas Middleton, William Rowley, Thomas Heywood, and John Webster.

#### **All's Well that Ends Well, William Shakespeare (c. 1606)**

In *Measure for Measure*, Shakespeare begins the play with an illegitimate pregnancy that stimulates the play's action. Alternatively, in *All's Well that Ends Well*, he provides a legitimate pregnancy that is supposed to tie up loose ends, but in fact leaves many things unresolved. While

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<sup>435</sup> *Extracts from the Accounts of the Revels at Court*, 204.

the gestational bodies in these plays seem unquestionably peripheral to the play's central action, they nevertheless factor into the play at key moments. Juliet's fecund body emerges throughout the play at crucial moments to juxtapose her presumed moral corruption with Angelo's actual hypocrisy, but in *All's Well that Ends Well*, the pregnant body does not arrive on stage until the last moments of the play. Nevertheless, from the moment Bertram renounces Helen and assures her she will never bear his child, Shakespeare asks the audience to track the movements of this resourceful woman, and anticipate the moment of conception. For Kate Moncrief, "pregnancy and its problems are central to understanding the play as its conclusion turns on the issue."<sup>436</sup> The foundation of my own *All's Well* analysis rests upon this point: although Helen's pregnancy—or claim to pregnancy—is peripheral to the overall action of the play, the issue of issue dominates the playwright's dramaturgy in Shakespeare's late comedy.

As discussed above, the composition and first performance of *All's Well* is uncertain. Likely first performed by the King's Men some time between 1604 and 1607, *All's Well* tells the story of Helen, the lowborn daughter of the late renowned physician, Gerard de Narbon. After the death of Helen's father, she became ward to the Count and Countess of Roussillon; the play begins shortly after the death of the former. Despite her low birth, Helen fell in love with the Count's son, Bertram. Following the Count's funeral, Bertram receives a summons from the King. Bertram is to serve as attendant and ward to the ailing monarch; the young nobleman quickly leaves for Paris. Meanwhile, Helen develops a plan to follow Bertram under the guise of curing the King's fistula, determined to remain in Bertram's company. Using what knowledge she gleaned from her father, Helen treats the King and restores him to good health. As a reward,

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<sup>436</sup> Moncrief, "Show me a child," 36.



seem to develop—a plan to pursue Bertram and fulfill his belittling scavenger hunt. Instead, the letter’s final sentence lands a crushing blow on the forlorn Helen: “*Till I have no wife, I have nothing in France.*”<sup>441</sup> Upon learning that Bertram would rather fight in a foreign war than be her husband, and worried she will be responsible for Bertram’s wartime death, Helen resolves to leave France in hopes Bertram will return home. It is this final sentence, rather than the challenge to obtain Bertram’s heirloom ring or conceive his child, that propels Helen into action. Despite Bertram’s abandonment of her in favor of martial glory, Helen receives his insincere challenge in stride, more concerned with his welfare than her own happiness.

In her pilgrimage, Helen stumbles upon a young Florentine woman named Diana and her widowed mother. Helen learns Bertram is nearby with his regiment and pursues the chaste Diana despite his legal marriage to Helen. In this moment, Bertram’s challenge reactivates and Helen sees one last opportunity to win him over. She reveals her identity to Diana and convinces the young Florentine to submit to Bertram’s advances. At the appointed time, Helen takes Diana’s place, acquires Bertram’s ring, consummates their marriage and, we are to learn, conceives his child. Once the bed trick occurs and Bertram unwittingly has sex with his wife, Helen returns to France in secret and fakes her own death in order to lure Bertram home.

The bed trick in *All’s Well* echoes the Isabella-Mariana-Angelo triangle from *Measure for Measure*, as Adelman points out.<sup>442</sup> These two Shakespearean bed swaps are similar in their intent: to consummate a lawful marriage while satisfying the carnal desire of an errant husband. Simultaneously, Isabella, the chaste novice nun, and Diana, the iconic pastoral virgin, retain their chastity and dramatically reveal the truth behind the reported assignation. Nevertheless, these

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<sup>441</sup> TLN 1480; 3.2.

<sup>442</sup> Adelman argues that, in “both plays, the bed trick is thus the primary device through which desire is regulated, both legitimized and relocated in the socially sanctioned bond of marriage” (77). She goes on to suggest that the bed tricks “tend to become less a vehicle for the working out of impediments to marriage than a forced and conspicuous emblem for what needs working out” (77-78).

two bed tricks differ in key ways. For instance, Bertram's lust, though immoral and rakish, does not echo Angelo's malice. While Bertram attempts to woo Diana, he does not coerce her or threaten to execute a family member upon her refusal. Finally, the bed trick in *All's Well that Ends Well* results in an exchange: Bertram and Helen swap rings, and she conceives their child. The ring is particularly important here as Thomas Heywood will refer back to this moment in his late pregnancy play, *A Maidenhead Well Lost*, discussed in further detail below.

In her essay, "Shakespeare's bed trick," Julia Briggs points out that of all known bed tricks, Shakespeare's two are among the earliest. She argues this suggests Shakespeare's plays inspired later uses of what would become a popular theatrical convention on Stuart stages.<sup>443</sup> While Briggs acknowledges the use of the bed trick in precursory non-Shakespearean Elizabethan plays (*Alphonsus, Emperor of Germany*, 1594 and *Grim the Collier of Croydon or The Devil and his Dame*, 1600), she suggests the trick is merely incidental to these plays, while it is integral to Shakespeare's late comedies.<sup>444</sup> While I am not in complete agreement with Briggs on this point of Shakespearean exceptionalism, as *Alphonsus*'s bed trick has dire consequences for the unknowing female victim, I nevertheless grant that Shakespeare's use of the bed trick in *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well that Ends Well* is distinct from its predecessors. With its implementation of the female-initiated swap, Shakespeare's bed tricks influenced later plays' application of this theatrical convention.<sup>445</sup> These two "problem plays" help establish a lasting visual and theatrical vocabulary for pregnancy on boy actors' bodies through the early Caroline period.

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<sup>443</sup> Here Briggs acknowledges R.S. Forsythe's incomplete list of twenty-one bed trick plays. See: Forsythe, *The Relations of Shirley's Plays to the Elizabethan Drama*, 330-1. See also: Briggs, "Shakespeare's bed tricks," 312 n.3.

<sup>444</sup> Briggs, "Shakespeare's bed tricks," 294.

<sup>445</sup> This is especially true for Thomas Heywood's pregnancy play, *A Maidenhead Well Lost*, discussed in further detail below.

*All's Well's* final revelatory scene echoes that of *Measure for Measure*. Diana exposes Bertram's wrong doings to the court, only to then reveal his behavior was unintentionally lawful.

Helen prepares to enter as Diana weaves the final riddle of "her" night with Bertram:

DIANA           He knows himself my bed he hath defiled  
                    And at that time he got his wife with child;  
                    Dead though she be, she feels her young one kick:  
                    So there's my riddle: one that's dead is quick.<sup>446</sup>

Helen, thought dead by the entire court, appears to prove she is in fact "quick": both alive and pregnant. In the final moments of *All's Well*, Helen, reveals to Bertram she has not only managed to collect the ring from his finger, which he claimed "never shall come off," but she also announces she carries Bertram's child, though he has no memory of consummating their arranged marriage.<sup>447</sup> As Helen attempts to show Bertram he is "doubly won" despite his best efforts to be rid of his lowborn wife, Bertram remains skeptical.

BERTRAM           *If* she, my liege, can make me know this clearly  
                    I'll love her dearly, ever ever dearly.  
HELEN             *If* it appear not plain and prove untrue,  
                    Deadly divorce step between me and you.<sup>448</sup>

Bertram places the burden of proof on Helen while his pointed "if" gestures to the continually tentative quality of his commitment to her. Helen immediately retorts that "[i]f it appear not plain and prove untrue" she will free Bertram of their marital contract. Helen's use of the word "appear" suggests she will provide the ocular proof to make her claim undeniable. Presumably, Helen means she will bear a child who carries an incontestable resemblance to its father: Bertram himself. Only when what is hidden from sight comes to the surface—when what is inside comes outside—will Helen's claim to Bertram's paternity be believed; only then will the troublesome "if" withdraw.

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<sup>446</sup> Shakespeare, *All's Well that Ends Well*, TLN 3034-7; 5.3

<sup>447</sup> TLN 1460-1; 3.2.

<sup>448</sup> TLN 3053-6; 5.3.

It is unclear in this revelatory moment just how far along Helen is in her pregnancy. However, Diana's use of the word "quick" provides an important clue. In lieu of urinalysis or a sonogram, quickening paired with an absent monthly menstruation was often a reliable way to confirm pregnancy. As Laura Gowing points out:

Women used the moment of quickening as a means of forecasting parturition [...] Quickening was the moment at which the child announced definitively to the mother, and the mother announced it to the world. Internal feeling was the best measure of pregnancy.<sup>449</sup>

Fetal movement typically occurs anywhere from eighteen to twenty weeks of gestation for first-time pregnancies, at which point a protruding belly may be noticeable if touched, or visible in a state of undress. However, if Helen has only recently reached quickening, it is unlikely that her belly would be conspicuous under her many-layered gown.<sup>450</sup> Therefore, while Helen presents Bertram's letter to verify his prerequisites to husband-hood, and his ring to present evidence of their assignation, the only potentially missing piece of evidence is the "child begotten" of Helen's body.

Bertram's doubt and reliance on "if," then carries two different meanings based on the conspicuity of Helen's gestational body. If Helen's belly is not yet visible, Bertram's further stipulation that "if [Helen] can make [him] known this clearly," simply gestures to the fact that he cannot yet see physical evidence of Helen's pregnancy. However, if Bertram can clearly perceive Helen's pregnancy through sight, or even touch, yet still brings in the pointed "if," he

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<sup>449</sup> Gowing, *Common Bodies*, 121-22.

<sup>450</sup> For further discussion of Helen's quickening, see Moncrief, 37-8. See also Caroline Bicks's discussion of *All's Well* wherein she argues that a quickened pregnancy did not necessarily equal visibility. Bicks, "Planned Parenthood: Minding the Quick Woman in *All's Well*," 332-33.

calls into question Helen's chastity, insisting upon verification of paternity before he will "love her dearly, ever ever dearly."<sup>451</sup>

This final moment of performed pregnancy becomes particularly interesting if one considers the alterations Shakespeare made to Boccaccio's *Decameron*, his source text for *All's Well*. In Boccaccio's story, Giletta of Narbona and Beltramo (Helen and Bertram's respective analogues) have several assignations before she becomes pregnant. At the end of the story, Giletta returns to Beltramo after giving birth to twin sons who favor their father. She presents the children to Beltramo to prove she fulfilled his terms.<sup>452</sup> Beltramo, elated by his newfound family, embraces Giletta without further hesitation. Alternatively, in *All's Well*, Helen merely announces her pregnancy, and Bertram continues to receive her unwavering commitment to him with ambivalence.<sup>453</sup>

Bearing in mind this source text, I suggest the fact of Helen's theatricalized pregnancy is worthy of consideration. The pregnant body carries with it important cultural distrust, as discussed at length throughout chapter two; Shakespeare himself employed this patriarchal anxiety in *Henry VIII* and *The Winter's Tale*. For an early modern audience, Bertram was perhaps wise to doubt Helen's claims of pregnancy and paternity. Erasing the newborn bodies called for in Boccaccio's story, Shakespeare endows Helen with only a mere claim to pregnancy.

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<sup>451</sup> In Shakespeare Dallas's 2008 production of *All's Well that Ends Well* directed by René Moreno, Helen (played by Jo Schellenberg) announced her pregnancy to Bertram in act five by revealing a large, distended belly, intimating her body was prepared to give birth at any moment. Bertram, played by Brandon J. Walker, unable to deny her pregnancy, scoffed at the possibility that he was the father, at which point Schellenberg slapped him across the face for the insult to her chastity. Contrarily, in Daniel Sullivan's 2011 production at the New York Shakespeare Festival, Helen (played by Annie Parisse) presented her pregnancy without the presence of a conspicuous belly. Instead, she placed the hand of Bertram (André Holland) on her belly to confirm the existence of a fetus. Holland reacted as though he could feel movement within Parisse's womb, despite the absence of any hint of a belly beneath her form-fitting sheath gown. Holland's reaction assured the audience that Bertram did not doubt the existence of a pregnancy, but rather, the fetus's paternity. This reading is dependent upon the performance of pregnancy in some kind of demonstrative way (i.e. the presence of a belly or a reaction to fetal movement).

<sup>452</sup> See Moncrief, "Show me a child," 39-40; Briggs, "Shakespeare's bed tricks," 295.

<sup>453</sup> As Moncrief points out, "While Bertram had demanded of Helena...both a child and evidence of his paternity—she has presented no such thing." Moncrief, "Show me a child," 39.

He does not provide any textual indication of the size and shape of Helen's gestating body outside of Diana's assertion that Helen feels her "young one kick." I suggest this is purposefully distinct from Juliet's pregnancy in *Measure for Measure*, which receives a great deal of attention from other characters and is crucial to the play's visual storytelling. Shakespeare purposefully invented a pregnancy for Helen whose visibility status is uncertain; we cannot know whether the boy actor wore a prosthetic belly beneath his gown. It is certain however, is that *All's Well*—a comedy—ends ambiguously, with no real celebration. Bertram continues to coldly receive his worthy wife and Shakespeare's rendering of Helen perhaps gives the audience reason to doubt her pregnancy.

Despite the presence or absence of a prosthetic belly for Helen, her peripheral pregnancy is nevertheless crucial to the play's overall structure. When Bertram challenges Helen to conceive his child in act three, Shakespeare brings the possibility of Helen's pregnancy into the play. The audience is left to wonder how even this resourceful heroine can achieve such a daunting task. To save *All's Well* from the jaws of tragedy, Helen requires the bed trick to save her husband from committing adultery while also serving her own purposes. Finally, just as Juliet's pregnancy spurs the plot of *Measure for Measure* forward, Helen's pregnancy concludes *All's Well*, keeping it within the formal structure of early modern comedy. Nevertheless, Helen's declaration of pregnancy without the visual evidence of it fails to provide the tidy conclusion for which one might hope.<sup>454</sup> Therefore, Shakespeare's early pregnancy plays highlight the ambivalence toward and anxiety over women's reproductive bodies, even in plays whose pregnancies appear peripheral to the main action of the plot.

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<sup>454</sup> Moncrief, "Show me a child," 43.

## **Part 2**

### **“A bastard issue grows within my womb”: Illegitimate Pregnancies in *A Fair Quarrel*, *The Devil’s Law-Case*, and *A Maidenhead Well Lost***

Having discussed at length Shakespeare’s early pregnancy plays and the dramaturgical import of Juliet and Helen’s respective pregnancies, I now turn to three later texts by writers who have already made appearances in this study: Middleton and Rowley’s *A Fair Quarrel*, Webster’s *The Devil’s Law-Case*, and Heywood’s *A Maidenhead Well Lost*. Like Middleton’s 1611 *No Wit/No Help Like a Woman’s*, the following three dramas depend on the pregnant body for the play’s structural soundness, while simultaneously de-emphasizing the maternal body and recycling tropes from earlier pregnancy plays. Turning to Middleton and Rowley’s *A Fair Quarrel* first, I examine how this mid-period pregnancy play simultaneously echoes those that came before it, while anticipating conventions employed by later leading Stuart playwrights.

#### ***A Fair Quarrel*, Thomas Middleton and William Rowley (c. 1617)**

Co-written by Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, *A Fair Quarrel* received its first performance by Prince Charles’s Men at court some time between 1612 and 1617.<sup>455</sup> The play’s 1617 publication reports the tragicomedy performed at court, having been “Acted before the King” as well as “divers times publikely.”<sup>456</sup> In Suzanne Gossett’s introduction to the play, she suggests a composition date around 1615-16, and calls this Middleton-Rowley collaboration a “popular play” in its day.<sup>457</sup> While Middleton and Rowley wrote several other well-known plays together, this is their only collaboration that appears in this study.<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> *A Fair Quarrel* was first published in 1617. The play’s frontispiece notes it was “Acted before the King and divers times publikely,” indicating the court presentation was likely the drama’s first performance. Middleton and Rowley, *A Fair Quarrel*, London: 1617, frontispiece.

<sup>456</sup> Middleton and Rowley, *A Fair Quarrel*, frontispiece. Gurr suggests the Prince’s Men gave the play at court some time in 1616 or early 1617 “before they settled at the [Red] Bull” (Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, 404).

<sup>457</sup> According to Gossett, the “date of *A Fair Quarrel* lies between 1612, the year of Peter Lowe’s *A Discourse of the Whole Art of Surgery*, which Middleton consulted for the professional jargon of the Surgeon, and the play’s publication in 1617. The apparent influence of the roaring scenes in Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair*, performed in

*A Fair Quarrel* possesses three independent (though intertwined) plotlines, and the quest for honor weaves its way into each branch of this tightly constructed tragicomic narrative. The titular quarrel between the Colonel and Captain Ager rests upon the fact that the Colonel calls the Captain the “son of a whore,” thereby impugning the honor of Lady Ager, the Captain’s mother.”<sup>459</sup> In one of the subplots, the foolish Chough trains in the art of roaring, but finds his honor consistently at stake during his outlandish roaring contests.

Finally—and most importantly in this study—for Jane Russell, the question of honor is one of chastity. In the play’s opening lines, Russell, Jane’s father, frets over his daughter’s chastity, calling her honor “a mere cupboard of glasses” broken by the “least shake.”<sup>460</sup> Eager to marry Jane off to a rich man, Russell worries that Jane’s honor (i.e., her virginity and, hence, her market value) is achingly fragile. Unaware that Jane and Fitzallen possess a *de praesenti* contract—a marriage by handfasting—Russell decides on pairing Jane with a wealthier man of the gentry.<sup>461</sup> He schemes to rid his house of Fitzallen by having Jane’s betrothed arrested and thrown into debtor’s prison. It is there Fitzallen sits until the end of the play, while Jane confesses to the audience, a Physician, and the Physician’s sister Anne, that she carries Fitzallen’s child.

When two sergeants arrive under the guise of being “saltpetremen,” Russell feigns disdain at the interruption of the nitrate miners. Russell makes pretense at turning them away, publicly declaring his is “yet a virgin earth: the worm hath not been seem/ To wriggle in her

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October 1614, narrows the time further. In all likelihood the play was composed in 1615-16, in which years roaring boys, the invasion of private property to search for saltpeter, and duels were all troublesome” (*Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, 1212).

<sup>458</sup> Other Middleton/Rowley collaborations include *Wit at Several Weapons*, *An/The Old Law*, *The World Tossed at Tennis*, *The Changeling*, and *The Spanish Gypsy* (*Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, 1212).

<sup>459</sup> Middleton and Rowley, *A Faire Quarrell*, C2.

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.*, B.

<sup>461</sup> Like Claudio and Juliet, this essentially indicates that Jane and Russell are already married. They only lack the formal wedding ceremony and church sacrament. I discuss this concept in further detail below.

chaste bowels and I'd be loath/ A gunpowder fellow should deflower her now."<sup>462</sup> Russell's anxiety over the wholesomeness of his land clearly gestures toward his concern over marrying Jane to a wealthy man before Fitzallen can plant his own "worm" to "wriggle in her chaste bowels." Russell's performed disdain for the "saltpetremen" reflects his inability to distinguish between land-as-property and daughter-as-property. Unhappily for Russell, he is already too late to stop the couple from consummating their betrothal and conceiving a child.

The first explicit reference the audience receives of Jane's pregnancy is in the very first scene. Jane speaks with the Colonel (Fitzallen's kin), and tells him of their betrothal. The Colonel communicates his wish that the marriage had already taken place. In an aside to the audience, Jane confides: "That wish comes too late./ For I too soon fear my delivery."<sup>463</sup> Like Helen's pregnancy, the text is not explicit as to whether Jane's gestational body is conspicuous to others. This is despite the fact that Jane insinuates an advanced pregnancy, as she "soon fear[s] her delivery." However, given the lack of attention paid to her distended belly or other changes in her body, it is reasonable to believe she satisfactorily conceals the advanced pregnancy beneath her heavy skirts.

The first scene continues through Fitzallen's arrest. Jane, bribing the officer to have a final word with Fitzallen, asks if the allegations are true. Fitzallen denies the charges, asserting that Russell set him up, claiming her father schemes to "plant some other" in Fitzallen's place. Jane assures her lover that he "has too firmly stamped" her "Ever to be rased out."<sup>464</sup> This additional juxtaposition of land and woman suggests Fitzallen knows about Jane's pregnancy, a fact further supported by Jane's final goodbye:

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<sup>462</sup> Middleton and Rowley, *A Faire Quarrell*, C. Saltpeter is perhaps better known by its chemical compound name, potassium nitrate. Saltpeter is one of the main ingredients used in the making of gunpowder. As Gossett notes, saltpetremen "had the right to enter private premises to search for the material" (1217 n243).

<sup>463</sup> Middleton and Rowley, *A Faire Quarrell*, B4.

<sup>464</sup> Middleton and Rowley, *A Faire Quarrell*, C2-3.

JANE           Farewell. We are both prisoned, though not together,  
                  But here's the difference in our luckless chance:  
                  I fear my own, wish thy deliverance.<sup>465</sup>

Jane, of course, is playing with the dual meaning of delivery in both of their situations:

Fitzallen's freedom and Jane's impending labor.

One may see similar dramatic irony in Middleton's *The Witch, More Dissemblers Besides Women*, or *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* with respect to pregnancy wordplay. While scholars do indeed credit Middleton with penning the majority of act one, language analysts have shown that Rowley is in fact responsible for the chunks of text pertaining to the Jane Russell pregnancy subplot.<sup>466</sup> It then appears that the collaborators divided the play by plotline rather than "arbitrary 'chunks,'" as David Nicol observes.<sup>467</sup> Throughout the play's first scene, Rowley makes apparent Jane's secret pregnancy through wordplay and turns of phrase; this was a common staple in pregnancy plays written between 1603 and 1615. As mentioned above, in *All's Well that Ends Well*, Diana reveals Helen's aliveness and pregnancy in a single line: "One that's dead, is quick."<sup>468</sup> In Middleton's *The Witch*, Francesca notes "No, there's another with me, though you see't not" when her sister-in-law inquires as to her solitude.<sup>469</sup> The abundance of this kind of word play before *A Fair Quarrel*, communicates that audiences were well attuned to the language of pregnancy as I discuss in chapter three's analysis of *The Magnetic Lady*. The

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<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>466</sup> David Nicol, *Middleton and Rowley: Forms of Collaboration in the Jacobean Playhouse*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012. See also: Jowett, "Introduction to *A Fair Quarrel*, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, 1211; Lake, *Canon of Thomas Middleton's Plays*, 200-2.

<sup>467</sup> Nicol, 30. Outside of this first scene, Russell (Jane's father) and Lady Ager (Captain Ager's mother) never interact; despite that we learn from the outset that Russell and Lady Ager are siblings. Nicol suggests the collaborative playwrighting is even responsible for the relative lack of interaction between the main plot (the duelers) and the subplots (Jane Russell and Chough, the roarer). See: Nicol, 30; 92-119.

<sup>468</sup> Shakespeare, *All's Well*, TLN 3034-7; 5.3

<sup>469</sup> Middleton, *The Witch*, 2.1.65.

repeated use of coded pregnancy language throughout the pregnancy play subgenre suggests its popularity, or at least its acceptance, among London audiences

After Fitzallen's departure, Jane laments the loss of her lover and father to her unborn child; she expresses that she feels unwell. Russell calls for a Physician to assist his daughter, satisfied that she will find her "health" by climbing her way to "wealth" through a more profitable marriage.<sup>470</sup> Upon meeting with the Physician, Jane attempts to use similarly coded pregnancy language to communicate her predicament. In the following act, the Physician badgers Jane, asking for her confidence. "Nay mistress, you must not be covered to me./ The patient must ope to the physician/ All her dearest sorrows."<sup>471</sup> Jane, perturbed that the Physician appears so poor at his job that she must bluntly disclose her situation, asks "Have you no skill in physiognomy?/ What color, says your coat, is my disease? I am unmarried, and it cannot be yellow;/ If it be maiden green, you cannot miss it."<sup>472</sup> Here Jane cleverly alludes to her unmarried status as the reason she cannot be "yellow" (i.e. jealous) and assures him that if she did in fact suffer from "the green sickness," the anemia thought to affect young women entering their childbearing years, the Physician would certainly know it by now. In other words: this inept Physician ought to be able to identify her pregnancy through the process of elimination, at the very least. Nevertheless, the Physician dogs on, likely looking for an explicit confession from his patient, or perhaps a sign that she will confess her attraction toward him:

PHYSICIAN	Now I have found you out. You are in love.
JANE	I think I am. What your appliance now?
	[...]
PHYSICIAN	Gentlewoman
	If you knew well my heart you would not be
	So circular. <sup>473</sup>

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<sup>470</sup> Middleton and Rowley, *A Faire Quarrell*, C3.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*, D3.

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>473</sup> *Ibid.*, D4.

Jane, under a time constraint and weary of the Physician's persistence, asks if he might have an equally trustworthy woman nearby with whom she might discuss her situation more candidly. While the Physician exits to retrieve his sister Anne, Jane turns to the audience to explain her reasoning:

JANE

I must reveal:

My shame will else take tongue and speak before me.  
'Tis a necessity impulsive drives me.  
[...]  
The father of my fault would have repaired  
His faulty issue, but my fate's father hinders it:  
Then fate and fault, wherever I begin  
I must blame both, and yet, 'twas love did sin.<sup>474</sup>

Rowley makes it clear to the audience that Jane is not merely a clever woman whose sense of irony is well developed, but also a logical and resourceful mother. Jane knows she must confide in someone, as her child will soon enter the world to "take tongue and speak" before Fitzallen is released from prison to legitimize the newborn.

When the Physician leaves the women together, Jane verbalizes the fact of her pregnancy explicitly for the first time: "I am with child," she confides.<sup>475</sup> To secure Anne's aid, Jane assures her that the act leading to her pregnancy was indeed "done/ When heaven had witness to the jugal knot; Only the barren ceremony wants."<sup>476</sup> The act of handfasting creates the "jugal knot" to which Jane refers.<sup>477</sup> While Jane and Russell are indeed married, they lack the "barren ceremony" which provides the holy sacrament, public approval, and witnesses to their union. Anne, sympathetic to Jane's plight, offers to keep her secret and help in what ways she can.

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<sup>474</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>475</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>476</sup> *Ibid.*, D4-E.

<sup>477</sup> Suzanna Gossett explains that the *de futuro* engagement, or handfasting, precedes the *de praesenti* marriage discussed above (*Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, 1216 n191-3).

The next time Jane appears on stage in act three, scene three, the Dutch Nurse carries Jane's newborn child. The nurse, paid in full by the Physician and Jane, prepares to go along with the ruse that Jane is the godmother at the child's baptism. Only after Jane gives birth does the Physician finally make his move. Armed with the appropriate information to shame Jane in front of her father and community, the Physician proposes they engage in a sexual relationship. When Jane vehemently refuses the Physician's advances, he assures her that he will reveal what he knows: "Study your answer well," he warns. "Yet I love you./ If you refuse I have a hand above you" (3.2.133-34). It is in this scene that the similarities between *A Fair Quarrel* and its Shakespearean predecessor, *Measure for Measure*, become most apparent.

As I have already established, *A Fair Quarrel* logically follows several patterns of pregnancy plots from earlier plays in the subgenre. Juliet and Claudio, like Jane and Fitzallen, are bound by a *de praesenti* contract, lacking only the official church ceremony. Although it was common practice for couples to commence a sexual relationship as early as the betrothal in early modern London and few audience members would have considered Jane's behavior immoral, Jane nevertheless fears for her own honor along with that of her father.<sup>478</sup> Similarly, Juliet repents the "sin" she carries despite the legitimacy of her union with Claudio.<sup>479</sup> Finally, like Juliet and Claudio, Jane and Fitzallen find their union—and child—retroactively legitimized by the community at the end of the play.

It is not just the pregnant character that *A Fair Quarrel* parallels, however, but also the conflict between Isabella and Angelo. Eventually, the Physician blackmails Jane and threatens to reveal her secret child to the entire community. This conflict echoes act two, scene four of *Measure for Measure* wherein Angelo agrees to trade Isabella's virginity for her brother's life.

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<sup>478</sup> Nicol, *Middleton and Rowley*, 112.

<sup>479</sup> See: Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, TLN 973-92; 2.3.



PHYSICIAN I will defame thee ever.  
 JANE Spare me not.  
 PHYSICIAN I will produce thy bastard,  
 Bring thee to public penance.  
 JANE No matter, I care not:  
 I shall then have a clean sheet. I'll wear twenty  
 Rather than one defiled with thee.<sup>481</sup>

Like Helen and Juliet before her, Jane exerts her will to engage in a sexual relationship of her choosing. While, for Russell, Jane's chastity is an extension of his own honor and Jane herself as an object of exchange, Jane never fully submits to these expectations. While she frets over the vexation and social consequences of her pregnancy for her father, she ultimately chooses to preserve her bodily autonomy in favor of yielding to the Physician's threats.

In Pacheco's revisionist reading of *A Fair Quarrel*, she suggests that Jane Russell—cast as the play's feminist heroine—both maintains bodily autonomy while marrying for love, which, “marks the full extent of [Jane's] disruption of patriarchal power.”<sup>482</sup> Pacheco goes on to argue that in “repudiating his oppressive masculine ideology that makes female chastity the measure of male value, women can gain the upper hand and secure a small space of self-determination.”<sup>483</sup> Complicating Pacheco's optimistic analysis, however, is the fact that no actual women appeared on the stage when Prince Charles' Men first performed the play. No women were a part of the writing or performance process in order to “secure a small space of self-determination.” Moreover, the material reality of Jane's underlying male-ness hinders one's ability to read this play as particularly empowering for women. Regardless of the transgressive behavior in which

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<sup>481</sup> Middleton and Rowley, *A Faire Quarrell*, H4.

<sup>482</sup> Pacheco, “A mere cupboard of glasses.” 462.

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid.*, 463. As there is relatively little scholarship about this play (compared to more canonical early modern texts), Pacheco feminist recovery project seems a response to twentieth-century scholars who puzzlingly condemn Jane for her sexuality. See, for example Brian Parker's 1991 essay wherein he claims Jane is “as devious and untruthful as her mercenary father” and “blithely conscienceless” (69). Arthur C. Kirsch victim-blames by asserting Jane's pregnancy results from “the blindness of lust,” and the physician's blackmail attempt is “its inevitable retribution,” (81-2). Similarly, John F. McElroy denounces Jane's rejection of the Physician's sexual demands as “hysterical abuse,” insinuating that Jane is merely in the throws of post-partum hormones (272-3, n19).

many of the pregnant women throughout this study engage—pre- or extra-marital sex, incestuous relationships, false pregnancies—the audience can watch, secure in the assurance that no *actual* women are engaging in this comical, lewd, or grotesque behavior. As such, any reading of Jane and her pregnancy necessitate an acknowledgement of the historical performance reality: a male playwright develops a character, portrayed by a boy actor boy, who defies societal expectations outlined by other men. While the fiction of the play perhaps possesses what we would call feminist undertones today, the historical reality troubles our ability to read this as a moment of female empowerment, as Pacheco’s analysis would suggest.

Regardless of our ability to read Jane as a feminist iconoclast, her pregnancy remains crucial to the world and structure of the play, as is the case with the peripheral pregnancies throughout this chapter. *A Fair Quarrel*’s plot structure(s) revolve around the characters’ respective abilities to maintain their honor.<sup>484</sup> Despite this fact, the play only has one truly honorable character: Jane. Not only does she remain loyal to Fitzallen at the cost of ruining her family’s reputation, but even within the established patriarchal system of the play, Fitzallen and Jane were “wedded by the hand of heaven” prior to engaging in a sexual relationship.<sup>485</sup> This fact lends legitimacy to the newborn child that resulted from their premature coupling.

While Jane’s pregnant body is only present on stage in two scenes before she gives birth, and is relatively peripheral to the overall *mise en scène* of the drama, her pregnancy is nevertheless always “in play” for the Physician as he attempts to blackmail Jane. During their scenes together, the playwrights consistently ask the audience to imagine Jane’s gestational belly as she struggles to ward off the Physician’s advances. As Gossett observes, “[o]nce we notice the play’s focus on female sexuality, the story of Jane Russell’s secret marriage”—and, I suggest,

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<sup>484</sup> See: Pacheco, “A mere cupboard of glasses,” 442; Gossett, Introduction to *A Fair Quarrel*, 1209; Nicol, *Middleton and Rowley*, 92-119.

<sup>485</sup> Middleton and Rowley, *A Faire Quarrell*, K.

her subsequent pregnancy—“come to seem increasingly central” to the play’s structure.<sup>486</sup> Jane’s pregnancy, though peripheral to the action of the play, is nevertheless integral to *A Fair Quarrel*’s dramaturgy.

At first glance, *A Fair Quarrel* may appear derivative, or perhaps insignificant, within the subgenre. However, Middleton and Rowley in fact anticipate tropes found in more canonical pregnancy plays discussed throughout this study. Jane’s Physician, who cannot read the signs of advanced pregnancy that her body presents, represents a character revisited by both John Ford in *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore* (Richardetto) and Ben Jonson in *The Magnetic Lady* (Rut). In all three of these plays, the pregnant woman encounters a man who struggles to read signs offered by the opaque female body. This ineptitude is balanced in each case with a female confidant better equipped to read the signals presented by their fecund forms: Anne in *A Fair Quarrel*, Puttana in *’Tis Pity*, and Polish in *The Magnetic Lady*. Similarly, Jane’s father presents her with an unsuitable marriage prospect: the crude roarer, Chough, likely played by William Rowley in the original performance.<sup>487</sup> The small-minded clown proves himself unworthy of Jane upon their first meeting when he tries to wrestle her. This relationship between the clown-suitor and the clever heroine is echoed in the proposed relationships between Annabella and Bergetto (*’Tis Pity*), as well as Luce and Shallow (*The Heir*).

Finally, *A Fair Quarrel* stages a retroactively legitimized pregnancy and child, following the problem plays, *All’s Well that Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*. The retrospective validation of these pregnancies, as well as the ambiguity that accompany their respective reveals and resolutions, are anticipated by the indecisive nature of their genre. These problem plays and tragicomedies are neither comic nor tragic; neither particularly funny nor poignant. These plays

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<sup>486</sup> *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, 1210.

<sup>487</sup> See: Gossett’s introduction to the play in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, 1210.

are resolved neither by a stage full of dead bodies, nor a series of happy marriages. Instead, the dramaturgical functions of the pregnant body in these drama reflect the generic no-man's land of the play's structure. In the remainder of this chapter, I analyze two more peripheral pregnancy plays: Webster's *The Devil's Law-Case* and Heywood's *A Maidenhead Well Lost*, wherein I pay particular attention to pregnancy's function as it relates to the play's generic framework, as well as how these two late plays recycle earlier pregnancy tropes.

### ***The Devil's Law-Case, John Webster (c. 1619)***

According to the original 1623 publication of *The Devil's Law-Case*, John Webster's "new tragecomedy [*sic*]" was "approvedly well Acted by the Queen's Majesty's Servants."<sup>488</sup> While Scholars debate the original performance and composition date for Webster's play, as well as its premiere venue, many date the play between 1617 and 1621 for a variety of reasons. Firstly, *The Devil's Law-Case* was first published in 1623 and called "a new play," as opposed to a text that was "diverse times acted," a claim made by *A Fair Quarrel's* frontispiece. Probably the most telling piece of evidence is that the "Queen" referred to in the company's title was Anna of Denmark, who died in 1619, after which the patron-less company became more well known as the Company of the Revels, or the Red Bull Company.<sup>489</sup>

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<sup>488</sup> Webster, *The Devil's Law-Case* or, *When Women goe to Law the Devill is full of Businesse*. London, 1623. Frontispiece.

<sup>489</sup> Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, 325-6. Gurr's select list of plays and performances reflects this sentiment in *The Shakespearean Stage* (287-98). For performances held after 1619, Gurr refers to the performers as The Red Bull Company instead of Queen Anne's Men. Frances Shirley likewise notes that in the years following Anna's death, it is "probable...the company came to be thought of in connection with its theater, the Red Bull" (Webster, *The Devil's Law-Case*, Ed. Francis A. Shirley, xii).

Andrew Gurr, who suggests dates *The Devil's Law-Case* as 1617, notes "Queen Anne's Men...passed from the Red Bull to the Cockpit and back again in 1616 and after."<sup>490</sup> Francis A.

Shirley argues for a later date:

1619 seems a reasonable choice of date for the play would have been relatively new when printed [in 1623], could have been on the boards while the players were thought of as the Queen's, and would have been contemporaneous with the few topical allusions it contains."<sup>491</sup>

Given the available evidence, the The Red Bull appears to be the most likely original performance venue for Webster's tragicomedy, as Gurr himself suggests.<sup>492</sup> In terms of the ways in which Webster's pregnancy plot echoes earlier pregnancy plays (discussed below) I similarly suggest that *The Devil's Law-Case* has a later composition and premiere date, closer to 1617-1619 than earlier in the period.

Surveying the body of work that continues to emerge over the *The Devil's Law-Case*, David Coleman suggests the "critical rehabilitation of *The Devil's Law-Case* [...] is far from complete, but is at least undoubtedly underway."<sup>493</sup> In particular, feminist critiques and recoveries of the play highlight unconsidered aspects of the play and performance, as the present study aims to do.<sup>494</sup> Lee Bliss suggests that, *The Devil's Law-Case*, "[d]espite flashes of greatness [...] is not a felicitous successor to Webster's tragedies."<sup>495</sup> However, I read Webster's tragicomedy not in conjunction with his earlier sole-authored works, but instead amongst the diverse range of extant Stuart pregnancy plays, particularly those performed at the Red Bull by

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<sup>490</sup> Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, 190. This is a change from his earlier monograph, 1996's *Shakespearean Playing Companies*, wherein Gurr argues that the move to the Cockpit lasted from 1617 to 1619, rather than sporadically after 1616.

<sup>491</sup> Webster, *The Devil's Law-Case*, Ed. Frances A. Shirley, xiv. For further discussion of the contemporary allusions to which Shirley alludes, see xii-xiii.

<sup>492</sup> Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, 190; 289.

<sup>493</sup> Coleman, *Webster, Renaissance Dramatist*, 139.

<sup>494</sup> See, for example: Aspasia Velissariou, "Class and Gender Destabilization in Webster's *The Devil's Law-Case*," 2003. Subha Mukherji, "Women, Law, and Dramatic Realism in Early Modern England," 2005.

<sup>495</sup> Bliss, *The World's Perspective: John Webster and the Jacobean Drama*, 171.

the Queen's Men/Revels Company. If one reads the pregnancy plot of *The Devil's Law-Case* as being in conversation with these other plays, a new significance emerges for Webster's tragicomedy.

Throughout *The Devil's Law-Case*, one can see echoes of earlier King's Men pregnancy plays, namely *Measure for Measure* and Webster's own *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614). Furthermore, *The Devil's Law-Case* both echoes and anticipates the anxiety over incestuous conception found in Middleton's *No Wit/No Help Like a Woman's* (1611) and John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (c. 1630), as I reveal below. Finally, as a Queen's Men/Revels Company play, *The Devil's Law-Case* sits in the center of a three part continuum between two other Queen's/Revels plays: Heywood's *The Golden Age* (1611) and Thomas May's *The Heir* (1620). These plays, along with Webster's tragicomedy, each wrestle with the prosthetic reality of materializing pregnancy on boy actors' bodies. As such, *The Devil's Law-Case*, considered relatively little by early modern scholars and critics, is a crucial text in the pregnancy play subgenre.

*The Devil's Law-Case* tells the story of Romelio, a scheming merchant who attempts several times throughout the play to obtain great wealth at the expense of his family; namely, his mother Leonora, and his sister, Jolenta. Early in the play, the audience learns Jolenta has two suitors. One of these men, the nobleman Contarino, is the object of affection for both Jolenta, and her widowed mother. The other suitor, Ercole, is a wealthy and landed Knight of Malta. While the plots and subplots in this play interweave in complex ways, for the purposes of this study, I focus on the pregnancy subplot between Romelio, Jolenta, and a young nun, Angiolella.

Although Jolenta, yet another clever Websterian heroine, is not the pregnant character in this tragicomedy, she does fake a pregnancy at her brother's insistence. Romelio has seduced and

impregnated the young nun, Angiolella. He hopes to pass off the child as Jolenta's in order to both cover up his indiscretion and obtain wealth from the fictional father of Jolenta's imaginary child: Ercole. Angiolella's actual pregnancy—and the character herself—appears on the periphery of the play's action. Despite this, the nun's gravid presence on stage and Jolenta's plan to falsify pregnancy are dramaturgically necessary for structure of Webster's play.

In act three, it appears to Romelio that Contarino and Ercole are dead (although they are both very much alive and skulking about the city in disguise). Jolenta discovers Contarino named her heir to his estate; she will inherit all of his wealth. Romelio, seeing an opportunity for a major land-grab, tries to convince Jolenta to feign that she is pregnant with Ercole's heir so that she will control the money and property belonging to the two wealthiest men in the city. Romelio then plans to convince Jolenta to enter a convent, leaving him the guardian of her newfound wealth.

Before this scene—and prior to his “death”—Ercole relays a rumor that Romelio “has got a nun with child.”<sup>496</sup> Romelio confirms this report in his proposition to Jolenta:

ROMELIO	You are already made by absolute will Contarino's heir; now, if it can be proved That you have issue by Lord Ercole, I will make you inherit his land too.
JOLENTA	How's this? Issue by him, he dead and I a virgin? <sup>497</sup>

At this point, Romelio must tip his hand to his sister:

ROMELIO	I have a mistress Of the Order of Saint Clare, a beauteous nun, [...] and to be short, I have so much disordered the holy order, I have got this nun with child. <sup>498</sup>
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<sup>496</sup> Webster, *Devil's*, E2.

<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.*, F2.

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.*

Romelio has impregnated a nun of the Order of Saint Clare (incidentally, the same order into which Isabella attempts to take her final oaths in *Measure for Measure*). Jolenta does not immediately see the purpose for Romelio's confession, but is aghast at this news. His sister suggests this is "work made for a dumb midwife."<sup>499</sup> Romelio, upon seeing Jolenta's interest in keeping the pregnancy secret, instructs Jolenta to announce she is "full two months quicken'd with child/ By Ercole" so that when Angiolella "falls in labor/ [Jolenta] must feign the like."<sup>500</sup> Jolenta immediately rebuts that she is unable to comply with Romelio's request; informing him, she is "with child already" by Contarino.<sup>501</sup> Romelio insists this is not a problem, as Jolenta will merely announce giving birth to twins once both children arrive. When Romelio refuses to let go of this plan, Jolenta relents that she lied about her own pregnancy. Romelio finally browbeats her into going along with his original scheme: fake a pregnancy and claim Angiolella and Romelio's child once born. Jolenta finally agrees to "mother this child" for her brother's sake.<sup>502</sup>

Throughout this scene, Romelio's attitude toward Jolenta's false pregnancy suggests the character feels it is as easy to hide a "great belly," as it is to feign one. When Jolenta finally agrees to fake the pregnancy, he springs into action. Jolenta wrestles with having to "practice/ The art of a great-bellied woman, and go feign/ Their qualms and swooundings."<sup>503</sup> Romelio makes a number of suggestions with respect to how Jolenta may convincingly falsify gestation. Firstly, Romelio asks his sister to announce she is "two months quicken'd," indicating Jolenta should appear around four to five months pregnant.<sup>504</sup> If Romelio asks Jolenta to appear this far

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<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*, F4.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>504</sup> As discussed above, quickening typically occurs around two to three months of gestation. If Jolenta is "two months quicken'd," this means she reached quickening two months ago.

along in her pregnancy, it stands to reason that the pregnant nun, Angiolella, is likewise “two months quicken’d.” In other words, the nun is in her second trimester so Jolenta must appear to be so as well.

In addition to announcing her pregnancy, Romelio and Jolenta develop a plan to convince everyone of her fecundity by changing her habits, altering her pallor, and making her appear great-bellied. This scene simultaneously echoes and inverts act two, scene one from Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi*.<sup>505</sup> Where the Duchess’s eyelids “look most teeming blue...[she] wanes in the cheek,” and devours the “apricocks” that induce her labor, Jolenta will consume “unripe fruit and oatmeal to take away [her] color.”<sup>506</sup> While the Duchess “Is sick o’ days [and] pukes,” Jolenta likewise has strange new gastronomic tendencies: dining in her bed “some two hours after noon.”<sup>507</sup> Finally, the Duchess “waxes fat i’ th’ flank [and] Wears a loose-bodied gown,” whereas Jolenta must make her “petticoat a quilted preface/ To advance [her] belly.”<sup>508</sup> Jolenta carries on in this way, not revealing until the final act that she falsified the pregnancy in order to cover up Romelio’s indiscretions with Angiolella.

Meanwhile, Angiolella, the only character in the play who is actually pregnant, does not appear on stage until act five. The women enter together, and the stage directions stipulate Angiolella is “great-bellied.”<sup>509</sup> Despite this indication, Jolenta asks if Angiolella is “quick with child.”<sup>510</sup> (5.1.10). Angiolella confirms that she is, of course, but the question remains: why does Jolenta ask the hapless nun if she is pregnant, if the stage directions indicate that her pregnancy is visible, and the audience is already well aware that Jolenta knows about Angiolella’s

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<sup>505</sup> For further discussion regarding the resonances between *Duchess* and *Devil’s*, see: Charles R. Forker, *Skull Beneath the Skin: The Achievement of John Webster*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986. 375-8.

<sup>506</sup> Webster, *Devil’s*, F4; Webster, *Duchess*, D3.

<sup>507</sup> *Devil’s*, F4; *Duchess*, D2.

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*, K2.

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*

pregnancy? There are a few explanations. First, the stage direction may simply communicate Angiolella's gestational status rather than what visible indicators were present in performance. In other words: what was on stage and what is on the page may be misaligned. Alternatively, Webster may have merely required the interaction wherein Jolenta asks for confirmation of Angiolella's pregnancy for the dramaturgical soundness of the play. Angiolella has not appeared on stage before this and the play nears its end. The audience requires an introduction to this new character before she becomes necessary for the tragicomedy's conclusion.

A third possibility is that Jolenta attempts to win Angiolella's trust in order to conspire against Romelio and flee the city together. She does so by reminding Angiolella they were once "playfellows...little children...So small a while ago," before asking her personal questions: Why do you wear that veil? Are you pregnant? How do you know when you have reached quickening?<sup>511</sup> Only after Angiolella has disclosed herself to Jolenta, does Jolenta admit she falsified her own pregnancy: "Ercole's coming to life again has shrunk/ And made invisible [her] great belly," she confesses.<sup>512</sup> Jolenta, revealing Romelio's scheme to Angiolella, proposes that they "get as far as [they] can" from his tyranny and Angiolella's ill fame. This scene reveals that these two women—both victims to Romelio's machinations—actively collaborate, rather than passively fall together through a trick of fate, a fact which becomes important in the play's concluding scene.

Yet, the question remains, as it does throughout so many of these pregnancy plays: how visible are these bellies on the bodies of boy actors? What does the male-performed pregnant body look like on stage and what kind of work does it do within the *mise en scène* of the play?

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<sup>511</sup> *Ibid.*, K2.

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*

Act five, scene one is the first time Jolenta appears on stage after she and Romelio plan her false pregnancy. Does she, at this moment, wear the “quilted preface” under her skirts? In response to Jolenta’s questions about Angiolella’s pregnancy, the nun retorts “‘Tis reported you are in the same taking,” yet Jolenta confirms her “great belly” is now “invisible.”<sup>513</sup> Does Jolenta remove or reveal the padding in some way that prefigures Luce’s deconstructed pregnancy in *The Heir*? Does she gesture to her midsection to indicate the quilting discussed earlier is now absent? While these questions are unanswerable based on presently available evidence, it appears that in these pregnancy plays, false pregnancies (as defined within the fiction of the play) require the use of visible prosthetics.

Regardless of Jolenta’s appearance, Angiolella remains pregnant throughout the remainder of the play, presumably, in a nun’s habit. If the boy actor does indeed enter act five, scene one while “great-bellied” and in the habit of a nun, the humorous juxtaposition of a nun’s costume with a distended belly could not have been lost on its (largely) Protestant audience. The discord offered by the sight of a pregnant (supposed) virgin is at once humorous and anxiety inducing because, as Aspasia Velissariou observes, in the “body of the pregnant nun the workings of desire are thrown into relief along with the inability of religious vows to counter them.”<sup>514</sup> These religious vows include not only holy orders, but also those of marriage. As the plot of *The Devil’s Law-Case* hinges on the false suit of bastardy that Romelio’s own mother brings against him, and the revenge Romelio enacts as a result, his own hypocrisy becomes blatantly apparent when the fecund body of his unwed nun-lover appears on stage.

Despite the problematic nature of Angiolella’s sexual activity, Jolenta’s fabricated gestational belly takes precedence over Angiolella’s genuinely pregnant body, which remains

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<sup>513</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>514</sup> Velissariou, “Class and Gender Destabilization in Webster’s *The Devil’s Law-Case*, 83.

offstage until act five. In the nun's place, Jolenta's false pregnancy provokes patriarchal anxiety similar to the plays discussed in chapter two. Romelio's plan to make his own child heir to Ercole and Contarino's respective fortunes is the realization of Leontes, Soranzo, and Ferdinand's fears in *The Winter's Tale*, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, and *The Duchess of Malfi*, respectively. However, in those plays, the enemy (or imagined enemy) is a woman while, in *The Devil's Law-Case*, another man schemes to place his illegitimate child in a more favorable socio-economic position. Nevertheless, Romelio requires the opacity of two women's reproductive bodies to carry off his plan.

Webster's implementation of staged pregnancy—both false and authentic within the play's fiction—communicates the playwright participates in existing conventions of staged gestation. As discussed above, Webster echoes Bosola's suspicions over the Duchess's concealed gestational body when the playwright stages Romelio and Jolenta's plan to fabricate the latter's pregnancy. The inversion of the Duchess's hidden, real gestation and Jolenta's public but falsified pregnancy communicates Webster's willingness to recycle successful material. However, it is not only Webster's own work with which *The Devil's Law-Case* is in conversation, but a number of other pregnancy plays as well.

Throughout *The Devil's Law-Case*—particularly in the two scenes featuring the pregnant nun—one can find echoes of Shakespeare's early pregnancy play, *Measure for Measure*. Both the names of Isabella and her would-be violator, Angelo, anticipate the nun's name: Angiolella. Simultaneously, Webster's pregnant nun presents the alternative reality in which Isabella forgoes the bed trick, gives in to Angelo, and becomes pregnant as a result. Considering these two pregnancy plays—written approximately fifteen years apart—one cannot help but recall the chaste Isabella when faced with Angiolella's fecund body.

Perhaps more directly, Angiolella's pregnancy also recalls Calisto in Heywood's *The Golden Age* (1611); another Queen's Men play performed at the Red Bull. As I have shown above, it is most likely that the actor who played the pregnant nymph, Calisto, wore a prosthetic belly of some kind, evinced by the dumb show wherein Atlanta "shows" Diana Calisto's "great belly."<sup>515</sup> It would then stand to reason that the Queen's Men possessed the prosthetic technology to stage Angiolella's "great belly." Together, Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and Heywood's *The Golden Age* anticipates Angiolella's peripheral pregnancy in *The Devil's Law-Case*. Just as Romelio seduced Angiolella, Jupiter seduced Calisto, and Angelo attempted to coerce Isabella. In turn, each of these women—Angiolella, Isabella, and Calisto—must leave their cloistered society, doff their habits, and take up the mantle of motherhood instead.

However, this connection to *The Golden Age* is not merely thematic, but prosthetic. Calisto's discovered pregnancy on the Red Bull stage haunts the scene wherein Jolenta and Romelio plot the material construction of her pregnancy. Similarly, *The Devil's Law-Case* anticipates the metatheatrical unmaking of pregnancy in Thomas May's *The Heir* (1620), yet another play performed by the Queen's/Revels Company at the Red Bull. *The Heir* possesses the period's only known metatheatrical disruption of false pregnancy, as discussed in the previous chapter. It is productive to consider these *The Golden Age*, *The Devil's Law-Case*, and *The Heir* together as they reveal that the Queen's Men/Revels Company, more than any other group of players performing pregnancy plays between 1603 and 1642, pushed the boundaries of pregnancy conventions and tropes. In *The Golden Age* the audience observes while Atlanta publicly strips Calisto to reveal her pregnant belly, in *The Devil's Law-Case*, the audience listens as a brother/sister duo plan the materialization of her fake pregnancy. This plotting scene from *The Devil's Law-Case* is, in a sense, the missing moment from May's *The Heir* when Luce and

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<sup>515</sup> Heywood, *The Golden Age*, E3.

Francisco plan her false pregnancy. In *The Devil's Law-Case*, the audience bears witness to the construction of prosthetic maternity, whereas in *The Heir*, the audience sees only its unmaking—it's deconstruction. Through these three plays, Heywood, Webster, and May along with the rest of the Queen's/Revels, establishes itself as a company occupied with the material construction of pregnant bellies on stage.

Finally, the specter of incest hangs over Webster's play, as it does in *The Duchess of Malfi*. Throughout Webster's earlier tragedy, Ferdinand's sexual desire to maintain control over his twin sister's reproductive body weaves its way throughout the play. When Ferdinand bans her from marrying to preserve her chastity, only to later discover that she has given birth to three children, he flies into lycanthropic rage. While Romelio is not quite as threatening a figure to Jolenta, he does take control over her reproductive functions, in a sense, by coercing Jolenta into mothering his child via Angiolella.

Later in the play, when Ercole and Contarino finally come face-to-face, Ercole shares Jolenta's confirmation that "the shame she goes withal/ Was begot by her brother."<sup>516</sup> The noblemen, of course, take this to mean that Romelio had sex with his own sister, thereby impregnating her, whereas the audience is aware of the irony in Jolenta's words. Nevertheless, Ercole and Contarino's fear Jolenta's incestuous pregnancy, a moment haunted by Middleton's *No Wit/No Help Like a Woman's*, discussed above. Later in the period, John Ford builds on these comedic misunderstandings and anxieties over incestuous pregnancy. In his Caroline tragedy, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, the sibling-lovers Annabella and Giovanni do, in fact, conceive a child together. The ways in which Webster's tragicomedy both haunts and is haunted by numerous pregnancy plays reveals the author to be an active participant in the pregnancy play subgenre.

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<sup>516</sup> Webster, *Devil's*, K3.

While Angiolella's pregnancy appears peripheral to the action of the play as a whole, and the character of little actual importance to the main plot (further indicated by the omission of her name from the dramatis personae in the play's original 1623 publication) her pregnancy is in fact crucial to the play's dramaturgy.<sup>517</sup> Romelio impregnates a nun but tries to use his sister's body as an incubator, of sorts. However, upon marrying Angiolella and doing away with Jolenta's false pregnancy, the world stabilizes. In this way, the pregnant body in *The Devil's Law-Case* stands as a metaphor for Romelio's disruption of societal norms.

To conclude this chapter, I turn to a play wherein pregnancy serves a similar function: Thomas Heywood's comedy *A Maidenhead Well Lost*. In this late pregnancy play, we see not only the repetition of tropes such as a retroactively legitimized pregnancy, but also a bed trick that at once prevents adultery and consummates a marriage agreement. This play, perhaps more than *The Devil's Law-Case* or *A Fair Quarrel*, most directly echoes Shakespeare's late problem/early pregnancy plays, *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well that Ends Well*. As such, *Maidenhead* evinces a perceptible conversation within the pregnancy play subgenre. Given the density of plays featuring pregnant characters—and considering the abundances of echoes among these plays—it remains surprising that they have never been discussed together and at length.

#### ***A Maidenhead Well Lost*, Thomas Heywood (c. 1634)**

Queen Henrietta's Men performed *A Maidenhead Well Lost* at the Cockpit some time before 1634, at which point it received publication.<sup>518</sup> This tonally dark comedy, near the

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<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.*, dramatis personae.

<sup>518</sup> Thomas Heywood, *A Pleasant Comedy Called: A Mayden-Head Well Lost*, London: 1634, frontispiece. *Early English Books Online*. 20 June 2016. For an extended discussion of this particular digitized quarto, see: William Proctor Williams, "Maidenhead Lost in the Digital Age," 251-3. Andrew Gurr gives *Maidenhead* a wide range of dates. He suggests Queen Henrietta Maria's Men play first performed the comedy some time between 16245 and 1634 (Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, 294).

chronological end of the pregnancy play subgenre—and about which there is little published criticism—is the latest peripheral pregnancy discussed in this chapter.<sup>519</sup> Throughout the play, Heywood recycles multiple pregnancy play tropes: pregnancy following a *de praesenti* contract, a short onstage gestational period, a retroactively legitimized child, and a bed trick that helps bring the appropriate couples together. I argue that Heywood’s late pregnancy play reveals conscious borrowing from his contemporaries, while also signaling that popular interest in staging the pregnant body wanes in the 1630s.

*A Maidenhead Well Lost* tells the story of the intrepid Julia—daughter to the Duke of Milan—and her lover, the Prince of Parma. However, all is not well with these two. Stroza, groom to Julia’s father, maligns the young couple, and sows discord between them. In the opening scene, Stroza convinces Julia that Parma takes Laretta, a court maiden, for his mistress; Julia confronts Parma about this infidelity. Parma, of course, defends his own honor against these false allegations and they quarrel. When Parma storms off the stage—professing to “abjure [the] sight” of Julia forevermore—the young woman laments that she consummated their relationship before the official church marriage.<sup>520</sup> Like so many of the young couples in these peripheral pregnancy plays—including Jane and Fitzallen as well as Juliet and Claudio—Julia and Parma possess a *de praesenti* contract. Julia professes that she only yielded her virginity to the Prince because they were “man and wife;/ Saving the Churches outward Ceremony.”<sup>521</sup> In both *Measure for Measure* and *A Fair Quarrel*, the lovers’ pre-contracts are brought up multiple times to remind the audience that their sexual relationship is consensual and beyond reasonable reproof. However, because this convention appears repeatedly throughout early modern drama,

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<sup>519</sup> Grace Ioppolo notes that *A Maidenhead Well Lost* has “received less critical attention, especially in terms of gender studies,” than the many other Heywoodian texts that include a feminine phrase or pronoun in the title, such as *A Woman Killed with Kindness* or *Fair Maid of the West* (Ioppolo, “Thomas Heywood, Just in Time,” 123).

<sup>520</sup> Heywood, *Mayden-Head*, B3.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*, C4.

and pregnancy plays especially, this well-worn trope requires—and receives—little further explanation from Julia or Parma in *Maidenhead*.

While the audience does quickly learn the strength of Julia's lamentation comes from an unplanned pregnancy, the playwright brings up the fact of her gravidity only a few times throughout the play. The first allusion to Julia's pregnancy occurs upon Parma's exit from scene one. Julia turns to the audience and confesses the Prince "hath left behind/ That pledge of his acquaintance, that will for ever/ Cleave to my blood in scandal."<sup>522</sup> In act two, Julia finally tells Parma about her pregnancy. Unfortunately, after their initial argument, he no longer believes in her chastity, and vehemently denies his paternity.

This second confrontation between Julia and Parma is the only scene wherein the audience hears a verbal description of Julia's belly. However, Parma's description is indirect compared to details given out about the shape and size of gestational bodies in earlier pregnancy plays. When Parma asks why Julia insists on weeping, he dryly suggests she cannot be "hungry, for [her] belly's full," and quits the court.<sup>523</sup> Julia, with nowhere else to turn, confessed her pregnancy to her father, providing another oblique allusion to the shape of her body: "I am strumpeted,/ A bastard issue grows within my womb."<sup>524</sup> These descriptions of the pregnant body are very different from Hermione in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* who "spreads of late into a goodly bulk" or Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* wherein Mrs. Allwit transforms into a "tumbler whose nose and belly meet."<sup>525</sup> Instead, Heywood only provides these fleeting allusions to Julia's "full" belly, which do not require the pregnant body as part of the *mise en scène* the way Shakespeare or Middleton do.

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<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*, B3.

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.*, C4.

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>525</sup> See: Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, TLN 607-12; 2.1; Middleton, *Chast Mayd*, C.

The only clue we have as to how far along Julia is in the first two acts—and hence, how visible her belly may be beneath her gown—comes from a comment in act three when Parma returns to Milan. Parma enquires as to Julia’s well-being, and a Lord confirms that, upon Parma’s departure, Julia has “Full two months...kept her chamber, grievously distracted.”<sup>526</sup> This communicates that the Duke hid away Julia for the final months of her pregnancy while her body grew to accommodate the “bastard issue” within. Otherwise, there is nothing in the text or the play’s action to suggest Julia has failed to sufficiently conceal her pregnancy from the court. Unlike so many of the pregnancy plays discussed throughout this study, the visual component of Julia’s pregnancy—or even the fact of her concealing the physical evidence of her condition—is wholly unacknowledged, though her pregnancy is undoubtedly necessitated by Heywood’s play.

Despite the de-emphasis of Julia’s pregnant body within the play’s *mise en scène*, Heywood’s reliance on theatrical, visually rich storytelling is evident throughout *Maidenhead*. Similar to the way in which Middleton and Rowley manage Jane’s pregnancy in *Fair Quarrel*, Julia suddenly appears on stage having already given birth. Between acts two and three, the script indicates a dumb show wherein the Duke, a midwife, and Stroza enter the stage with Julia’s newborn. The Duke commands Stroza to do away with the child and Parma follows Stroza out of the city. When Stroza leaves the child to die in a nearby wood, Parma rescues the newborn and accepts he is the father after all. This is one of three dumb shows throughout the play. The other two are also major plot points, akin to *The Golden Age* when Atlanta strips Calisto to find the latter’s “great belly.” Even while Heywood provides little information with respect to the visibility of Julia’s pregnant belly, he nevertheless relies upon visual storytelling that emphasizes Julia’s importance in the play.

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<sup>526</sup> Heywood, *Mayden-Head*, F.

The remainder of the comedy is full of confusion and deceitful plotting which culminates in a bed trick orchestrated by Heywood's heroine. These layers of misunderstanding—not to mention the all-important bed trick—are characteristic of these peripheral pregnancy plays. The Duke attempts to marry Julia to the Prince of Florence before anyone learns of her illegitimate child with Parma. However, Florence has fallen in love with the banished Laretta, whom Julia expelled from court when she believed Parma was unfaithful. Because Laretta is technically below Florence's station and out of reach for the young Prince, he dutifully goes to court and marries Julia; Laretta follow him.

The marriage between Florence and Julia marks the second dumb show. After the ceremony, Florence expresses his doubt as to Julia's virginity, professing to annul the marriage if he learns she has already been with another man. To keep herself chaste for Parma while hiding her non-virginity from Florence, Julia contracts the newly returned Laretta to switch places with her. This bed trick—the third dumb show—clearly evokes both *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well that Ends Well*, the two peripheral pregnancy plays that opened this chapter.

It is worth pausing here to consider the ways in which Heywood's bed trick in *A Maidenhead Well Lost* echoes Shakespeare's late comedies/early pregnancy plays, while veering away from them in significant ways. Again, we see an intrepid young woman who tries to preserve herself sexually and socially. If Julia consummates her marriage to Florence, she will never be able to be with Parma, should he ever come back. If Parma never returns to court and Florence learns the truth of Julia's sexual history, she will be publicly disgraced; the news will quickly ruin all future marriage prospects. Just as Helen in *All's Well* sought to consummate her marriage while protecting Diana's chastity and Isabella retained her virginity while helping Mariana to her rightful place as Angelo's wife, Julia allows Laretta the opportunity to take

Florence for herself while she preserves her own reputation and fidelity. In addition, like *All's Well that Ends Well*, Florence gives Laretta a ring, which she later uses to prove that she was his bedfellow the previous evening in Julia's stead.

However similar, the Shakespearean and Heywoodian bed tricks are distinct in their moral arguments. For Adelman, bed tricks in *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well that Ends Well* are "the primary device through which desire is regulated, both legitimized and relocated in the socially sanctioned bond of marriage."<sup>527</sup> However, in the case of *A Maidenhead Well Lost*, the two individuals involved in the bed trick—Florence and Laretta—are not lawful husband and wife in the "socially sanctioned bond of marriage." Instead, Julia and Florence are officially married in the eyes of the state and church. While Julia loves Parma and even bore his child, she is now legally bound to Florence. Rather than regulating immoral sexual desire by surreptitiously preserving the marital bed, Julia tricks Florence into committing adultery, thereby willfully corrupting their marital contract for her own preservation. Despite this bit of moral relativism, all comes out well in the end. Parma presents himself at court with his and Julia's retroactively legitimized child. Florence and Laretta, having consummated a marriage agreement made earlier in the play, are now joined together. Stroza, the malignant architect of the play's strife, receives his comeuppance.

In *A Maidenhead Well Lost*, misunderstandings and underhanded duplicitousness abound, while Julia and Parma's child sits at the play's core conflict. Upon her first mention of the pregnancy, the unborn fetus heightens the stakes for her and Parma during their arguments. Julia not only carries and gives birth to the child of a man convinced of her infidelity, but she also stands by as her father commands Stroza to leave the child for dead in the wilderness. The child, rescued by its father, keeps Parma in the story and helps to neatly conclude the play by bringing

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<sup>527</sup> Adelman, 77.

Julia and the Prince back together. Although Julia's pregnant body is peripheral to the play's action and *mise en scène*, her pregnancy and subsequent birth prove central to Heywood's dramaturgy.

*A Maidenhead Well Lost*, with its tightly constructed plot, trades in the popular theatrical tropes seen throughout earlier peripheral pregnancy plays, with no significant contributions to the subgenre.<sup>528</sup> Julia and Parma are married-in-all-but-ceremony as in *A Fair Quarrel*. The couple legitimizes their child after the fact as in *Measure for Measure* and *The Devil's Law-Case*. Moreover, dumb shows move the plot along through visual storytelling techniques as in Heywood's own play, *The Golden Age*. Finally, the playwright stages a bed trick that centers on the need to preserve chastity on one side, and bring about the most appropriate coupling for the comedic plot. Taken together, all of this communicates that Heywood's own work was in conversation with the popular theatrical performance conventions of the time and, most importantly for this study, in tune with the ebbs and flows of performing pregnancy on Stuart stages. Nevertheless, whereas the presence of complex pregnant characters seemed to peak between 1610 and 1620, the treatment and lack of attention paid to Julia's gestational body as a central subject of the play's action suggests innovation within the pregnancy convention was subsiding by the 1630s.<sup>529</sup>

The peripheral pregnancy plays discussed throughout this chapter are distinct from those discussed above. The pregnant characters of chapter two's histories, romances, and tragedies, as well as chapter three's comedies, feature pregnant bodies that exist at the center of each play in

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<sup>528</sup> Despite Jean E. Howard's assertion that Heywood "was a notable dramatic innovator, turning received genres to new purposes and inventing new theatrical devices to heighten the emotional impact of his dramas," he does not appear to have done so in *Maidenhead* (120). I suggest his largest contributions to the pregnancy play subgenre field are most recognizable in *The Golden Age* and *Love's Mistress*, as I show in the last chapter. Howard, "Thomas Heywood: Dramatist of London and Playwright of the Passions," 120-33.

<sup>529</sup> See: Appendix A

some significant way. At first glance, that does not appear to be the case for these problem plays and tragicomedies. In *When You See Me* and *Henry VIII*, the King spends a great deal of the play concerned over the security of his legacy via gestating bodies and royal progeniture. In *Winter's Tale*, *Duchess of Malfi*, and *'Tis Pity*, pregnant characters find their respective bodies under constant surveillance by the men around them. Throughout the comedies, including *Chaste Maid*, *The Magnetic Lady*, and *The Heir*, the pregnancy manifested on the male body becomes a source of grotesque humor, thereby removing any maternal authority those characters might have retained for themselves. Paradoxically, in the tonally ambiguous plays discussed throughout this chapter, the pregnant body is incidental to the play's fiction, yet remains crucial to the dramaturgical structure of each drama, a fact exemplified by Helen's pregnancy in *All's Well*. Even though Helen is the central character in *All's Well*, her pregnancy is merely a condition of the play's resolution. In *A Maidenhead Well Lost*, Julia's pregnancy is likewise peripheral. There is little attention paid to her gestational body compared to the numerous pregnancy plays written during the period and analyzed in this study. Despite this fact, her gestation and birth are crucial plot points, necessary to instigate Julia's central conflict, and tie together *Maidenhead's* loose ends. Furthermore, Julia's peripheral pregnancy in *A Maidenhead Well Lost*, like Angiolella's in *The Devil's Law-Case*, Jane's in *A Fair Quarrel*, and Juliet's in *Measure for Measure*, acts as a touchstone that tells the audience about the overall (dys)functionality of the world, while providing the play's dramaturgical core.

When a playwright includes a pregnant character, he necessarily imparts dramatic weight to that gestational body. This is made evident by the way pregnancy consistently reveals itself to be dramaturgically, theatrically, and visually significant. I address this significance in chapter five, wherein I examine Heywood's *Love's Mistress*, commissioned by Queen Henrietta Maria

and performed by her company in 1634. In this performance, a pregnant, disfigured Psyche roams the stage, recalling Queen Anna of Denmark's own blackface pregnant performance in 1605. I follow this analysis with the epilogue wherein I explore possibilities for further study.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
Pageantry and Pregnancy:  
The Enduring Influence of *Blackness*

When James I took the English throne with Queen Anna in 1603, playwrights began staging the pregnant body with increasing consistency. I suggest the arrival of England's first royal childbearing body in two generations, paired with Anna's highly conspicuous displays of matriarchal authority, bolstered the popularity of pregnancy plays on seventeenth-century London stages. Playwrights consciously recalled her conspicuous performance of pregnancy in *The Masque of Blackness*—iconographically, a wholesale reversal of Elizabeth's emblematic virginal red and white—by scripting plays with pregnant characters whose reproductive bodies elicited patriarchal anxiety through metatheatrical performance. This process became quite explicit after Anna's death in 1619, particularly in other masques, or plays that feature inset masque-like spectacles.

In Richard Brome's Caroline comedy *The English Moor* (c. 1637)—originally performed for Queen Henrietta's Men—the playwright appeals directly to the *Masque of Blackness*. Mandeville Quicksands, a despised and lecherous usurer, worries that his new and beautiful young bride, Millicent, will cuckold him before they can consummate their marriage. Although Quicksands has agreed to respect Millicent's virginity for one month into their marriage, he decides to disguise her as a moor so she will not be pretty enough to attract the attention of any would-be extra-marital lovers. Millicent initially refuses to partake in the charade. To convince Millicent to play along, Quicksands asserts that “blacking up” is a noble act, and appeals to Queen Anna's performance in *The Masque of Blackness*, assuring Millicent “even Queens

themselves/ Have, for the glory of a nights presentment,/ To grace the work, suffered as much as this.”<sup>530</sup> Millicent eventually relents and spends the majority of the play in blackface.

Later in *The English Moor*, Quicksands stages a sumptuous masque. When the inset spectacle—the play within a play—begins, the Inductor details the plot: “The Queen of Ethiop dreamt upon a night/ Her black womb should bring forth a virgin white.”<sup>531</sup> The invocation of the “black womb” points back to Anna’s 1605 performance wherein the Queen took center-stage with her blackened, pregnant body.<sup>532</sup> While Andrea Stevens points out the extravagant metatheatrical event is “clearly modeled” on Jonson’s *Blackness*, and Kim F. Hall likewise agrees that Brome’s *Moor* draws upon *The Masque of Blackness* in terms of their similar treatment of racial stereotypes, I add that the iconography of this Queen Henrietta’s Men performance repeatedly gestures to the consort’s predecessor, Queen Anna of Denmark, and her blackened gestational body.<sup>533</sup>

Similarly, John Ford’s *The Lover’s Melancholy* (King’s Men, 1629) features an inset masque wherein a “sea-nymph” enters “big-bellied, singing and dancing” to conclude the festivities.<sup>534</sup> Nothing in the text indicates whether or not body paint similar to that used in *Blackness* was involved in this performance, although the technology clearly existed by 1629. Nevertheless, the “big-bellied” sea nymph is only onstage briefly to introduce the masque’s

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<sup>530</sup> Brome, *The English Moor*, act 3, scene 1, page 38. For a more detailed discussion of the resonances between *The Masque of Blackness* and *The English Moor* with respect to black cosmetic paint, see: Andrea Stevens, “Mastering Masques of Blackness: Jonson’s *Masque of Blackness*, the Windsor text of *The Gypsies Metamorphosed*, and Brome’s *The English Moor*,” 2009.

<sup>531</sup> Brome, *The English Moor*, 4.5, page 65.

<sup>532</sup> While the memory of Anna’s pregnant painted performance is activated in this moment, Brome’s allusion is to Heliodorus’s story of an Ethiopian Queen who gave birth to a white child. In the story, the Queen explains she gazed upon the portrait of a white woman, Andromeda, at the moment of conception. The longing for the painting impressed her child with white skin. Again, we return to the intertwining narratives of maternal impressions and the dangers of toxic black paint in *The Masque of Blackness*.

<sup>533</sup> Stevens, “Mastering Masques of Blackness,” 423; Hall, *Things of Darkness*, 166-74.

<sup>534</sup> Ford, *The Lover’s Melancholy*, H2. Ford’s play was published in 1629 and originally presented by the King’s Men at Blackfriars and the Globe, according to the frontispiece.

concluding dance number. There appears to be no other reason for the nymph's pregnancy other than to perhaps recall Anna's performance as a pregnant fertility nymph in *Blackness* twenty-four years earlier. The two plays under consideration in this final chapter, Middleton's *The Nice Valour* (1622) and Heywood's *Love's Mistress* (1634), likewise intertwine pageantry and pregnancy, while recalling (and resisting) Queen Anna's 1605 assertion of maternal autonomy in *The Masque of Blackness*. In these late pregnancy plays, I examine the ways in which Middleton and—to a greater extent—Heywood used theatrical materials and conventions similar to *Blackness* to engage with the images and (and perhaps alleviate the anxieties) produced by Queen Anna of Denmark in 1605.

Middleton's *The Nice Valour* treads the (by now) well-worn path of a scorned young woman who follows her lover, and enters into his service while she dons a male disguise. Like the Page in *More Dissemblers Besides Women*, this character is also pregnant. What is distinct about *A Nice Valour*, however, is that the pregnant character in question is not dressed as a page, but as Cupid performing in her paramour's traveling troupe of players. Throughout the play, the Cupid (the only name by which she is known) performs at the command of her lover while plotting with her brothers about their course of action. Eventually the truth comes out: the rake is reconciled with his lover, unborn child, and newfound familial responsibilities.

With *Valour*, Middleton continues to showcase his interest in, and tendencies toward, participating in well-established theatrical tropes—the girl page, the comically hidden pregnancy—while continuing to push the boundaries of what the prosthetically-adorned boy body is capable of eliciting from spectators. Although the Cupid appears to have little agency throughout *Valour*, the actor's body moves through the theatrical space, commanding the rapt attention of her guardian-brothers, while requiring the audience to consider the (im)penetrability

of her disguise. Will the Cupid go into labor while dancing in one of her masques like the Page from *More Dissemblers*? Will her costume betray the swelling of her pregnant body like Calisto in Heywood's *The Golden Age*? Middleton's play leaves contemporary readers to consider the material reality of the boy actor playing a pregnant woman playing Cupid, while simultaneously gesturing toward dancing pregnant body as spectacle, à la Anna of Denmark, and echoing the Queen's late-career court masque patronage.

Thomas Heywood picks up this performance of pregnancy, pageantry, and mythology in his 1634 Caroline drama, *Love's Mistress or, The Queen's Masque*, wherein Cupid reappears. However, this time, rather than a spurned woman in disguise as the young demi-god, Cupid is the play's ruling patriarch. Heywood presented *Love's Mistress, or The Queen's Masque* three times for King Charles I and his wife, Henrietta Maria, within the span of a mere eight days during November, 1634.<sup>535</sup> This highly successful mythic drama—revived through the 1630s—survived the Interregnum, and was Heywood's final play before his 1641 death.<sup>536</sup>

*Love's Mistress*, a tale of redemption through patriarchal submission, reverses Queen Anna's defiant assertion of matriarchal agency in *The Masque of Blackness*. Heywood's masque, more than any other in this study, echoes Queen Anna of Denmark's performance of blackface maternity in *The Masque of Blackness*. However, *Love's Mistress*—brought to court by Queen Henrietta Maria for Charles I's 1634 birthday celebration—reasserts the patriarchal authority that Anna resisted in *Blackness*. This spectacle-filled drama echoes Queen Anna of Denmark's 1605

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<sup>535</sup> According to the frontispiece for the play's 1636 printing, the masque was "three times presented before their two excellent majesties within the space of eight days." See: Heywood, *Love's Mistress: or the Queen's Masque* (1636). Throughout my analysis of *Love's Mistress*, I toggle between the original 1636 publication of the play and the follow-up printing in 1640. The 1636 front matter (To the Reader, Prologue, etc.) on *EEBO* is corrupted and unreadable. In addition, many pages are missing. For these sections and the missing pages, I supplement with the 1640 publication, available in hard-copy from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign Rare Books and Manuscript Library.

<sup>536</sup> Samuel Pepys attended no less than five performances of *Love's Mistress* after the Restoration. He recorded seeing the play three times in March 1661, once in 1665, and again in 1668. Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, Vol. 1, pgs. 330, 334, 339; 4: 386; 8: 77.

painted pregnancy in both its performance history, as well as Heywood's dramaturgical treatment of the pregnant body. After its first presentation in a private theatre, *Love's Mistress* received its second two performances at Denmark House, the former stronghold of Anna's Queen's court.

Throughout Heywood's retelling of the Cupid and Psyche myth, the play's heroine is castigated for her disobedience by a patriarchal authority. Cupid curses Psyche with cosmetic ugliness and a sudden, punishing pregnancy. While the topical disfigurement proves temporary, Psyche maintains her gestational status through the end of the play. Through Biblical allusions and parallels, *Love's Mistress*, the last (and latest) play in this study, reasserts patriarchal dominance over the deceitful and opaque female body by forcing pregnancy on the Eve-like Psyche. Throughout Heywood's masque, Psyche's family and community persecute her for a pregnancy she did not willingly conceive, until Psyche finally repents, thereby submitting to her god-husband. In this way, *Love's Mistress* reaffirms the role of the patriarch over the matriarch in Stuart drama by using the pregnant body as a weapon against willful women. In what follows, I reveal the ways in which these late Stuart plays invoke, recall, and resist Queen Anna's conspicuous display of blackface pregnancy and public assertions of patriarchal authority.

### **The Nice Valour, Thomas Middleton (1622)**

*The Nice Valour, or the Passionate Madman* received its first publication in Beaumont and Fletcher's 1647 folio, *Comedies and Tragedies*. As a result, scholars attributed it to the dynamic duo of early modern playwriting for many years.<sup>537</sup> Despite its late printing, Gary Taylor dates *The Nice Valour's* composition much earlier, arguing Thomas Middleton, not

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<sup>537</sup> See: Jackson, MacDonald P. "Early Modern Authorship: Canons and Chronology," 85-6; 89; Lake, *The Canon of Thomas Middleton's Plays*, 192-196.

Beaumont and Fletcher, wrote the play around autumn of 1622.<sup>538</sup> Susan Wiseman agrees with Taylor's dating while similarly asserting, "most scholars now agree that Middleton wrote much (and probably all) of the play," long before the 1640s, although the circumstances of *Valour's* initial performance venue remain uncertain.<sup>539</sup> Wiseman concludes *Valour* is "not Fletcherian but Middletonian, not Caroline but Jacobean," in both its style and host of contemporary allusions.<sup>540</sup> Building on Wiseman and Taylor's assertions that Middleton penned *The Nice Valour*, I argue that the author's treatment of the pregnant character, known only as "the Cupid," is likewise consistent with Middletonian dramaturgy as well as the playwright's previous challenges to the pregnancy play subgenre. Moreover, the resonances between the boy-page/scorned lover pregnancy plots in *More Dissemblers* (c. 1619) and *The Nice Valour* suggest Middleton not only penned them both, but also wrote them in the same period.

In *The Nice Valour*, a young woman in male disguise follows her lost paramour, aptly called the Passionate Lord. This young Lord travels with a band of strolling players to keep him entertained and the Cupid—so-called because she performs the part of the male demi-god—is part of his company. Periodically throughout *Valour*, the Passionate Lord gives a performance to show off his wealth, sophistication, and virility. His dejected former mistress in Cupidian costume pays penance for her sins by performing her part in private masques for the Passionate Lord, while trying to hide the fact that she is pregnant and growing larger with each passing day.

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<sup>538</sup> Taylor argues against the previously accepted date argued by Baldwin Maxwell in his 1935 study of the play, suggesting that Maxwell's foundational evidence "depends upon attribution of the play to Beaumont and Fletcher, and collapses once the play is recognized as the work of Middleton," (Taylor, "Thomas Middleton, *The Nice Valour*, and the Court of James I," 4-5). Taylor goes on to suggest that, stylistically, *The Nice Valour* is linked to the Middletonian plays of 1621-4 rather than 1615-16. Taylor's stylistic and contextual analysis concludes the play likely belongs to the Fall of 1622 (*Ibid.*, 9-20).

<sup>539</sup> Middleton, *The Collected Works*, 1679.

<sup>540</sup> *ibid.*

Middleton's treatment of pregnancy in *The Nice Valour* becomes particularly interesting when considered alongside the inset theatricals offered by the Cupid for the Passionate Lord. Several times throughout *Valour*, the Passionate Lord shows off his wealth and influence, so he sings and gives his guests the pleasure of admiring the talents of his playing company. The first of these metatheatrical events occurs in act two, scene one. The Passionate Lord sings a song to welcome the Cupid who, when she arrives, begins to shoot her arrows at the Passionate Lord, no doubt hoping he will turn his gaze upon her once struck; he never does. Instead he commands the Cupid to "Strike me the Duchess of Valois in love with me,/ With all the speed thou canst, and two of her women."<sup>541</sup> After submitting to his will and completing the first pass, the Cupid re-enters with the masquers: her two brothers and several women, who all continue the performance. Gazing upon these women dancers, the caddish Passionate Lord announces:

PASSIONATE LORD	What a felicity of whores are here! And all my concubines, struck bleeding new. A man can in his lifetime make but one woman, But he may make his fifty Queans a month. <sup>542</sup>
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The pregnant Cupid must stand by and watch while the object of her love and father of her unborn child carouses with other women as part of his debauched festivities. The irony here, of course, is that the only "quean" the Passionate Lord has made among this group (of which we are aware) is the Cupid, who strikes these "concubines...bleeding new" with her arrows.

Throughout *Valour*, the Cupid's metatheatrical performances likewise recall the Page's dance lesson in *More Dissemblers Besides Women*, as does the Cupid's attempt to disguise her ever-changing gestational body under an unforgiving male costume. The Cupid follows the Passionate Lord in hopes she can find an opportune time to reveal herself, her pregnant predicament, and her hopes of marrying the Lord to legitimize her child. Her brothers follow and

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<sup>541</sup> Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Nice Valour*, act 2, scene 1, page 152.

<sup>542</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.



This moment of sartorial anxiety specifically echoes Lactantio's concerns over concealing the increasing girth of his pregnant former-lover-turned-page in *More Dissemblers Besides Women* (1619). Like the Cupid's brothers, Lactantio frets that as the Page "grows big/ Those masculine hose will shortly prove too little."<sup>544</sup> Just as the Page struggled to hide her ever-changing body beneath her masculine uniform, so too does the Cupid strive to hide her "shame" beneath her Cupid's costume. While the Page goes into labor when forced to dance, so too does the Cupid struggle to maintain her physical activity in the Passionate Lord's company of travelling players. Throughout *Valour*, both of the Cupid's brothers express anxiety over the fragility of their sister's disguise as well as the time constraint that her pregnancy puts on their plans, just as the Page does over her own great belly in *More Dissemblers*.

Throughout the canon of early modern drama, it is common to see female pages work to facilitate their beloveds' advances on other women.<sup>545</sup> It was likewise common, by this point, to watch a pregnant character attempt to conceal her gestational body.<sup>546</sup> The popularity of these tropes drives Middleton to experiment with audience expectations by pushing the boundaries of what the prosthetically constructed body can do, while simultaneously bringing the audience's attention to the boy body beneath the belly through inset spectacles. In *Valour*, Middleton constructs several metatheatrical events whereby the pregnant body simultaneously hides and displays itself, creating a self-conscious tension between the fictional Cupid's gestating body and the reality of the young male body performing beneath the love-god's costume. Audience members who were familiar with Middleton's work—and *More Dissemblers* in particular—were likely conscious of the fragility of the Cupid disguise, and waiting in titillation for the belly's

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<sup>544</sup> Middleton, Thomas. *More Dissemblers Besides Women*. London: 1657. Act 3, scene 1, page 31.

<sup>545</sup> For an exhaustive discussion of popular tropes and dramaturgical variations in female page plays, see Michael Shapiro's *Gender in Play*, especially part two (65-198).

<sup>546</sup> See above discussions regarding: *The Golden Age* by Thomas Heywood, *The Duchess of Malfi* by John Webster, *The Witch* by Thomas Middleton, and *A Fair Quarrel* by Thomas Middleton and William Rowley.

dramatic reveal. If such individuals existed, they must have been sorely disappointed, as the revelation of the Cupid's identity happens offstage.

In act five, the Passionate Lord suffers a blow; he is stabbed and rushed offstage to a surgeon. At a loss, the Cupid turns to her distended belly, remarking, "Thou hadst a most unfortunate conception,/ Whate'er thou prov'st to be," as she laments the probable loss of the unborn child's father.<sup>547</sup> She exits, presumably following the injured Lord. However, upon the Passionate Lord and Cupid's re-entrance in the play's concluding moments two scenes later, the recovered Lord announces his intention to marry the mother of his unborn child. With little explanation, he asks the Duke for his forgiveness: "I have chose a wife,/ Without your counsel or consent, my lord...whose honour my forgetful times much wronged."<sup>548</sup> It seems that, between the time of his injury and his recovery, the Cupid reveals herself to the Passionate Lord.

The Duke, bewildered by the Passionate Lord's intent to marry, looks about his court and sees only men. "A wife? Where is she, sir."<sup>549</sup> Presenting the still-costumed Cupid as "this noble gentlewoman," the Duke immediately believes the Passionate Lord must have lost his senses when he suffered the stabbing. While the Passionate Lord insists upon the Cupid's female sex, insisting she is a "worthy lady," the Duke remains flustered by this strange turn of events. While the Cupid's First Brother confirms she is his indeed sister, the Duke's First Gentleman corroborates this revelation: "It appears plainly now below the waist, my lord," gesturing toward the Cupid's now-visible pregnancy.<sup>550</sup> It is at this point, when the distended belly seems to be apparent to others, that the Duke relents and accepts the Cupid as a woman: "didst ever read of a

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<sup>547</sup> Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Nice Valour*, 5.1, page 162.

<sup>548</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.3, 164.

<sup>549</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid.*

she-Cupid?”<sup>551</sup> However, it is unclear as to whether the belly is now more visible than it was earlier in the play, or if the fact of her distended belly is merely narrated and accepted as a verbally-constructed reality by the audience. What Middleton does make plain in this moment, however, is that the distended belly signals the Cupid’s status as female, as perhaps long hair, cosmetics, or a change in dress might otherwise do in other disguise plots.<sup>552</sup> This suggests that the presence of a “great belly” on stage is, by the 1620s, so commonplace on Stuart stages that it becomes a visible confirmation of identity and sex. By withholding the initial revelation of pregnancy and gender between the Cupid and the Passionate Lord, Middleton playfully denies his audience the titillation typically present in moments of gender revelation.

Finally, I suggest the inset spectacles peppered throughout *Valour* perhaps encouraged audiences to remember their late Queen, Anna of Denmark, who died of dropsy in 1619. The dancing, pregnant Cupid recalls Anna’s performance in *The Masque of Blackness*. In addition, the Queen’s own rich masquing career kept her active in court spectacles and cultural production through her final court masque two years before her death. *Cupid’s Banishment* premiered at court on 4 May 1617. The masque was given at Anna’s court at Greenwich Palace, written by Robert White, and performed for the Queen, who was no longer performing in masques herself.<sup>553</sup> The basic conceit of *Cupid’s Banishment*, as the title might suggest, presents a series of attempts by chaste female characters to rid their private space of the love god’s temptations toward sexual pleasure. In other words, White’s masque wrestles with the creation (and

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<sup>551</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>552</sup> For example, in Jonson’s *Epicoene*, the removal of a wig signals that the titular character is a male, and Rosalind in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* reveals herself to be a woman by changing into her feminine garments.

<sup>553</sup> McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage*, 179. McManus speaks about *Cupid’s Banishment* at length, specifically as “a document of immense importance for the assessment of female performance” as it features perhaps the “first instance of female speech in the Jacobean court masque” (180). Here McManus refers to the list of performers within the masque’s text, which reads “‘Mistress Ann Watkins acted Fortune,’ the only use of the term ‘acted’ for a female participant” (182-3). See: McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage*, 179-201.

maintenance) of a sacred gynocentric space, echoing the formation of Anna's separate Queen's court discussed in chapter one. Alternatively, Clare McManus argues that *Cupid's Banishment*, "can be read as a statement of Anna's marginalisation and her withdrawal from performance," and the subsequent adoption of the form by James's male favorites.<sup>554</sup> After all, *Cupid's Banishment* was performed, not at Whitehall Palace, but outside the King's court at Greenwich. It is nevertheless evident that, despite Anna's political marginalization over her sixteen years as Queen of England, she continued to haunt the imaginations of London's cultural producers and creators via her past pregnant performance and assertions of matriarchal authority. As such, I contend that—aside from the obvious resonances between the Cupids in *Cupid's Banishment* and *Love's Valour*—Middleton's pregnant god of love, who is scorned by a Lord obsessed with the cultural power of spectacle, simultaneously echoes the beginning and end Anna's masquing career in the Stuart court. As such, royal performance and popular culture uniquely intertwine within the figure of Queen Anna of Denmark who has emerged as a major influence on the pregnancy play subgenre.

These resonances between pregnancy, maternal agency, and court pageantry continue through one last pregnancy play: Thomas Heywood's *Love's Mistress or, The Queen's Masque*. Although first performed at the Phoenix Theatre, Queen Henrietta Maria, wife to Charles I, brought the play to court to celebrate the King's birthday in 1634. *Love's Mistress* presents yet another spectacular performance of gestation echoing both Queen Anna's pregnant performance in *Blackness*, as well as the pregnant boy-Cupid in *Valour*.

#### **Love's Mistress, Thomas Heywood (1634)**

On Saturday 15 November 1634, nearly thirty years after Anna danced in *Blackness*, Thomas Heywood premiered *Love's Mistress* on at the Cockpit/Phoenix Theatre before the royal

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<sup>554</sup> *Ibid.*, 180

couple in a private dress rehearsal.<sup>555</sup> Impressed with the play, Henrietta Maria requested the actors perform four days later at Denmark House in honor of the King's birthday.<sup>556</sup> Inigo Jones designed the scenery for the masque's court premiere, much to Heywood's delight. In his preface to the reader, Heywood praises the artistic acumen of Jones,

who to every act, nay almost to every scene, by his excellent inventions gave such an extraordinary lustre, upon every occasion changing the stage, to the admirations of all the spectators, that, as I must ingenuously confess, it was above my apprehension to conceive, so too their sacred Majesties, and the rest of the auditory.<sup>557</sup>

In Heywood's own words, Jones's theatrical innovations were beyond anything the playwright could have imagined for his work. While there are no surviving designs from *Love's Mistress* and no stage directions to tell us about Jones's scenic design, there remain a few clues throughout the text to help us imagine the "excellent inventions" Jones contributed to Heywood's court production. For example, the first prologue that Heywood wrote for *Love's Mistress* specifies that Cupid descends in a cloud.<sup>558</sup> In act two, Psyche scales a large rock to wait in a cave and later Boreas sweeps her up in his storms. Cupid's Palace, Pluto's Court, and Vulcan's forge are all visited in the masque, not to mention the arrival of various mythical creatures such as Vulcan's Cyclops and Cerberus, the three-headed dog of the underworld. These spectacular effects surely added to the splendor of Heywood's mythical masque performed before the royal couple.

For the first *Love's Mistress* court performance on 19 November, Heywood wrote a second prologue and tasks Cupid with paying tribute to the play's benefactor: Queen Henrietta Maria.

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<sup>555</sup> Heywood, *Love's Mistress* (1636), frontispiece. See also: Heywood. *Love's Mistress* (1970), xxvii.

<sup>556</sup> Heywood, *Love's Mistress* (1970), xxvii-xxix.

<sup>557</sup> Heywood, *Love's Mistress* (1640), A3.

<sup>558</sup> Heywood, *Love's Mistress* (1640), A3.

I had almost lost myself, when my intent  
Was to tell why I come, and from whom sent:  
From one, to whom I'm but a shadow, she  
The very soul of Amability.  
One that, without my quiver and my bow,  
Commands the hearts and eyes of high and low.<sup>559</sup>

With his reference to the “soul,” the playwright importantly likens the Queen to Psyche. Even lacking Cupid’s quiver and bow, Psyche commands the demi-god’s heart, just as the mere mortal Henrietta Maria commands the love of the divinely ordained Charles I. Heywood’s prologue thereby links the (soon to be) pregnant Psyche and dread Cupid with the royal bodies in the audience. While Henrietta Maria was renowned—and, in some instances, rebuked—for her own rebellious court performances, there is no evidence to suggest she performed in *Love’s Mistress*.<sup>560</sup> Nevertheless, by invoking the Queen onstage, the playwright puts her performing body in the minds of the court audience, some of who perhaps witnessed Henrietta Maria perform at court.<sup>561</sup> While the connection that Heywood draws between Psyche and Henrietta Maria in the play’s prologue call to mind memories of the Queen’s masquing career, Heywood’s treatment of pregnancy and physical deformity, along with the performance history of *Love’s Mistress*, conjures memories of Anna of Denmark’s pregnant performance in *The Masque of Blackness*.

The *Love’s Mistress* court premiere took place at Denmark House. As mentioned in chapter one, Denmark House was the royal home wherein Queen Anna kept her ladies’ court.

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<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.*, A4.

<sup>560</sup> One such instance of public critique over Henrietta Maria’s performance occurred a year earlier in 1633. The Puritan anti-theatricalist and pamphleteer William Prynne published his infamous work, *Histrionomastix: a Scourge of Stage-Players*, wherein he lambasted “women actors,” as “Notorious whores.” Queen Henrietta Maria took offense to this slander, as she was among these “women actors” who dancing and spoke in court performances. As punishment, Prynne had his ears clipped in May 1634. See: Prynne, *Histrionomastix: a Scourge of Stage-Players*. See also: Hughes, “The Ears of William Prynne,” 43-44.

<sup>561</sup> As Karen Britland reveals, Queen Henrietta Maria’s performance career was not one of folly and fancy, but one of politics, religious devotion, and courtly influence. Britland’s work is “particularly concerned to investigate how her productions reflected events on the continent, introducing a European dimension into discussion of the politics of court masque” (2).

Formerly known as Somerset House, the name changed to honor Anna's homeland.<sup>562</sup> The late Queen's own masquing career and inclination toward autonomy within the Stuart court—exercised in part during her tenure at Denmark house—perhaps haunted the *Love's Mistress* performance space, thereby evoking memories of Queen Anna's times as a dancer and court patron. Furthermore, Inigo Jones designed many of Anna's masques, including *The Masque of Blackness* in 1605. His invitation to design Heywood's *Love's Mistress* perhaps likewise recalled his time as a favorite to Queen Anna of Denmark. While memories of Anna perhaps resonated within, both the performance space and design of *Love's Mistress*, the masque's text similarly hearkens back to Jonson's *The Masque of Blackness* by staging a pregnant body marked by cosmetic ugliness that seeks redemption from a patriarchal savior. Like Euphoris and the other "blackamoor" nymphs in Jonson's *Blackness*, Psyche finds her way to redemption, yet similarly falls short of bodily restoration and autonomy.

Recalling the Cupid's performance of pregnancy in *The Nice Valour*, Heywood's *Love's Mistress, or The Queen's Masque*, likewise tells the story of Cupid. As in Ovid's rendition of the myth, Cupid is sent to Psyche to punish her for her vainglorious pride and disrespect toward Venus, Cupid's mother. However, Cupid falls in love with the beautiful mortal and secretly takes Psyche as his wife. As a prerequisite to their marriage, Cupid insists Psyche swear never to look upon his face; she agrees. However, Psyche breaks her oath and sneaks to Cupid's lodgings while he sleeps in order to discover his identity. Made furious by Psyche's betrayal, Cupid curses her disobedience. He calls upon Boreas, the mythical Greek god of the north wind, to take Psyche away with a cold, wintry gust:

CUPID

Breathe winter's storms upon the blushing cheeks  
Of beauteous Psyche; with thy boisterous breath,

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<sup>562</sup> See: Barroll, *Queen Anna of Denmark*, 39; 70.

Rend off her silks, and clothe her in torn rags;  
Hang on her loathed locks base deformity,  
And bear her to her father; leave her there,  
Barren of comfort, great with child of fear.<sup>563</sup>

Cursing Psyche's body, Cupid makes her internal corruption and sinful pride outwardly visible by turning her into a weather-beaten hag. In so doing, Cupid fulfills Venus's original command to bring great suffering upon the once beautiful woman.

It is worth pausing here to note that the text repeatedly gestures toward the physical transformation undergone by Psyche. The once beautiful woman, described as a rival to Venus's beauty and too lovely to remain among mortals, quickly becomes a disfigured hag at Cupid's command.<sup>564</sup> This transformation happens offstage and is in place by the time she returns. Boreas carries off Psyche at Cupid's bidding near the end of act three's first scene.<sup>565</sup> She returns to the stage, accompanied by Boreas and his storm, in the middle of the following scene.<sup>566</sup> In the interim, Boreas's strong winds disfigure the dejected Psyche; "Where art thou, Psyche?" she asks of herself upon her re-entrance. "How art thou deformed?"<sup>567</sup> When Psyche tries to hide from her family, her father calls out: "What bare anatomy is this?"<sup>568</sup> When Psyche announces herself to her father he rebukes her, insisting Psyche is "no child" of his; her sisters likewise berate her as a "hag" and "some infectious strumpet," gesturing toward Psyche's leprous—or even syphilitic—appearance.<sup>569</sup> The text and required action of Heywood's play necessitate that the actor playing Psyche undergoes a visible, physical change from the last time she was with her family. Her father and sisters do not recognize her; they scorn her as a disfigured hag where they earlier

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<sup>563</sup> Heywood, *Love's Mistress* (1636), F3. Emphasis added.

<sup>564</sup> Heywood, *Love's Mistress* (1636), C; C2.

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid.*, F3.

<sup>566</sup> *Ibid.*, G2.

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>568</sup> Heywood, *Love's Mistress* (1640), E2.

<sup>569</sup> *Ibid.*

praised her for her otherworldly beauty. Previously called “the white-handed Psyche,” her “leprous sin [now] deforms her,” and not “Till Psyche be made fair, and angel-white” will she ever “stand in Cupid’s glorious sight.”<sup>570</sup> When it comes time to cure Psyche of her leprous “spotted covers,” Cupid uses his “white hand...to clear/ This black deformity.”<sup>571</sup> Heywood’s text continues to indicate that the actor playing Psyche appears not only spotted and leprous, but also *blackened* and then re-whitened. Together, all of this suggests that when Boreas shepherds Psyche offstage, the actor took the opportunity to paint himself with dark cosmetics in order to appear haggish and leprous.<sup>572</sup> Heywood provides a similar exit and re-entrance strategy in act five, wherein Cupid vows to “clear/ This black deformity” tainting Psyche’s body.<sup>573</sup> Psyche exits with her husband, appearing restored to her full beauty in the following scene.<sup>574</sup> The text further indicates this physical transformation when Venus wonders at “how this leper came thus fair” upon Psyche’s re-entrance.<sup>575</sup> In the approximately one hundred and twenty-five lines of text wherein Psyche is offstage, the actor likely removed his black cosmetic paint, and replaced it with the feminine red and white that was commonplace for boys playing women. This is the physical transformation that was denied to Anna and her ladies in the 1605 performance of *The Masque of Blackness*.

In Stevens’s examination of early modern cosmetics, she spends a great deal of time analyzing the use of, and changes to, black body paint technology. She points out that, whereas Anna and her colleagues failed to achieve the “blanching” promised to them in *The Masque of Blackness* until *The Masque of Beauty* in 1608, Jonson’s black gypsies in the 1621 performance

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<sup>570</sup> Heywood, *Love’s Mistress* (1636), B3; H2.

<sup>571</sup> *Ibid.*, L.

<sup>572</sup> *Ibid.*, F3-G2.

<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.*, L.

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid.*, L3.

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid.*, L4.

of *The Gypsies Metamorphosed* successfully achieved whiteness. Stevens shows that, due to a development in cosmetic technology that allowed for the paint's removal, the masque's performers were able to successfully transform from black to white. Whereas it was likely impossible that Anna and her ladies effectively remove their black paint in *Blackness*, by Jonson's 1621 *Gypsies*, the titular characters were able to successfully metamorphose due to the existence of, what Stevens calls, a "more tractable technology."<sup>576</sup> I would argue that a similar dark paint—perhaps composed of "walnut juice added to a tallow base," as in *Gypsies*—was used for Psyche in *Love's Mistress*.<sup>577</sup>

By examining Psyche's stage time in relation to her physical deformities, it is evident that Heywood provides opportunities for Psyche to shift from a beautiful woman to a leprous pregnant hag, and back using stage cosmetics. However, Cupid not only curses his wife with pocked, blackened ugliness but also a sudden, advanced pregnancy. During the time in which the actor playing Psyche applies cosmetics to shift his appearance, it stands to reason that he likewise outfitted himself with a large prosthesis to appear visibly pregnant, perhaps similar to the one used in Heywood's *The Golden Age*. Throughout *Love's Mistress*, Psyche repeatedly gestures to her own "wretched womb," while others remark upon "how big she looks," and "What a great breadth she bears" in her "great belly."<sup>578</sup> When Cupid curses Psyche, he insists she will be "great with child of fear"; others beg for mercy on for Psyche's "great-belly's sake."<sup>579</sup> Meanwhile, Psyche expresses exhaustion due to "bearing this poor burden in [her] womb."<sup>580</sup> Given the spectacular nature of Heywood's play, evinced by his praise of Jones's

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<sup>576</sup> Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin*, 104. For the complete discussion of Jonson's *The Gypsies Metamorphosed*, see: Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin*, 100-5; Stevens, "Mastering the Masque of Blackness."

<sup>577</sup> Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin*, 102.

<sup>578</sup> Heywood, *Love's Mistress* (1636), G4; *Love's Mistress* (1640), F.

<sup>579</sup> Heywood, *Love's Mistress* (1636), F3; I2.

<sup>580</sup> Heywood, *Love's Mistress* (1640), G.

design aesthetic and machinery, as well as the emphasis on Psyche's drastic changes in appearance, it stands to reason that her pregnancy was plainly visible throughout the majority of the play.

Due to the emphasis laid upon Psyche's increased girth along with her painted ugliness, it is evident that the actor not only exhibited dark cosmetics in order to make her skin appear leprously spotted, but also incorporated the use of a prosthetic belly to indicate her advanced pregnancy. If the performer playing Psyche had enough off-stage time to paint his skin so as to conform with Heywood's text, it similarly stands to reason the boy actor had time to stuff his skirt with a cushion, similar to that used in May's *The Heir*. It therefore seems reasonable that Heywood's masque employed both the use of cosmetics to darken Psyche's skin, along with a prosthetic belly to highlight her punishing pregnancy. Surely, these elements would have conjured memories of Queen Anna of Denmark and *The Masque of Blackness*.<sup>581</sup>

For Cupid, Psyche's pocked skin and swelling belly signal that she is as inwardly corrupt as she is outwardly blemished. The allusions to Eve here are undeniable: a patriarchal god punishes a proud mortal woman with the pain of childbirth when she disobeys the only commandment set before her. Suddenly appearing on stage with a pregnant belly beneath the boy actor's costume, Psyche transforms from a young, virginal bride, to a sickly pregnant hag whose belly is yet another sign of her inward depravity made outwardly manifest. Psyche's pregnancy, rather than signifying a fruitful womb and successful marriage, indicates her inability (or unwillingness) to follow the rules set forth by her god-husband.

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<sup>581</sup> The many discussions of Psyche's blackened, leprous body echoes Dudley Carleton's commentary on Anna's performance in *The Masque of Blackness*, wherein he complains that the ladies' "black faces, and hands which were painted and bare up to the elbows, was a very loathsome sight" (Carleton 68).

Psyche's pregnancy is a punishment for her disobedience. Again, echoing tenants laid out in Christian theology, Psyche's husband punishes her for failing to submit to his will. For example, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, scripture instructs wives to:

submit...unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.<sup>582</sup>

Robert Filmer, a loyal royalist and political theorist, picks up this concept in his most well-known work of the period, *Patriarcha, or the Natural Power of Kings*. Although *Patriarcha* did not receive publication until 1689, scholars believe that Filmer began writing his treatise around 1620 and completed it before the Civil War began.<sup>583</sup> He was inspired to begin writing in defense of the monarchy when conflicts began between Charles I and Parliament. Filmer's philosophical writing reflects one side of the Monarchist/Parliamentary divide that argued that the right of kings as unimpeachable and divine. Appealing to the Christian scripture cited above, Filmer argues that, just as God is a king over his people, the King is father to his people. This right of rule extends to all fathers and husbands over their wives and children, as ordained by God through Adam and expressed in Ephesians.<sup>584</sup> To challenge a divinely ordained king—and, by extension, a divinely ordained husband—is heresy. Cupid's need to control Psyche's body connects directly to his desire to rid his wife of what rebellious female nature she possesses, and incorporate her into his own divine body politic.

Suddenly cursing Psyche with an advanced stage of gestation, Cupid effectively colonizes her body, marking it as simultaneously owned and abjected by a patriarchal entity. Desperate for deliverance from these physical tortures, Psyche goes so far as to appeal to Venus

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<sup>582</sup> King James Version, *The Holy Bible*, Ephesians, 5: 22-4.

<sup>583</sup> Filmer, *Patriarcha*, xiv.

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

herself for forgiveness and salvation. She begs the goddess to take pity upon the “rich burden” within Psyche’s “wretched womb”: her unborn child.<sup>585</sup> Despite Psyche’s attempts to humble herself to Venus, the goddess violently beats her, repeating the violence against the pregnant body that we see in Samuel Rowley’s *The Birth of Merlin* and, even more so, in Ford’s *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore*.<sup>586</sup> Venus tells Psyche that, until she redeems herself by fulfilling a series of seemingly impossible tasks, Psyche can anticipate similar physical abuse. Thus, the pregnant body remains an object of ridicule, scorn, and public humiliation—perhaps a far cry from Queen Anna of Denmark’s depiction of pregnancy and matriarchal autonomy in Jonson’s *The Masque of Blackness* for the court’s 1605 Twelfth Night festivities.

I suggest that, while *Love’s Mistress* echoes *Blackness* in several key ways, it also reverses the paradigm between the pregnant character and her political power. By the time we arrive to the Caroline theatre, the pregnant body in performance has lost much of its earlier authority in favor of promoting a strong patriarchal monarch in the face of Parliamentary adversity. While Queen Anna maintains control over her matriarchal agency for an extended period of time after Euphoris fails to achieve “blanching” in *Blackness*, no such maternal redemption exists for Psyche nor for the boy actor who played her part. Although Cupid vows to “clear/ This black deformity,” and Venus ask how “this leper came thus fair,” it is unclear as to whether Psyche’s punishing pregnancy remains in tact at the play’s conclusion, or whether her cursed strumpet-hood has been likewise transformed into glorified maternity.<sup>587</sup> In other words, Cupid restores her to beauty but it is not clear as to whether she regains bodily autonomy.

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<sup>585</sup> Heywood, *Love’s Mistress* (1636), G4.

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>587</sup> *Ibid.*, L; L4.

*Love's Mistress* features a woman whose husband punishes her sins with a haggish form and grotesque unnatural pregnancy. She must prove herself worthy to have this curse lifted, however even at the end of the play when Psyche's "leprosy, through labour, is made clear," there is no mention of her pregnancy.<sup>588</sup> One may argue that the aforementioned "labour" represents work done through her trials as well as the work associated with parturition, but I suggest that although Psyche's beauty is restored, her pregnancy remains.<sup>589</sup> The effect of this is that Cupid maintains control over her reproductive body (and, by extension, her sexuality) despite the couple's reconciliation. Just as Queen Anna remains perpetually blackened in *The Masque of Blackness*, suggesting her inability to become incorporated into James's body politic, so too does Psyche remain the perpetually pregnant boy actor whose body echoes the late, unruly Queen. While the prologue for *Love's Mistress* links the Psyche to the royal patroness, Henrietta Maria, Heywood's integration of cosmetic ugliness, pregnancy, and the courtly performance space continues to gesture toward Henrietta Maria's predecessor—Charles I's mother—Queen Anna of Denmark. I attest there exist clear resonances between Queen Anna of Denmark's *The Masque of Blackness* and Heywood's *Love's Mistress*, commissioned by Anna's successor, Henrietta Maria. When read in conjunction, Anna's maternal agency haunts Psyche's "deformed" shape and "wretched womb."<sup>590</sup> Although Anna's pregnancy was authentic rather than prosthetically materialized, both *The Masque of Blackness* and *Love's Mistress* feature the fecund female body that, in a number of ways, transgresses its own boundaries. Both Anna-as-masquer and Psyche-as-boy-actor possess blemished skin, one through exercise of artistic agency

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<sup>588</sup> *Ibid.*, L3.

<sup>589</sup> While there exist three separate references to Psyche's restored beauty, there is no such explicit reference to relieving from her "heavy burden" nor is there a mention of a newborn child. There is, however, a call to retire "unto plenty's bower,/Where Ceres, Queen of Fertility,/Invites us with the other gods to feast" imagery which calls to mind the "fruitful bounty" of a desired pregnancy (5.3.101-03).

<sup>590</sup> Heywood, *Love's Mistress*, (1636), G2; G4.

and the other through fictional patriarchal punishment. While Queen Anna of Denmark used her forced miscarriage to wield maternal authority in 1603, and her pregnancy as a performance contrivance in 1605's *The Masque of Blackness*, Psyche's "condition" proves to be a patriarchal tool of subjugation and surveillance in Heywood's 1634 masque. Whereas Anna used her pregnancy to control a troublesome king, Cupid appropriates pregnancy in order to control a disobedient wife. While I interpret Anna's performance as an act of resistance to James's patriarchal power, Psyche is subject to her god-husband's will and whims. Consequently, I argue that *Love's Mistress* reveals how Queen Anna of Denmark's pregnant performance continued to influence the production of pregnancy on early modern stages thirty years after *The Masque of Blackness's* premiere at Whitehall Palace in 1605.

*The Masque of Blackness* and *Love's Mistress* bookend the patricentric, prosthetic, and peripheral pregnancy plays analyzed throughout this study. In chapter two, I analyzed the patricentric histories, tragedies, and romances, while chapters three and four show that peripheral and prosthetic pregnancy plays are in conversation with one another through the ways they engage the visibility and importance of the belly, as well as the dramaturgical employment of pregnant characters. Similarly, the resonances between Anna's blackface pregnant performance in *The Masque of Blackness*, Psyche's blackened performance of pregnancy in the royally sponsored *Love's Mistress*, and the spectacular performances by the pregnant Cupid in *The Nice Valour* reveals yet another a through-line in the staging of pregnancy plays: pregnancy as spectacle and pageantry. Together, all of this suggests that these playwrights—Shakespeare, Jonson, Webster, Middleton, Heywood, and the Rowleys alike—were not uncannily producing work that was in some kind of mysterious communion with one another but, rather, that they were well aware of their participation in a popular theatrical staging convention.

Throughout this study, I establish pregnancy plays as a discrete subgenre of early modern drama through a dramaturgical analysis of pregnancies and gestating characters in twenty-two extant plays. In the process, I have spent a significant amount of time considering the material reality of staging pregnancy on boy actors' bodies, as well as the role the "great belly" plays in the Stuart theatre's *mise en scène*. These plays, which have never been considered as a distinct subgenre before, gesture to a blind spot in scholarship that has emerged in the dual shadow cast by Queen Elizabeth and King James's respective influence on London's theatrical culture. Now that these plays are in conversation with one another, we can begin to fill a major gap in scholarship that ignores the rich and abundant presence of prenatal motherhood on Stuart stages, and further interrogate how Queen Anna of Denmark heavily influenced dramatic literature and performance practices. The temptation to accept the overly neat narrative of the shift from a strong matriarch to a would-be absolutist patriarch has proven too strong for contemporary critics, who overlook how Anna's political maternity and popular drama intertwine in complex ways. However, my close examination of pregnancy plays as a viable subgenre on the Stuart stage, as well as their (at times) explicit connection to the first childbearing Queen in two generations, troubles this binary categorization from maternal to paternal—from strictly matriarchal to strictly patriarchal. In other words, "Great Bellies and Boy Actors" challenges ideas of "Elizabethan" and "Jacobean" as categories of early modern dramatic literature. In the Epilogue that follows, I return to the question original posed in the Prologue: how are the tensions between the boy actor's body and the pregnant character reconciled in performance, if at all? Finally, I examine avenues for further research with respect to performances of pregnancy—and, crucially—pregnant performance with the arrival of "the first English actresses" in 1660.<sup>591</sup>

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<sup>591</sup> Here I borrow the title of Elizabeth Howe's now-canonical study, *The First English Actresses: Women and*

## EPILOGUE

### Imagination and Contest: Conceiving the Pregnant Actress

To conclude this study, I return to the question posed in the Prologue: What did Atlanta show to Diana? What does the audience see? What did it look like to see a boy actor, costumed and painted as a woman, display a great belly? Considering these cushions—these “protuberances that produce nothing”—I return to the curious revelation of Calisto’s pregnancy in Heywood’s *The Golden Age*.<sup>592</sup> We know from Homer’s narration it has been eight months since Calisto first encountered Jupiter and become pregnant; presently she “grows great” with “Jove’s issue.”<sup>593</sup> The text carefully directs the audience to pay particular attention to the visible proof of that which Calisto has secreted away for eight months. Homer, setting the scene for the audience, asks us to “note how she would hide/ That which time found, and great Diana spied.”<sup>594</sup> So what *did* the audience spy when Diana’s nymph undresses Calisto—when Atlanta “finds her great belly” and “shows it to Diana”?<sup>595</sup> I argue the word “show” is important here as it suggests Atlanta not only displays Calisto’s belly to Diana, but to the audience as well. The text intimates that Atlanta exposes Calisto’s secret through a dramatic, sartorial reveal wherein the audience and Diana witness the physical evidence of Calisto’s transgression together. The textual emphasis on discovering and exposing Calisto’s belly suggests the audience bears witness to uncovering the advanced pregnancy. In Webster’s *Duchess of Malfi*, Middleton’s *More Dissemblers Besides Women*, or Jonson’s *The Magnetic Lady*, the plays’ characters learn of a hidden pregnancy because the secret must eventually come out: the child must emerge from the mother’s womb. Even in *The Heir*, wherein Luce falsifies her own pregnancy, Francisco must

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*Drama, 1660-1700.*

<sup>592</sup> Davies and Halliwell-Phillips, 167

<sup>593</sup> Heywood, Thomas. *The Golden Age*. London, 1611. 3.1.E3.

<sup>594</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>595</sup> Heywood, *The Golden Age*, E3.

deliver the material truth of Luce's swelling: a cushion. The act of removing what creates the "great belly" (i.e. the fetus-cushion) proves the belly's existence. However, in the case of Heywood's *The Golden Age*, it is not birth or the meta-theatrical revelation of a prosthetic that reveals Calisto's hidden pregnancy, but the visibility of the materialized belly alone.

While Calisto's distended belly indicates the character's fertility, it also signifies an impossible reality: the pregnant boy. In Heywood's strip-scene from *The Golden Age*, the cushion-cum-belly simultaneously creates and dismantles the boy actor's feminine identity. In what may appear to be a straightforward scene, this moment from *The Golden Age* demonstrates the complexity of materializing great bellies on the bodies of boy actors for the all-male English stage, while gesturing toward the titillation associated with surveilling and revealing the pregnant body.

Through my extensive analysis of pregnancy plays and the material reality of boy actors performing pregnant bodies on early Stuart stages, I conclude that the now-apparent fascination with staging gravid bodies suggests a broader cultural interest in exploring the many variations and fluctuations in the female body via performance. However, in the pre-Restoration theatre, players and playwrights perform these transgressive, opaque, and unwieldy bodies without any of the risks offered by actual pregnant women on stage, outside of Queen Anna in *The Masque of Blackness*. The presence of the boy actor's body underneath the great belly—sometimes theatrically or linguistically exposed by the playwright—assures audiences against the imagined threat of the transgressive, opaque feminine form. However, this fantasy is short-lived. In only a few years after Heywood premieres *Love's Mistress* for the reigning Stuart couple, Charles I's opposition will chase him from the throne and execute him, thereby ending the Stuart reign until 1660 when Charles II is welcomed back from his French exile. With the arrival of Charles II and

the Restoration of the Stuart crown come new expectations for the theatre. For the first time in English history, a monarch will invite women actors to tread the boards of London's playhouses, bringing with them new, rich possibilities for the performance of pregnancy, and perhaps, pregnant performances.

To borrow a phrase from Chelsea Phillips, when “actresses replace boy actors after the Interregnum [...] the lines between fiction and reality in representations of pregnancy began to blur, for the female body contained the potential to be pregnant in actuality.”<sup>596</sup> This was certainly the case for Sarah Siddons, as Phillips demonstrates in her study of the actress's numerous pregnant performances. In 1785 and 1794, Sarah Siddons—perhaps the most famous actress of eighteenth-century England—performed the role of Lady Macbeth while in an advanced stage of pregnancy.<sup>597</sup> In Chelsea Phillips's examination of these performances, she shows that Siddons “not only frequently performed while visibly pregnant, but also consciously used her maternity to establish a celebrity persona,” as Phillips reveals how Siddons's roles “often invited audiences to conflate actor and character,” perhaps eliciting a surprising amount of sympathy for the “unsexed” and murderous Lady Macbeth.<sup>598</sup> Likewise, Phillips's 2015 dissertation out of Ohio State University, “‘Carrying All Before Her’: Pregnancy and Performance on the British Stage in the Long Eighteenth Century, 1689-1807,” is a recovery project of eighteenth-century celebrity actresses, Siddons, Dorothy Jordan, Anne Oldfield, Susannah Cibber, George Anne Bellamy, and numerous others, who performed while pregnant. Phillips reveals that these pregnant performances, rather than hindering the actress' respective careers, as the accepted historiographical narrative might suggest, actually increased the

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<sup>596</sup> Phillips, “I Have Given Suck,” 21.

<sup>597</sup> See: *Ibid.*, 19-25.

<sup>598</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-2.

performers' demand on popular English stages. However, as Phillips explains, these eighteenth-century actresses were trying to combat the stereotypes that linked actresses with prostitutes in the cultural imagination throughout the Restoration.<sup>599</sup>

So, the question remains: did famous Restoration actresses like Anne Bracegirdle, Elizabeth Barry, or even Nell Gwynn—famously known to have conceived and delivered an illegitimate child by Charles II—perform on stage while pregnant? Did audiences read the actress's body as perpetually potentially pregnant? What is the status of the pregnancy play in Restoration theatre given what we know of *Love's Mistress* repeated performances after 1660?<sup>600</sup> Finally, in what ways did Restoration playwrights compose new works for actresses that might allude to, feature, or hide an actress's pregnancy? There is still much work to be done with respect to the reproductive lives of Restoration actresses, although Laura Engel and Elaine M. McGirr's 2014 collection, *Stage Mothers: Women, Work, and the Theater, 1660-1830* provides a solid foundation on which to build.

Engel and McGirr's collection of essays focuses on “the representation of motherhood as the defining female role; the interplay between an actress's celebrity persona and her chosen roles; [...] and tensions between sex and maternity and/or maternity and public authority.”<sup>601</sup> In other words, the authors featured in Engel and McGirr's book analyze the multiplicity of meanings offered by the maternal body—especially the *performing* maternal body—because, as they reveal, “the idea of motherhood and its connection to the theater as a professional, material,

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<sup>599</sup> Phillips, “Carrying All Before Her’: Pregnancy and Performance on the British Stage in the Long Eighteenth Century, 1689-1807,” 2015.

<sup>600</sup> As I briefly mentioned in the last chapter, Samuel Pepys attended no less than five performances of *Love's Mistress* after the Restoration. He recorded seeing the play three times in March 1661, once in 1665, and again in 1668. Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, Vol. 1, pgs. 330, 334, 339; 4: 386; 8: 77.

<sup>601</sup> Engel and McGirr, 1.

literary, and cultural site has received little critical attention.”<sup>602</sup> In so doing, the editors resist the binary distinctions between maternity as the apotheosis of wholesome femininity, and mothers as the “sexualized illegitimate prostitute/whore” of the Restoration stage, by complicating accepted notions of mothers, actresses, and maternal bodies in performance.<sup>603</sup>

Engel and McGirr’s collection looks ahead and aims to “start conversations about the many ways in which motherhood can be a spur to creativity rather than a drag on one’s career,” for scholars, actresses, and artists, alike. Taking the editors up on their “call to action,” I place “Great Bellies and Boy Actors” within a continually developing dialogue of work that analyzes the possibilities of meaning wrought by the (actual) performing pregnant body, as well as performances of gestation, including the “extratextual pregnancies” sometimes found in contemporary productions of Shakespeare’s work.<sup>604</sup> By “extratextual pregnancies,” I refer to those pregnancies—actual or prosthetically materialized—that are not written into the play, but perhaps change, alter, or enrich the way in which that character is read by the audience in performance.<sup>605</sup> For example, in Punchdrunk’s *Sleep No More* (an adaptation of *Macbeth*), Lady Macduff is heavily pregnant. While Shakespeare does not write Lady Macduff as a pregnant character, her gestating body is a useful foil to Lady Macbeth’s anti-maternal, unsexed figure, while also heightening the stakes of the moment wherein Macduff discovers his wife’s lifeless, gravid body.

I likewise place my work into conversation with the many emerging studies of contemporary pregnant performances and performative pregnancy, especially as they relate to expectations and burdens put upon the maternal body in popular culture. For example, in Ann C.

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<sup>602</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>603</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>604</sup> See Phillips, 25-6, for further examples of these “extratextual pregnancies.”

<sup>605</sup> See Phillips, “I Have Given Suck,” for an analysis of the multivalent meanings of Sarah Siddons pregnant performances of *Lady Macbeth* (25-9).

Hall and Mardia J. Bishop's 2009, *Mommy Angst*, the collected essays wrestle with perceptions of motherhood in popular culture through a variety of lenses including: adoption, bioethics, and the pressures of perfecting the post-partum body via "mommy lifts," as well as representations of motherhood in politics, film and television. Specifically, Katherine N. Kinnick's "Media Morality Tales and the Politics of Motherhood" argues, "studies of entertainment and news content shows us that media portrayals [of motherhood] matter."<sup>606</sup> While Kinnick speaks specifically about twentieth-century media and television, I wonder if we might take the author's supposition that "media portrayals matter" to re-examine the major trends in these pregnancy plays, and query what these seventeenth-century "pop culture" representations of pregnancy reflect about or inspired in early modern audiences? If mediated representations of maternity reflect and shape societal values, as Kinnick argues, might we—at the risk of implementing an anachronistic or transhistorical methodology—make the same supposition about early modern drama and pregnancy plays? I suggest this question is worthy of extended consideration, perhaps through an analysis of pregnancy plays in relation to other popular media, such as conduct books and broadside ballads.

In addition to Hall and Bishop's collection, Kelly Oliver's 2012 monograph focuses more precisely on representations and portrayals of pregnancy through twentieth-century film.<sup>607</sup> Her study asks how, in "just a couple of decades [...] did we go from abject pregnancy to pregnant glam, from pregnancy as shameful to pregnancy as sexy?"<sup>608</sup> Her book aims to get at the multivalent answers to this question through an analysis of pregnancy in Hollywood film. She does so "to diagnose the ways in which these images open up now possibilities for conceiving of

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<sup>606</sup> Kinnick, 1.

<sup>607</sup> A portion of Oliver's book appears as a stand-alone essay in Sara LaChance Adams and Caroline Lundquist's 2013 collection *Coming to Life: Philosophies of Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Mothering*. See: Oliver's "Knock Me Up, Knock Me Down" in Adams and Lundquist, 241-62.

<sup>608</sup> Oliver, *Knock Me Up*, 2.

pregnancy [...] but also continue to reinforce old stereotypes and restrictions on women.”<sup>609</sup> Specifically, Oliver challenges recent “positive and desirable images of pregnant women” by reading them as mere repetitions of “traditional ideals about abject maternal bodies, conventional notions of family values, familiar anxieties over women’s role in reproduction, and fears of miscegenation.”<sup>610</sup> Here I am perhaps most struck by the similarities between the trends analyzed by Oliver in her study of twentieth-century film, and those I locate throughout Queen Anna’s *Masque of Blackness* performance, as well as chapter two’s patricentric pregnancy plays. What might these commonalities suggest about patriarchal anxiety over maternal bodies as represented in Western entertainment culture?

Finally, I place my work into conversation with Renée Ann Cramer’s 2016 monograph, *Pregnant With the Stars*. In this study, the author suggests that our cultural obsession and surveillance of “celebrity baby bumps” is an “indicator of rapidly changing contemporary understandings of pregnancy in the United States and a lens through which we can interpret a complex set of social and legal regulations of pregnant women and their bodies.”<sup>611</sup> While Cramer’s study is decidedly outside the scope of performance studies and theatre history, she argues that the voracity with which we devour celebrity culture and images of the telltale “bump,” places us in a unique cultural moment wherein celebrity pregnancy becomes a commodified and consumable good. Nevertheless, these surveillance practices were just as common—though alternatively mediatised—for England’s eighteenth-century actresses, as revealed by Phillips, as well as Engel and McGirr.<sup>612</sup> I do not want to imply that contemporary

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<sup>609</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>610</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>611</sup> Cramer, 2.

<sup>612</sup> For further discussion of celebrity culture during the Restoration and long eighteenth century, see: Engel and McGirr’s *Stage Mothers*; Phillips, “I Have Given Suck” and “*Carrying All Before Her: Pregnancy and Performance on the British Stage in the Long Eighteenth Century, 1689-1807.*”

representations of gestation in film, or the contemporary surveillance of celebrity pregnancy in popular culture, are equivalent to pregnant actresses in the eighteenth century, let alone performances of pregnancy by boy actors in seventeenth-century London. Nevertheless, I do want to suggest these seemingly disparate socio-historical moments are connected via the performing pregnant body and performances of pregnancy.

Clearly, there remains much work to do with respect to the pregnancy plays analyzed throughout this study (and those of which I am perhaps unaware). While my analysis reveals that pregnancy plays exist within as an established, popular theatrical convention on early Stuart stages, what remains to be seen is the relationship between these pregnancy plays and popular English understandings of the pregnant body. Furthermore, the correlation between the “baby boom” of pregnancy plays on seventeenth-century stages, and the patronage of performing, childbearing royal Queens is deserving of extended critical analysis, especially as it relates to the presence of the boy body beneath the great belly. The boy actor’s pregnant body is, I suggest, a potent “site of imagination and contest,” to borrow a phrase from Moncrief and McPherson.<sup>613</sup> It is my hope that this study spurs curiosity and further questions with respect to the “how” and “why” of the emergence of pregnancy plays on Stuart stages.

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<sup>613</sup> Moncrief and McPherson, 1.

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## APPENDIX A

Extant Pregnancy Plays Discussed in this Study  
Organized in Approximate Chronological Order

<u>Title</u>	<u>Playwright</u>	<u>Approx. Year of First Performance</u>
<i>Measure for Measure</i>	William Shakespeare	1604
<i>When You See Me, You Know Me</i>	Samuel Rowley	1604
<i>The Masque of Blackness</i>	Ben Jonson	1605
<i>All's Well that Ends Well</i>	William Shakespeare	c. 1606
<i>Pericles, Prince of Tyre</i>	William Shakespeare	1607/08
<i>The Golden Age</i>	Thomas Heywood	c. 1610
<i>The Winter's Tale</i>	William Shakespeare	c. 1611
<i>No Wit/No Help Like a Woman's</i>	Thomas Middleton	1611
<i>A Chaste Maid in Cheapside</i>	Thomas Middleton	1613
<i>Henry VIII, or All is True</i>	William Shakespeare and John Fletcher	1614
<i>The Duchess of Malfi</i>	John Webster	c. 1614
<i>The Witch</i>	Thomas Middleton	c. 1616
<i>A Fair Quarrel</i>	Thomas Middleton and William Rowley	c. 1617
<i>Devil's Law-Case, or When Women Go to Law the Devil is Full of Business</i>	John Webster	c. 1619
<i>More Dissemblers Besides Women</i>	Thomas Middleton	c. 1619
<i>The Heir</i>	Thomas May	1620
<i>The Birth of Merlin, or the Child Hath Found His Father</i>	William Rowley	c. 1620
<i>The Nice Valour, or the Passionate Madman</i>	Thomas Middleton	1622
<i>'Tis Pity She's a Whore</i>	John Ford	c. 1630
<i>The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled</i>	Ben Jonson	1632
<i>A Maidenhead Well Lost</i>	Thomas Heywood	c. 1634
<i>Love's Mistress, or the Queen's Masque</i>	Thomas Heywood	1634

**APPENDIX B**  
 Lexicon of Common Allusions and References to Pregnancy  
 in Early Modern Pregnancy Plays

<b>KEY</b>		
<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Play</b>	<b>Playwright</b>
AW	<i>All's Well that Ends Well</i>	Shakespeare
CHASTE	<i>A Chaste Maid in Cheapside</i>	Middleton
DISS	<i>More Dissemblers Besides Women</i>	Middleton
DLC	<i>The Devil's Law-Case</i>	Webster
DUCH	<i>The Duchess of Malfi</i>	Webster
FQ	<i>A Fair Quarrel</i>	Middleton and W. Rowley
GOLD	<i>The Golden Age</i>	Heywood
HEIR	<i>The Heir</i>	May
H8	<i>Henry VIII</i>	Shakespeare and Fletcher
MIST	<i>Love's Mistress</i>	Heywood
ML	<i>The Magnetic Lady</i>	Jonson
MWL	<i>A Maidenhead Well Lost</i>	Heywood
M4M	<i>Measure for Measure</i>	Shakespeare
MERLIN	<i>The Birth of Merlin</i>	W. Rowley
NICE	<i>The Nice Valour</i>	Middleton
NWNH	<i>No Wit/No Help Like a Woman's</i>	Middleton
PER	<i>Pericles</i>	Shakespeare
PITY	<i>'Tis Pity She's a Whore</i>	Ford
WYSM	<i>When You See Me, You Know Me</i>	S. Rowley
WT	<i>The Winter's Tale</i>	Shakespeare
WITCH	<i>The Witch</i>	Middleton

**Belly (see also: great belly)**

- “swell up a glass to the fashion of a woman’s belly.” (DUCH, 2.2.10-1)
- “young springal cutting a caper in her belly.” (DUCH, 2.1.155)
- “to save your belly harmless.” (NWNH, scene 8, line 86)
- “you may see by my sister’s belly.” (MERLIN, 3.1 pg 98)
- “You are not hungry, for your belly’s full.” (MWL, 2.2, 118)
- “Your belly-sports?” (PITY, 4.3.12)

## Big

- “when she grows big/ Those masculine hose will shortly prove too little.”  
(DISS, 3.1.23-4)
- “Her shame grows big, brother.” (NICE, 5.1.5)
- “see how big she looks.” (MIST, 4.1.78)
- “She looks very big.” (WYSM, 1.2)

## Blown

- “Puffed, blown, and’t please your worship.” (ML, 2.3.8)

## Carry

- “Repent you, fair one, of the sin you carry?” (M4M, 2.3.20)

## Cushion

- “Make to your petticoat a quilted preface/ To advance your belly.” (DLC, 3.3.191-2)
- “Cushion come forth.” (HEIR, 5.1, pg 153)
- *He flings the cushion at him.* (HEIR, 5.1, pg 153)

## Delivery

- “That wish comes too late,/ For I too soon fear my delivery.” (FQ, 1.1.193-4)
- “I fear my own, wish thy deliverance.” (FQ, 1.1.391)

## Fat

- “She...waxes fat i’t h’ flank.” (DUCH, 2.1.69).
- “Antonio—do I not grow fat?” (DUCH, 2.1.112)

## Fruit/Fruitfulness

- “As those that feed grow full, as blossoming time/ That from the seedness the bare fallow  
brings/ To teeming foison.” (M4M, 1.4.40-2)
- “The fatal fruit thou bear’st within they womb.” (MERLIN, 3.1 pg 100)
- “Yes, and this the happy fruit.” (MERLIN, 3.4 pg 106)
- “hapless fruit” (PITY, 5.5.95)
- “ploughed up/ Her fruitful womb.” (PITY, 5.6.30-1)
- “For her too fruitful womb too soon bewrayed/ The happy passage of our stolen delights”  
(PITY, 5.6.47-8)
- “’twas my luck, at the first hour, forsooth,/ To prove too fruitful.” (WITCH, 2.1.39-40)
- “Like good September vines, loaden with fruit.” (WYSM, 1.2)

## Full

- “Methinks she shows gallantly,/ Like a moon at full” (CHASTE, 1.2.133)
- “As those that feed grow full.” (M4M, 1.4.40)
- “You are not hungry, for your belly’s full.” (MWL, 2.2, pg 118)

## Great

- “My wife’s as great as she can wallow.” (CHASTE, 1.2.6)
- “when she was great with child” (DUCH, 2.1.116)
- “Eight moons are fill’d and waned, when she grows great.” (GOLD, 3.1, pg 36)
- “Shall find her great with child by another man.” (HEIR, 1.1, pg 107)
- *Enter Clown, and his Sister great with child.* (MERLIN, 2.1 pg 79)
- “what with childe, great with childe.” (MERLIN, 2.1. pg 79)
- “I should have had a great belly too” (MERLIN, 2.1 pg 82)
- “great with child of fear.” (MIST, 3.1.75)
- “What a great breadth she bears.” (MIST, 4.1.79)

## Great Belly (see also: belly, great)

- “practice/ The art of a great-bellied woman.” (DLC, 3.3185-6)
- *Enter Jolenta, and Angiolella great-bellied.* (DLC, 5.1)
- “Ercole’s coming to life again has shrunk/And made invisible my great belly.”  
(DLC, 5.1.17-18)
- *Atlanta...finds her great belly.* (GOLD, 3.1, pg 36)
- “Great-bellied women” (H8, 4.1.78)
- “and being great-bellied.” (M4M, 2.1.91)
- “I should have had a great belly too” (MERLIN, 2.1 pg 82)
- “Is your great belly gone?” (MERLIN, 3.4 pg 106)
- “Methinks a woman/ Becomes no ornaments she wears so well/As a great belly.”  
(MIST, 4.1.79-81)
- “be more merciful/ For her great-belly’s sake.” (MIST, 4.1.193)
- “This’ the worst fright that could come/ To a concealed great belly.” (WITCH, 1.1.133-4)

## Gravid

- *Enter...Luce gravida.* (HEIR [1622], B4).

### **Groan**

- “What shall be done, sir, with the groaning Juliet?” (M4M, 2.2.15)
- “How now, Jane? What, groaning?” (WYSM, 1.2)

### **Gross**

- “The stealth of our most mutual entertainment/ With character too gross is writ on Juliet.”  
(M4M, 1.2.132)

### **Heavy**

- “Made lightsome e’en by him/ That made me heavy.” (CHASTE, 1.2.132)
- “Methinks she bears her burden very heavily.” (WYSM, 1.2)

### **Leavened**

- “The gentlewoman, I do fear, is leavened.” (ML, 2.3.6)

### **Quick**

- “So there’s my riddle; one that’s dead is quick” (AW, 5.3.300)
- “full two months quicken’d with child.” (DLC, 3.3.50)
- “Say friend, are you quick with child?” (DLC, 5.1.10)
- “How could you know/ Of your first child when you quicken’d?” (DLC, 5.1.12-3)
- “gave at first/ Large approbation to the quick conceit,/ Which then was quick indeed.”  
(NICE, 3.1.14-16)
- “Dead? No, she is quick.” (PITY, 3.2.8)
- “but commonly we prove/ Quicker mothers than you that have husbands.”  
(WITCH, 2.1.107-8)

### **Rise**

- “All this while/ She’s risse with a son’s.” (NWNH, scene 8, line 91)

### **Round**

- “she’s a tumbler, i’ faith; the nose and belly meets.” (CHASTE, 1.2.71)
- “The Queen your mother rounds apace” (WT, 2.1.16)

### **Shame**

- “Her shame grows big, brother.” (NICE, 5.1.5)
- “I do and bear the shame most patiently.” (M4M, 2.3.21)

## Spread

- “like a clew she spreads.” (MERLIN, 2.1 pg 82)
- “She is spread of late into a goodly bulk.” (WT, 2.1.19-20)

## Swell

- “swell up a glass to the fashion of a woman’s belly” (DUCH, 2.2.10-1)
- “She’s with child indeed, it swells.” (HEIR, 1.1, pg 109)
- “She swells and swells so with it—” (ML, 2.3.12)
- “pride is a kind of swelling./ And yet I’ve small cause to be proud of mine.”  
(WITCH, 2.1.101-2)

## Time

- “She’s very near her hour.” (M4M, 2.2.16)
- “Sure I’m near my time.” (WITCH, 2.1.40).

## With Child

- “And at that time he got his wife with child.” (AW, 5.3.298)
- “He has got a nun with child.” (DLC, 2.4.41)
- “I have got this nun with child.” (DLC, 3.3.46)
- “I am with child already.” (DLC, 3.3.67)
- “I fear sir, I’m with child”. (DISS, 1.2.143)
- “The boy’s with child!” (DISS, 5.2.223)
- “I am with child.” (FQ, 2.2.75)
- “Shall find her great with child by another man.” (HEIR, 1.1 pg 107)
- “Why, father is she with child?” (HEIR, 1.1, pg 108)
- “She’s with child indeed, it swells.” (HEIR, 1.1, pg 109)
- “He hath got his friend with child.” (M4M, 1.4.29)
- “Sir, she came in great with child.” (M4M, 2.1.82)
- “Mistress Elbow, being, as I say, with child.” (M4M, 2.1.90-1)
- “Whom he begot with child.” (M4M, 5.1.505)
- *Enter Clown, and his Sister great with child.* (MERLIN, 2.1 pg 79)
- “what with childe, great with childe.” (MERLIN, 2.1 pg 79)
- “did his Oathes get you with Childe” (MERLIN, 2.1 pg 79)
- “to have a sister got with childe, and know not who did it.” (MERLIN 2.1 pg 81)

- “The stream of the argument threatened her being with child from the very beginning”  
(ML, 3.chorus.6-7)
- “great with child of fear”— (MIST, 3.1.75)
- *Then enter Thaisa with child.* (PER, scene 10)
- “She is with child.” (PITY, 3.2.8-9)
- “Why, art thou not with child?” (PITY, 4.3.26)
- “I’m with child.” (WITCH, 1.1.134)
- “Were I conceived with child.” (WITCH, 2.1.99)

### **Womb**

- “And young Jove’s issue in her womb doth spring.” (GOLD, 3.1 pg 36)
- “my lady’s womb.” (H8, 2.4.185)
- “even so her plenteous womb/ Expresseth his full tilth and husbandry.” (M4M, 1.4.42-3)
- “The fatal fruit thou bear’st within they womb.” (MERLIN, 3.1 pg 100)
- “And this rich burden in my wretched womb.” (MIST, 3.2.253)
- “faint and weary/ with bearing this poor burden in my womb.” (MIST, 5.1.71-2)
- “I am strumpeted,/ A bastard issue grows within my womb.” (MWL, 2.2, pg 119)
- “thy corrupted bastard-bearing womb” (PITY, 4.3.14)