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Maternal agency in renaissance revenge tragedy

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MATERNAL AGENCY IN RENAISSANCE REVENGE TRAGEDY

Submitted by

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In partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of

Masters by Research in English

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Candidate Declaration

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Abstract

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This thesis offers a feminist inflected, historicised close reading of the Renaissance revenge tragedies *Titus Andronicus*, *The Duchess of Malfi* and *'Tis Pity she's a Whore*. It specifically examines constructs of maternity found in a variety of medical, theological, dietary and conduct texts from the early modern period. Additionally, this thesis establishes close links between the representations of the maternal body on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage and in the early modern settings of the anatomy theatre and the birth chamber. The period reflects the specific belief that consumption is important to demonstrate virtue and religious morality. This thesis will engage with this topic by focussing attention on the significance of fruit and consumption within the dramas and how the maternal body is closely interlinked with the digestive system. By engaging with the premise of the anatomy theatre, birth chamber and early modern literature surrounding maternity, this thesis shows that maternity in revenge drama is purposefully portrayed as transgressive, to successfully condemn maternal characters and validate the violence that is enacted on their bodies. Overall, the thesis undertakes an extensive analysis of the impact of the maternal body on the stage, as influenced by early modern literature and in ritualistic early modern environments. Both physically and textually, maternity is characterised by its performativity in this period, which is recognised and adapted in this study.

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Introduction: Constructions of Maternity and the Maternal Body

During the early modern period, the maternal body provoked debate amongst all aspects of culture. According to Moncrief and McPherson (2007) in their book *Performing Maternity in Early Modern England*, “the mid-sixteenth through the seventeenth century manifested intensive social, cultural and religious concern about maternity and the maternal subject” (p.3). This time period encompasses three revenge tragedies, all of which feature prominent maternal figures.

Firstly, Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*, which is thought to have been composed around the early 1590s. Kaara L. Peterson, building on the work of Marion Wynne-Davies, notes that the 1590s were “a particularly fraught time for anxieties over who had control over women’s wombs” (Peterson, 2010, p.124) and so *Titus Andronicus* “throws into sharp relief the difference between the sexual constraint and sexual self-determination of women” (p.124). The play features the fiery, ruthless mother and Queen of the Goths turned Roman Empress, Tamora. Tamora takes up the position of the Empress of Rome to avenge her sacrificed son, Alarbus. She is presented as a barbaric, blood thirsty and lustful figure, whose relationship with Aaron the Moor results in the birth of “a joyless, dismal, black and sorrowful issue” (IV.ii.68).

Next, John Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi*, first performed in 1614 and published in 1623. Webster delivers one of the most iconic characters in Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy. Jane Kingsley-Smith (2014) calls the Duchess “Webster’s most haunting protagonist” (p.22); she is “caught between classes, between sexes, between tenses” (p.23). Despite being an independent ruler, her sex renders her “marginal, subordinate, dependant” (p.23). Most

importantly, her roles as a widow and a mother permit her brothers' intrusive investigation into her private life and lead to her tragic death.

Finally, John Ford's *'Tis Pity she's a Whore*, published in 1633, focuses on the character of Annabella, to whom the title of the play possibly alludes. Annabella begins as a maid, with no children. However, her relationship with her brother Giovanni becomes incestuous and she finds herself pregnant, which bears violent consequences. Kingsley-Smith (2014) writes: "The shifting of blame on to the unchaste and adulterous Annabella may have been a feature of the play's reception" (p.32). Annabella is certainly treated as a scapegoat by many characters in the play; immorality is attributed to her sex.

Each of these plays examines maternity and pregnancy through transgressive women, who deviate from the identities which society has ascribed to them. Many early modern texts, however, reflect that it is characteristic of womankind to stray from goodness if women are not under the control of men. Tamora, the Duchess and Annabella are aware of the consequences and speculation that come with deviating from patriarchal expectations and so, all of these women attempt to conceal the illicit activities they partake in. Their pregnancies are therefore purposefully concealed and so they maintain control over their maternal bodies; this is the core of the problem for men because an autonomous maternal body is presented as a dangerous, anxiety-inducing one.

Transgressive mothers actively concealing their relationships and pregnancies coincides with early modern perceptions of maternity itself. Moncrief and McPherson (2007) explain that early modern maternity is multifaceted, given that it reflects "spirituality, medicine and health, politics, the supernatural, as well as the many and complex facets of gender" (p.1). This reflects that the construction of maternity was primarily rooted in literature and was not, therefore, approached from a scientifically informed angle, as it is today. Jonathan Sawday

(1995) suggests that before this time period, “the record of the body in pre-modern societies is one which is composed out of disturbingly unscientific phenomena” (p.7). While literary concepts of maternity were rampant, they were not matched with scientific equivalents at this point in time; factual understandings of the corporeal maternal body were scarcer. Therefore, the maternal body was somewhat naturally concealed because it was not scientifically understood and, of course because it was rarely seen by the naked eye. This is shown in Nicholas Culpeper’s *A directory for midwives*, published in 1651. Despite its title, the book was aimed at a popular audience which reveals the widespread desire to learn about the maternal body. Though the date of the text is outside of the time period this study focusses on, the content of the text reflects upon existing debates about women’s health and is consistent with beliefs which circulated during the late sixteenth century onwards. Culpeper devotes a section of his book to ‘the formation of the child in the womb’, which he describes as “the most difficultest piece of work in the whole book, nay in the whole study of anatomy because such anatomies are hard to be gotten” (Aughterson, 1995, p.59). The publishing date also reinforces the continuing struggle to access the internal maternal body. Kate Aughterson (1995) explains that “despite the increase in scientific and empirical knowledge in the sixteenth century about the skeleton and the body, discoveries about woman’s physiology were remarkably slow” (p.41). Visualising the internal maternal body in order to acquire knowledge of it, was therefore, a task in itself. Without the aid of the technologies that we rely on today, it was not possible to witness the internal process of pregnancy. Culpeper expresses that this is particularly because “most women that lie on their death-beds when they are with child, miscarry before they die” (p.59). Although it is clear that observing the internal maternal body was hugely difficult, those in the medical profession still formulated opinions and attempted to present understandings of it in their works. Chris Laoutaris suggests, in his book *Shakespearean Maternities*, that “the process of visualising pregnancy

and embryological development was indeed important to the Renaissance imagination” (p.15). Arguably, the lack of physical evidence of the true functions of the womb gave way to its fruition in the ‘Renaissance imagination’. Its construction developed through ideas based on assumption and interpretation, which was an attempt to harness an understanding of what could not be physically attained. Laoutaris poses the question:

If knowledge of the maternal body did not derive solely from the visual penetration of real bodies by the medical profession ... then just how was maternity - as body, principle, natural force, political instrument, locus of the sacred and satanic - constituted in the age of Shakespeare?

(p.10)

Titus Andronicus, *The Duchess of Malfi* and *'Tis Pity she's a Whore* all respond to the notion that the maternal body is capable of highlighting elements of society and culture, as Moncrief and McPherson made clear, while it is also secretive and unknown, as professed in the works of early modern physicians like Nicholas Culpeper. Kaara L. Peterson (2010) suggests that “the tragically flawed but fascinatingly ‘other’ female body is one that writes itself in medical writers’ fanciful imaginations” (p.112). The maternal body in the early modern period was approached with fascination, curiosity, fear and anxiety, which is definitely apparent in the dramas that this study focusses on. Furthermore, Moncrief and McPherson (2007) argue that maternity is a state which is both “embodied and enacted” (p.1); it is also one which “must be considered performative and that the maternal body as a result, functions as a potent space for cultural conflict, a site of imagination and contest” (p.1). Tamora, the Duchess and Annabella certainly respond to this view because they are theatrical representations of maternity. Their transgressions through their maternal agency permit the use of their bodies for both pleasure and for violence. The term ‘maternal agency’ will feature as the overarching definition of how the women in the plays influence their surroundings through their experience with maternity. They are maternal agents because their position as mothers transforms the sequence of events that leads to their ends.

Informed by historicist approach, this study will consider the violent treatment of the mothers in these plays in relation to the early modern discourse surrounding maternity and the maternal body. Early modern representations of maternity, found amongst a variety of medical, conduct and theological texts contribute to the notion that the female body is marked by the actions of the primary transgressor, Eve and therefore needs to be ruled by man. I will approach the mothers in the plays from this angle, to show how the conceptualisations of their sex determines their tragic outcomes. The most prominent aspect of this study is that I will interweave the violent treatment of the mothers with the early modern discourse and practise of anatomy, which during this time period, developed somewhat of an obsession with the female maternal body. In accordance with the concept of violence being enacted on the maternal body, I will also examine the ways in which female spaces such as the birth chamber were violated and threatened by men in the plays and in early modern society. This violation of space expresses some of the anxieties about maternal knowledge and the maternal body, which perpetuates maternity as a state that increases the power of the individual who experiences it. The following portion of this introduction will discuss key elements of literature and space which were important features of the early modern understanding of maternity.

Firstly, to better understand the early modern construction of maternity, the literary significance of Eve must be acknowledged for its impact in this period. In early modern literature, the biblical Fall of Man is largely recognised as the fault of Eve and it is, therefore, the fault of woman too. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, the Duchess is not trusted by her brothers with her own fate. One of her brothers, the Cardinal, reminds her: “wisdom begins at the end: remember it” (I.ii.238). He clearly warns the Duchess about harnessing her capacity for desire because, according to her brothers, her sexual desire has been emboldened as a result of her becoming a widow. The Cardinal’s comment speaks to a widely circulated belief during the early modern period; that women should seek to avoid giving in to temptation as Eve did in Eden. If they did not adhere to patriarchal rules, the consequences could be severe. This segment shall show that women were illustrated as unequal to men both in body and in nature and this was made possible by the instrumental use of Eve.

In John Calvin’s sermons, which were often used by churches, Calvin asserts that men were the initially superior sex. He says: “man was already the head of woman even before the sin and fall of Eve and Adam” (Aughterson, 1995, p.15). This belief originates in Genesis, which states that “the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman ... she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man” (Aughterson, p.11). Calvin uses the story to demonstrate the legitimacy of man’s rule over woman and Eve’s temptation only furthers the case for man’s superiority. He states that Eve was “beguiled” (p.15) and that as a result, women should “feel the fruit of their sins” (p.16).

Eve’s punishment, specified in Genesis, is as follows: “the Lord God said unto the woman ... I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall have rule over thee” (Aughterson, p.12). Her punishment is explicitly related to her body and it explains that pain will be inflicted on her body to alleviate her sins. In essence, the exclusively female function

of childbirth, is illustrated as a punishment itself. This is particularly important because, as Kate Aughterson explains, “the Protestant insistence on a personal reading of the vernacular Bible meant that individual and private reading and interpretation became increasingly important during this period, for both women and men” (p.9). Taking this into consideration, it is clear that theological texts were being consumed on a personal level. This would have had an impact on how men and women interpreted the role of women within society, as well as how women would have instructed themselves having been informed by these texts. In Elizabeth Clinton’s writing, *The Countess of Lincoln’s nursery* published in 1622, Clinton writes to her daughter-in-law, saying: “We have followed Eve in transgression, let us follow her in obedience. When God lay the sorrows of conception, of breeding, of bringing forth and bringing up her children upon her, and so upon us in her loins, did she reply any word against? Not a word” (p.112). By setting Eve’s transgression as an example to all women, it is easier to understand how they would have been expected to submit to their husbands and accept their roles as mothers. Calvin advises this; he claims women should use Eve as “a warning to keep themselves lowly and mild” (p.17) because “all this came of Eve and of the womankind ... there is none other way but for them to stoop and to bear patiently the subjection that God hath laid upon them” (p.17). To follow in Eve’s initial steps and not follow her into subservience, then, establishes grounds to punish any woman who attempts to rebel against patriarchally founded instructions that are directed at how women conduct themselves and the use of their bodies.

The belief that women were inherently inferior was not exclusive to theology. In physiology, for example, Galen’s writings were widespread and used as the foundation for medical knowledge up until the eighteenth century (Aughterson, 1995, p.47). In *On the usefulness of the parts of the body*, he writes: “just as mankind is the most perfect of all animals, so within mankind the man is more perfect than the woman, and the primary instrument” (p.47). He

describes women's ability to become pregnant as a "mutilation" (p.48). This 'mutilation' is further explained: "This is the reason the female was made cold, and the immediate consequence of this is the imperfection of the parts, which cannot emerge on the outside on account of the defect in the heat" (p.48). Galen effectively defines womankind as the lesser and more imperfect counterpart of man that can be defined by the usefulness of her characteristically 'mutilated' and more imperfect body, which is represented as an inversion of man's. This opinion links with the suggestion in Genesis, that woman was created out of the rib of man, to be a 'helper'; she is not as whole as man and therefore cannot be viewed as a perfect creation of God's image, especially in light of her sin.

These fictional constructions of maternity and womanhood, both characteristic and physical, form the basis of how the maternal characters in *Titus Andronicus*, *The Duchess of Malfi* and *'Tis Pity she's a Whore* are treated, especially once their transgressions come to light. To build upon these concepts of womanhood and maternity, I will detail two specific settings in which the maternal body was the primary focus, during the early modern period; the birth chamber and the anatomy theatre.

The Birthing Chamber

Linda Pollock (2013), in *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England*, claims that “the bearing of children ... was a process so fundamental to the identity of women in early modern society that Philip Gawdy, on being informed that his wife had been safely delivered, could ask ‘whether it be a boy or mother’” (2013, p.287). While pregnancy, as Pollock suggests, was a hugely influential aspect of identity for women, the area in which birth took place was also represented as wholly feminine and ritualistically important for the mother. In her study *The Midwives of Seventeenth Century London*, Doreen Evenden (2000) explains:

It has been well established that giving birth in the seventeenth century was still “women’s business” and once the husband had summoned or ridden for the midwife, he was banished from the actual birth chamber, leaving the hustle and bustle of preparation, delivery and aftercare to the midwife, female relatives, neighbours and friends

(p.80)

The deliberate exclusion of any male presence in the birth chamber reinforces the experience as exclusively female. Additionally, it equips the process of childbearing with a sense of power; the birth-chamber usually functioned as an impenetrable space and so the women within it were fully in control of the situation at hand. Janelle Jenstad illustrates the common setting of a birth-chamber: “The ritually demarcated space was usually the bedchamber, but sometimes a specially designated ‘lying-in’ chamber, enclosed by curtains and rugs, with the doors, windows and keyholes stopped” (p.89). This setting is implied in *The Duchess of Malfi*, when the Duchess suddenly falls into labour and as a result, her husband and several others rush around, making preparations. Delio asks Antonio: “Have you prepared / Those ladies to attend her, and procured / That politic, safe conveyance for the midwife / Your

Duchess plotted?” (II.i.160). What follows is Antonio’s announcement to the Duchess’s officers:

‘Tis the Duchess’s pleasure
Each officer be locked into his chamber
Till the sun-rising, and to send the keys
Of all their chests, and of their outward doors,
Into her bedchamber. She is very sick.

(II.ii.54-6).

The Duchess’ political and maternal authorities combine here to represent the atmosphere generated within the birth-chamber; her body, sick or not, has forced out the possibility of any male presence in her bedchamber. Jenstad suggests that this acquired sense of authority, from pregnancy, satirised the position of the husband because “by the early modern period, texts were poking fun at the harassed husband who fetched the midwife and served the women gathered for the lying-in” (p.89). Arguably, this attitude is doubly satirical because it suggests that the functioning, female authority within the birth-chamber is invalid because it is amusing for a husband to serve it. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, the Duchess’s maternal agency during the time of her giving birth is not omnipotent; it is met with the looming prospect of male interference, as once her child is delivered, Bosola is found to be lurking in the hallways. He states: “There’s some stratagem / In the confining all our courtiers / To their several wards. I must have part of it” (II.iii.1-5). To an extent, Bosola’s presence outside of the Duchess’s bedchamber corresponds to the notion that patriarchal early modern society demanded answers from the maternal body to expand knowledge of it. Furthermore, in this scene, Bosola represents the increasing influence of masculine authority figures on the internal affairs of the birth-chamber, which will be discussed in more detail in the first chapter of this thesis.

Anatomy and Anatomy Theatres

Now that I have reflected upon the birth chamber, an entirely female setting, I will explore the contrastingly predominantly male setting of the anatomy theatre and its relationship to the female body. To comprehend the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century approach to the discipline of anatomy, it is useful to consider the history of the subject. Andrew Cunningham (2001) clarifies the chronology of the study of anatomy in *The End of the Sacred Ritual of Anatomy*:

In the traditional positivist account of the history of anatomy, we find the discipline beginning in Ancient Greece with Aristotle, and with a strong medical tradition of anatomising continuing until the time of Galen in the second century A.D. Then anatomy was largely neglected until it was revived in 1316 in the University of Bologna, where professor Mondino (Mundinus) began teaching anatomy from a human corpse, and he wrote a dissection guide, the *Anatomia*, out of the works of Galen that he knew, to steer one through the sequence of anatomising a human corpse.

(p.188)

So, it is clear that anatomical dissection found its roots within an educational setting, for the purpose of gaining and expanding medical knowledge. Cunningham explains the several roles taken up in the setting of the anatomies of this time; a professor would sit and read the text of *Anatomia* aloud, while someone else held a rod and directed it at the parts of the body which the professor was reading about (p.188-9). Lastly, he says, “there is a surgeon who actually does the dissection” (p.189). The process of acquiring corpses appears to be relatively straightforward, given that institutions would perform dissections “annually in the winter” (p.190). Furthermore, the bodies were “supplied by the local government, granting the bodies of those who had been judicially executed by hanging” (p.190). This is particularly important to this thesis because it alerts us to the fact that the bodies which became anatomical subjects were criminal bodies. In ‘Dissecting the Renaissance Body’, Jonathan

Sawday suggests “the anatomist claims the body for ‘science’, and in so doing, the punishment is reinforced” (Gent and Llewellyn, 1990, p.116). In the original punishment of execution, he says, “is enacted what Michael Foucault has analysed as the demands of the law, which result in an attempt at inscribing on the body of the felon the full weight of the wronged sovereigns’ displeasure” (p.116). This idea of anatomical punishment inflicted on the physical body of a wrongdoer can be linked to Kaara L. Peterson’s interpretation of Jacobean tragedies. Peterson claims that “these tragedies pointedly attach death by manual strangulation or suffocation to the suggestion built into the text that the murdered women receive exemplary punishments for hints or open displays of transgressive sexuality” (p.97). So then, in *The Duchess of Malfi*, the Duchess receives the same treatment that a criminal would have received, and her punishment is directly linked to her sexual activity. While Peterson’s explanation accounts for the Duchess because she is strangled for her disobedience, Annabella’s death carried out by Giovanni perhaps resembles a significant turning point in the discipline of anatomy. Andrew Cunningham explains “in the early 1540s (the customary story goes) Andreas Vesalius, at Padua and Bologna, began to dispense with the offices of the *ostensor* and the *surgeon*, and began to carry out all three roles himself” (p.190). Giovanni, therefore, is not unlike the early-modern anatomist with a thirst for knowledge of the dissected, corporeal human body. Arguably, Vesalius’ process of anatomisation represents the strength of this thirst, given that, according to Sawday (1990) he “moved from one cadaver to another” (p.115) in one demonstration because decay proved to be an issue “in an age lacking in preservative agents” (p.115), in which “the anatomy could not be a leisurely affair” (p.115). Under this method, the demand for bodies grew and so even though “the legal source of such material was the scaffold ... Vesalius, in common with anatomists all over Europe, frequently had to find bodies from other, illicit sources” (p.115).

By acknowledging the significance of the cadaver under the knife of the eager anatomists like Vesalius, with his demand for bodies, we can draw the conclusion that from the mid-sixteenth century, through to the early seventeenth century, anatomy was pursued vigorously with the intention of not only determining the science of the body but also to satisfy the appetites of the anatomists. As Sawday explains (2013), “to see ‘the parts denied unto the eye’ was, of course, the mainspring of the licensed explorations of the anatomist” (p.211).

Where, then, is the female body placed amongst this setting? If it makes its way onto the anatomist’s table, what is the significance of it? Chris Laoutaris suggests that “nowhere does this open, enumeration of the illegal, anarchic and even necrophilic aspects of anatomy come to the fore as it does in Vesalius’ investigations into the female reproductive system” (p.28). Laoutaris’ opinion is well evidenced, given the compelling literature that it stems from. Vesalius’ own writings determine that he approaches the female body as a subject, even when that subject is still living. For example, Laoutaris explains: “In his *Letter on the China Root*, Vesalius reveals that even the virginity of a nun cannot be taken on trust until she is opened to reveal her ‘ovaries [which] however, were shrunken as happens to organs that are not used” (p.28). Effectively, Vesalius approaches the female reproductive body as a vessel with undeniable eroticism, as well as a subject which can only be validated and mastered by a qualified authority, like an anatomist. Unlike the birth chamber in which the maternal body is required to perform to usually supportive and experienced women, Vesalius’ approach to the body is interrogative, illicit and especially in light of his views of the nun, somewhat misogynistic.

I previously mentioned Peterson’s suggestion that sexually transgressive characters in Jacobean drama are strangled as a just punishment for their deviance, which, ultimately corresponds to punishments laid out by the law during this time period. Adapting on this, and

to reaffirm the misogynistic connotations drawn from Vesalius' works, Chris Laoutaris' detailed analysis of an extract from Vesalius' *Fabrica* recognises the theatricality of female execution. The excerpt, which he describes as "an unflinchingly macabre tale" (p.28), reads as follows:

The handsome mistress of a certain monk of San Antonio here [in Padua] died suddenly as though from strangulation of the uterus or some quickly devastating ailment and was snatched from her tomb by the Paduan students and carried off for public dissection. By remarkable industry they flayed the whole skin from the cadaver lest it be recognised by the monk who, with the relatives of his mistress, had complained to the municipal judge that the body had been stolen from its tomb.

(p.28)

Perhaps most noticeably, this 'macabre tale' is extremely sinister when considering the opinion of Peterson and the facts provided by Sawday, that anatomisation constituted a damning punishment of the transgressor. Is it likely that the identity of the 'mistress' gave license to the snatching of her body? Laoutaris argues "Vesalius' lively deliberations of the characters who make cameo appearances in his anatomical manual operate beyond the purely functional paradigms of medical explanation and form an integral part of what I am identifying as the largely unacknowledged *satiric* impulse of the early modern anatomy" (p.29). Just from one look at the case of the mistress and the monk, Vesalius' account does appear to be more of a scandalous tale than a real, unjust theft of a woman's body. I argue that early modern anatomy does not successfully attempt to observe the female body as a purely scientific subject; it is loaded with literary meaning that considers it as a spectacle and even as an erotic object, primarily because it is secretive. This aligns with the treatment of transgressive mothers in Renaissance revenge tragedy because they too are branded as whores for the concealment of their acts and bodies.

The first chapter of this thesis determines the significance of knowledge in relation to maternity within the plays. As a result of mothers attempting to conceal their pregnancies and maternal knowledge, male characters are faced with the task of prying to acquire information about the women's activities. This links to early modern anatomy because that too undertakes an investigation of the maternal body to retrieve information on what secrets it withheld. This chapter determines that female sexual knowledge is the root cause of transgression, while withholding paternal knowledge gives license to the violence that is enacted on maternal bodies.

Furthermore, the chapter will discuss the problem posed by female knowledge within patriarchal early modern society. I will argue that maternal knowledge formed by women was faced with the threat of male domination during this time period. Additionally, the anxiety surrounding female knowledge is enhanced by the inclusion of more minor female characters in the plays, who choose to subvert patriarchal expectations of women and are, therefore, punished for doing so. The primary reason that they are killed for their disobedience, is to regain patriarchal control by eliminating the threat of further rebellion towards it.

In the second chapter, I analyse the role of fruit within the texts and how it can affect and symbolise maternity. I incorporate early modern texts which present opinions of fruit that regard it as having both medicinal properties and negative effects, if it is consumed out of moderation. Again, it is double-edged like the maternal body itself. Fruit aids the understanding of several aspects of this study, including lust, pregnancy and the offspring that is produced by it. It plays a pivotal role in *The Duchess of Malfi* and appears as a link to Annabella's pregnancy in *'Tis Pity she's a Whore*. I will also explain how other forms of consumption influence the presentation of maternal characters, such as men regarding women as foodstuffs and Tamora eating her children in a pie.

The third chapter connects the stage to the anatomy theatre to affirm that the maternal body was constructed as a spectacle and a transgressive figure, which authorised the destruction of the body to the benefit of male characters and anatomists alike. I also argue that male characters and anatomists share the approach they take towards the maternal body because in both cases, they view the body as innately sexual and transgressive. This chapter identifies that scenes in the plays incorporate dismembered body parts to resonate with the early modern anatomy theatre. In these settings, men hold intellectual authority and present their findings to a bewildered and curious audience. Furthermore, I argue that the maternal body is presented as potentially threatening to the order of patriarchal rule in early modern society because it is powerful in its own right and can mask its contents, which prove to be concerns of male characters in the plays and cause extreme and violent reactions on their behalf.

Knowledge: “Her ways are like the ways of a serpent: hard to be found out”

It is apparent in *Titus Andronicus*, *The Duchess of Malfi* and *'Tis Pity she's a Whore* that transgressive female characters partake in socially complex and unacceptable relationships. Aaron the Moor is characterised as racially and socially inferior to Tamora, while Antonio is the Duchess' steward whose social status is beneath hers and Giovanni is Annabella's biological brother; no doubt the most taboo element of the play. Despite the socially condemnable features of their relationships, the mothers are drawn together because of their perceived sexual desire, which becomes chiefly responsible for their mistreatment. This is made possible through their relationships, which allow transgressive characters to act upon their sexual desire. Thus, it is their learned experience which solidifies their identities as sexual transgressors; the sexual knowledge that they acquire cannot be reversed. Instead, it must be stopped. Lisa Hopkins (2015) suggests that “it could be argued that all Shakespearean males have a fundamental insecurity about knowledge in general and knowledge about the sexual fidelity of women in particular” (p.192), which perhaps resonates with why female sexual knowledge is forcefully negated by the male characters in the plays. In this section, I examine the sexual knowledge of transgressive female characters to show that it is the foreground of their misfortune and eventual demise. Furthermore, maternal agency is founded upon sexual desire and knowledge in these plays, illustrating that the maternal body is characterised as lustful and tainted.

To begin, Tamora is certainly the most overtly sexual maternal character of the three incorporated into this study. Jonathan Bate (2018) takes note of the sexual significance of her name, explaining “her sexual love (amor) and its object (the Moor) may be heard within her name” (p.165). Her sexuality manifests itself in her choice to love the shunned Aaron, which takes place in the ominous setting of the forest. Many critics have established that Tamora

functions through her 'hybrid' sexuality, or double gender, in that she denies traditional concepts of femininity and uses masculine political power to manipulate events in the play. However, I argue that her both female and maternal body provide the essential properties that enable her to enact revenge upon her enemies and increase her power. In his first description of Tamora, Aaron refers to her as "this queen, / This goddess, this Semiramis, this nymph" (I.i.520-1). He conflates terms that suggest she is, from his view, simultaneously sexually deviant and divine, given the likely pun on 'quean', immediately juxtaposed with 'goddess'. Aaron is very much aware of Tamora's versatile maternal agency, as his opinion of her derives from her ability to deceive the Emperor. Furthermore, he reveres her as a 'goddess' because of his sexual appreciation for her, thereby reinforcing her as an idol in the eyes of the corrupt Aaron.

Despite their contrasting identities as widow and virgin, the Duchess and Annabella are also bestowed with sexual assumptions of their sex. In the first act of *The Duchess of Malfi*, Ferdinand's first lengthy discussion with his sister revolves around her sexual expertise. He tells her: "you are a widow: / you know already what man is" (I.ii.203-4). Effectively, Ferdinand voices his concern for the potential volatility of the Duchess' sexuality which could, in his view, be damaging for the family bloodline. While the Duchess is defined by her brothers as a danger because of her already apparent sexual desire, Annabella is sexualised by Giovanni because of her beauty and chasteness, all of which transforms because of her consent to her brother's use of her body, which he terms as "the rape of life and beauty" (V.vi.17). Both women are sexualised and exploited at the pleasure of their brothers, who ultimately treat them as sexual objects. However, they are also framed in this way by their brothers to alleviate any responsibility and reaffirm female sexual desire as the origin of the mothers' own downfalls.

This is especially reaffirmed through the punishment of female characters associated with the Duchess and Annabella who, when it is revealed that they were aware of the circumstances, are viewed as the immoral overseers of the illicit relationships. Even women who are not closely attached to the maternal characters are eventually killed because of these events. The general rule appears to be, in each of these texts, that women who attempt to disrupt the stability of patriarchal society cannot continue to live within it. This is most boldly shown in threatening attempts, from male characters, to control the family succession and censor women who try to rid themselves of what is expected of them.

Putana, described as a “rare phenomenon in Renaissance drama” (p.2) by Lisa Hopkins (1998) for her occupation as a ‘tut’ress’, presents a satirised perception of female knowledge, particularly illuminated by her name’s literal translation as ‘whore’. Putana does not provide Annabella with what would be acknowledged as educational tutoring; the only form of ‘tutoring’ that she performs is weighing up which of Annabella’s suitors would be most suitable. She becomes rather animated by placing herself in Annabella’s shoes and “prat’st” (I.ii.84) on about Soranzo, who is suitable because he is “wholesome” (I.ii.90), “and a man, sure” (I.ii.92). Her ‘tutoring’ comes in the form of calculating which man would be the greatest sexual performer. Putana advises Annabella: “commend a man for his qualities, but / take a husband as he is a plain-sufficient, naked man” (I.ii.96-7). She is effectively constructed as shallow, lusty and foolish. Despite telling Annabella that she should “take anybody: father or brother, all is one” (II.i.4), Putana is mortified when she realises that Annabella’s indulgence in her sexuality manifests itself physically in the form of her pregnancy: “we are all undone, quite undone” (III.iii.1). Her folly is used against her by Vasquez in Act 4, where his deception rewards him with Annabella’s lover’s name. He says to Putana that she should “relieve [Annabella’s] present discomforts, pacify my lord, and gain yourself everlasting love and preferment” (IV.ii.200). Vasquez deliberately exploits her

position, which is alike to the midwife's in that she is a "dual figure" (p.89). Jenstad (2007) pins this duality on two expectations of midwives: that they were supposed to keep "what actually happened within the gynocentric space" (p.89) yet were also expected to divulge the name of the true father of the child (p.89). "The latter requirement" in Jenstad's words, "makes the midwife the agent of patriarchy, even suggesting that she has the ability to discern whether or not a woman is lying about the father of her child" (p.89). Though Putana is not a midwife, she possesses maternal knowledge. It is, as Corinne Abate (2010) points out, "that harbinger of deceit throughout all of literature 'trust | me'" (p.100) which causes Putana to reveal Giovanni's name. After disclosing to Giovanni that Annabella is pregnant, he asks Putana: "With child? How dost thou know't?" (III.iii.9). She responds by declaring that her experience has come with age: "Am I, at these years, ignorant what the meanings of / qualms and water-pangs be, or changing colours, / queasiness of stomachs, pukings and another thing that I could name?" (III.iii.10-13). Interestingly, she tantalisingly offers 'another thing' that she 'could' name to Giovanni and the audience alike. She flaunts her knowledge of maternity and the female body and forces Giovanni to wander off in speculation of what 'another thing' might be, even if he already does know it.

Annabella's identity depends upon her relationship to sex, which evidently shifts across the course of *'Tis Pity*. As Gillian Woods (2014) explains, Annabella is "profoundly fluid" (p.125) because of her identity changes: "physically, she changes from virginity to pregnancy, socially from maid to wife to whore, and spiritually from innocent to sinner to redeemed penitent" (p.125). All of these labels are linked to Annabella's sexual knowledge which she first gains from going away with her brother Giovanni, "to court in smiles, to kiss and sleep" (I.ii.260). The pair return in the second act, from consummating their relationship, and it begins with Giovanni's announcement of his sister's transformation: "Come, Annabella: no more sister now, / But love – a name more gracious" (II.i.1). While she has, according to

Giovanni, left her title as his sister behind and replaced it with the role of his lover, she is also acknowledged for her sexual difference. Giovanni's shift in his use of language from affectionately referring to Annabella as his 'love', to then discussing her physical change in quite a vulgar manner, is abrupt. In a sense, it marks the way in which the treatment she receives will also be changed because of her newly gained sexual experience. Giovanni observes: "I marvel why the chaster of your sex / Should think this pretty toy called maidenhead / So strange a loss, when being lost, 'tis nothing / And you are still the same" (II.i.9-12). Here, Giovanni opens a debate with his sister and lover on the meaning of virginity and more bluntly, her hymen which confirms his objectification of her once he has sexually experienced her body. Furthermore, instead of saying 'it' is still the same, Giovanni generalises and says 'you', as though Annabella were a vessel created for his sexual pleasure. It is Giovanni who reconfigures his sisters' body from virgin to sexual object but because of this, it is Annabella who comes to represent the depravity of their relationship, as her body more clearly demonstrates their movement from purity to sexual contamination.

Annabella's change in character through her base relationship with Giovanni further brands her as sexually transgressive through unintentional and comical remarks made by her father Florio and Giovanni. For example, Florio comments: "I think my girl hath not quite forgot / To touch an instrument" (II.i.73-4) and he praises Giovanni for fetching the Friar when Annabella becomes sick: "thou herein / Hast showed a Christian's care, a brother's love" (III.iv.31-2). The deep irony in these statements reflects Florio's complete obliviousness to his children's affairs and he is, therefore, presented as foolish and weak because he is not in control of his family. There is a sense of pity for Florio because of this, as his main wish through the play is for his daughter to continue his family bloodline. Therefore, Annabella whose sexual deviance is the source of those comically ironic comments, is shaped as deceptive because she is secretly rebelling against her father's plans for her future. This is all

achieved by allowing the audience to witness intimate scenes between Annabella and Giovanni in which the solitary focus is Annabella's body, while preventing characters like Florio from learning about their business for most of the play.

While Giovanni is the leading influence of Annabella's sexual meaning through *'Tis Pity she's a Whore*, the Duchess' brothers, despite not being sexually involved with her, still ensure they assert their dominance when it comes to governing her sexual desire. In Margaret Lael Mikesell's work 'Catholic Widows in "The Duchess of Malfi"', Mikesell (1983) discusses the differences between Painter's portrayal of the Duchess in *The Palace of Pleasure* and in Webster's play. She suggests:

The Catholic widow found in *The Duchess of Malfi* can be traced to the version of the tale appearing in *The Palace of Pleasure*. In Painter's narrative, the Duchess, plagued by "a certain vnacquaynted lust", decides she must remarry, after some deliberation she carefully chooses Antonio, falls in love and marries. Although the Duchess is treated not unsympathetically, she is presented as acting predictably but unwisely. She conforms to the Catholic vision of the widow who remarries only if she cannot "contain"

...

In his tragedy, Webster shifts this image from the character of the Duchess into the fantasies of her brothers. It is exclusively in their imagination that all the trappings of the "lusty widow", as Ferdinand calls his sister, appear.

(p.271).

Mikesell's argument is that the aspect of the Duchess' identity as a 'lusty' widow in Webster's play originates entirely in the imaginations of the Duchess' brothers. This is shown more boldly in the character of Ferdinand, who becomes furious at the thought of his sister becoming unchaste. He often concocts images of his sister, which are particularly hateful and obsessive. At one point, he actually imagines the Duchess, first as a mocking hyena and then he pictures her: "Happily with some strong-thighed bargeman, / Or one o' th' wood-yard that can quoit the sledge / Or toss the bar; or else some lovely squire / That carries coals up to her privy lodgings" (II.v.42-5). Much like Florio's and Giovanni's unintentional jokes which are

references to Annabella's unchasteness, Ferdinand's fantasies construct the Duchess as sexually immoral, particularly, in this case, because she is engaged with a man who is socially inferior to her. This would inevitably bring shame upon her and her brothers. It is the ferocity of Ferdinand's imagination that will eventually identify her as a "notorious strumpet" (II.v.6) who is "loose i' th' hilts" (II.v.5).

As a result of the Duchess and Annabella's participation in illicit relationships, of which the primary function is sexual activity, those who choose to be complicit and keep their affairs a secret are also held accountable for their misdemeanour. Lisa Hopkins (2002), speaking about Putana, suggests "knowing what one should not is rewarded by a blindness which, in Putana's case, proves to be a literal, not a redemptive one – no 'cloud of unknowing' but a state of terrifying vulnerability and disempowerment in which one can be led unresisting to her death" (p.134). I agree that Putana's punishment is directly related to the knowledge she acquires from Giovanni and Annabella's relationship, even though Vasquez sensationalises it for his own pleasure. However, I believe Vasquez enforces this punishment to dissolve the anxiety felt by himself and other characters. It is a way for them to alleviate the sense of intellectual authority caused by Putana 'knowing what one should not'. Hopkins suggests that Vasquez values knowledge for what it is in itself and so, I would say, that his decision to gag Putana is because he cannot stand to hear her any longer. He essentially shuts her up to retain the authority of his own, acquired knowledge from her. I rather think that Putana *is* more unknowing than unresisting because she was once remarkably sure of her own knowledge and opinion and it is that air of confidence which is taken away from her and replaced with blindness. She can no longer be deceitful and her morally corrupt position as a tutoress is also unearthed at this point, by, ironically, her own confession. Therefore, her punishment is double; she is condemned for accepting Annabella's sexual involvement with Giovanni as well as her own immoral beliefs and ideals. Vasquez violently threatens to silence her

altogether: “If she roars, slit her nose” (IV.iii.232). His authority is made permanent in Putana’s last line before her imminent death, which is a plea: “Vasquez, Vasquez!” (IV.iii.227). After this, it is finalised that Vasquez has received Putana’s knowledge and destroyed its source because Putana was clearly a threat. Her flippant attitude towards sex and depraved beliefs about incest characterise her as a dangerous possessor of Annabella and Giovanni’s truth. Vasquez, on the other hand, configures himself as a cunning victor, who restores moral order by using the information he has seized for his own benefit: “I must to my lord, and tutor him better” (IV.iii.239). Putana’s ill-gotten knowledge is recycled and placed into the hands of men who see it as their moral obligation, and right to revenge, to put a stop to Annabella and Giovanni’s relationship. In the following portion of this chapter, I will assess the ways in which female knowledge is undermined in order to debase it, to thereby re-establish a sense of male authority.

Corrine Abate suggests: “despite their fallen moral standings, Putana, Hippolita and Annabella come to ends that I contend are unwarranted by and disproportionate to their given crimes” (p.105). While I agree with Abate’s opinion, I do think it is fair to say that though unwarranted, these punishments are justified by male characters, through one specific aspect of Putana’s, Hippolita’s and Annabella’s agencies; all of these women attempt to protest against their punishments.

‘Tis Pity she’s a Whore is a play which presents a whole array of female characters. It features a virgin, a whore, a widow and a ‘tutoress’/gossip. Only one of these characters survives the play and she is perhaps one of the least debated characters in the play. Philotis, niece of Richardetto, is not given much dialogue in the text, despite the fact that she witnesses the deaths of her potential love interest Bergetto and her aunt Hippolita. As a result

of the rising violent atmosphere in Parma, Richardetto advises Philotis to leave, in “pity of [her] youth” (IV.ii.14):

Hie to Cremona now, as Fortune leads;
Your home your cloister, your best friends your beads
Your chaste and single life shall crown your birth.
Who dies a virgin lives a saint on earth.

(IV.ii.26-8)

Richardetto’s suggestion is important to the construction of femininity within the play, primarily because Philotis is the only woman to survive unscathed. It is her submission which secures her safety. Additionally, Richardetto’s vision for Philotis’ tranquil and chaste future links her to a briefly mentioned mythological goddess in the text. In Act 3, scene 9, Florio mutters: “Justice is fled to heaven and comes no nearer” (III.ix.61). Philotis’ departure can be linked to Florio’s statement because her reasons for leaving bare resemblance to the tale, in classical mythology, of Justice. It is likely that Florio is referring to Astraea, who is commonly known as the goddess of purity and justice. Astraea is known for her escape from earth because of human crimes like murder. Hence, Richardetto’s advice to Philotis to leave because of “these woes” (IV.ii.16) finds its roots in similar motives as those that drove Astraea away from the earth. Frances A. Yates, recalling Aratus’ telling of the myth, writes: “when the virgin Justice left the world in the iron age, she took up her abode in the heavens as the constellation Virgo; the figure of the Just virgin now shines in the sky” (p.28). Like Astraea, Richardetto implies that Philotis’ devoted journey to Cremona, where she shall submit herself to a solitary life and a preservation of her chasteness, shall secure her good fame as a ‘saint’; essentially, the journey will transform her into an idol as did Astraea’s from earth to heaven because of her permanent virginity.

By welcoming her uncle’s vision for her future and her almost immediate acceptance of becoming a nun, Philotis eliminates a threat that she could pose to the men of Parma. Laurie

Finke (referred to by Abate, 2010) suggests that: “all women are objects, defined solely by their sexuality; they are all also potentially sexual threats because they are all potentially false lovers” (p.108). In removing herself from the chaotic events of Parma, Philotis erases this possibility of being a sexual threat and in doing so, she erases herself as a threat to patriarchal ruling and joining the other female characters in their ill-fated demises. Abate (2010) claims that “if Philotis were to remain in Parmesan society, especially given that her chosen mate has recently been killed, she too would inevitably become a whore” (p.108). With this in mind, I interpret Philotis’ acceptance of her uncles’ advice as a vow of submission to patriarchal ruling. If Philotis cannot stay in Parma because it is too dangerous and depraved, she must go to a nunnery so that Richardetto can ensure that she is physically and spiritually preserved. Her devotion to prayers and chaste vows, however, reveals the most important aspect of her compliance. Philotis is ultimately silenced given that she gives up her rights to experience the world, both in body and mind. Early modern conduct and theological texts, in some cases, suggest that silence is a preferred characteristic of women. For example, a marital conduct book written by Puritan clergymen Robert Dod and John Cleaver has a substantial number of claims to make about a woman’s use of speech. The book says that “the wise woman” (p.80) is “not bold but bashful; not full of words, pouring out all in her mind” (p.80), “silence is far better than such unsavoury talk” (p.80), “She must avoid gossiping further than the law of good neighbourhood doth require” (p.79). Dod and Cleaver seem to suggest that a woman who engages too much in idle conversation or ‘unsavoury talk’ diminishes her own sex and deviates from social expectations of herself. In Thomas Becon’s *The book of matrimony*, Becon goes into detail about the ideal formulation of a woman’s use of speech:

It is the duty of an honest wife in all her acts and deeds to be chaste and pure: so likewise must she provide that her words be utterly estranged from all wantonness, jesting, filth speaking, and whatsoever may offend chaste eares ... It is unseemly for a man to use unclean

talk: but for a woman to use it, it is more than twice unseemly, seeing that there is nothing that so garnisheth a woman as silence. Few words in a woman is ever most commendable: even as nothing doth more discommend a woman then the multitude of words, according to the common proverb: a woman should be seen and not heard. It is good for every honest woman to remember this saying of our saviour Christ, *that at the day of judgment we shall render an accompt of every idle word that we have spoken* [Matt .12]

(p.112)

By looking at the disobedience of the women in *'Tis Pity* from this angle, it is fair to say that it is a tragedy in which male characters reflect an overarching preference for women who comply with their wishes and punish those who protest against their own ill-treatment. The mouth, therefore, is another bodily vehicle through which women can betray themselves because their verbal protestation is unwelcome and 'unsavoury'.

Philotis' quiet departure is entirely juxtaposed by Annabella's entrance in the following scene. Soranzo drags her in; he is described as "unbraced, [with his sword drawn]" (p.545) and he yells: "Come, strumpet, famous whore!" (IV.iii.1). This is a scene which depends on speech to illustrate the ferocity of Annabella's identity as a whore, which, fused with Philotis' prior scene, creates a virgin/whore dichotomy. Soranzo repeatedly condemns Annabella throughout the scene, recycling the word again and again: "famous whore" (IV.iii.1), "notable harlot" (IV.iii.4), "cunning whoredom" (IV.iii.7), "whore of whores" (IV.iii.20), "Excellent quean" (IV.iii.24), "whore" (IV.iii.58). His regurgitated use of the word complies with Sandra Clark's suggestion that "when [Annabella's] lovers Giovanni and Soranzo believe themselves in control over her, she is in terms of neoplatonic discourse a goddess and a divine being; when they can control her no more, there is no word for her but 'whore'" (p.65). I would stretch this opinion further, however, as all female characters who cannot be controlled are, in one way or another, reduced to whores. Philotis is the only exception to this occurrence, as she is bestowed with the identity of a 'goddess and a divine

being' specifically because she was successfully controlled. Furthermore, Kay Stanton argues that the word 'whore' is used throughout Shakespeare's dramas as a "male-initiated inscription onto the female as scapegoat" (p.98). This is particularly apparent in the anger fuelled scene between Soranzo and Annabella because Soranzo certainly portrays himself as a victim of Annabella's sexual deviance. In Henry Bullinger's *The Christian state of matrimony*, Bullinger writes about husbands as victims of whoredom:

Go the shameless harlots forth still in their own perdition, vice and abomination, yea and undertake to blaspheme wedlock and somewhat to excuse their own mischief ... Filth is filthiness still, although the filthy swine delight therein. They speak much of evil wives which, when some men had taken, they could not be rid of them with any fair means. And yet they cannot leave their vain, crafty and unfaithful harlots of whom they themselves are mocked and scorned to the uttermost.

(p.107)

Bullinger illustrates whores as those women who relish in their own depravity and take delight in destroying and insulting the holy state of matrimony, while those men who fall for whoredom are victims of it. This is reinforced by the idea that those men are 'mocked' for engaging in whoredom and further on Bullinger discusses that husbands are duped for their money. He states: "let no reasonable man therefore be snared still in whoredom by such harlots ... Whoredom (no doubt) hath much more disquietness, anguish and trouble than hath the state of holy marriage" (p.108). The fact that, in Soranzo's eyes, his wife *is* a whore, however, only adds to his shame. He cries: "could none but I / Be picked out to be cloak to your close tricks?" (IV.iii.11), "Was there no man in Parma to be bawd / To your loose, cunning whoredom else but I?" (IV.iii.7). Soranzo cannot believe his misfortune; he appears to suffer at the hands of Annabella and is aware that her illicit affairs will and have humiliated him.

Women are further vilified in the plays for speaking out of line and engaging in conversation with one another by being termed and perceived as ‘gossips’, like Putana. The term ‘gossip’, according to Sara D. Luttfiring (2016), endured a shift in meaning through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Luttfiring details the etymology of the word, in *Bodies, Speech and Reproductive Knowledge in Early Modern England*:

Beginning around the end of the sixteenth century, the word shifted to mean the women who attended a labouring mother, and more generally women who engaged in idle talk. During the seventeenth century, the verb form of this latter usage developed, so that ‘gossip’ could refer both to women who talked and to the kind of talk in which they engaged.

(p.25)

Luttfiring’s study of the word indicates that during the period, ‘gossip’ was a word which generally referred to women and more specifically, the association between women and maternity. This knowledge calls into question the torment and death that such women who are deemed to be ‘gossips’ receive in the plays included in this thesis. Arguably, the fact that characters such as Putana are put to death for their role as gossips suggests a male-based fear of the content and act of gossip, which could perhaps be a threat to patriarchal control. These characters are often teased or fooled to give the impression that they are ridiculous and unwise, which ultimately slights the knowledge they possess as well as the women themselves.

For example, in *Titus Andronicus*, Aaron asks the nurse that attended his child’s birth who else was in the room at the time and this is the exchange that follows:

NURSE. Cornelia the midwife, and myself,

And no one else but the delivered empress.

AARON. The empress, the midwife and yourself.

Two may keep counsel when the third’s away.

Go to the empress, tell her this I said: *He kills her.*

‘Wheak, wheak!’ – so cries a pig prepared to the spit.

(IV.ii.142-148).

His decision to kill the nurse is based on his calculation that there were one too many women in the room at the time of the birth and therefore, two of them could conspire against the other when they are alone with one another. While this is fairly logical considering Aaron's unfavourable position and isolation because of Tamora's insistence on the baby's death, he attributes his reasoning to sex. Demetrius asks Aaron "What mean'st thou, Aaron? Wherefore didst thou this?" (IV.ii.149) and Aaron responds, knowledgably, with: "O Lord, sir, 'tis a deed of policy: / Shall she live to betray this guilt of ours? / A long-tongued, babbling gossip? No, lords, no" (IV.ii.150-3). Aaron's anxiety about the possibility of women spreading secrets seeps through this passage and he justifies his act of murder by criticising them for being 'gossips'. By killing the nurse, he effectively eradicates the ability for the women to talk about his secrets and produce their own.

The nurse from *Titus Andronicus* does not stand as a lone example of a woman killed because of the threat of her maternal knowledge. In *'Tis Pity she's a Whore*, Annabella's tutoress Putana is quite literally gagged by Vasquez for her admittance to having known about Giovanni and Annabella's relationship. Vasquez deliberately engages in menial conversation with Putana to acquire the information that Giovanni is the father of Annabella's child. Furthermore, he also flatters her to charm her into confession: "sure you know a great deal" (IV.iii.194), "you would not betray [Annabella] to any affliction for the world" (IV.iii.198).

In *The Duchess of Malfi*, an old woman who is possibly about to attend the Duchess' birth chamber in this scene is interrupted by Bosola, despite her attempted dismissal of him: "I am in haste, sir" (II.ii.2) and another attempt to disengage, "I will hear no more" (II.ii.10). He inappropriately taunts her by crudely discussing women's sexual affairs: "some of you give entertainment / for pure love" (II.ii.20) and somewhat sinisterly commands her to "go give your foster-daughters good counsel. / Tell them that the devil takes delight to hang at a

woman's girdle" (II.ii.22). Given that midwives were often thought of as foster mothers to the women they served and would usually stay with them for a few days leading up to the birth, the old woman's 'foster-daughters' are probably pregnant women. Bosola's persistence to feed the old woman's ear with the degradation of these women is also reflective of the old woman herself because of her intimate relationship with them. She defends her sex: "You are still abusing women!" (II.ii.10). Bosola's treatment of the old woman is a clear attempt to undermine her job while it is also a resentful jeer; she is on her way to a secret meeting which he is unable to attend. This exchange echoes a wider tug-of-war over maternal knowledge and who got to be the chief of it. Bosola's derogatory handling of the old woman voices an early modern societal belief that midwives were not, technically, professionals.

Anthony Fletcher (1995) records this opinion in *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800*. He writes: "The exclusion of midwives from professional standing as the medical profession extended its expertise in the fields of gynaecology and obstetrics is a classic example of how women were swept aside by male assertiveness" (p.238). Fletcher's observation relays the injustice that female midwives, who held the most physical knowledge about pregnancy than any other body of people, were not deemed as professionals because, as Houlebrooke (2014) asserts, they "underwent no proper training. Such skill as they possessed, they owed to experience and inherited lore" (p.129). David Harley (2005) suggests that "midwifery can perhaps best be understood as a skill rather than as a trade" (p.27). Yet, midwives were also essential to male practitioners because of the information they gained in the wholly female space of the birth chamber. Adrian Wilson (cited by L. Pollock), reiterates the importance of female knowledge on the subject of birth: "Before childbirth belonged to medicine, it belonged to women ... women had constructed a coherent system for the management of childbirth, a system based on their own collective culture and satisfying their

own material needs” (p.288). Male characters, therefore, reflect an incessant desire to control the functions of maternity, or to at least attempt to assert their dominance in the face of it. This is also true in relation to paternity, which features as a heavy focus in each text.

The final segment of this chapter draws upon the significance of paternal knowledge in the plays. Speaking of the early modern period, Kathryn Moncrief (2007) proposes: “In an economic culture predicated on patrilineal inheritance, anxieties about legitimate paternity are rampant” (p.34). This is certainly relayed in *The Duchess of Malfi* and *'Tis Pity she's a Whore*, in which mothers are able to conceal the truth of the father of their children. While it is possible for male characters to detect pregnancy, paternity is perhaps the most invisible aspect of it. This crucial information is held back by transgressive mothers, in an attempt to hide the evidence of their wrongdoing and save themselves from harm. Additionally, this information can be withheld to demonstrate the power of the maternal body. As a result, male characters express great concern and anxiety because of the fear that they have not been successful at maintaining ‘legitimate’ maternity, as well as failing to control the women themselves. I argue, therefore, that withholding paternal knowledge emphasises the authority of the maternal body and in doing so, male characters take violent revenge upon maternal bodies in an attempt to reassert patriarchal authority. Male characters consequently reflect a masculine challenge and threat to the capabilities of maternal agency, through violent dominance.

In *The Duchess of Malfi*, Bosola becomes determined to unveil the paternal truth of the Duchess’ pregnancy. After he picks up the freshly made horoscope, which has accidentally been dropped by Antonio, for the Duchess’ newborn, he mutters: “If only one could find the father now – but that / Time will discover” (II.iii.73-4). Bosola voices the battle that exists between his own ability to decipher the Duchess’ body and the Duchess’ maternal agency, as the only way to uncover the paternity of her child relies on her accidentally revealing it.

'Time' will tell, either because Bosola will hatch a plan to extract this knowledge from her, or she will eventually make a mistake. Similarly, Vasquez warns Soranzo not to immediately act upon the revelation of the imminent birth of Annabella's illegitimate child. Vasquez wets Soranzo's appetite for revenge through dramatizing the possibility of discovering the father: "To know what ferret it was that haunted your cunny-berry, there's the cunning" (IV.iii.154). Both remarks focus on two key aspects of the search for paternity. Firstly, Bosola's frustration speaks to Susan J. Wiseman's (1990) suggestion that "the body does not of itself disclose the identity of the child's father" (p.180). Secondly, Vasquez' illustration of the 'ferret' haunting the 'cunny-berry' reflects the baseness of Giovanni and Annabella's act but more importantly it reiterates the wife as an object of economic exchange. Now that Annabella has been passed from her father Florio, to her new husband Soranzo, he becomes the gatekeeper of her body and so he is expected to control its use. Bosola and Vasquez choose to keep maternal characters alive because of the precious possibility of paternity being revealed to them. Vasquez also reminds Soranzo of his own vulnerable situation, in order to persuade him to pursue the knowledge of the father, instead of killing Annabella in a frenzy. He rhetorically asks Soranzo: "know you how, or by whom?" (IV.iii.151), which emphasises Soranzo's uninformed position and the possibility that his reputation could crumble if he was seen to be a husband who could not control his wife. The only way to re-establish his control is to be patient and uncover the father. He acknowledges this by agreeing to let Vasquez figure it out, saying: "Delay in vengeance gives a heavier blow" (IV.iii.161).

Kathryn Moncrief (2007) suggests: "The stress on reading the signs available in the body and the problems inherent in attempting to do so apparent across the printed guides also surface tantalisingly on stage" (p.34). Like Bosola, Vasquez blames his inability to discover the pregnancy on Annabella's clothing: "If the lower parts of a she-tailor's cunning can cover such a swelling in the stomach, I'll never / blame a false stitch in a shoe whiles I live again"

(IV.iii.168-70). This problem not only manifests itself in the form of clothing but Soranzo's visualisation of the illegitimate pregnancy is formed through his debasement of the unborn, unknown child: "Now I must be the dad / To all that gallimaufry that's stuffed / In thy corrupted, bastard-bearing womb?" (IV.ii.13-4). The shape of the body and its contents are detected by Soranzo, presumably because of his attempt to consummate his marriage with Annabella, only to discover that he has been beaten to it.

The Duchess attempts to provide Ferdinand with the truth about her husband: "Will you see my husband?" (III.ii.87). It is the revelation of paternity which will authorise his violence; the very thing which for so long he had attempted to monitor through his own constrained means. Without this knowledge, he does not have enough vigour for vengeance, given his spiteful response: "Yes, if I could change / Eyes with a basilisk" (III.ii.88), prior to which he had remarked: "Till I know who leaps my sister, I'll not stir. / That known, I'll find scorpions to string my whips, / And fix her in a general eclipse" (II.v.78-80). His own incestuous fascination with the Duchess causes him to wait for its discovery: "If thou love [Antonio], cut out thine own tongue / Lest it bewray him" (III.ii.109). Ferdinand affirms that verbal confession is the only possibility of accessing the truth because the Duchess's body cannot reveal the father of her children. Susan J Wiseman (1995) details the consequences of this: "As the body of the woman did not reveal the child's father, pregnant women could be subjected to mental and physical torture to elicit a confession of paternity" (p.213).

Punishments by the law during this period were naturally damning and violent towards women because they were the vehicles expected to deliver legitimate offspring. Wiseman details a few examples of such punishments in her chapter of *Renaissance Bodies*, 'Representing the Incestuous Body':

If a woman had committed fornication, she might be declared a common whore and punished with banishment for a year, fined, whipped, put in the stocks and required to confess, wearing a white sheet in front of the church...

In 1624 a statute was passed whereby women who gave birth to an illegitimate child that would be dependent on the parish might be sentenced to one year's hard labour

(p.185)

These punishments brand the female body as the instigator of sexual transgression by enacting violence on it and demanding it to be embellished in signs of its fault, like whip bruises and white sheets. Sexual transgression which breached patriarchal operations to maintain the production of legitimate children, was not only condemned on the stage by male characters; the violence that ensued on the stage was perhaps an exaggerated but apparent reflection of the punishments that were endured by mothers during the early seventeenth century.

“You are too much swell’d already”: Identifying symptoms of pregnancy and moral transgression through the consumption of fruit

In the introduction to this thesis, I discussed Moncrief and McPherson’s observation that maternity was considered to be a vast and complex subject in early modern society which could reflect and reveal beliefs about politics, medicine and other strands of culture. In her book *Food in Shakespeare*, Joan Fitzpatrick (2007) makes a similar connection using the relationship between people and food, given that in her words, food can be indicative of “one’s position in relation to complex ideas about rank, nationality and spiritual well-being” (p.3). Fitzpatrick’s argument links to Moncrief and McPherson’s, by showing that food can possess the same indicative quality as maternity.

Additionally, dietary recommendations in early modern texts are not a far cry from the advice in conduct and medical manuals which attempt to control maternity and the conduct of women; at times dietary advice is incorporated into those texts. Food appears in early modern literature, therefore, as another accessory to ensure the smooth-running of patriarchally enforced instructions for expectant mothers and women generally. A specific area of interest for this study is Fitzpatrick’s realisation that “careful consumption might correct moral as well as physical shortcomings” (p.3). This is something which is clearly noted by characters and breached in the plays. The fact that maternity is indicative, emphasised by Moncrief and McPherson, cannot be relied on fully in the plays because the concealment of pregnancy makes it more difficult to discern. Therefore, as Bosola in *The Duchess of Malfi* is aware, it is useful to turn to food as a tool for acquiring information about maternity and morality. I will examine how food is used as a test of maternal characters’ moral fibre and use early modern beliefs about food to adapt on conceptualisations of maternity.

The importance of ‘careful consumption’ is relayed in a text, first published in English in 1529, by Juan Luis Vives. Vives was appointed by Catherine of Aragon to write the text for her daughter, a very young Mary, who would later become the first queen regnant of England. Titled *The instruction of a Christian woman*, Vives lays out advice for how a woman should conduct herself in a variety of instances. Most importantly to this study, however, he explains how the body should be ‘ordered’. He issues a warning to women, that they can be a threat unto themselves: “They ought to remember that our first mother for meat was cast out of paradise” (Aughterson, 1995, p.69). In this one sentence, Vives outlines the connections between maternity, food and sin by claiming that “our first mother’s” act of consumption was the damning cause of her condemnation. Eve’s inability to resist the food she was tempted with causes Vives to advise that parents keep a hold of their daughters: “specially when they grow from child’s state, and hold them from men’s company” (p.69). He fears that they too will act upon their lust and therefore become tainted by immorality. While the consequences of failing to moderately consume are severe for women in general, pregnant women in particular are pressured to follow this instruction. According to Linda Pollock (2013), in *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England*, “childbearing women were entreated to be more than usually solicitous of their welfare” (p.49). Furthermore, moderateness was promoted particularly because of a circulated belief presented in printed advice texts, that “all pregnancies were potential miscarriages” (p.50). The responsibility of the pregnant woman is emboldened by the dependency upon her to monitor her own wellbeing to ensure the safe delivery of her child. Pollock concisely details the ideal dietary balance of a pregnant woman, which relies on temperance:

The mother was to ensure that she took in enough nutrients to sustain the foetus, otherwise it would leave the womb in search of nourishment, but not too much food which may suffocate the baby. A temperate diet was best, one which provided adequate nourishment for the mother

and foetus, while minimising digestive difficulties and avoiding foods that might bring on dangerous situations such as constipation, vomiting, terms and fluxes

(p.50)

Pollock's description suggests that early modern mothers had to consciously measure their consumption, not only to ensure the health of their child but also to preserve their morality. If their unborn child suffocates, it is their acts of consumption and bodies which are accused of the suffocation.

This dietary restriction is depicted as increasingly difficult when factoring in the sexual lust that is echoed by individuals like Juan Luis Vives in the early modern period. Another popular text entitled *The English housewife* by Gervase Markham also intermingles diet with sex and morality. Markham imagines the ideal housewife in his writing: "let her diet be wholesome and clean ... cooked with care and diligence: let it be rather to satisfy nature, than her affections" (p.248). Markham displays a preference for women satisfying their appetites for the purpose of good health, rather than for their own means. His language suggests that a disciplined wife is more amicable than one who impulsively satisfies a greedy appetite. Vives is similarly suggestive, as he claims: "much fasting shall be good ... Let their meat be mean and easy to get ... neither hot of itself ... nor delicate" (p.69); even the moderateness of the food is commended, so that it does not provoke lust by being appetising. Thomas Becon reiterates this concept in *Catechism*, first published in *Works* in 1564. He instructs women to be strong in the face of their vigorous appetites: "labour to the uttermost of your power to suppress that lust and desire ... by moderate eating and drinking" (Aughterson, 1995, p.28). Here, Becon proposes that a woman's sexual appetite can be controlled if she successfully harnesses her gastronomic appetite. Bartholomew Batty extends this opinion by advising parents of young women to not let them "eat openly (that is to say) in the feasts and banquets of her parents, lest she sees such meats as she might desire and lust after" (Aughterson, 1995,

p.182). Batty's suggestion that the mere sight of appetising foods could possibly trigger a woman's lust is a reminder that women are more likely to give in to temptation. Another of Thomas Becon's pieces of advice is to "use no fine and exquisite meats, but homely and usual, even such as may slay hunger and not kindle lust" (p.28). Taking these instructions into consideration, it is clear that women are presented as characteristically greedy and lustful, while they may also possess a natural greediness that needs to be managed. Essentially, through this discourse, sexual and literal appetites become intertwined and it is possible to regulate them respectively. In *The Duchess of Malfi* and *'Tis Pity she's a Whore*, this dyadic relationship between lust and food is explored chiefly by the presence of fruit in each text. Fruit, in these plays, exposes overindulgent appetites that arise because of pregnancy and therefore signify sexual transgression and sickness as a result. The multifunctionality of fruit allows it to be interpreted in different ways by characters, as for example, it is claimed in each of the plays to be poisonous, which allows the pregnancies to be temporarily masked.

The consequences of acting upon greedy appetites are portrayed as potentially devastating both for health and morality. Prominent 16th century physician Paracelsus claimed that "God in His benevolence has set before our eyes the things that we desire. To exceed the measure is therefore an evil and adulterous act" (Jacobi, p.292). Here, excess is deemed as a direct sin while the use of the word 'adulterous' reaffirms the possible connections between greed and lust. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, the Duchess certainly can be seen to 'exceed the measure' when she is offered apricots by intelligencer Bosola. There is nothing humble or plainly nutritional about the apricots during the Duchess' initial taste of them; she remarks on their sweet taste many times, calling them "wondrous fair ones" (II.i.30), "a delicate fruit" (II.i.143) and "dainties" (II.i.143). Furthermore, she acknowledges that they are not 'usual',

or 'easy to get': "we shall have none this month" (II.i.133). By responding with praise and finding pleasure in her consumption of the apricots, the Duchess essentially reveals her own overindulgence to Bosola. After eating them, the Duchess reminds herself of the possible health risks caused by an excessive appetite: "They were right good ones - / If they do not make me sick" (II.i.152). Not only this but a sickness brought about by food would bring her closer to her pregnancy being revealed. Pollock explains that "some pregnant women were unable to digest their food ... Indeed, women were grateful if eating did not lead to bouts of nausea" (p.50). Interestingly, Pollock refers to Elizabeth Mordaunt; possibly the mother of Lord Mordaunt to whom *'Tis Pity she's a Whore* is dedicated, saying she "gave thanks to God 'that I have bin able to ete mete without being very ill after it" (p.50). Furthermore, Lori Haslem reiterates that "vomiting early in pregnancy was seen as another example of the woman's inability to use up all the foods she had eaten, or successfully to pass along the nutrition to the foetus" (p.442). Keeping food down was a good sign of a possibly successful and smooth pregnancy, while falling out of line with dietary temperance was a worry and displayed weakness. While these are the likely primary concerns of the Duchess as she frets that she may fall ill, it is also apparent that the nature of the apricots could cause her to become potentially 'undone'.

The apricots will only remain 'good ones' if they are easily digested, which would allow the Duchess to physically conceal any further signs of her pregnancy and greedy sexual appetite. After expressing her anxiety over the fruit's capability of revealing her secrets, she complains: "How they swell me!" (II.i.155), to which Bosola, who has been observing her eat during this scene, confirms his suspicions: "Nay, you are too much swelled already" (II.i.156). The Duchess does not only 'swell' because her sexual and literal appetites are sated, Bosola affirms that she was swelled prior to this whole occasion because of her pregnancy. It is only the Duchess' "loose-bodied gown" (II.i.148) which prevents Bosola

from solidifying his claim, as it hides the true shape of the Duchess' belly. The Duchess' sickness, triggered by the consumption of the apricot, is therefore alike to the aforementioned consumption of 'our first mother'; her imminent sexual transgression is set into motion and the apricot is the fruit which solidifies her fate. Haslem (1995) poses the question: "If pregnancy manifests itself as disease, does it too belie a moral failing rooted somehow in carnal appetite?" (p.441) and in the Duchess' apricot scene, this is definitely the case. Both illness and carnal appetite can be revealed by pregnancy and vice versa. The disruption that the apricot causes instils a consciousness in the Duchess to better cover her tracks, whereas it motivates Bosola further to seek proof of his almost verified assumptions about the Duchess' pregnancy.

Though there is not an entire scene centred around the melons found in *'Tis Pity she's a Whore*, the mention of them does reaffirm the dual nature of fruit; it can be pleasurable or poisonous and, in these cases, both. The melons arise at first as a snippet of hearsay, as the disguised and false doctor Richardetto reports that Annabella has told him "she had lately eaten / Melons and, as she thought these disagreed / With her young stomach" (III.iv.3). The early modern texts I have previously discussed which offer dietary advice would no doubt dissuade consumption of this kind. However, for Annabella, concealing her immoral and illegitimate pregnancy is more important than admitting a sickness caused by her own appetite. Her brother and her unborn child's father, Giovanni, takes advantage of the delicateness of the fruit, by ordering tutoress Putana to "say 'twas but some ill diet. D'ee hear, woman?" (III.iii.28). While Bosola utilises the apricots to unearth signs of the Duchess' pregnancy, Giovanni uses it to conceal Annabella's. The use of fruit and fruit itself is, therefore, oxymoronic. At this point in *'Tis Pity she's a Whore*, Annabella's maternity is clandestine because Giovanni conceals it by insisting the fruit causes an illness which is not

unique to the maternal body; maternity can hide itself in plain sight because of its relation to illness. Annabella's father Florio fails to consider the possibility of his daughter's pregnancy: "I see / You have of late been sickly" (II.i.54-5), perhaps because he is preoccupied by the illness he thinks that Annabella has. Another significant aspect of Annabella's situation is her age. She is young and so Richardetto's mention of her 'young stomach' is of interest here. Returning to Vives, he writes that youth has an impact on the sensitivity of the stomach, given that the "heat of youth" (Aughterson, 1995, p.69) is presented in his text as a potential danger. He calls youth a "lusty age" (p.70) which entails being "hot of a natural heat" (p.70) and claims that such a heat needs to be "bridled" (p.69). With this in mind, Annabella's stomach becomes one which is more susceptible to lust being kindled within it because she is youthful.

There is some evidence in early modern literature that the melon was thought to be luxurious with a pleasing, sweet taste. Annabella's sickness, when paired with the fact that this fruit is eaten for its taste, suggest that her transgression is also the result of her sexual desire. Whereas the apricots in *The Duchess of Malfi* are primarily used as a means of identifying pregnancy, the melons in *'Tis Pity she's a Whore* serve to reflect the depravity of Annabella's sexual involvement with her brother. To illustrate this in fuller detail, there is a compelling anecdote used by Thomas Moffett in his 1655 text *Health's Improvement* which details the irresistibility of the melon:

Jason Mainus (a most famous Civilian) so loved a Musk-melon that he said to one of his friends, Were I in Paradise as Adam was, and this Fruit forbidden me, Verily, I fear me, I should leave Paradise to taste of a Musk-melon

Though this may seem a curious documentation of the melon, considering that it is included in Moffett's text which was intended for educational purposes, it is perhaps used to

emphasise to readers that the melon is extremely enticing. After all, Mainus accepts, or at least acknowledges, that he would endure the punishments of going against God's will if he was not allowed the fruit. Annabella approaches her confession of love to Giovanni with a similar fear, as after Giovanni admits his feelings for her, she cries: "Forbid it, my just fears! / If this be true, 'twere fitter I were dead" (I.ii.213-4). She acknowledges the price she will have to pay as a result of indulging in her sexual appetite before exiting the scene, to "court in smiles, to kiss and sleep" (I.ii.260). Therefore, the effects that the melon produces are perhaps not as shocking as those which the Duchess' apricots cause. This is because Annabella explicitly acknowledges (a while before the melons appear) her own impulsivity and leaves to sleep with her brother all within a short space of time.

In his book *The Duchess of Malfi's Apricots, and Other Literary Fruits*, Robert Palter provides a sexualised understanding of the melon. It comes in the form of a poem, written in 1631 by Antoine-Girard de Saint-Amant and Palter calls it one of "the most extended poetic appreciations of melons I know" (p.440). The poem details the satisfying experience of eating a melon and it is depicted as overtly erotic; it "oozes a sweet juice which will steep my heart in ecstasy" (p.440). The poet emphasises the extremity of the feelings caused by the melon which are anything but moderate. He claims his "appetite is sated with a new and pure ambrosia", ambrosia being classically understood as the food of the Gods. Palter refers to this description as illustrating the melon as "an icon of pleasure" (p.441). The enjoyment and gorging of the melon described in Saint-Amant's poem can be translated into the indulgence in sexual appetites when observing Annabella's transformation from virgin to lover. After being won over by Giovanni's flattery, confessing her own feelings and then leaving to have sex with him, Annabella returns to Putana exclaiming "O guardian, what a paradise of joy / Have I passed over!" (II.i.40). Putana jokes with her by replying "Nay, what a paradise of joy have you passed under!" (II.i.41). Annabella's sexual awakening is triggered by her choice to

overindulge with Giovanni. If the melon is so highly regarded as a source of pleasure, which offers its consumer a sensual and sensory experience, it is exchangeable with sex itself. Therefore, it is clear that Annabella's consumption of the melons reflects the fact that she has surfeited and steeped her heart in sexual pleasure, so much so that it has made her sick. Principally, the "paradise of joy" (II.i.40) that she is excited by is fleeting and the consequence of revelling in it is a pregnancy that proves to be a problem, as Putana worriedly cries: "We are all undone, quite undone, utterly undone and / shamed forever!" (III.iii.1). Annabella's perceived sickness reflects how she has fallen out of line with moderateness and Richardetto's diagnosis of a "fullness" of the blood is indicative of 'excess' (OED). Moffett's use of Mainus' enjoyment of the melon does not stand alone in his documentation of the fruit. It is joined by a more frightening list of individuals who became victims of the fruit's ability to cause sickness:

Let not the pleasant smell or taste of them draw any man to eat too much of them, for they cast *Albertus secundus* the Emperor into a deadly flux; *Sophia* Queen of *Poland* into a numb'd palsie, and *Paulus secundus* the Pope into a mortal Apoplexy

(p.124)

The fact that this information is much less appealing for anyone considering eating a melon suggests that Moffett intends to educate his readers that the fruit should be eaten in small amounts and never gorged on. However, it does not take away the potential for damage to be caused for individuals who do not successfully control their appetites. While the taste of the melon is irresistible, it proves to be a genuine danger and, in some cases, even deadly. The underlying suggestion to resist temptation is a morbid forewarning. Moffett also includes information on the apricot in *Health's Improvement*. He displays how apricots are mostly commendable for their superficial, momentary purposes rather than their nutritious properties:

Good only for their taste and fragrant smell, their flesh quickly corrupting and degenerating into cholera and wheyish excrements ... breeding ill juice ... yet they are medicinal and wholesome for some persons, for they provoke urine, quench thirst

(Fitzpatrick, 2009, p.18).

While I have established the melon as paradoxical in that it possesses conflicting properties, the apricot is equally as unpredictable, especially because it is only medicinal 'for some persons' because of the several different effects it can have. Moffett specifically warns: "let not women eat many of them" (Fitzpatrick, 2009, p.19). He does not provide a specific reason for this but it is likely that it is due to the increased sensitivity of women's stomachs in comparison to men's. The apricots' 'quickly corrupting' flesh indicates that they must be consumed when they are perfectly ripe, so that the 'cholera' and 'ill juice' does not disrupt their digestion.

In *The Duchess of Malfi*, the Duchess does recognise the health benefits that she may receive from the apricots if her body approves of them, as she says "they say they are restorative" (II.i.143). The apricots' ripeness is questioned by Robert Palter (2002) who creates an association between the Duchess' colour rising after she has eaten them and the colour of the apricots as he calls into question "whether the apricots colour has yet risen" (p.274). The potential rottenness of the apricots does, in effect, obscure the entire scene because audience members are aware of the Duchess' pregnancy, yet it is entirely plausible that this was a deliberate intervention by Bosola to convince himself that his suspicions are true. Anyhow, he is satisfied with his biological experiment and comes to the conclusion that "there's no question but her tetchiness and most vulturous / eating of the apricots are apparent signs of breeding" (II.ii.1-2). However, the oxymoronic nature of the apricots allows Delio to hatch a plan despite Bosola's findings: "Give out that Bosola hath poisoned her with these apricots" (II.i.163-4).

The association between food, pregnancy and poison that is created by Giovanni and Delio in their attempts to conceal pregnancies further accentuates the corruption of maternal bodies that are formed by surrendering to lust. Ferdinand forewarns the Duchess about succumbing to temptation: “You live in a rank pasture / There is a kind of honey-dew that’s deadly / ‘T will poison your fame; look to’t” (I.ii.218-9). While poison can cause sickness, Ferdinand claims that lust itself is poisonous and the thing it poisons is reputation. Additionally, Bosola states “the devil / Candies all sins o’er” (I.ii.187-8). Sweet food is portrayed by Ferdinand and Bosola as deceptive, in that it is likely appetising but also fatal. Further on, the Duchess asks Bosola “why dost thou wrap thy poison’d pills / In gold and sugar?” (IV.i.20). The ‘poison’d pills’ that the Duchess describes definitely include the dung ripened apricots that she consumed as a result of her unrelenting appetite. Just as Annabella professes “this banquet is a harbinger of death” (V.v.27) in her final scene, so too is the apricot scene of the Duchess.

This is further emphasised through Joan Fitzpatrick’s (2010) useful account of the etymology of the apricot, which was originally highlighted by Dale B. Randall (1987). Fitzpatrick discusses Randall’s idea that the apricot was potentially the original forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden (p.19). This is because of the link between the Latin forms of the words for apple (*malus*), which was also the word for ‘evil’, “a link that extends also to the apricot (*Malus armeniaccum*)” (p.19). Of course, this can be directly related to femaleness and maternity because Eve was the first to consume the fruit. Randall (1987) further links femaleness to the apricot because he relays it as a symbol of the vulva (p.182). Through Randall’s representation, the apricot is recognised for its similarities to specific features of the female body as well as narratives of evil recognised in the Fall of Man. This enhances the Duchess’ consumption of fruit and verifies that her sexual transgression is a symptom of her

sex. The possible physical corruption of the fruit reflects the gradual deterioration of her own transgression.

Given that Annabella's pregnancy is undisclosed, it is possible that Richardetto's "fullness of the blood" (III.iv.8) is the cause of what was known in the early modern period as 'green sickness'. Kaara L. Peterson explains the basis for this sickness: "The period's still-dominant Galenically based humoral theories set out a vision of women's bodies as naturally plethoric and polluted by their own blood as well as by build-ups of seed" (p.29). Young women were the particular victims of this sort of sickness because it was thought to occur if they did not have sex, as without having the ability to purge bodily fluids through "menstruation or salubrious acts of intercourse ... they could produce harmful effects" (p.29). Peterson's informative description of green sickness relays it as potentially dangerous to the woman who falls victim to it. Also, Schleiner (2009) explains how green sickness was thought to primarily affect "young women who are particularly good-looking and lovely" (p.665) which suggests that beauty could cause green sickness to develop. Furthermore, it was commonly believed during this time that women were more susceptible to illness than men because they were deemed to be naturally weaker. From this it can be deduced that green sickness is particularly reductive to women because it reaffirms demeaning ideas about their sex. As green sickness was obviously curable and not specifically a health issue, Richardetto urges Florio not to worry about Annabella's health (III.iv.7) but that she should be married as quickly as possible to ensure that she is cured. Richardetto and Florio's discussion signifies that female sexuality is most appropriate when it is in the hands of men who are able to control it to their own advantage. Annabella's arcane pregnancy of course adds a deep irony to her father's belief that she is sick. It also adds elements of pity and humour to Florio being misled, which further reduces Annabella to the sexual deviance she has partaken in and

shames her for doing so. Schleiner (2009) cites Dawson's observation that virgins with green sickness were not praised for being chaste because virginity would make them "unnatural and diseased" (p.665) when afflicted with this condition. In a sense, Annabella is portrayed to her audience as unnatural through her socially unacceptable relationship with her own brother, while she is still perceived as a virgin by her father and so this description is technically applicable to her situation. Passing off Annabella's pregnancy as a food-related illness does not, evidently, simplify her condition. It reaffirms the concept of the female body as weak because a woman's digestive abilities reflect her physical and moral strength. Additionally, the consumption of the melon is a reminder that Annabella has given in to temptation and acted upon her appetite for lust, which when factored in with physical weakness, reinforces Annabella as the innate cause of her transgression. Her pregnancy is reduced to one which occurs out of lust and irresponsibility. Florio and Richardetto's discussion of marrying Annabella off unwittingly serves as a possible antidote to Annabella's immoral situation and perceived health condition because her only chance at redemption would be to marry while she is young and beautiful, to be both cured from the green sickness her father thinks she has and to put a stop to the actions which fuel her lust.

One phrase which echoes the treatment of Annabella by Florio and Richardetto is Fitzpatrick's (2008) terming of the apricot. She describes it as a fruit which was thought of as "quick to ripen and therefore quick to rot". Annabella's condition, perceived as green sickness, adds a sense of urgency for her to marry because her blood could eventually poison her and her youth will eventually run out; she will become rotten, yet her youth reflects her ripeness. Fitzpatrick's phrasing is also useful to mark the deterioration of the Duchess' transgression from momentarily pleasurable to turning entirely sour. At the beginning of the play, the Duchess insists: "I'll never marry" (I.ii.214) to which her brother, the Cardinal,

responds: “So most widows say, / But commonly that motion lasts no longer / Than the turning of an hour-glass; the funeral sermon / And it end both together” (I.ii.215-8). Not only are women framed as weak, irresponsible and lustful if they carelessly consume; the Cardinal also voices the opinion that their impulsivity is attributed to lust. He suggests that women cannot be trusted in their own certainty because it is possible that lust may override their decision making. Therefore, the Duchess is perceived as thoughtless by her brother. Her own statement that she “winked and chose a husband” (I.iii.259) not only emphasises the possible rapidity of her decision; it gives her declaration the same misogynistic generalisation, that widows cannot restrain themselves, which her brother voices in his judgment of widows. This supposed flaw, unique to womankind, is maintained in other areas of the play. For example, Ferdinand asks his sister: “what cannot a neat knave with a smooth tale / Make a woman believe?” (I.ii.250). This question simultaneously reveals Ferdinand’s anxiety over the possibility that his sister could be persuaded by a ‘neat knave’ and the Duchess’ capacity for falling victim to deception and foolishness. This is perhaps more violently approached in *Titus Andronicus*, where Demetrius asks: “What, hast not thou full often struck a doe / And borne her cleanly by the keeper’s nose?” (I.i.593-4). Women are represented as prey because of their vulnerability and can be ‘struck’ by men because of their capacity to be deceived.

In the first section of this chapter, I discussed how the Duchess’ hasty devouring of the dung-ripened apricots portrays the foundation of her sin as lust, in order to condemn her sex and conjoin her gastronomic greed with her appetite for lust. I shall extend this proposition by suggesting that the Duchess’ consumption of the apricots is an act of self-poisoning. She is a tragic heroine, who makes a fatal error by eating the apricots and so, like Eve, she is demanded to accept and suffer the consequences of her careless consumption. Fissell (2006) argues that “female power ... is often double-edged. Women make seed – but they can also

be poisoned by their own seed if it turns venomous” (p.201), which ultimately extends the possibility of women being poisoned, to their own offspring poisoning them. It reiterates the Renaissance ‘ripe and then rotten’ motif, in that what once might have appeared as appealing (entering into the corrupt relationships), soon turns sour when the product (the offspring) can no longer be concealed. Additionally, it confirms the transgressive state of the maternal body because it is capable of generating life but the life it generates physically manifests the corruption of the body. This, therefore, comes to diminish the reputation of the mother. Perhaps this fate explains why characters like Florio attempt to control the use of the maternal body, in order to avoid its descent into depravity, with their own interests as the underlying motive. Other male characters, like Aaron, reflect the corruption of illegitimate offspring by refusing to destroy it and valuing its monstrous characteristics.

The concept of parents being ‘poisoned’ by their own seed is implied in *The Duchess of Malfi* when Ferdinand uses his imagination to conjure an act that he views as an appropriate measure to deal with the Duchess’ illegitimate offspring: “I would have their bodies / Burn in a coalpit ... Or else to boil their bastard to a cullis / And give’t his lecherous father to renew / The sin of his back” (II.v.67-4). Ferdinand not only communicates the double-edgedness of the broth in that it is both restorative, but it is restorative of sin which could deem it poisonous. He also deems the child that the broth is created from as a bastard. Technically the child is not a bastard and so it can be read as an attack on the Duchess’ decision to marry socially beneath her, which Ferdinand takes great issue with because it poisons his own bloodline. Failing to recognise his sister’s marriage also reaffirms that Ferdinand perceives her offspring to be direct products of lust, highlighted by referring to the sin ‘of his back’. Whereas the apricots reveal the Duchess’ maternal body to be morally and physically degenerative because of her ‘vulturous eating’ and sudden sickness, her children reaffirm and

solidify this argument because they are physical evidence of corruption. Interestingly, the gardener in *King Richard II* likens “young dangling apricots” (III.iv.29) to “unruly children” (III.iv.30). After all, children were commonly referred to as the ‘fruit’ of the womb and a mother’s womb was described, amongst other things, as either ‘fruitful’ or ‘barren’.

A more blatant example of children becoming the poison that proves fatal to their mother occurs in Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*. Tamora, who is well known for her unruly sexual autonomy, is fed a pie while Titus observes her as she eats: “she daintily hath fed, / Eating the flesh that she herself hath bred” (V.iii.60-1). Through this punishment, Tamora’s body is held responsible for producing depraved offspring. Willis (2002) reiterates the relationship between Tamora’s body and her act of accidental cannibalism, by stating that “her womb was the breeding place for murderers and rapists; her stomach will become their grave” (p.49). Willis connects Tamora’s sexual immorality to the state of her womb, while her womb is also the driving force for how ‘daintily’ she eats the pie. ‘Dainty’ refers to “anything pleasing or delicious to the palate” (OED), which determines that Tamora finds the pie appetising because of her own depravity; anyone lecherous would find the pie delicious, despite its vulgar contents. Titus’ mentioning of the food source being the flesh that ‘she herself’ gave birth to reinforces Tamora’s position as a cultivator and marks her body as responsible for its own transgression. Tamora’s punishment is also a reminder of how closely the stomach and the womb are interlinked. Adelman details how the womb was “traditionally understood as the entrance to death and the site of morality” (p.6), while as Willis has postulated, Tamora’s stomach is her son’s ‘grave’.

Bosola’s insistence of curing immorality with death insinuates that he is fully involved with his role as intelligencer. He does not simply spectate but employs a botanical metaphor to

achieve the information which denounces the Duchess: “’Tis a pretty art, / This grafting” (II.i.144). To graft is to “insert (a shoot from one tree) as a graft into another tree” (OED). While engaging with the Duchess in what she assumes is a harmless conversation about gardening methods, he is determining the nature of her illicit relationship, as he continues: “to make a pippin grow upon a crab, / A damson on a blackthorn” (II.ii.145-6). He uses this metaphor as a means of debasing the Duchess’ marriage through the relation of grafting to the crossbreeding of the Duchess and Antonio’s differing social classes. In *The Winter’s Tale*, Perdita refers to carnations and “streak’d gillyvors” (IV.iv.96) as “Nature’s bastards” (IV.iv.97) because they are cross-bred and says “Of that kind / Our rustic garden’s barren, and I care not / To get slips of them” (IV.iv.99) and that they are ‘pied’ – “marked, dappled, speckled” (“Pied”, 2006). Comparably, Ferdinand condemns lechers for possessing particoloured insides. He says: “their livers more spotted / Than Laban’s sheep” (I.ii.210). The emphasis from these constructs is that bastardy and crossbreeding are impurities in themselves and the genetic makeup of illegitimate children is ‘speckled’ because they are not considered purebloods.

While it is clear that Bosola implies that the Duchess’ offspring is a genetic mutation as the result of crossbreeding, the maternal body itself was thought to hold some influence over the nature of its offspring. This is highlighted by Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus*. She describes the quality of Tamora’s milk and its effect on her children: “The milk thou suckst from her did turn to marble; / Even at thy teat thou hast thy tyranny” (II.ii.144-5). Lavinia voices the belief that breast milk was capable of transferring character traits from mother to child, while she also brands Tamora’s body as the source of Chiron and Demetrius’ immorality. Of course, this reflects Tamora as a bad mother who fails her children through her own depravity. In 1620, Christopher Newstead attributed breast milk with educational qualities, as he wrote:

Women ... persevere in their benefits giving them that other nature, education: nourishing our bodies ... with the substance of their breasts ... they suckle our minds with the milk of good manners, training us up as *Tanaquil* did her son, in religion and learning

(Aughterson, 1995, p.116).

Newstead affirms that one ideal characterisation of women is their role as educators. He claims that children can be educated through the nourishment provided by breast milk and that it is a mother's responsibility to perform such education. Jacqueline T. Miller (1997) interprets the supposed educational abilities of breastmilk by addressing an image which appeared on the front of a text published in 1641. The frontispiece of Richard Brathwait's *The English Gentlewoman*, as described by Miller, features a woman "expressing her breastmilk in two distinct streams onto the pages of the book open on her lap" (p.178). Miller suggests that this depiction is a "direct pictorial association of the breast and the book" (p.179), whereby "the breast replaces the pen, just as the book replaces the baby" (p.179). Janet Adelman (1992) discusses several aspects of early modern beliefs about breast milk in her book *Suffocating Mothers*. She outlines the belief that the "condemnation of the mother's first milk as noxious ... conspires to locate the child's vulnerability in the body of the nurse/mother" (p.6). Again, the mother and her body are deemed as highly influential forces which possess the ability to determine a child's moral nature. Texts that offered advice on the care of infants actually, according to Adelman, "urge extreme caution in the selection of nurses" (p.7) because of the powerful influence of breast milk. Tamora, however, has no nurse to suckle her children and she herself is a "bestly creature" (II.ii.182). In his text *Child-birth* published in 1612, French surgeon Jacques Guillemeau uses the example of a child being suckled by a creature to demonstrate breast milk's capability to influence: "It is reported that a certain child was nourished with the milk of a Bitch: But he would rise in the night and howl with other dogs". Guillemeau demonstrates how the nourishment breast milk

provides can cause the suckling child to develop attributes that the mother first possesses. This reaffirms that Demetrius and Chiron become murderers and rapists because of Tamora's sinful reputation, and the immoral use of her body depicted through her relationship with Aaron. In Elizabeth Crawford's (1955) study of the symbol of the wolf in literature, she writes that "the wolf as a symbol ... contains not only the association of cannibalism ... but also the aspect of protection and nurture, of suckling" (p.308). Crawford also affirms that the most famous wolf is "probably the wolf-mother of Romulus and Remus" (p.307), which is likely the famous tale that Guillemeau describes in his text. Given that, as echoed by Lavinia, Tamora is devoid of any 'grace' or 'womanhood', she is certainly reflected as more of a creature than a human, maternal mother and is therefore comparable to the she-wolf that suckles Romulus and Remus. Lavinia's remark that Tamora's breast milk turned to marble when her children received it removes any traditional concepts of femininity from Tamora's maternity. Her milk is presented both as cold and indigestible, thereby rendering it useless and lacking in nurture. Tamora is not alone in being presented in animalistic terms, as Ferdinand in *The Duchess of Malfi* refers to his sisters' offspring as "cubs" (IV.i.34) and states that "the death / of young wolves is never to be pitied" (IV.ii.245). This is arguably rooted in Ferdinand's own unwillingness to approach the Duchess' children with compassion because they have been bred in a socially unacceptable way; he is also largely associated with werewolves, given that he has lycanthropy, a disease where an individual believes that they can transform into a wolf. However, by suggesting that the Duchess' children are cubs, Ferdinand reiterates the concept that the Duchess is a she-wolf. Perhaps this is an attempt by Ferdinand to distance himself from the Duchess' social disgrace reiterated by her children. This perhaps points to Miller's (1997) assertion that "in the literature of early modern England the nursing breast figures as an intricately gendered site of struggle for power" (p.181). While Ferdinand is furious when he learns of the Duchess' maternity, the maternity

itself and the Duchess' nurture of her 'cubs' reveals a "power and authority ... capable of writing books and rewriting lineaments of individual and national character" (p.179). Despite being illustrated by her brother as rotten and therefore her children also falling under his depiction, the Duchess is made powerful by Miller's interpretation. This is because Miller attributes the sense of power women gain from being able to produce milk to the ideas produced by works like *The English Gentlewoman*. Miller claims that images like the woman lactating onto the book allow women to "occupy an extreme position of power and authority by virtue of a bodily function reserved for females" (p.179). This suggestion displays the issue for male characters like Ferdinand because the female body is strong in that it is uniquely capable of birthing and nourishing children. Essentially, men are rendered somewhat powerless by the female maternal body's influence on its offspring, as men cannot birth a child or offer it nourishment.

So far in this chapter, I have clarified that a mother's act of consumption is suggestive of her own sexual and social transgression, which can then be consumed by their offspring to transfer those characteristics. I would also like to suggest that mothers themselves are eventually presented as things to be consumed, once they are no longer needed, or it is necessary to eliminate them. Lisa Hopkins (2015) relates women to the Renaissance 'carpe diem' motif, which she notes "means literally 'pluck the fruit of the day'" (p.196). Hopkins uses an historically appropriate example, to create the connection between fruit and women, by claiming: "ripeness was for the Renaissance mind inextricably linked with the idea of rottenness, as when Luke Gernon in 1620 asserted that Irish women were 'soone ripe, soone rotten'" (p.196). With this in mind, it can be deduced that Tamora, the Duchess and Annabella, are initially perceived as 'ripe', in sexual terms and their actions cast them as rotten.

This is certainly the case for Tamora, who is undeniably linked to food, as she is murdered by a faux chef Titus and dies eating a pie made from human meat. However, her body is comparatively decaying like fruit, over the course of the play. At the beginning of the play, she is immediately chosen by the Emperor as his wife. She then warns Titus: “I am incorporate in Rome” (I.i.467) and proceeds to undertake the dismantlement of the Andronici, with Aaron at her side. Louise Noble (2003) intricately connects the female body, brought to our attention by Tamora, to the deteriorating state of Rome. She argues, that like Hopkins’ depiction of decaying fruit, Rome and the body are too degenerative:

The Rome of *Titus*, as many have argued, is a degenerating state: internally threatened by imperial conflicts, corruption, and ruthlessness. In order to naturalise an embattled political institution, Shakespeare resorts to a popular organic model of the source of dangerous cultural corruption: the female body. The idea of Rome as a headless female body with a greedy appetite is introduced early in the play, in the image of the uterine tomb, the warehouse of Andronici sons.

(p.690).

Noble’s argument reaffirms the emphasis on Tamora’s own body as hungry and corrupt, while it speaks to Moncrief and McPherson’s concept of maternity as reflective, as Noble claims Shakespeare equips the female body to make sense of the conflict in Rome. The degeneration of Tamora’s body, and of Rome therefore coincides with the inevitability of fruit rotting. This no doubt culminates in her fate: “throw her forth to beasts and birds to prey: / Her life was beastly and devoid of pity, / And being dead, let birds on her take pity” (V.iii.197-9). Saturninus’ once “lovely bride” (I.i.339) becomes decaying fruit for birds to pick at, a most apt end for a woman who wanted to “feed” (V.ii.71) Titus’ “brainsick humours” (V.ii.71). Her death is emblematic of her relationship to food, in that she is both fed and feeds others.

Part of Tamora’s ability to feed is reflected in her offering of Lavinia to her sons. She orchestrates the rape of Lavinia, particularly because it is the ‘fruit of her womb’ which will

carry out what her body cannot. Tamora reverberates the nature of this activity through language which signifies Lavinia as a food source. She tells her sons: “When ye have the honey we desire / Let not this wasp outlive us both to sting” (II.ii.131-2). This implies that Chiron and Demetrius will satisfy their ravenous appetites, inherited from their mother, by extracting Lavinia’s ‘honey’. Lavinia is further reduced to a product when she begs Tamora to be a “charitable” (II.ii.178) murderer and Tamora responds: “So should I rob my sweet sons of their fee. / No, let them satisfy their lust on thee” (II.ii.180).

While Lavinia satisfies the appetites of Chiron and Demetrius, Giovanni gorges on Annabella’s sweetness in *‘Tis Pity she’s a Whore*, from start to finish. Fittingly, Craik (2007) makes it clear that though food and drink have long shared connections with desire, it was specifically characteristic of the early modern period to accentuate the biblical association of corporeal appetite with sexual culpability (p.98). Giovanni tells Annabella, his “sweet wonder” (II.i.3), to “be proud to know / That, yielding, thou hast conquered and enflamed / A heart” (II.i.3-5). Yielding can be defined as both “to hand over, give up” (OED) and “to produce, bear, generate fruit ... to bring forth, give birth to” (OED). His description, ‘enflamed’ is reminiscent of the youthful rising heat that Vives warned of in relation to the danger of overconsumption. In *Microcosmographia* from 1618, Helkiah Crooke refers to the womb as “the fruitful field or garden of nature” (Aughterson, 1995, p.54) and so Giovanni demonstrates that she has allowed him to reap the rewards that her body provides. Annabella is simultaneously the fruit that has ‘enflamed’ Giovanni’s heart and the bearer of the fruit that confirms their ill fate. The couple are presented as having sated one another’s gluttonous appetites and even after a kiss, Giovanni exaggeratedly makes the comparison: “Thus hung Jove on Leda’s neck / And sucked divine ambrosia from her lips” (II.i.15-6), ‘ambrosia’ being “the fabled food of the Gods” (OED). Annabella is repeatedly referred to as a sweet

source of pleasure and is given the title “most dainty and honey mistress” (II.iv.18) in Bergetto’s foolish letter; she is both a delicious food and a provider of it. Bergetto is presented with a box of marmalade from Annabella, which sheds some light on her awareness of his appetite for her and for delicious food stuffs and thereby equates the two. He also claims to love her “almost as well” as he “loved Parmesan” (I.iii.58), which likely refers to the cheese, or “an Italian way of drinking” (OED).

Annabella’s sweet and delicious qualities, founded on her physical body and beauty, is exploited in the final banquet scene of *’Tis Pity she’s a Whore*, where she is presented much more literally as a food source. Giovanni arrives “trimmed in reeking blood” (V.vi.8), which is Annabella’s, freshly bled in the intimate scene prior to this, where Giovanni lay with her on a bed. This no doubt symbolises Giovanni’s overindulgence and his outlook on his sisters’ body as providing produce. Donald K. Anderson (1962) interestingly marks the transition from one room to the other: “when Giovanni shortly enters the banquet room, he has left one feast for another. (p212). Giovanni, then, enters the banquet with the intention of sharing his findings produced by Annabella’s body. He announces that he is serving up the heart and ‘reeking’ blood by acknowledging the attendees of the banquet with the statement: “You came to feast, my lords, with dainty fare” (V.vi.21), all while Annabella’s heart sits punctured on his dagger. Giovanni’s explicit link between Annabella’s body and food comes after this line, when he claims: “I came to feast too, but I digged for food / In a much richer mine than gold or stone” (V.vi.22). He commends himself for discovering a food so extravagant and in doing so, brands himself as a master of the food he has discovered. Of course, the food that he is talking about, is primarily the heart on his dagger. Annabella is reduced to a food source because, as Giovanni tells his audience at the banquet, he has “ploughed up her fruitful womb” (V.vi.29) and is therefore “a most glorious executioner”

(V.vi.31). Giovanni's act of 'ploughing' up Annabella's womb is the literal basis that his mine metaphor is set upon. It is also, as he terms it, "the rape of life and beauty" (V.vi.17) because he takes Annabella's life to satiate his own burning desire for revenge: "now brave revenge is mine" (V.vi.72). This 'rape of life and beauty' is best presented by Giovanni detailing how his hands "from her bosom ripped this heart" (V.vi.56). The literalness of this violent gesture, specifically emphasised by 'ripped', creates the image of Annabella's heart as pluckable, as though it were a grape on a vine. It also reaffirms that Giovanni ripped out her heart to serve his own wants. Hopkins' link between fruit and women is definitely applicable to Giovanni's treatment of his sister; as he says himself to Annabella: "wise nature first in your creation meant / To make you mine" (I.ii.230-1), as well as establishing that he is "king of" (II.i.19) her. Furthermore, Hopkins explains that after a woman is plucked, she is not really cared for (p.7). Even the chronology of Giovanni and Annabella's immoral love affair suggests Hopkins' observation; once Annabella's womb, as Giovanni claims, "bewrayed / The happy passage of our stol'n delights" (V.vi.46-7) and her "ambrosia" (II.i.16) is spent, there is not really much use for her other than to become Giovanni's device for revenge.

While it is clear that maternal bodies are perpetuated as lusty through their heightened appetites and that they themselves can be treated as fruit by others, it is useful to return to Crooke's depiction of the womb as the "garden of nature" (Aughterson, p.54). Peterson recalls *Titus Andronicus* as "perhaps the best example of the womb gone bad" (p.124) and it has been established that the pit scene in particular bears resemblance to the idea of a 'bad' womb. Before this scene however, Tamora is alone with Aaron in the forest, where she observes "the birds chant melody on every bush / The snake lies rolled in the cheerful sun / The green leaves quiver with the cooling wind" (II.ii.12-4); she produces an image of a

serene, bountiful garden. Her suggestion that the birdsong is “a nurse’s song / Of lullaby to bring her babe asleep” (II.ii.28-9) echoes Edenic innocence. However, this setting is swept away once Bassianus and Lavinia disrupt the pair and suspect Tamora of being Aaron’s lover. When Demetrius arrives, he asks his mother “Why doth your highness look so pale and wan?” (II.ii.90). The forest then becomes “A barren detested vale” (II.ii.93), the trees are “o’ercome with moss and baleful mistletoe” (II.ii.95); mistletoe noted for being parasitic (p.215). She tells her sons that Bassianus and Lavinia threateningly told her “A thousand fiends, a thousand hissing snakes, / Ten thousand swelling toads” (II.ii.100-1) would scream in the night in the forest. What had, moments ago, been her paradise, quickly became a living hell, especially when she imagines herself tied “to the body of a dismal yew” (II.ii.107), which carries connotations of foreboding death (p.215). The Friar also threatens Annabella with a vision of hell: “There is a place / ... in a black and hollow vault, / Where day is never seen” (III.vi.8-10), the darkness is “infected” (III.vi.13) and there are “gluttons fed / With toads and adders” (III.vi.16-7). He goes on: “there lies the wanton / On racks of burning steel, whiles in his soul / He feels the torment of his raging lust” (III.vi.21-3). Though this frightens Annabella into repentance, she once believed that her experience with Giovanni was a “paradise of joy” (II.i.40). In essence, they are threatened with the consequences of their own sexuality. Kate Aughterson documents a text from Jacques Olivier, *An Alphabet of Women’s Imperfections*, in which he writes:

[woman] you live here on earth as the world’s most imperfect creature: the scum of nature, the cause of misfortune ... the plague of the wise, the stirr[‘]r of hell, the tinder of vice, the guardian of excrement, a monster in nature, an evil necessity, a multiple chimera, a sorry pleasure, Devil’s bait, the enemy of angels.

(p.41).

Aughterson writes that this was “a popular misogynist tract which was republished seventeen times in the subsequent hundred years” (p.41). Olivier’s damning description of women comes as a result of femininity being constructed by “the Hebraic-Christian tradition of

equating Eve with the Fall” (p.41). By looking at fruit and the ways in which it emphasises aspects of maternity, it is clear that this can be extended to observing wider elements of nature found within plays which too point to the unrelenting, damning consequences of female transgression, that are no doubt inspired by Eve’s influence in the Fall.

In *Titus Andronicus*, as a result of surfeiting on their sexual appetites, Tamora and Aaron are punished in relation to their wrongdoing. While Tamora is forced to glut on that appetite once more in the form of her own poisonous seed and then become meat for “beasts and birds to prey” (V.iii.196), Aaron is planted “breast-deep” (V.iii.178) into the earth and left to “stand and rave and cry for food” (V.iii.179). He rhetorically asks: “why should wrath be mute and fury dumb?” (V.iii.183). His penalty sees him fixed into the earth like a mandrake, which according to the Oxford English Dictionary:

was formerly credited with magical and medicinal properties because of the supposedly human shape of its forked fleshy root, being used to promote conception, and was reputed to shriek when pulled from the ground and to cause the death of whoever uprooted it (a dog being therefore traditionally employed for the purpose).

Aaron claims: “ten thousand worse than ever yet I did / Would I perform if I might have my will” (V.iii.186-7). His intention to wreak havoc against his enemies does not disappear; he is denied the pleasure of vengeance and his paternal role and is therefore “famished” (V.iii.178). Gruber (2014) describes how he is claimed by the “swallowing womb” (p.284), yet he is half in and half out; “There is a mythic quality to Aaron’s punishment. For instance, it evokes the suffering of Tantalus, who was forced to remain in torturous proximity to that for which he yearned” (p.284). Likening Aaron to the mandrake thereby reinforces his influence as a dangerous conspirator whose actions are also rooted in sexual transgression; he is forced to beg for the opportunity to regain these qualities, but all are warned to abandon him.

Lavinia is also botanised, much more deliberately than Aaron, when she has been dismembered by Demetrius and Chiron. Marcus commences a blazon on the sight of her, amongst which he remarks that she has been “hewed” (II.iii.17) and “made thy body bare / Of her two branches” (II.iii.17-18). The blood spewing from her mouth becomes a “crimson river” (II.iii.22) and her breath is “honey” (II.iii.26), she has “lily hands” (II.iii.44) and Titus later refers to her as a “lily almost withered” (III.i.114). Sawday explains that the blazon made it “possible to witness the partitioning of the female body on the stage” (p.201) and that is what appears to be happening in this scene. Eventually, like Aaron and because she is now tainted, she must be altogether abandoned to remove the reminder of corruption, as Titus commands: “Die, die Lavinia, and thy shame with thee, / And with thy shame thy father’s sorrow die” (V.iii.45-6).

The Ambiguous Maternal Body

Titus Andronicus, *The Duchess of Malfi* and *'Tis Pity she's a Whore* are dramas which exhibit an interest in the cultural significance of corporeal anatomy. It is clear that each plot thrives on the centrality of the maternal body as an instigator of outrage, pleasure, confusion and devastation; sentiments evoked by the instrumental use of the body in the play. I have reflected upon the transgressive maternal body's connection to consumption and how female bodies themselves can be consumed. This is also apparent in the early modern medical sphere, more specifically in the practise of anatomy, which carried out the dissection of the body in the name of 'science'. The portrayal of the maternal body on the stage, as we have seen, is inflected with symbolism and meaning which appear in early modern constructs and attitudes towards the body itself. Jonathan Sawday (1995) in his book *The Body Emblazoned*, points to the symbolic significance of corporeal anatomy during the period:

Given the rich tapestry of symbol and ritual which shrouded the investigation of the body within the early modern period, it should come as no surprise that, to the poets of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the dissected body presented an alluring object. Evidence of the body's attraction as a source of mediation and instruction is everywhere apparent in the literature of the period.

(p.86).

It is clear, therefore, that corporeal anatomy was approached as a rich literary subject during this time, particularly because it was perceived as 'alluring'. Sawday clarifies that this fascination was echoed through language inspired by the body: "To the contemporaries of the Renaissance anatomists, the language of the body, moreover, was enthralling: the body was an ever-present source of tropes, metaphors, similes and figurative twists" (p.87). We have come to understand many tropes of the maternal body over the course of this study but, by examining the way in which the body is treated by early modern anatomists, what can be discerned? The mid sixteenth, into the seventeenth century, possessed an emerging

interrogative obsession with the female body and the cultural significance it demonstrated. Thus, Tamora, the Duchess and Annabella can be considered as embodied performances of maternity, whose immoral maternal agency causes the investigation which is carried out on their bodies. Sawday identifies that “female bodies were not just cut up in anatomy theatres. Within the court, they were cut up in literary texts in order to be circulated as specifically male knowledge of women” (p.212). In relation to Sawday’s suggestion, it can be said that Renaissance revenge tragedy also dissects the female body and mimics the male pursuit of intellectual authority to reverberate the innate power and many literary significances of female anatomy. By choosing maternal characters as the focal points of their tragedies, which do incorporate a fascination with dismemberment and the culture of anatomy, Shakespeare, Webster and Ford reinforce the rich symbolism of the maternal body, to dramatise and embellish their tragedy plots. This chapter will heavily focus upon the corporeal maternal body and how it is managed, destroyed and perceived in the plays.

In *The Body Emblazoned*, Jonathan Sawday provides an extensive and insightful commentary about the title-page of Vesalius’ most famous book, *Fabrica*. The image on this page depicts Vesalius carrying out a dissection in Padua, in front of a very large crowd who all gather around the anatomy table to observe the opened female cadaver. Sawday explains that the most distinguishable feature of the image, from its pre-Vesalius predecessors, is that the space is bustling with people. He says:

Rather than depict the Renaissance anatomisation as taking place within a reserved space of detached enquiry, with a few figures bending over the cadaver, the dissection scene was suddenly packed with onlookers. It is as though the crowd with which Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* opens has suddenly burst onto the stage

(p.66-7).

This observation from Sawday suggests that the illustration was deliberate and that as a result, the anatomy theatre is tied to the playhouse because of the emphasised theatricalisation of the setting. The growing number of onlookers and treatment of the female

body as a spectacle further reinforces the link between the anatomy theatre and, more specifically than the playhouse, *The Duchess of Malfi* and *'Tis Pity she's a Whore*.

While in both spaces, it is clear that the body has a performative role to play, it is further dramatised when considering the ambiguity of the maternal body. Returning to Nicolas Culpeper's *A directory for midwives*, Culpeper's description of 'the formation of the child in the womb' which is the crux of maternity, uses a renowned medical figure to demonstrate the obscurity of the body: "besides Galen never saw a woman anatomised in his lifetime" (Aughterson, 1995, p.59); he voices the physical difficulty to obtain visual knowledge of the composition of the womb because even the most established professionals had not witnessed it. In Chris Laoutaris' introduction to his book *Shakespearean Maternities*, Laoutaris fascinatingly outlines and explores how embryological development was perceived during the early modern period. He determines that the work of Hieronymous Fabricius aided the visualisation of this subject, as it constituted some of the earliest and most elaborate illustrations of the foetus in the womb (p.6). Laoutaris describes these images as "floating embryos, snugly settled in pockets of truncated maternal flesh" (p.6). It is evident that these images are predominantly artistic representations of the core of the maternal body, which with 'truncated' flesh insinuate that the body functions as a façade; it can be peeled back to reveal the 'truth' of its core, the embryo underneath the masking flesh. Visually, Fabricius' images do not differ much from modern day scans which sonographers are known to produce, but unlike ultrasound scans, the illustrations do not provide motion. They are not representations of the womb in action, which was evidently desired by early modern anatomists and physicians. Both Fabricius' works and scans alike, however, present a limited view of the child in the womb. They do not account or provide knowledge on maternal

relationships between the mother and her kin, or the state of maternity itself and therefore they are limited depictions.

The maternal body on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage, is therefore, not easily understood. Even without the presence of characters who attempt to conceal their pregnancies, the female body is obscured on the stage because boy actors fulfilled female roles. Pregnant characters were not actually women and so, they were evidently not pregnant. According to David Kathman (2005), one of the first boy actors to play the role of the Duchess was Richard Sharpe, who first played the role “during the second half of his apprenticeship, when he was between seventeen and twenty-one years old” (p.233). The likelihood of Richard Sharpe’s experience and knowledge of pregnancy greatly influencing his performance of the Duchess is small and it was almost certainly not a requirement of the actor to engage in some kind of ‘method’ acting to appropriately depict a heavily pregnant woman. Despite the absence of any legitimate, pregnant female bodies on the stage, the representation of them through boy actors was met with some criticism, which perhaps suggests a wish to dismantle femininity on the stage all together.

For example, in 1599, Thomas Rainoldes condemned the act of cross-dressing in the theatre: “What sparkles of lust to that vice the putting on of a woman’s attire on men may kindle unclean affections” (Aughterson, 1995, p.77). Interestingly, Rainoldes’ concern appears to lie in the effects of women’s clothing when it is worn by men. Supposedly, wearing female garments will transform the actors wearing them, as they will become contaminated with lust. Perhaps the fear here is that through dressing as women, men degrade themselves by placing themselves in a morally and socially inferior position, through appearance. In 1583, Philip Stubbes wrote *The anatomy of abuses*, in which he says: “It is written in the 22. of Deuteronomy that what man soever weareth women’s apparel is accursed also” (Aughterson, 1995, p.76). However, women are again constructed as the primary issue in this text, as

Stubbes refers to women as “chameleons” (p.76) and says that to “wear the apparel of one sex is to participate with the same, and to adulterate the verity of his own kind” (p.76). Stubbes reaffirms women as the primary transgressors, given that he believes that men who wear women’s clothing are essentially betraying their sex. These views, combined with the fact that women were absent from the stage, show that the true maternal body was not genuinely represented and therefore it was instead portrayed as secretive and impenetrable. Arguably, for an early modern audience, a great imagination was required to comprehend the young, male body present on the stage as the pregnant woman they were portraying. The accrued symbolism and narratives created in texts, illustrations and theatre scripts shaped maternity into a theatrical and artistic state rather than a physical and biological experience. The physical and natural maternal body receded from view and was instead embellished and interpreted through literary and artistic forms; imagination became the forefront of encapsulating images of the internal, maternal body.

This is particularly apparent in *The Duchess of Malfi*, during the apricot scene. Bosola is used in this scene to verbally construct a detailed vision of the Duchess’ maternal body, as he undertakes an analysis of the corporeal aspects of her body. Though I have explored the significance of the apricot and its effects on the body, I think Bosola’s presence in this scene is also important. He articulates the Duchess’ physical state before performing his labour-inducing trick:

I observe our Duchess
Is sick a’ days. She pukes, her stomach seethes,
The fins of her eyelids look most teeming blue,
She wanes i’th cheek and waxes fat i’th flank;
And, contrary to our Italian fashion,
Wears a loose-bodied gown. There’s somewhat in’t.

(II.i.64-8).

Bosola's illustration of the Duchess as a heavily pregnant woman is quite necessary because audiences were not supplied with a physically pregnant body to observe. Therefore, his words which signal stereotypical symptoms of pregnancy, do most of the work in constructing the Duchess as a visibly maternal figure. In some ways, this links Bosola to the early modern anatomist, who as we know, demonstrated the meaning of the body to an audience by orating the process. In this scene, he does not only fulfil his role as an intelligencer and reflect early modern anatomy techniques, he also plays the role of a physician. This is manifested in his observations of the Duchess after her consumption of the apricots. For example, his first observation, "Good, her colour rises" (II.i.129), while the Duchess is "[*eating greedily*]" (p.206) hints towards some early modern beliefs about the womb itself. In a text entitled *On the common conditions of women*, published in 1587, the physician Ludovic Mercatus claims that the womb "has a natural appetite" (Aughterson, 1995, p.53) and that this appetite "arises when heat increases" (p.53). Therefore, Bosola is not just taking notes of the Duchess' reaction for his own benefit; he urges the audience to consider the significance of the Duchess' changing colour and thereby educates them that it is a possible sign of pregnancy.

Further on, his attention shifts from the effects of the apricots to the opaqueness of her body, in a more sinister analysis:

BOSOLA. [*Aside*] How greedily she eats them!

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.

(II.i.147-50).

Bosola's line of vision is redirected from the Duchess' mouth to her belly, which becomes the focal point of his discussion because, as he follows her digestion of the apricots, he is led to the resting place of the Duchess' growing foetus. Mercatus also creates a link between the stomach and the womb: "just as unquenchable thirst occurs in the mouth of the belly, an

implacable desire to copulate occurs and arises in parts of the womb” (p.53). The unborn child is therefore represented not only as a product of pregnancy but also an embodiment of lust. The womb not only has its own appetite, it also apparently thrives on and satisfies its appetite with copulation. The lustfulness of the Duchess’ body is portrayed in Bosola’s deliberate frustration over her ‘loose-bodied’ gown, on which the ‘bawd-farthingales’ conceal the signs of the Duchess’ sexual sin. All that Bosola can hope for is a gust of wind which will uncover the natural shape of her body. However, Enterline, referred to by Dolan in *The Duchess of Malfi: A Critical Guide* (2011) makes a fair point: “if one could actually see the body, what would one know? Would seeing be knowing?” (p.126). Despite Bosola’s attempt to attribute his failure to the Duchess’ gown, it is clear that what lies beneath it does not prove or answer all of his questions. The ability to stage the internal maternal body is, therefore, an impossibility in this scene. All that Bosola can do is speculate and so he does, as his frustration culminates into the conjuring of a ‘springal’, which taunts him by dancing sardonically in the Duchess’ belly, in a space which is beyond his grasp. His interpretation of the Duchess’ body concludes as a personal insult and threat towards him; the inability to decipher it renders Bosola helpless. Frances E. Dolan (2011) expresses the obscurity of pregnancy in the early modern period by suggesting that “even signs we might assume to be incontrovertible – quickening or foetal movement and growing ‘great bellied’ – could mislead” (p.126). To illustrate this further, Dolan uses Queen Mary Tudor’s phantom pregnancies as an example:

Rumours circulated in September 1554 that her doctors had told her she was pregnant; she does not seem to have believed it herself until she felt quickening in November of 1554. By late May of 1555, there were rumours that she was not, in fact, pregnant; her doctors continued to insist she was – until she emerged from ‘semi-seclusion’ in July without having given birth.

(p.126).

Queen Mary's experience reinforces the incapability to verify pregnancy with no speculation and only factual information. This reaffirms the notion that genuine pregnancy is covert; it can only be comprehensible through fictional interpretation. The interweaving components of the maternal body which Bosola has constructed himself; the Duchess's lusty greed, her deceitful and concealing dress and the jeering unborn child beneath it, therefore, reaffirm that her womb is a source of illicit sexual desire and a cloak which conceals the child that grows inside it. The female body is consequently constructed as a "region of erotic desire governed by the quasi-autonomous uterus" (Sawday, p.222). The presentation of the Duchess' body in such a way as this insinuates that it is a force to be reckoned with as well as a secret that needs to be uncovered. Dolan refers to Michelle Dowd, who argues that "the audience is essentially put in the same position that Ferdinand and Bosola find themselves in earlier in the play, forced to follow a receding trail of evidence about the Duchess's reproductive life" (p.126). While, of course, Bosola and Ferdinand follow this trail to gain clear evidence of the Duchess' dishonest activities, as audience members with no motive or grudge against the Duchess, she can be acknowledged for her "remarkably fertile female body" (Moncrief and McPherson, 2002, p.161).

Whatever the individuals of an early modern audience thought about the Duchess' disposition, the Duchess' fertility would have been a mark of strength during a time when birth was, for so many women, also their possible death. As Sid Ray (2007) suggests: "Where Elizabeth's virgin image – her sexual inexperience – gave her authority, it is explicitly the Duchess' sexual *experience* (their emphasis) that gives her authority" (p.20). The Duchess' body is, therefore, a mark of depravity but it also holds power which originates in her "quasi-autonomous" (Sawday, p.222) uterus. This explains in more depth why Ferdinand hires Bosola in the first place; his sister's body is a threat to patriarchal authority, her brothers included. Returning to the apricots, Bosola concludes that the Duchess' reaction to them, "her

tetchiness and most vulturous / eating of the apricots” (II.ii.1-2), are “apparent signs of breeding” (II.ii.2). This final observation from his experiment reflects that her body is measured by the symptoms of pregnancy it displays.

While *The Duchess of Malfi* cuts up aspects of the Duchess’ private reproductive and sexual lives into snippets for both characters and audiences alike, *’Tis Pity she’s a Whore* allows for the thorough observation of the sexualised female body, which was forbidden to us by the Duchess’ petticoats. Giovanni’s treatment of Annabella’s body reinforces Sawday’s view that, during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the female body became “the licenced site of male erotic desire” (p.213). Giovanni justifies this exploration by claiming authorship of his sister’s body in the line “one flesh, one love, one heart, one all” (I.i.34). He echoes Adam’s words to Eve, “flesh of my flesh”, as she was created from Adam’s body. Additionally, he accuses Annabella’s body of being the source of his own lechery because it is irresistible. He does this through blazoning her body: “Such a pair of stars / As are thine eyes would, like Promethean fire, / If gently glanced, give life to senseless stones” (I.ii.190-3), “Such lips would tempt a saint; such hands as those / Would make an anchorite lascivious” (I.ii.196-7).

Each part of Annabella is distinguished from the other for the purpose of anatomising her so that Giovanni can construct her as his own. Gillian Woods (2010) suggests that the language Giovanni uses to comprehend and appropriate his sister’s body causes him to “see her as a source of theological corruption” (p.125). His patriarchal dominance ensues when Annabella herself voices her initial submission: “thou hast won / The field and never fought” (I.ii.238).

The ‘field’, I interpret, as the affirmation of her body as a ‘site’, reminiscent of Sawday’s prior spatial suggestion. Furthermore, Sawday proposes that “to peer into the body was to

undertake a journey into a corrupt world of mortality and decay; it became a voyage into the very heart of the principle of spiritual dissolution” (p.21). While Giovanni energetically celebrates and claims Annabella’s body through his language, Mathew R. Martin (2012) emphasises that “Giovanni’s blazon does not include Annabella’s heart ... after blazoning her other body parts, Giovanni substitutes his own heart for Annabella’s and tropes his heart as ground of her being” (p.135). This is perhaps because her heart is another internal organ which is uninterpretable; all Giovanni is capable of is entrusting Annabella with his own heart, which he knows the truth of and asks her to “Remember what thou vow’st: keep well my heart.” (II.i.32). This is not the only instance of Giovanni ordering Annabella to remember the vows she made to her brother; her body is threatening in its very existence and so his reoccurring reminders to her serve as a form of control. Annabella’s body must belong to Giovanni or else, as he supposes, he will die.

The pit scene in *Titus Andronicus* is perhaps one of the most deliberate spatial visualisations of early modern concepts of depraved female sexuality and in my view, it is also an exploration of the womb. While I have established that Annabella’s body is the sustenance Giovanni requires to thrive, it is the imagined space of Tamora’s ‘bad’ womb that draws in curious men and captures them to ensure their miserable fate. While Mohler (2006) suggests that the pit scene is a diminishment of Lavinia’s body, rather than an exploration of Tamora’s, she claims that the pit “becomes a chaotic imaginary terrain” (p.36). This phrase can be linked to Jonathan Sawday’s metaphorical interpretation of the body as a terrain, waiting to be discovered. He writes that period between 1540 and 1640 is “the period of the discovery of the Vesalian body” (p.23) and that followers of Vesalius believed that “the human body expressed in miniature the divine workmanship of God, and that its form corresponded to the greater form of the macrocosm” (p.23). According to Sawday, this phase was kickstarted by Vesalius’ *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*:

Eustachius mapped the ear, Fallopius the female reproductive organs, Realdus Columbus and Fabricus of Aquapendente the venous system, and Michael Servetus the pulmonary transit of the blood. Like the Columbian explorers, these early discoverers dotted their names, like place-names on a map, over the terrain which they encountered.

(p.23)

While Sawday's suggestion is primarily aimed at linking colonialism with prominent physicians, marking their efforts onto parts of the body, it clearly relays that the body itself can be interpreted as a land which can be conquered or at least, explored. In the pit scene, therefore, Shakespeare sends Quintus and Martius on an expedition to experience the interiors of the female body in the form of a pit.

It demonstrates the pit as a forceful, swallowing and dark space which draws men into it; the same characteristics as we have seen Mercatus attribute to the womb. It is not just representative of the bad womb, however, as Bate suggests that "we do not have to be card carrying Freudians to see the connection between what we know Chiron and Demetrius are doing to Lavinia, and Quintus' description of a 'subtle hole'" (p.7). Chiron and Demetrius' rape of Lavinia, while this scene plays out, is essential to understanding the pit as a womb. This is because it is Tamora who is the architect of the rape. Peterson (2010) suggests that "we have evidence that Tamora's bad sexuality and its reproduction precedes the affair with Aaron – her licentiousness is apparently inherited by Chiron and Demetrius as the propensity to rape" (p.126).

While the pit scene establishes the grotesque nature of the rape, it also resonates with "the threatening female sexuality embodied in Tamora" (Bate, p.8) and consequently, her womb. On reaching the pit, Quintus complains: "my sight is very dull" (II.ii.195) and then asks Martius, "Art thou fallen? What subtle hole is this / Upon whose leaves are drops of new-shed blood / A very fatal place it seems to me" (II.ii.198-202). His bewilderment and fear reinforce the early modern attitude towards the womb. Adelman suggests that the womb was "traditionally understood as the entrance to death and the site of mortality" (p.6). A scene of

horror on behalf of Quintus and Martius ensues, as Quintus says, “I am surprised with an uncouth fear / A chilling sweat o’erruns my trembling joints; / My heart suspects more than mine eye can see” (II.ii.211-13). The men are essentially exposed to the heart of the corrupt womb, where Bassianus’ body lies in the pit, “all on a heap, like to a slaughtered lamb” (II.ii.223), as though he were a helpless foetus nestled in the womb, or a cadaver placed centrally in an anatomy theatre for all to see.

Susan J. Wiseman (1990) suggests that “the wound by which [Annabella] was murdered might run from her womb to her heart in the cut an anatomist might use to open a body” (p.194). One might ask how Giovanni goes from seeking Annabella’s undying love to appropriating her body as an anatomist’s corpse and wonder what caused him to be able to commit a murder as bizarre as this. The Friar calls Giovanni a “wonder of thine age” (I.i.49); he is presented by the Friar as a remarkably intelligent student, known “throughout Bologna” (I.i.49) for his academic mind. This is amplified given his ‘age’; he is young and therefore might strike a resemblance with a young budding medical student like Vesalius. His interest in anatomy appears alongside his confession of his love for Annabella, which he exaggeratedly expresses:

Say that we had one father, say one womb
(Curse to my joys!) gave us both life and birth:
Are we not therefore each to other bound
So much the more by nature, by the links
Of blood, of reason (nay, if you will have’t,
Even of religion), to be ever one,
One soul, one flesh, one love, one heart, one all?

(I.i.28-34).

Giovanni’s attempt to validate his incestuous love for his sister is formulated by avoiding the essence of its corruption, incest itself. Susan J. Wiseman explains that this process is demonstrated by Giovanni’s language: “Giovanni’s language in the early part of the play has two results. It confuses the categories of nature and culture and erases the confusions caused

by incest through an appeal to 'beauty' as a 'natural' producer of desire and therefore as an endorsement of that desire" (p.186). Wiseman's interpretation of Giovanni's discourse is suggestive of his unwillingness to confront the baseness of his own desire for his sister, given that Wiseman terms the "idea of incest" (p.186) as the "absent centre in Giovanni's discourse, the hidden precondition of his platonic language" (p.186). Arguably, this 'absent centre' helps to refocus meaning, or as Wiseman suggests, 'confuse' pre-existing ideas so that Giovanni's true motives become obscured. This allows Giovanni to validate his feelings and it is done by using the female body as a vehicle for doing so. His desire is based in 'flesh' and the 'womb' which gave both Annabella and Giovanni 'birth'. He asks the Friar: "Shall then, for that I am her brother born, / My joys be ever banished from her bed?" (I.i.36-7). In reductive terms, Giovanni implies that being Annabella's brother is not a powerful enough or a legitimate reason to keep him from sharing her bed. If anything, given his prior speech, it is a reason to be with her. His attraction is entirely physical, and it originates in the flesh and the womb that they shared. Yet, as Wiseman explains, Giovanni reconstructs language to fit his own narrative and presents his desire as being natural. Though perhaps more overtly sexual, Andreas Vesalius' account of his experience with a cadaver, according to Sawday, is presented through "the language of courtly love" (p.197):

While out walking, looking for bones in the place where on the country highways eventually, to the great convenience of students, all those who have been executed are customarily placed, I happened upon a dried cadaver ... I climbed the stake and pulled off the femur from the hip bone ... After I had brought the legs and arms home in secret ... I allowed myself to be shut out of the city in the evening in order to obtain the thorax which was firmly held by a chain. I was burning with so great a desire ... that I was not afraid to snatch in the middle of the night what I so longed for ... The next day I transported the bones home piecemeal through another gate of the city.

(p.196)

This language is, as Sawday claims, “illicit, secretive ... All that is missing is the balcony” (p.197). The body is recognised as a source of overpowering desire; it is irresistible and if it means one must involve themselves in immoral, secretive affairs then so be it. By interpreting the language used here as the language of ‘courtly love’, it reconstructs the event as one which sees Vesalius at its forefront as the hero and doting lover; he will place himself in danger if pleasure is the reward. Of course, Giovanni does just this, as “it were easier to stop the ocean / From floats and ebbs than to dissuade my vows” (I.i.63-4). Even in this utterance, Giovanni aligns himself with forces of nature to suggest that his desire is a natural compulsion. Given that Vesalius ‘happened upon’ the body while he was searching suggests that it was a natural coincidence and the cadaver was so desirable that he could not resist to take it. Furthermore, Vesalius’ passage can be linked with the physicians’ observation of Ferdinand, in *The Duchess of Malfi*:

One met the Duke, ‘bout midnight, in a lane
Behind St Mark’s church, with the leg of a man
Upon his shoulder; and he howled fearfully,
Said he was a wolf - only the difference
Was a wolf’s skin was hairy on the outside,
His on the inside; bade them take their swords,
Rip up his flesh, and try.

(V.ii.13-19).

Though Ferdinand’s compulsion to snatch bodies is represented as a symptom of his lycanthropy, it is still, like Vesalius’, an illicit hobby carried out in darkness so as not to be caught. It is perhaps the most striking instance of Ferdinand’s infatuation with anatomy but not the only one by any means. Sheryl Craig (1994) reminds us that “Ferdinand is fascinated by severed body parts throughout the play” (p.23). While Ferdinand stages a deliberate attempt to horrify the Duchess with a dead man’s hand and faux corpses, he also showcases an interest in anatomy elsewhere. He refers to “chirurgeons” (I.ii.28) and “Barber-Chirurgeons’ Hall” (V.ii.78) and provides a plethora of his own anatomical fantasies, such as

claiming he will murder his doctor by “flay[ing] off his skin to cover one of the anatomies this rogue hath set i’th cold yonder” (V.ii.77-8). Yet, it is only the Duchess who suffers the consequences of such fantasies being put into motion.

That the Duchess becomes a subject for Ferdinand to inflict his violent dreams upon can be linked to the early modern treatment of the female body under the influence of anatomy. As an outcome of the scarcity of maternal bodies to gaze upon, anatomists “seized their opportunities when they came” (Sawday, p.221). Sawday recounts a disturbing real-life instance of a woman who was hanged for killing her bastard child. He references Anthony À Wood’s account of the situation:

Went between 12 and one of the clock at night to the house where she laid, and putting her into a coffin carried her into Broken Hayes, and by a halter about her neck drew her out of it, and hung her on a tree ... She then was so sensible of what they were about to do, that she said “Lord have mercy upon me”. The women were exceedingly enraged at it, cut down the tree whereon she hang’d

(p.220)

Sawday describes this as “the door into the realities of the word of ‘rigour pittillesse’ in which a group of women struggled to preserve the life and the body that the law and science demanded” (p.220). This violent reality adds extra depth to the Duchess’s request “but my body / Bestow upon my women. Will you?” (IV.ii.217). Additionally, Cariola attempts to escape strangulation by claiming she is pregnant, to which Bosola coldly says “Why then / Your credit’s saved” (IV.ii.243); there is an inescapable sense of cruelty when women resist allowing their fates to fall into the hands of curious and power hungry men. The destruction of the unruly maternal body is not just a way to silence it and prevent its power but, for physicians, it was a way to transfer them to the anatomy table and gain knowledge which

would otherwise be withheld. The way in which this process is achieved in the theatre will be discussed further in the following and final section of this study.

In the final segment of this thesis, I aim to accomplish the fusion of the stage with the ritualistic atmosphere of the anatomy theatre. Doing this reflects the symbolic significance of the maternal body under the interrogative knife of the early modern anatomist and the period itself, which heavily pursued a deeper understanding of the female reproductive system. It is clear that Giovanni orchestrates the most personal, elaborate and violent investigation and interrogation of the maternal body, of any of the men in the plays. Therefore, in Lisa Hopkins' (1998) words, his "quest for knowledge" (p.6) will be followed here. I also want to consider Mark Houlahan's (2010) suggestion that Giovanni's remark "stand up my heart" (V.v.105) is effectively a riddle because "he will shortly bring this phallic command to his self-devised theatre of revenge, entering '*with a heart upon his dagger*', holding it before him as his weapon" (p.143). With this in mind, Giovanni can be contemplated as having acquired the experiential knowledge and thereby authority of the maternal body. He goes on to present his findings to an audience of men, who unlike him, have not obtained this level of comprehension. So, I shall interpret the final banquet as Houlahan does, as a "self-devised theatre" (p.143), in which the "phallic command" (p.143) turned weapon resonates with the male-led, imposing dissection of the maternal body in early modern culture.

Initially, Giovanni sets out on his 'quest' by using his sister's body as its driving force. His fascination with her and the emphasis he places on the significance of her body, which shared the same womb as him, cannot be put aside in his mind. His philosophical battle with God in the opening scene of the play is met with the Friar's advice: "better 'tis / To bless the sun than reason why it shines – Yet He thou talk'st of is above the sun. No more! I may not hear it" (I.i.9-11). The Friar's insistence to accept God rather than question him does not sit well

with Giovanni. In a similar sense, Giovanni cannot stop his desire to chase his feelings for Annabella because he is insistent on understanding and experiencing her. He refuses to allow their biological relationship to prevent him from doing so and so he mirrors the Friar's words on God being 'above the sun', by saying: "Must I not praise / That beauty which, if framed anew, the gods / Would make a god of" (I.i.20-2). He places Annabella above God in an attempt to legitimise the events that will proceed his conversation with the Friar. This is where his quest really begins, as the Friar despairs: "O Giovanni, hast thou left the schools / Of knowledge to converse with Lust and Death?" (I.i.57-8). Lisa Hopkins (1998) suggests that "the proximity of 'knowledge' to 'lust' threatens to pull the word in precisely the direction so markedly favoured by Giovanni, tending to merge the two rather than sustaining the opposition ostensibly between them" (p.7). Hopkins' intriguing interpretation of the line is reinforced by Giovanni's own view. After the Friar's troubling question, he says: "It were more ease to stop the ocean / From floats and ebbs than to dissuade my own vows" (I.i.64). The magnetic appeal and pull towards Annabella's body presents Giovanni's descent into depravity as some kind of Faustian voyage whereby he sets out to become "one flesh" (I.i.34) with his sister and uncover the secrets of her alluring body.

In light of Giovanni's obsession with the 'one flesh' that both Giovanni wants to achieve with Annabella and already shares with her as a sibling (having been born from the same womb), some critics argue that this obsession carries Oedipal connotations. For example, Susannah Mintz (2003) supposes that "Giovanni presumes to find his way back to the mother's womb through Annabella's body" (p.282). This is very possible, especially when taking Giovanni's statement that the "one womb" they shared "gave [them] both life and birth" (I.i.28-9). His explicit distinction between 'life' and 'birth' suggests an interest in the physical act and experience of birth located in the female body. Additionally, Derek Roper (1997) identifies another Oedipal struggle on Giovanni's behalf, by suggesting that he refuses

“to share his dead mother with his sister” (p.17). Roper attributes this to Giovanni’s carefully tailored language surrounding their mother: “Annabella invokes ‘our mother’s dust’, Giovanni varies this to ‘my mother’s dust’” (p.17). Roper’s argument thereby reinforces Mintz’ assertion and reaffirms that whatever Giovanni sets out to achieve, it is Annabella’s body which will allow him to do so. Annabella’s maternal agency ends up becoming another tool for Giovanni to revel in revenge, self-expression and scientific authority. Furthermore, it could be argued that Giovanni claiming his mother as his own eliminates Annabella as his sister. Instead of allowing her to give birth to their child, he eclipses her by ‘ploughing’ up her womb and stealing the knowledge of its contents for himself.

While Giovanni’s unrelenting obsession seems to be rooted in his attraction to his sister and her body, it is also clear that he evokes it as an intellectual frustration. When explaining his attempts to harness his own desire towards Annabella, he leaves out no details of the torment he has endured at the very thought of her. He claims to have spent “many a silent night in sighs and groans, / Ran over all my thoughts, despised my fate, / Reasoned against the reasons of my love, / Done all that smooth-cheeked Virtue could advise, / But found all bootless” (I.i.218-22). He specifically blames ‘smooth-cheeked Virtue’ for its hopeless advice and incapability to control his “hidden flames” (I.i.216). ‘Smooth-cheeked’ is suggestive of Giovanni’s lack of sexual experience (given that it refers to a lack of facial hair) and his youth. He intertwines sexual and intellectual experience and complains that his sexual inexperience is essentially preventing him from becoming intellectually advanced. By having sex with Annabella, he hopes that he will somehow be enlightened by the act. The importance of Annabella’s body as an educational instrument is therefore reaffirmed. His threatening demand, “you must either love, or I must die” (I.i.223) illustrates Annabella as her brother’s only hope in accessing the information he can no longer resist.

However, once Annabella has liberated Giovanni from his ‘hidden flames’, his evaluation of their sexual experience does not reflect him as a remarkably transformed or even reinvigorated man. All that he has learnt is relayed in one distinct and quite vulgar observation, which Gillian Woods (2010) terms “nominalist dismissiveness” (p.123). He says:

I marvel why the chaster of your sex
Should think this pretty toy called maidenhead
So strange a loss, when, being lost, ‘tis nothing,
And you are still the same

(II.i.9-12).

His observation is reductive and naïve; Woods argues that “he cannot perceive, or rather accept, the reality of change in others” (p.123) and “Giovanni’s confidence grows, but he remains explicitly ‘the same’” (p.123). His experiential form of learning allows him to remain in control of Annabella’s body, which perhaps explains why he explicates the loss of her virginity so plainly. Any literary meaning that Giovanni bestowed Annabella with before this scene is temporarily removed and replaced with a cold, biological deconstruction of her parts, when he is confronted with them: “‘tis nothing” (II.i.11). The body that he initially envisioned as a container of his illumination is now presented as empty and ordinary. The sexual pleasure Giovanni receives from their relationship is constant, but his intellectual investigation is in his view, underwhelming and likely coming to an end at this point. It is only the news of Annabella’s pregnancy which reawakens his desire for bodily understanding. When Putana discloses the pregnancy, Giovanni asks: “With child? How dost thou know’t?” (III.iii.9) and so his naivety resurfaces, widening his capacity for learning again. The revelation sends him into an animated state of confusion: “I have a world of business in my head!” (III.iii.23), “How do this news perplex me!” (III.iii.24).

It is Annabella’s pregnancy that will permit Giovanni’s ability to demonstrate his patriarchal and knowledgeable authority at the final banquet. It could be argued that the bearing of

Annabella's heart is actually necessary to prevent the female body from its own self-governing. Giovanni's use of the body certainly demonstrates his combined fascination and fear of it. For example, his stark realisation of Annabella's physical body, particularly her reproductive organs, as 'nothing' coincides with his insistence that she is "the same" (II.i.12). According to Mintz (2003), by referring to Annabella in this way, "[Giovanni] seems to deny the import of Annabella's newly realised sexuality" (p.287). Mintz suggests that this denial is a likely way for Giovanni to also deny the possibility of Annabella changing: "If sexual fulfilment were to change her – if she were to become threateningly uncontainable ... the monarchical Giovanni might risk the loss of an identity fragile for being based on creation" (p.287). This possibility is thereby prohibited by Giovanni through Annabella's death and even as he murders his sister, he says "to dispute with thy – even in thy death – most lovely beauty / Would make me stagger to perform this act / Which I most glory in" (V.v.88-90). Like Vasquez, Giovanni reveals a distaste for any protestations against his authority. Her repentance for their sins, therefore, is not welcomed by Giovanni and leaves him in a state of confusion: "What, changed so soon?" (V.v.1). According to Gillian Woods (2014), Giovanni is "ontologically stuck" (p.125). His failure to acknowledge the reality that Annabella has changed her mind about their relationship makes her appear all the more villainous to him. Therefore, his justification of her murder: "to save thy fame" (V.v.85) can be read as an attempt to retain what is left of their relationship and a form of chastity; Annabella's body is immortalised as Giovanni's and only Giovanni's. This occurs because, as Woods asserts, "that Annabella should feel or act differently from him is aberrant to his understanding" (p.125). This means that, as Catherine Silverstone (2010) suggests: "Giovanni's literal anatomisation can be read as an extreme manifestation of this attempt to control and order the body and desires of the lover" (p.82).

Chris Laoutaris suggests that “the process of visualising pregnancy and embryological development was indeed important to the Renaissance imagination” (p.15). He defines the theatre as one space in which this process was attempted and explains: “the Shakespearean theatre [was] a crucial medium for exploring the dichotomous nature of the maternal crises which provided the basis for the authorisation of those branches of learning that sought to regulate and define the reproductive anatomy” (p.15). Laoutaris not only considers the theatre as a platform which scrutinised the maternal body but he also highlights the theatrical environment of the anatomy theatres: “the dissemination of anatomical knowledge was often accompanied by music and feasting and on the Continent, where anatomies were scheduled in the winter during the carnival period, students sometimes attended in full masquing regalia” (p.12). Arguably, this presents the two settings as somewhat interchangeable in that they both intertwine theatricality with maternity. It is also apparent that the way in which Giovanni appropriates the space of the banquet reflects it as though it were doubly a theatre stage and an anatomy theatre.

Giovanni enters this space, ‘gilt’ in his sister’s blood as though he drew it to wear as a prized costume. His all-male audience is bemused: “What means this?” (V.vi.12). While the heart and dagger do constitute a phallic weapon, Giovanni evidently considers himself as intellectually and anatomically authoritative within this setting because of his constant jeering at his unknowing audience. He puzzles them: “’Tis a heart, / A heart, my lords, in which is mine entombed. / Look well upon’t. D’ee know’t?” (V.vi.24-6). Of course, Giovanni is aware that it is practically impossible for anyone to decipher who the heart belongs to, as Vasquez enquires “What strange riddle’s this?” (V.vi.28). Houlahan comprehends Giovanni’s sport as generally confusing, too: “If the point of anatomy was to bring things to light, then Giovanni’s gesture results in obscurity” (p.143). While this is evident given the reactions of the men in attendance, the whole point is that Giovanni is the master of knowledge at the

banquet. It is he who holds the answers to the puzzle he provides. Once he has announced that the heart belongs to Annabella and it is he who “ploughed up / Her fruitful womb” (V.vi.30) also, he commands that it is the “oracle of truth” (V.vi.50), insinuating he is the supplier of such wisdom. Four acts earlier, he begged Annabella to dissect him: “here’s my breast. Strike home! / Rip up my bosom! There thou shalt behold / A heart in which is writ the truth I speak” (I.ii.204). Giovanni’s desperation to unlock the truth revolves around death; one of them must die for reaching the truth to be possible. Annabella’s disregard for this plea means that eventually, she is the one who must die because of Giovanni’s obsession to extract the internal truth.

Derek Roper (1997) interprets Giovanni’s bearing of the heart as peculiar because of the nature of the heart itself: “perhaps the most powerful shock comes from the fact that this heart appears to signify nothing: it cannot be recognised ... nothing is written on it; the deepest truth of human beings turns out to be a blank, a piece of offal” (p.15). Houlihan also notes that “the oneness Giovanni sought through the language and action of the heart is rather a return to blankness and nullity” (p.143). Giovanni’s once reductive, newly found realisation of the female body as ‘nothing’, is refigured through his gruesome display. His conquering of the body, which he claims to be ‘king’ of after sleeping with Annabella, allows him to present his findings in this format.

With regards to Roper’s argument, that the heart is ‘offal’, the truth can be aligned with the same redundancy. In essence, the truth is derived from Giovanni’s limited understanding of the female body, that it is ‘nothing’ and his belief that he has become the master of it, hence his worried question: “Hath your new, sprightly lord / Found a trick in night-games more than we / Could know in our simplicity?” (V.v.1-3). The bearing of the heart is his display of the only ‘thing’ he has come to fully ‘know’ as his own.

In *The Duchess of Malfi*, Ferdinand's wax-work presentation also functions to illustrate obscurity because of Antonio's eventual literal death. In early performances, the wax-figures were played by real people which in some way bears resemblance to the notion of Annabella's heart being played by a pig/sheep's heart. The Duchess is first told that these figures are the corpses of her family and so, according to Duer:

The subsequent discovery that the images are wax at once increases their ambiguity and challenges directly the ability of the audience to distinguish even on a physical level between reality and illusion, an ability which in the theatre may always be in doubt, and which is in this case further evoked and turning the wax form of Antonio into an omen

(p.7)

Ferdinand, like Giovanni, creates an anatomical display in which the Duchess is incapable of distinguishing the authenticity of the dismembered body parts she is supplied with. Again, he is the only knowing subject in the room, much to his delight as he exclaims: "Excellent! As I would wish. She's plagued in art" (IV.i.110). He relays his satisfaction to the audience by explaining that the wax corpses are "framed in wax" (IV.i.110) and that the Duchess "takes them / For true, substantial bodies" (IV.i.110). Ferdinand plays on the boundaries between the artificial and real and aligns this measure just as Giovanni does, with the essence of truth and fiction.

The banquet becomes the anatomy theatre, in which Annabella's father and husband are forced to bear witness to her punctured heart. The retrieval of the heart is professed by Giovanni as an accomplishment: "Have you all no faith / To credit yet my triumphs? Here I swear ... by the love I bore my Annabella whilst she lived / These hands have from her bosom ripped this heart" (5.5.54-7). Sawday explains that "mastery over the body, the conquering of its desires, the endless war against the ravages of sin, or soul-sickness, is a feature of early-modern culture" (p.20). His explanation of his love for Annabella turning into the ripping out of her heart is oxymoronic, yet he portrays it as a shameless act of love. Houlihan (2010) notes Giovanni's disturbing connections between words and acts: "The

more Giovanni calls them into being through language, the more ‘words’ and ‘things’ are severed one from the other” (p.137). This very occurrence details how Giovanni has the ability to ‘sever’, meaning as Houlahan states “things are by no means what they so luridly appear to be” (p.137). This would explain the utter confusion he causes by presenting her heart: “What strange riddle is this?” (V.vi.27) Vasquez asks, while Florio cries “Oh, his rage belies him!” (V.vi.49). Annabella’s heart, sought after by Soranzo who threatened he’d “rip up thy heart” (IV.iii.55) and of course by Giovanni, who even offers her a dagger to “rip up my bosom!” (I.ii.206), has been brought to literal light yet cannot be interpreted. Consequently, Houlahan questions:

Whatever we are led to gaze upon, either ‘live’ on stage, or in the stage imaginary reading of the play, cannot surely be what Giovanni insists it is, unless as Catherine Silverstone remarks ... we are to imagine a truly repugnant snuff theatre

(p.137)

While I am in agreement with Neill, referred to by Houlahan, that “Ford fulfils the potential of anatomy theatre” (p.138), I also consider this scene to perpetuate the enigmatic concepts of the womb, as explored and created by the physicians in those anatomy theatres. The presentation of the heart effectively reveals nothing; it is indistinguishable from the hearts of others and as Houlahan has recognised, in a theatrical sense, is not what it presents itself to be.

Conclusion

This dissertation has endeavoured to consider conceptions of maternity and pregnancy in early modern literature, in relation to their presentation on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage. It has expounded on the undeniably imposing interrogation of the maternal body in the anatomy theatre, which grew in public popularity during the time that these dramas were published. Furthermore, by addressing a range of criticism alongside early modern texts from a variety of genres, this dissertation has collectively constructed its own interpretations of the representations of maternal agency within *Titus Andronicus*, *The Duchess of Malfi* and *'Tis Pity she's a Whore*.

Titus Andronicus' Tamora has been determined as the most monstrous and ambiguous example of maternal agency from the plays, in this thesis. Her corrupted womb, evidenced by her depraved sons, has been reimagined as the site of Bassianus' death in the pit scene. It is worth noting that in this scene, according to Metz (1981), "the trap door was probably open since no stage direction calls for it to be opened during the scene" (p.100). The trap door has been linked by Amy Strahler Holzapfel (2008) to the 'slab' of the anatomy theatre, "upon which the body was dissected" (p.4). Holzapfel continues by explaining how the slab might have functioned: "In some technologically advanced theatres ... the body may have been elevated by a mechanical lift from a lower room" (p.4). This no doubt would have, if it is even possible, brought more attention to the body which lay upon the slab because of its dramatic entrance from below the theatre. Holzapfel claims "While the modern image of Frankenstein may come to mind for some readers, a more historically accurate reference for this gaping hole ... is the hell-mouth trap of the medieval theatre" (p.4). In *Titus Andronicus*, Martius affirms this significance of the trap door by referring to the "devouring receptacle" (II.ii.234) as "Cocytus' misty mouth" (II.ii.235). Overall, Tamora's maternal body, that "chaotic terrain" (Mohler, 2006, p.36), becomes Moncrief and McPherson's (2007)

conceptualisation of the maternal body “as a site of imagination and contest” through this thesis’ interpretation of it as the ‘pit’.

The Duchess’ maternal body has been approached in this thesis as having primarily brought forth early modern concerns about desire and overconsumption; her brother Ferdinand’s persistence to maintain authority over her is complicated by her maternal agency. It enhances Ferdinand’s sexual fascination with her because she gradually becomes more difficult to control and so Ferdinand increasingly objectifies and demands that her body submits to his commands. The Duchess’ all-concealing ‘loose-bodied’ gown provokes Bosola’s imagination to consider what lies beneath. The image bears some resemblance to Sawday’s depiction of Elizabeth I, whose court generated blazons inspired by the significance of the Queen’s body (Sawday, 1995, p.199). Sawday suggests “within the English blazons the erotic and the anatomic were to co-exist, feeding off one another as female bodies were divided in a riot of aesthetic and scientific exploration” (p.197). This thesis has shown that Bosola’s observation of the Duchess combines anatomical education with undeniable connotations of lust and desire. Sawday records an instance of a visiting French ambassador at Elizabeth’s court, who describes her attire: “girdled, and open in the front, as was also her chemise, in such a manner that she often opened this dress” (p.198). Sawday terms this a “visible blazon” (p.198), which I suggest is also applicable to Bosola’s scrutiny of the Duchess’ body. Both examples, of the Duchess’ gown with its weighted petticoats and the Queen’s openable dress, which Sawday claims allowed her to reveal “to her courtiers what was at the same time denied to them” (p.198), confirm the female body as a source of eroticism and speculation.

Lastly, Annabella has been identified in this dissertation as somewhat of a culmination of the ideas represented through the maternal agency of Tamora and the Duchess. Her transgression is, like Tamora’s, depraved and to most, unknown. While alive, she is blazoned by her brother and suitors alike, who all praise her for her physical beauty. Her body comes

to resemble the anatomist's cadaver because Giovanni, from beginning to end, utilises her body to retrieve answers to enquiries based on religion, sex and anatomy. Her transforming persona, highlighted by Gillian Woods, is combined with her transformation into a pregnant woman. She is the only woman of the three to newly experience pregnancy and so too is Giovanni, who cannot comprehend the fluctuating state of the body that he wanted to remain still under his control. His presentation of her literal heart and the dissection of her womb, do not however, clarify the meaning of the female maternal body. Despite believing himself a victor and deliverer of revenge, the entire scene is disorderly, and he is perceived by the other men as a madman and a murderer; Giovanni's apparent 'truth' cannot be translated. Annabella is a reminder that maternity is partially constructed through the imagination during the early modern period because even when her maternal body is opened, it is still indecipherable. As Sawday (1995) clarifies: "A feature of our sense of interiority is that it can never be experienced other than at second-hand" (p.7).

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