

Performing Blackface Pregnancy at the Stuart Court: *The Masque of Blackness and Love's Mistress, or the Queen's Masque*

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On January 6, 1605, Queen Anna of Denmark—wife to King James I—danced in Ben Jonson's *The Masque of Blackness*. Against contemporary courtly conventions, the queen used cosmetics to paint her skin in order to play a “Black-more.”¹ The fact of Anna's temporary blackness has been amply discussed: what has not been sufficiently considered is that Anna was also six months pregnant with Princess Mary, the first royal child born in England since 1537.² This essay compares Queen Anna's pregnant performance in *The Masque of Blackness* and Thomas Heywood's 1634 *Love's Mistress*. I argue Heywood's *Love's Mistress*—featuring a blackened and heavily pregnant Psyche—evokes Anna's performance in *The Masque of Blackness*, wherein England's first childbearing queen in two generations danced in blackface while visibly pregnant. In so doing, I explore how Anna wielded her reproductive body as a weapon in Stuart court politics, thereby recovering the queen's influence on early modern dramaturgy and performances of pregnancy in early seventeenth-century England.

1. Ben Jonson, *The Characters of Two Royall Masques: The One of Blacknesse, the Other of Beautie* (London, 1608), A3. Leeds 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.” Following Barroll, I refer to the queen consort as Anna instead of Anne aside from direct quotations. Leeds Barroll, *Anna of Denmark, Queen of England: A Cultural Biography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 173 n. 1.

2. Before Anna, Jane Seymour was the last English queen to give birth when she delivered Edward VI in 1537.

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 turn toward “repatriation,” or the “conservative reestablishment of the father as the linchpin of society, burying the mother” in Stuart drama.³ 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.”⁴ While instances of maternal erasure certainly are prevalent throughout the early modern canon of dramatic literature, prenatal motherhood on Stuart stages is equally present.

From the time James took the throne in 1603 until Charles’s overthrow in 1642, maternal bodies became a major source of dramatic spectacle on public, private, and court stages. While many playwrights appealed to James’s interest in absolute patriarchal rule, as Suzanne Penuel suggests, I argue Queen Anna of Denmark’s presence in court likewise prompted depictions of pregnant characters, thereby challenging predominant notions regarding the nonmaternal Stuart stage. Approximately twenty-two pregnancy plays written between 1603 and 1642 survive, the defining characteristic of which is a pregnancy (whether visible or unknown to the audience) or pregnant character that drives the action of a plot in some significant way.⁵ As it is outside the scope of this essay to discuss all of these plays, I focus on two: Ben Jonson’s *The Masque of Blackness*, commissioned by Queen Anna of Denmark for the 1605 Twelfth Night festivities, and *Love’s Mistress, or the Queen’s Masque* by Thomas Heywood, brought to court by Queen Henrietta Maria to celebrate Charles I’s 1634 birthday. I argue that *Love’s Mistress* evokes Queen Anna’s political participation through her court performance career—specifically, *The Masque of Blackness*.

3. Suzanne Penuel, “Male Mothering and *The Tempest*,” in *Performing Maternity in Early Modern England*, ed. Kathryn M. Moncrief and Kathryn R. McPherson (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 115–27, at 115.

4. Coppélia Kahn, “The Absent Mother in *King Lear*,” in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference*, ed. Margaret Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy Vickers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 35–36; Mary Beth Rose’s essay “Where Are the Mothers in Shakespeare?” precludes pregnant women from being identified as mothers when she notes that among the playwright’s “romances, tragedies, and ‘problem plays,’ mothers are conspicuously absent.” Rose includes *Measure for Measure* in her account of “motherless” dramas despite Juliet’s pregnancy, which is a crucial component of the play’s structure and central conflict. Mary Beth Rose, “Where Are the Mothers in Shakespeare? Options for Gender Representation in the English Renaissance,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (1991): 291–314, at 292.

5. Some notable pregnancy plays of the period include: Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* (c. 1611), Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* (c. 1614), Jonson’s *The Magnetic Lady* (1632), and Ford’s *‘Tis Pity She’s a Whore* (c. 1630).

Part I details Anna of Denmark's nine-year custody battle for her eldest son while in Scotland, which culminated in a standoff between the queen and the Earl of Mar (Prince Henry's legal guardian), in May 1603. The queen, who was four months pregnant at the time, possibly induced a miscarriage to remain nearby until she gained custody of the new English heir apparent. This abortive moment serves as prologue to Anna's politically charged pregnant performance in *The Masque of Blackness*.

Part II highlights the ways in which Queen Anna made her gestational body hypervisible within Jonson's 1605 court masque. Working from the assumption 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," as Martin Butler aptly suggests, I examine how Anna made her pregnant body highly visible in *Blackness* to make space for her political influence in the newly minted English Stuart court.⁶ For the purposes of this study, I define "political," or "political action," to be any behavior—subversive or overt—that participates in, resists, or comments upon the present ruling government. While Butler acknowledges the political nature of court masques, noting that these performances were indeed "an important point of contact between the crown and its political class," he nevertheless 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.⁷ Butler argues 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."⁸ 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 Anna's performance efforts, it becomes clear that the queen was indeed an active political agent. Therefore, part II examines Anna's curatorial and performative influence on the spectacle of *Blackness* as a decidedly political action.

Finally, I turn to Heywood's *Love's Mistress, or the Queen's Masque*. In this Caroline masque, commissioned by Queen Henrietta Maria for Charles I's 1634 birthday celebration, Cupid punishes his wife Psyche for her hubris by cursing her with cosmetic blackness and a sudden advanced pregnancy. As a result, *Love's Mistress* simultaneously evokes Anna's performance in *The Masque of Blackness*

6. Martin Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1.

7. Ibid., 1. See also: Barroll, *Anna of Denmark*; Clare McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage: Anna of Denmark and Female Masquing in the Stuart Court (1590–1619)* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Sophie Tomlinson, *Women on Stage in Stuart Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

8. Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque*, 132.

and flips the paradigm wherein the foreign queen asserted her political agency through maternal authority. By putting Heywood's court commission in conversation with Jonson's, I argue that Queen Anna's pregnant performance and assertion of maternal authority lived on in the cultural imagination of the Stuart theater, even thirty years after *The Masque of Blackness* and fifteen years after Anna's death. In so doing, this study establishes a genealogy of responses to Queen Anna of Denmark's assertions of political power through maternal authority.

I. A PROLOGUE TO *THE MASQUE OF BLACKNESS*

On February 19, 1594, King James VI of Scotland and Queen Anna of Denmark welcomed their first child into the world. 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.⁹ Displeased with this custom, the queen sought custody of her firstborn for nine years without success, and continued to press the issue despite James's rebuffs. In May 1595, Anna raised a faction against the king to support her claim to the prince. While the couple dropped the issue-at-hand several weeks later, an August report to Robert Cecil nevertheless noted Scotland remained "now constantly divided into two factions, one for the King and another for the Queen."¹⁰ When Queen Elizabeth I died nine years later in March 1603, James became her successor. He left for England in April, and his family was to follow in due course. On May 4, 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 prince and turned the queen away.¹¹ 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 ascension to the English monarchy; they feared Anna's behavior would publicly exhibit the unresolved conflict between the royal couple brewing for the last nine years.¹²

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. The timing of Anna's pregnancy was indeed auspicious, as she would arrive as the literal

9. 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." Barroll, *Anna of Denmark*, 20.

10. Quoted in Barroll, *Anna of Denmark*, 24.

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

12. Ibid., 22–41.

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 May 10, 1603, a week after the standoff began, Scottish historian David Calderwood reported in a public statement that Queen Anna "went to bed in anger and parted with child."¹³ However, on May 18 the Venetian ambassador reported in a private—and, therefore 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."¹⁴ Likewise, John Spottiswood reports 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."¹⁵ Following Anna's (possibly induced) miscarriage, she refused to travel until she gained custody of Henry. The king relieved Mar from his duty as royal guardian. On June 1, 1603, Anna and Henry set sail for England together.

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 the Calderwood public announcement is much less direct, suggests that those close to the action's center understood her miscarriage as intentionally abortive. Even if it is not true—even if Anna's miscarriage really was a result of the stress she suffered while trying to gain possession of her eldest son—it is telling that the Venetian ambassador would assume Anna capable of ending her own pregnancy through brute force. Furthermore, the fact that a Scottish historian in a separate (decidedly more public) document corroborated this event suggests there may be some truth to the report. It would seem that those around the queen understood her to be a strong—perhaps ruthless—political force, evinced by her previous faction-raising in the Scottish Stuart court and attempts to secure access to her eldest son.¹⁶ What's

13. David Calderwood, *The History of the Kirk of Scotland*, 7 vols., ed. Rev. Thomas Tomson (Edinburgh, 1842–49), 6:23.

14. Horatio Brown, ed., *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Relating to English Affairs, existing in the archives and collections of Venice and in other libraries of northern Italy*, 38 vols. (London, 1864–1947), 10:40.

15. Spottiswood notes in his *History of the Church of Scotland* that he had just become 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 (i.e., Stirling), "of mind to bring away the Prince her Son, and carry him along with her self to England." This suggests that Spottiswood, if he was not in Stirling with the queen, was near enough to receive reports of the queen's behavior. John Spottiswood, *The history of the Church of Scotland: beginning the year of our Lord 203, and continued to the end of the reign of King James VI*, 3rd ed. (London, 1668), 477.

16. See Barroll, *Anna of Denmark*, 14–35.

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 endeavors had been used to persuade the public, that his death was only feigned."¹⁷ Sully's report suggests that the queen not only brought her prize, but also the weapon she used to win custody of the English heir apparent. If Sully's report is accurate, it 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. Moreover, even if Sully's report is mere gossip, the report suggests those surrounding Anna understood her as more than willing to hold her own maternal body—and its contents—hostage for the sake of gaining access to Henry.¹⁸ 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 induced miscarriage and preceding factional activities threatened to overshadow James's ascension to the English throne. Consequently, James relinquished a facet of his patriarchal authority in order to bring Anna to England, thereby smoothing over the event before he took his position as England's new monarch. James—despite imagining himself an absolute ruler over a soon to be united Scotland and England—was obliged to contend with the factional conflicts raised by his—to borrow a phrase from Stephen Orgel—"unmanageable wife."¹⁹ In a continued effort to recover Anna's political agency, I argue that the 1603 conflict is merely one way in which the queen wielded her royal 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. While Anna spent quite a bit of time in Scotland carving out her own peerage factions, upon her arrival in England her participation in court politics took a decidedly performative turn.

II. PAINTED PREGNANT PERFORMANCE IN *THE MASQUE OF BLACKNESS*

Anna commissioned *The Masque of Blackness* from Ben Jonson to celebrate Twelfth Night, 1605. While *The Masque of Blackness* was neither Anna's first court commission nor her performance debut in England, it was the first collaboration

17. Maximilian de Béthune, duc de Sully, *Memoirs of Maximilian de Bethune, Duke of Sully, Prime Minister of Henry the Great*, 4th ed. (Edinburgh, 1770), 3:116.

18. 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 in London. Barroll, *Anna of Denmark*, 182 n. 63.

19. Stephen Orgel, "Marginal Jonson," in *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*, ed. David Bevington and Peter Holbrook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 144–75, at 146.

between the queen, Jonson, and designer Inigo Jones. *Blackness* remains unique as the first time the queen consort publicly danced in painted blackface; the performance is made even more noteworthy by the fact she was six months pregnant with Princess Mary, her first child since her alleged induced miscarriage two years earlier. 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.²⁰ Nevertheless, the methods whereby the queen used her maternal body as political tool in court performance have largely gone unrecognized by scholars.

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.²¹ As Dudley Carleton notes in his letter to John Chamberlain, those in attendance included the "Spanish and Venetian ambassadors . . . and most of the French about town."²² Clearly, these masques not only entertained,

20. For example, Butler's *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture* (2008) is a comprehensive analysis 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. Throughout his study, Butler spends a great deal of time detailing the relationship between Stuart court masque performances and the surrounding political climate and as such, his work is an expansion upon that of Clare McManus, who takes Anna of Denmark's masquing career as her central object of study in *Women on the Renaissance Stage* (2002). While McManus spends some time discussing Anna's performance of racial difference in *The Masque of Blackness*, this subject is taken up at length by Kim F. Hall, Hardin Aasand, and Mary Floyd-Wilson. See Hardin Aasand, "To blanch an Ethiop, and Revive a Corse": Queen Anne and *The Masque of Blackness*, *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, no. 2 (1992): 271–85; Mary Floyd-Wilson, "Temperature, Temperance, and Racial Difference in Ben Jonson's *The Masque of Blackness*," *English Literary Renaissance* 28, no. 2 (1998): 183–209; Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995). In addition, Andrea Stevens discusses the cosmetic construction of blackface on early modern stages, wherein she takes up Queen Anne as one of her subjects. Andrea Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 88–100. Carol Chillington Rutter looks to Queen Anne's pregnant performance in *The Masque of Blackness* as a possible model for Shakespeare's Cleopatra, but only briefly interrogates the intersection of Anna's pregnancy and blackness. Carol Chillington Rutter, *Enter the Body: Women and Representation on Shakespeare's Stage* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 98. The only scholar who attempts to wrestle with Queen Anne's pregnancy in relation to her blackness at any considerable length is Ann Cline Kelly's formalist analysis of the masque. For Kelly, Anna's pregnancy merely serves as evidence of Jonson's artistry. 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.'" Ann Cline Kelly, "The Challenge of the Impossible: Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness*," *College Language Association Journal* 20 (1977): 341–55, at 344.

21. 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.

22. Dudley Carleton, *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain, 1603–1624*, ed. Maurice Lee Jr. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1972), 68.

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*.²³ As Butler argues, there were many reasons to attend and enjoy a court masque other than the work of the poet—much to Jonson's chagrin, no doubt.²⁴ 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 ignored.”²⁵ It is therefore 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 a symbolic threat to the continuation of the Stuart line, sits at the core of the masque's spectacle. The queen drew public attention to her gestating body in this seemingly straightforward propagandistic display of Jacobean power by becoming a kind of auteur for the 1605 Twelfth Night performance.

Throughout her 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. 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*, was an immediate departure from this loosely established custom.²⁶ It featured 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 (B4). Those of note include Lady Elizabeth Howard and Lady Mary Wroth; the

23. As 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.” Hall, *Things of Darkness*, 133. I discuss *Blackness*'s imperial motivations in more detail below.

24. Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque*, 2–3.

25. Ibid.

26. For this information, I am indebted to Leeds Barroll, who spends a significant amount of time analyzing Anna's selection of women to appear with her in this masque. He ultimately concludes that the women who performed with Anna were there because she, not James, wanted them beside her. See Leeds Barroll, “Inventing the Stuart Court Masque,” in Bevington and Holbrook, *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*, 121–43, at 124–27 and 132–35.

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.²⁷ Given the high profile of the masque's dancers, the boundary separating the performer from the character became blurred easily; 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) fertility (B4). 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 the audience ignore her pregnancy, but instead aimed to 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.

Not only did Anna commission and cast *Blackness*, but she oversaw the staging and design of it as well. Thanks to her collaboration with Inigo Jones, the masque's designer, Anna and her fellow performers wore revealing, diaphanous gowns, which allowed the queen to display her pregnancy while resisting the conventions of standard feminine dress. The women's gowns were of particular note to Sir Dudley Carleton who witnessed the event firsthand. He observed the women's apparel was indeed "rich, but too light and curtizanlike" for ladies of their stature.²⁸ He goes on to assert their "black faces, and hands which were painted

27. Barroll, "Inventing the Stuart Masque," 124–27, 132–35. For further discussion of Anna and James's connections to the Essex circle, see Barroll, *Anna of Denmark*, 47–65.

28. Carleton, *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain*, 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, "Temperature, Temperance, and Racial Difference," 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." Orgel, "Marginal Jonson," 144–75, at 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." Ben Jonson, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 505. Although Carleton found the aesthetic of the masque transgressive and distasteful, the queen and her ladies set a trend for future masques. 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.

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, contrary to popular practices wherein women covered their arms and faces.²⁹ Carleton's commentary illuminates his preoccupation with the ways in which Anna and the other women exhibited their bodies for public consumption. 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. Furthermore, Carleton does not level his criticism at Jones, the designer, but the noblewomen wearing the garments and the 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.

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 pregnant, a result she likely desired given what we know about her oversight in the overall aesthetic of the performance.³⁰ 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 deems it, her "aggressive display of sexuality."³¹ Together with her casting practices and commissioning of the masque, this suggests *Blackness* was not a masque merely provided for Anna by the genius of Jonson and Jones's theatrical innovations, but an event curated by the queen herself.

What was perhaps most striking to Carleton were the women's blackened face and arms, as he notes. Anna, along with the other women 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 (A3). While Carleton seems aghast at Anna's blackness, Orgel reminds us that "Queen Anne's bright idea for a 'masque of blackness' was by 1605 a very old one."³² McManus likewise points out that blackness was a popular motif in the Scottish Stuart court.³³ Therefore, it was not the mere fact of playing a Moor that flouted previous court performance practices, but the queen's manifestation of blackness.

29. Carleton, *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain*, 68.

30. Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, in *The First Folio of Shakespeare: Based on the Folio in the Folger Shakespeare Library Collection*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1996), 2.1; TLN 607.

31. Orgel, "Marginal Jonson," 150.

32. Orgel, *Jonsonian Masque*, 34.

33. McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage*, 74, 81–87.

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.³⁴ 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."³⁵ Questioning the cosmetics Anna and the other women used in order to darken their flesh for *Blackness*, Stevens convincingly reveals that Anna and her women must have used an extremely dark pigment to achieve their blackface effect, perhaps similar to that used in public playhouses.³⁶ Although 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 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.

Due to the cosmetic paint applied directly to skin, the Stuart masque blurred the lines between performer and character, conflating them into a single body. Because paint, rather than fabric, created the illusion, the women could not easily shed their blackness for a climactic, transformative conclusion. Although the nymphs come face to face with the "sun" that possesses the power to wash them white, they 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 women's 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.³⁷ 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

34. See Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574–1642*, 4th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 244–45; Tiffany Stern, *Making Shakespeare: From Page to Stage* (London: Routledge, 2004), 9; Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin*, 88.

35. Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin*, 88.

36. 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." Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin*, 88–93. See Morwenna Carr, "Material/Blackness: Race and Its Material Reconstructions on the Seventeenth-Century English Stage," *Early Theatre* 20, no. 2 (2017): 77–96. Farah Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); Meg Twycross and Sarah Carpenter, *Masks and Masking in Medieval and Early Tudor England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

37. Edmund Sawyer, *Memorial of Affairs of State in the Reigns of Q. Elizabeth and K. James I* (London, 1727), 2:44.

negating her identity as much as asserting it.”³⁸ However, given the 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 notes that “most cosmetic foundations were made of mercury sublimate and ceruse, or white lead.”³⁹ These ingredients were known for their caustic qualities, as noted by Ambroise Paré, who suggests those who use sublimate will suffer from “the devouring and fierie furie of the poison, rending or eating into the guts and the stomacke, as if they were seared with a hot iron.”⁴⁰ 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.

Many early moderns likewise believed the caustic properties of cosmetics had the power to contaminate the painted person internally, in addition to materially corrupting the external body. This fear was particularly potent when considering the imagined permeability of women’s bodies—especially while pregnant—in seventeenth-century popular thought.⁴¹ Gestating women were warned to limit physical contact with toxic or dangerous substances (such as cosmetics) lest they should bring harm to their unborn child, via the ancient theory of maternal impressions.⁴² This theory stipulated that a pregnant woman had the ability to transmit her own sensory experiences—such as touch or physical trauma—to the fetus in utero; these experiences and feelings had the ability to impress themselves upon the child’s skin, and manifest in physical deformities. Nicolas Malebranche’s understanding of maternal impressions suggests that because the mother and fetus share the same skin and other modes of sensory intake, the child absorbs the

38. Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin*, 92–93.

39. Tanya Pollard, “Beauty’s Poisonous Properties,” *Shakespeare Studies* 27 (1999): 187–210, at 190.

40. Thomas Paré, “Of Poysons,” in *The Works of that famous Chirurgion Ambroise Parey*, trans. Thomas Johnson (London, 1634), 810.

41. Paolo Lomazzo writes that “paintings and embellishings which are made with minerals, and corrosives, are very dangerous . . . especially on the face of a woman, which is very tender & delicate by nature.” Paolo Lomazzo, *A Tracte Containing Arts of Curious Paintinge Carvinge & building*, trans. Richard Haydocke (London, 1598), 132–33.

42. Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch, and Power in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 127–33. See also Steven Connor, *The Book of Skin* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 95–118.

mother's experiences.⁴³ For example, if a baby had a port-wine stain (a common enough birth mark) on its body at birth, it may be explained that the mother spilled wine on her belly while she was pregnant; the wine seeped through her skin and left its impression on the child in her womb.⁴⁴ This is because, as Steven 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," while the mother is left unchanged.⁴⁵

The theory of psychic imprints, a related school of thought, likewise imagined the pregnant (or conceiving) woman's body as hyperporous and sensitive to emotional disturbance and excessive desire.⁴⁶ One such instance occurs in a tale told by Saint Jerome, wherein Hippocrates's testimony freed a Greek noblewoman accused of adultery when her child was born black. Hippocrates explained 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.⁴⁷ This, of course, is a different kind of impression and form of miscegenation from what Anna was symbolically risking, but it highlights anxieties surrounding the imagined permeability of gestating bodies, a woman's unchecked authority over a fetus's health, and the ease with which she might subvert patriarchal authority during pregnancy. While Jan Bondeson notes this story is most likely apocryphal, it nevertheless reflects how the doctrine of maternal impressions—which Martin Luther called "one of the most certain principles in medicine"—perhaps worked upon the cultural imagination of the seventeenth-century English population.⁴⁸

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, nonetheless, considered her unborn child to be too delicate and impressionable in utero for such an ostentatious display.⁴⁹ Due to Anna's desire to play a "Black-more" along with her use of cosmetic paint over the more conventional application of masks or black fabric, those in attendance may have understood the queen's performance as a threat—even if only a symbolic one—to the health, safety, or racial

43. For further discussion of Malebranche and other branches of the theory of maternal impressions, see Connor, *The Book of Skin*, 95–118.

44. For additional examples of infant physical abnormalities and birth defects explained by the theory of maternal impressions, see Jan Bondeson, *The Cabinet of Medical Curiosities* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press: 1997), 144–69; Connor, *The Book of Skin*, 103.

45. Connor, *The Book of Skin*, 115.

46. Gowing, *Common Bodies*, 127; Connor, *The Book of Skin*, 103.

47. See Gowing, *Common Bodies*, 133; Bondeson, *The Cabinet of Medical Curiosities*, 144.

48. Quoted in Bondeson, *The Cabinet of Medical Curiosities*, 146–47.

49. However, Mary did die at the age of two, perhaps leading those at court to wonder if Anna's use of caustic cosmetics during pregnancy damaged the developing fetus.

purity (i.e., Englishness) of her unborn child. Anna's performance might have even hearkened back to her reportedly induced miscarriage two years earlier. Reading her performance through the lens of the theory of maternal impressions, courtiers, diplomats, and nobles in attendance for *The Masque of Blackness* may have been surprised by Anna's willingness to risk miscegenation or bodily harm to the unborn child—even if it was only a symbolic gesture.

Together, all of this suggests that Anna curated a moment wherein her body became a focal point in *The Masque of Blackness* by painting her pregnant, exposed skin a shockingly dark shade. Considering the control Anna maintained over the masque's production elements, it becomes clear the queen consort sought to accentuate her pregnancy, drawing attention to her body as the biological gateway through which the English monarchy would regenerate. After all, it would only be through her body that the new Stuart dynasty could secure the throne for a peaceful succession of future generations while birthing "extra" Stuarts to act as living peace treaties via foreign marriages. Therefore, by analyzing *Blackness* and its stage history closely within the context of Anna's pregnancy, it becomes clear this performance was not merely a sumptuous exhibition of wealth, but also a deeply politically minded, propagandistic display of power, for Anna as well as James.

James's major objective as king was to join England and Scotland under a single banner: "Great Britain." In his first address to Parliament on March 19, 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 vreasonable 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."⁵⁰ On October 20 of the same year (less than three months before Anna would present *The Masque of Blackness*), James proclaimed his intention to become "King of Great Britaine, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith."⁵¹ Although "Great Britain"—as a term or officially recognized nation—was neither legalized, nor realized, until 1707 under Queen Anne, the designation nevertheless remained "the site of much discussion and debate over England's imperial growth and identity" according to Kim F. Hall.⁵² *The Masque of Blackness* participates in the nation-

50. James I and VI, *Political Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 136.

51. James Ludovic Lindsay, Earl of Crawford, *A Bibliography of Royal Proclamations of the Tudor and Stuart Sovereigns: And of Other Published under Authority, 1485–1714* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), 1:116.

52. Hall, *Things of Darkness*, 133.

making ideals spouted by King James I 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 nevertheless 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” (B2). The nymphs, who once believed their darkness to be evidence of the sun’s affection, now fear they cannot compare to the fair-skinned foreign beauties whose virtues these poets extol. 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 “who forms all beauty with his sight” (B2). 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” (B3).⁵³ Pursuing the sun “Whose beams shine day and night and are of force / To blanch an Ethiop and revive a cor’s,” they find King James I (B3).⁵⁴ 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 attempts to contextualize the juxtaposition between whiteness and blackness in Jonson’s text by revealing how he plays with 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.⁵⁵ In an effort to resist prevalent 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 law permits the king to “blacken” or “black-ward” a Scotsman, thereby conscripting him to military duty.⁵⁶ Alternatively, as a “Scottish legal term, ‘blanching’ refers to the king’s ability to transform

53. This “new name” is in reference to the newly coined and conceived “Great Britain.”

54. 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 January 10, 1608. In *Blackness*’s “sequel,” the daughters of Niger finally appear whitened.

55. Floyd-Wilson, “Temperature, Temperance, and Racial Difference,” 186.

56. Ibid., 191 n. 25.

a subject's material debt to the crown into a merely ceremonial display of allegiance." 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 argues.⁵⁷ 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 tache to few, from ward to blanch, erecteth new Baronies, and uniteth old, without advice or authoritie of either Parliament of any other subaltern judicial seat."⁵⁸ In this way, the nymphs seek whitening, as well as incorporation into the royal body politic of the Stuart crown.

Floyd-Wilson's reading suggests the Stuarts contracted *Blackness* in order to display royal power, means, and political authority by promoting a sense of joining cultures, rather than subsuming them. However, Floyd-Wilson bases her examination of the masque on the formal aspects of Jonson's text in relation to Stuart political culture, 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 disfigured barbarity.⁵⁹ Recognition that physical blackness possessed negative connotations of ugliness 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 spectacle-driven performance 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 entan-

57. *Ibid.*, 191.

58. James, *Political Writings*, 73.

59. Carleton does insist, after all, that one "cannot imagine a more ugly sight than a Troop of lean-cheek'd Moors." Sawyer, *Memorial of Affairs of State*, 2:44. 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. Stern, *Making Shakespeare*, 9. 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." Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin*, 92.

glement with the evolving ideology of the state.⁶⁰ In other words: it matters that the pregnant queen plays a black nymph who seeks and fails to attain white beauty. The representations of the colonized body seeking refuge from a superior white body (i.e., the king) challenge any reading that insists upon *Blackness* solely as a vehicle for James's English/Scottish unification project that merely anticipated, rather than actively participated in, cultural conceptions of white supremacy. Clare McManus astutely observes that when Niger and his daughters arrive on the shores of Britannia, "the colonized" comes to the colonizer, thereby complicating "the imaginative equation 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."⁶¹ If we imagine the royal gravid body as part of the masque's *mise en scène*, McManus's reading becomes even richer. James's prospective 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, thereby claiming authority over her own skin and everything beneath it. As such, *The Masque of Blackness* displayed Anna's maternal authority, challenging any reading that insists upon *Blackness* solely as a vehicle for James's patriarchal agenda.

By participating in the construction of "Great Britain" as a political and national ideal through *Blackness*, Anna created visibility for herself in the English court despite her husband's interest in depleting her political capital.⁶² Throughout preparations for the masque, Anna behaved as an auteur who sought to parade her pregnant body in a conspicuously public arena and assert her position as Stuart Queen. Anna's involvement in the commissioning, staging, and performing of *The Masque of Blackness* suggests the queen sought 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 pulled public attention to her exposed, blackened, expectant skin, placing herself at the center of this conspicuous, propagandistic holiday revelry.

60. Hall, *Things of Darkness*, 128.

61. McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage*, 43.

62. 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 rabble-rousing allies. In an attempt 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.

Again wielding her maternal body—as she did with her alleged abortion in 1603—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 miscarried at Stirling in 1603, that child would have filled this important role. Not only was this to be the first Stuart born on English soil, this was to be the first royal pregnant body in England since 1537. As such, the sight of Anna’s publicly displayed gestating body at court asserted the fruitfulness of the new Stuart couple, and perhaps more poignantly, Anna’s role—and control—in propagating the royal English line. Therefore, 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.

III. LOVE'S MISTRESS, OR THE QUEEN'S MASQUE

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.⁶³ Not only did the English public lack a royal heir for nearly seventy years, they likewise saw no pregnant queen who could carry a child to term. However, upon Anna’s arrival, England inherited all the living Stuart children along with a fertile queen who maintained control over her reproductive body while simultaneously remaining visible and active in Stuart court politics via her court performances.

While there were few performances of pregnancy in the Elizabethan playhouse, from the time King James I took the English throne until Charles I’s overthrow in 1642, maternal bodies became a major source of dramatic interest on public, private, and court stages. The arrival of England’s first childbearing queen since 1537 narrowly precedes the emergence of pregnancy plays in Stuart London. Some of the most well-known pregnancy plays, including Shakespeare’s *Measure*

63. Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* (c. 1591) illustrates this gestational erasure. In act 4, 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 offstage delivery in act 4 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*, the pregnant characters are not major stakeholders in the play’s action. For example, minor characters Samathis and Martia enter “with childe” within seventy lines of one another but offer no other major contribution to the overall plot. A notable exception is, perhaps, George Peele’s *Edward I*, wherein Queen Elinor enters “in her litter borne by foure Negro Mores.” Upon her arrival Elinor complains that her king, “knowing his Queene to be so great with childe,” beckons her to come with haste to Wales without an explanation. George Chapman, *The Plays of George Chapman: The Comedies, a Critical Edition*, ed. Allan Holday (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), F2–3; George Peele, *King Edward the First*, in *King Edward the First by George Peele 1593* (London: Malone Society, Oxford University Press, 1911), D3, D5.

for *Measure* (1604) and *The Winter's Tale* (c. 1611), as well as John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (c. 1614), feature an abundantly pregnant character whose gestational body stokes deep-seated patriarchal anxieties about female bodily and political autonomy.⁶⁴ Like the Duchess and Hermione, Anna likewise asserted political authority with her maternal body.

During Anna of Denmark's tenure as England's queen, she found ways to draw public attention to her reproductive body as the gateway of dynastic perpetuation. She seemed to understand that her ticket to political influence in the Stuart court was through an assertion of her role as royal progenitor. *The Masque of Blackness* arguably represents Anna of Denmark's most public and well-documented assertion of her maternal authority, evinced by the reverberation of *Blackness* throughout early modern drama for the first half of the seventeenth century.

In Richard Brome's *The English Moor* (c. 1637), the miserly Quicksands refers to *The Masque of Blackness*. In an attempt to convince Millicent that "blacking up" is a noble act, Quicksands 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."⁶⁵ Later, the playwright stages a sumptuous, decadent masque. While 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 published text gestures to Anna's blackened gestational body as well.⁶⁶ When the masque begins, the Inductor details the plot: "The Queen of Ethiop dreamt upon a night / Her black womb should bring forth a virgin white" (4.5.65). The invocation of the "black womb" points back to Anna's 1605 performance wherein the queen took center stage with her blackened, pregnant body.⁶⁷

64. For example, Juliet's pregnancy in *Measure for Measure* is the inciting incident for the plot, and stands as the emblem for all of Vienna's sexual deviance. Other comedic pregnancy plays, such as Thomas Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1613) or Samuel Rowley's *The Birth of Merlin* (c. 1620), ridicule the pregnant body in order to strip it of any power to subvert the patriarchal society seeking to control it.

65. Richard Brome, *The English Moor, or the Mock Marriage* (London, 1658), 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*," *English Literary Renaissance* 39, no. 2 (2009): 396–426.

66. Stevens, "Mastering Masques of Blackness," 423; Hall, *Things of Darkness*, 166–74.

67. While the memory of Anna's pregnant painted performance activates 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*.

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.⁶⁸ Nothing in the text indicates whether 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 on stage briefly to introduce the masque's concluding dance number. It therefore seems likely that Ford's inset spectacle and entrance of a gravid sprite recalled Queen Anna's own pregnant performance as a fertility nymph twenty-four years earlier.

Finally, Anna's influence is most evident in Thomas Heywood's *Love's Mistress, or the Queen's Masque*, which premiered in 1634 as part of Charles I's birthday celebrations. The prolific 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 eight days during November 1634.⁶⁹ This highly successful piece—revived through the 1630s—survived the interregnum and was Heywood's final play before his death in 1641.⁷⁰ This spectacle-filled drama echoes Queen Anna of Denmark's 1605 painted pregnancy in both its performance history and Heywood's dramaturgical treatment of the pregnant body. However, *Love's Mistress*, a tale of redemption through submission to a patriarchal regime, reverses Queen Anna's defiant assertion of maternal agency in *The Masque of Blackness*. In this way, *Love's Mistress* echoes the fraught relationship between Anna and James while implicitly juxtaposing the more peaceful union between Charles and Henrietta Maria.

In *Love's Mistress*, Cupid is the ruling patriarch who becomes angry when his wife, Psyche, betrays him. As punishment, the demigod curses Psyche with an unwieldy pregnancy and cosmetic ugliness. Through biblical allusions to patriarchal fidelity, *Love's Mistress* affirms patriarchal dominance over the deceitful and opaque female body by forcing pregnancy on the Eve-like Psyche. Throughout

68. John Ford, *The Lover's Melancholy* (London, 1629), H2. Published in 1629, the King's Men original presented Ford's play at Blackfriars and the Globe, according to the frontispiece.

69. 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 Thomas Heywood, *Love's Mistress: or the Queen's Masque* (London, 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. Some of the 1636 front matter pages on EEBO are corrupted and unreadable, and many pages are missing. For these sections, I supplement with the 1640 publication, available in hard copy from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign Rare Books and Manuscript Library.

70. Samuel Pepys attended no fewer 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*, transcribed by Rev. Mynors Bright (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1905–18), 1:330, 334, 339; 4:386; 8:77.

Heywood's masque, Psyche's family and community persecute her for a pregnancy she did not willingly conceive and ugliness she cannot shed, until Psyche finally repents, thereby submitting to her god-husband. In this way, *Love's Mistress* reaffirms the role of the patriarchal over maternal in Stuart drama by using the pregnant body as a weapon against willful women.

On Saturday November 15, 1634, nearly thirty years after Anna danced in *Blackness*, Thomas Heywood premiered *Love's Mistress* at the Cockpit/Phoenix Theatre before the royal couple in a private dress rehearsal (1636, frontispiece).⁷¹ Impressed with the play, Henrietta Maria requested the actors perform four days later at Denmark House in honor of the king's birthday.⁷² 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" (1640, A3). In Heywood's own words, Jones's theatrical innovations were beyond anything the playwright could have imagined for his own work.

Heywood's treatment of pregnancy and physical deformity, along with the performance history of *Love's Mistress*, conjures Anna of Denmark's pregnant performance in *The Masque of Blackness*. The *Love's Mistress* court premiere took place at Denmark House, the royal home wherein Anna formerly kept her queen's court. Formerly known as Somerset House, the name changed to honor Anna's homeland.⁷³ The late queen's own masquing career and inclination toward autonomy within the Stuart court—exercised in part during her tenure at Denmark house—likely haunted the *Love's Mistress* performance space, thereby evoking memories of Queen Anna's time 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 feasibly resonated within 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 "Black-more" nymphs in Jonson's masque, Psyche finds her way to redemption, yet similarly falls short of bodily restoration and autonomy.

71. See also Thomas Heywood, *Love's Mistress, or The Queen's Masque*, ed. Raymond C. Shady (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur Universität Salzburg, 1970), xxvii.

72. Heywood, *Love's Mistress* (1970), xxvii–xxix.

73. Barroll, *Queen Anna of Denmark*, 39, 70.

As in Ovid's rendition of the myth, Cupid goes to punish Psyche for her vain-glorious 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:

Breathe winter's storms upon the blushing cheeks
Of beauteous Psyche; with thy boisterous breath,
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.

(1636, F3)

Cursing Psyche's body, Cupid attempts to make 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 rival to Venus's beauty and too lovely to remain among mortals, quickly becomes a disfigured hag at Cupid's command (1636, C; C2). This transformation happens off stage and is in place by the time she returns. Boreas carries Psyche off at Cupid's bidding near the end of act 3's first scene (1636, F3). She returns to the stage in the middle of the following scene (1636, G2). In the interim, Boreas's strong winds disfigure the dejected Psyche; "Where art thou, Psyche?" she asks of herself upon her reentrance. "How art thou deformed?" (1636, G2). When Psyche reveals herself to her father, he scorns her, insisting Psyche is "no child" of his; her sisters likewise berate her as a "hag" and "some infectious strumpet," gesturing toward Psyche's newly acquired physical deformities (1636, G2). The action of the play clearly necessitates the boy playing Psyche undergo a profound and visible change of some kind.

It becomes clear, when examining the changes in Psyche's appearance carefully, that this physical is from whiteness to blackness (and again from black to white at the end of the play). Although previously called "the white-handed Psyche," her "sin [now] deforms her," and not "Till Psyche be made fair, and angel-white" will she ever "stand in Cupid's glorious sight" (1636, B3; H2). When it comes time to cure Psyche of her "spotted covers," Cupid uses his "white hand . . . to clear / This black

deformity" (1636, L). Therefore, the text suggests that when Boreas shepherds Psyche off stage, the actor took the opportunity to paint himself with dark cosmetics in order to appear blackened. Heywood provides a similar exit and reentrance strategy in act 5, when Cupid vows to "clear / This black deformity" that taints Psyche's body. In the approximately one hundred and twenty-five lines of text wherein Psyche is off stage, 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 denied to Anna and her cohort in the 1605 performance of *The Masque of Blackness*.

Stevens spends a great deal of time analyzing the use of, and changes to, black body paint technology in early modern performance. She points out that, whereas Anna and her colleagues failed to achieve the "blanching" promised to them in *The Masque of Blackness* until the *The Masque of Beauty* (1608), Jonson's black gypsies in *The Gypsies Metamorphosed* (1621) successfully achieved whiteness during the course of the play. 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 the other women effectively remove their dark paint in *Blackness*, by 1621, the titular characters were able to successfully metamorphose due to the existence of, what Stevens calls, a "more tractable technology."⁷⁴ I would argue for the use of a similar dark pigment—perhaps composed of "walnut juice added to a tallow base," as in *Gypsies*—in *Love's Mistress*.⁷⁵

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 grotesquely pregnant hag (and back again) 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 other pregnancy plays like Heywood's own *The Golden Age* (c. 1611) or Thomas May's *The Heir* (1620).⁷⁶ Throughout *Love's Mistress*, Psyche repeatedly

74. Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin*, 104. For the complete discussion of Jonson's *The Gypsies Metamorphosed*, see Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin*, 100–105; Stevens, "Mastering Masques of Blackness," 396–426. Discussing the ways in which Jonson's fiction defends the ladies' inability to transform from black to white, Stevens points out "Niger defends his daughters skin color on two distinct grounds: that blackness is a mark of the sun's favor and that black coloration, unlike white coloration, is permanent" (i.e., free from the dissembling qualities associated with [white] maidens' blushes). In this way, the masque pushes against the audience's negative stereotypes of blackness in order to justify their lack of transformation to whiteness. Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin*, 95.

75. Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin*, 102.

76. For further discussion of pregnancy as a prosthetic device in these plays, see Sara B. T. Thiel, "'Cushion come forth': Materializing Pregnancy on the Stuart Stage," in *Stage Matters: Props, Bodies*

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” (1636, G4; 1640, F). When Cupid curses Psyche, he insists she will be “great with child of fear”; others beg for mercy for her “great-belly’s sake” (1636, F3; L2). Meanwhile, Psyche expresses exhaustion due to “bearing this poor burden in [her] womb” (1640, G). Given the spectacular nature of Heywood’s play, evinced by his praise of Jones’s 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.

Hence, the emphasis laid upon Psyche’s increased girth and painted ugliness evinces the fact the actor not only exhibited dark cosmetics in order to make her skin appear ugly and spotted, but also incorporated the use of a prosthetic belly to indicate her advanced pregnancy. If the performer playing Psyche had enough offstage 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, perhaps similar to that used in May’s *The Heir*.⁷⁷ 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*.⁷⁸

Love’s Mistress features a woman whose husband punishes her sins with a hagish form and grotesque unnatural pregnancy. 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 sufferings, Psyche begs Cupid (and Venus) for forgiveness and salvation but is met with a laundry list of torturous tasks and physical violence. She must prove herself worthy to have this curse lifted, but even at the end of the play when Psyche’s deformity “through labour, is made clear,” there is no mention of her pregnancy (1636, L3). 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 while Cupid restores Psyche’s beauty, her preg-

and Space in Shakespearean Performance (Madison, NJ): Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, forthcoming).

77. In act 5 of Thomas May’s *The Heir* (1620), Luce and her would-be husband reveal that she is faking a pregnancy. Francisco invokes the prosthetic device beneath her gown when he demands, “Cushion come forth,” at which point he pulls the pillow from beneath Luce’s skirts and “flings the cushion” across the stage. See Thomas May, *The Heire* (London, 1622), H2. For further discussion, see Thiel, “Cushion come forth.”

78. The many discussions of Psyche’s blackened body in Heywood’s masque echo 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, *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain*, 68.

nancy remains. Despite their reconciliation, Cupid washes away Psyche's blackness yet maintains control over her reproductive capacity (and, by extension, her sexual body). While, in 1605, Queen Anna strategically remained blackened, perhaps as an act of resistance to absorption within James's body politic, Psyche remains the unwilling, perpetually pregnant boy actor. In this way, patriarchy recuperates and reclaims the representation of pregnancy in *Love's Mistress*.

As I have demonstrated, there exist clear resonances between Queen Anna of Denmark's assertion of maternal authority in *The Masque of Blackness* and Heywood's *Love's Mistress* wherein monarchical patriarchy reclaims the image of the gestating body. Read together, Psyche's blackened body and "wretched womb" evoke and respond to Queen Anna's painted pregnant performance (1636, G2–4). Although the queen'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 boy-actor-as-Psyche possess blemished skin, one through exercise of artistic agency, 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 pregnancy 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* illuminates how Queen Anna of Denmark's pregnant performance continued to influence the representation of pregnancy on early modern stages thirty years after *The Masque of Blackness*'s premiere at Whitehall Palace in 1605.

When King James I took the English throne with Queen Anna in 1603, playwrights began staging the royal pregnant body with increasing consistency. William Rowley, William Shakespeare, and John Fletcher quickly wrote pregnancy plays concerning historical queens' ability to bring forth viable heirs in *When You See Me, You Know Me* (1604) and *Henry VIII* (1614), respectively.⁷⁹ I argue

79. In these two plays, securing the future of the Tudor line—and, thus, the childbearing abilities of his queens—is at the forefront of Henry's motivating action. In *Henry VIII*, the titular king divorces Katherine of Aragon, marries Anne Boleyn, and the play ends with a disappointing female birth—the future Elizabeth I. In *When You See Me, You Know Me*, the play opens on the pregnant body of Jane Seymour, and Henry nervously dancing around her, hoping for the safe delivery of a boy. When Jane dies in childbirth but safely delivers the future Edward VI, Henry mourns his wife yet feels at ease for the first time with respect to the future of the Tudor line. 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 Gaywyn Moore, "You Turn Me into

that Anna's highly conspicuous fertility—and perhaps the absence of Queen Elizabeth I's poignant *infertility*—placed the gestational body at the heart of Stuart drama, serving as a catalyst to the birth of pregnancy plays on seventeenth-century London stages. While Elizabeth is the monarch we most often associate with the rise of early modern drama, Queen Anna of Denmark's legacy lived on in dramatic literature, haunting later performances of pregnancy in English theaters. Nevertheless, the two reigning monarchs, Elizabeth and James—one an anomalous female king and the other a properly male king—have blinded critics to Queen Anna's influence on the period's drama, particularly pregnancy plays. By recovering and foregrounding the authority of the queen's gestating body, I establish a genealogy of responses to Anna's initial subversive performances, ultimately recuperated for a patriarchal polity.

Nothing': Reformation Queenship on the Jacobean Stage," *Mediterranean Studies*, 21, no. 2 (2013): 27–56. Moore argues that, taken 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).