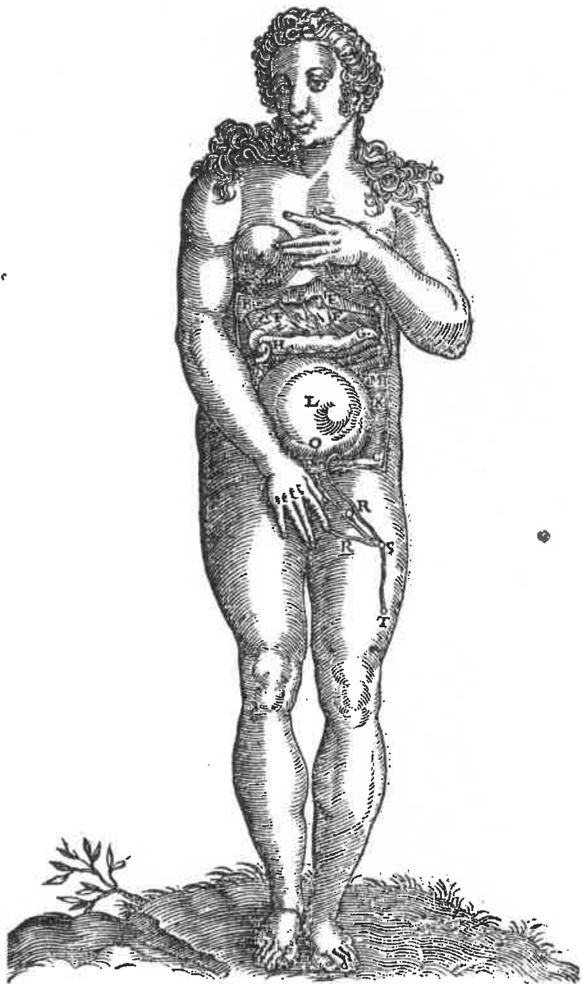

THE BODY EMBARRASSED

DRAMA AND THE DISCIPLINES OF SHAME IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

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Erotic death, fear, and desire succumb to forensic analysis. "Here, on her breast," says Dolabella, "there is a vent of blood, and something blown; / The like is on her arm" (5.2.348–50). "Most probable / That so she died," responds Caesar diagnostically, and he reductively literalizes Cleopatra's metaphorics of death into a kind of empirical project: "For her physician tells me / She hath pursu'd conclusions infinite / Of easy ways to die" (353–56).

Caesar's final entrance in the play symbolically marks the historical emergence of a new kind of collective discipline of mind and body, a demarcation of bodily distance, and an insistently unmetaphoric discourse. If this too seems voyeuristic, a call to imagine what could not be displayed for corroboration on the epicene body of the boy actor, the voyeurism has more to do with the forensics of the Renaissance anatomy theaters and their modes of bodily trespass than with the intimate and regressive participatory affect of the nursing scene for which no specialized knowledge, no professionalism of gaze is required. Cleopatra's suicide signifies the agency of death itself as a form of carnivalesque power against which Caesar and all forms of earthly power are conspicuously helpless, against which the analysis of forensic evidence seems merely a defensive, face-saving discursive back-formation. More than that, Cleopatra's suicide tropes on what—as we saw in the case of Juliet's nurse—is a cultural legacy of female empowerment in and through the reproductive body. Lactation begins as an involuntary bodily process, another conspicuous form of female effluence related to both woman's proneness to infirmity and her disruptive sexuality. But the key to a wet nurse's productivity, hence social power, is her control over her own milk giving and, through it, control over matters of death and survival. Cleopatra's metaphorics borrow some of that power to her own ends here. And in their sublime transmutations of fear and desire they seem to acknowledge the libidinal self-gratification contained within the hermetic enclosure of the nursing dyad.

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There are other social meanings to ascribe to the theatrical sign of a woman bringing an animal to her breast, particularly when that action is followed by the quasi-judicial inspection of her corpse by a political ruler. One is to be found in the Jacobean preoccupation with witches, particularly with the categorical differences between the bodies of witches and those of other women. A patriarchal order,

Christina Larner has argued, divides women on the grounds of conformity. I would add that in the witch-hunting patriarchal order in seventeenth-century England that conformity was in part bodily because patriarchy found in the apparent objectivity of bodily evidence a means of occluding the ideological grounds for social division. Thus, if Cleopatra's imitation of the wet nurse somatically expresses her commonality with ordinary women, whose lives were defined by domestic routines and physical obligations such as suckling babies, it also links her through metonymy with the bodily habitus of the witch—a woman out of the ordinary, in fact, one expelled from the ranks of ordinary women by a scapegoating process of social (mis)recognition.[41] Scholars for a long time have pointed out that Cleopatra's associations with mythological or literary witches such as Medusa or Tasso's Armida are never far from the surface of the play. Antony excuses his thralldom to Cleopatra by twice calling her a witch (4.2.37, 4.12.47), as does Pompey in calling for Cleopatra's destruction of Antony through witchcraft, by means of the old hero's regression to an infantile sensuality:

> Let witchcraft join with beauty, lust with both,
> Tie up the libertine in a field of feasts . . .
> That sleep and feeding may prorogue his honor.
> (2.1.22–26)

Such associations with witchcraft serve to magnify and mystify Cleopatra's sexual magnetism, making it both dangerous and excessive.[42] But in the early years of James I's reign, when witchcraft prosecutions were at their height, no use of the word "witch" may be seen as socially neutral or merely literary. Thus between Cleopatra's troping of her death as an intimate, ordinary form of female agency and Caesar's forensic gaze upon her breast exists a third possibility—that for an audience in early seventeenth-century England suckling an asp would resemble the hyperordinary erotic bond of a witch and her animal familiar.

Like the women accused in witchcraft prosecutions, Cleopatra from the Roman point of view is an Other perceived as possessing incom-

41. Christina Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion: The Politics of Popular Belief*, ed. Alan Macfarlane (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp. 87, 30.

42. Adelman discusses Cleopatra's links with various literary witches and temptresses in *Common Liar*, pp. 64–66.

prehensible and unwarranted kinds of agency, here that form of excessive sexual agency constructed as a female seductiveness fatal to manliness. Even her suicide becomes a sign of excessive agency in its troping upon the life-and-death power that maternity and lactation give to the maternal body—in her example a power turned, perhaps paradoxically, in upon itself. As a force perceived by the state to be its enemy, Cleopatra also serves another social function that we now ascribe to witches—strengthening a community's self-cohesion by the perception of her difference.[43] Perhaps even more to my point, Cleopatra could be said to share some demographic characteristics with seventeeth-century witches, all of whom were "by definition," says Larner, "abnormal" persons.[44] Like most of them, a mature widow, past childbearing, and admittedly "wrinkled deep in time," Cleopatra faces a future in which she would become increasingly dependent for her survival on those superior to her in strength and means. She kills herself rather than face the shame of capture, public display, and powerlessness and in death continues to resist the state's attempts to read and control the meaning of her body. In her suicide she escapes the fate of most of the women accused of witchcraft, who were searched, tortured, and executed and for whom a painless suicide at some point in their ordeal would have seemed fortunate. Where Cleopatra's theatrical body most differs from those of the poor women caught up in the Jacobean witch-hunt is in its opacity, its near illegibility to the forensic gaze: Caesar says he can find no "external swelling" to suggest the *swallowing* of poison; where Cleopatra's body has taken in poison is visible only by the "vent of blood, and something blown," which appears on her breast and arm (5.2.346, 349). For Caesar her death is a signifier of limit, and a discursive turn to probability is his only recourse: "Most probable / That so she died" (353–54).

But the body of an English witch was made to speak out, to betray its female subject far more visibly than Cleopatra's. Torture and interrogation were functions of a judicial power that took these bodies,

43. See Mary Douglas's introduction to *Witchcraft: Confessions and Accusations* (London: Tavistock, 1970), p. xxv: "The witch-image is as effective as the idea of the community is strong." See also Peter Stallybrass, "*Macbeth* and Witchcraft," in *Focus on "Macbeth,"* ed. John Russell Brown (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 190.

44. Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion*, p. 45. The social profile comes from the work of Alan Macfarlane on the Essex witches, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 158–66; and the explicitly feminist revision of that work in Christina Larner's *Enemies of God: The Witch-Hunt in Scotland* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1981), pp. 1–28.

unlike Cleopatra's, beyond the reach of dramatic, if not discursive, representation. One irony of this painful chapter in women's history is that if, as Elaine Scarry has argued, the structure of torture works to display the excessive agency of the torturer, to confirm the torturer in his self-experience *as* agent, then torture of the English witch seems determined to confer agency where one would least expect to find it in patriarchy—in old, impoverished village women.[45] More crucial for my purposes here, a major difference between English and virtually all other national forms of witchcraft prosecutions was the almost obsessive attention that English authorities paid to the presence on the witch's body of a "bigge," or mark, the site where the familiar was said to suck the witch's blood in payment for his services.[46] A key step in the prosecution of an English witch came when local matrons searched her body for any unusual mark, pap, or teatlike growth. Such marks cannot have been hard to find on the bodies of old women, as skeptics in the matter kept pointing out. In the witchfinder Matthew Hopkins's dialogic pamphlet, "The Discoverie of Witches," several skeptical queries point out the kind of blemishes likely to be found, especially on the bodies of the poor or aged: "Many poore People are condemned for having a Pap, or Teat about them, whereas many People (especially antient People) are, and have been a long time troubled with naturall wretts [warts] on severall parts of their bodies, and other naturall excressencies, as Hemerodes, Piles, Childbearing, &c. and these shall be judged only by one man alone, and a woman, and so accused or acquitted."[47]

But Hopkins insists that forensic interpretation of the accused witch's body never relied on "private judgments alone," depending instead on a consensus, what we would call a social classification:

> For never was any man tryed by search of his body, but commonly a dozen of the ablest men in the parish or else where, were present, and most commonly as many ancient skilfull matrons and midwives present

45. Scarry writes: "Torture systematically prevents the prisoner from being the agent of anything and simultaneously pretends that he is the agent of some things. Despite the fact that in reality he has been deprived of all control over, and therefore all responsibility for, his world, his words, and his body, he is to understand his confession as it will be understood by others, as an act of self-betrayal." See *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 47.

46. Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion*, p. 76; and Barbara Rosen, ed., *Witchcraft*, Stratford-upon-Avon Library, no. 6 (London: Edward Arnold, 1969), p. 30.

47. Matthew Hopkins, *The Discovery of Witches* (London, 1647; Wing H 2751), p. 3; also quoted in *The Witchcraft Papers: Contemporary Records of the Witchcraft Hysteria in Essex, 1560–1700*, ed. Peter Haining (London: Robert Hale, 1974), p. 179.

> when the women are tryed, which marks not only he, and his company attest to be very suspitious, but all beholders, the skilfulest of them, doe not approve of them, but likewise assent that such tokens cannot in their judgements proceed from any the above mentioned Causes.[48]

A body under interrogation whose warts and excrescences are "tokens" is one already deeply inscribed with social expressiveness, already overcoded. Even before judgment is passed, such a body has already been made to count in a culture's ongoing, always contested classification of what is and is not natural. The teat becomes a metonymy of awesome determinacy, as the skeptic's language suggests: "People are condemned for having a Pap, or Teat about them."

When the skeptical countervoice remains unconvinced of visible difference between the devil's marks and "naturall excressencies," the apparent gender neutrality of Hopkins's first exchange gives way to the underlying misogynistic paranoia that fueled the European witch-hunts.[49] He responds in terms of a "natural" norm, an ethical mapping of the body from which the body of the witch is said to depart. Devil's marks are "farre distant from any usuall place, from whence such naturall markes proceed"; they lack ordinary sensitivity to pain; and unlike natural marks, on which he confers stability, they are subject to change. In fact, he says, because witches will find surrogate nurses for their imps, the investigator should allow the teats to become engorged and thus reveal their (un)natural function: "Keepe her 24. houres with a diligent eye, that none of her Spirits come in any visible shape to suck her; the women have seen the next day after her Teats extended out to their former filling length, full of corruption ready to burst, and leaving her alone then one quarter of an houre, and let the women go up againe, and shee will have them drawn by her Imps close againe: *Probatum est.*"[50]

Particularly revealing of the witch-hunter's fear of maternal power is this vision of a wet-nurse cooperative, with witch wet nurses trading their imps back and forth in order to escape detection. For Hopkins, the dyadic bond between the witches and their animal nurselings stands in a complex relation of similarity and difference to the dyadic bond of nurse or mother and her baby. In being capable of engorgement, the teats of Hopkins's hypothetical witches clearly resemble the breasts of lactating women. The body of the witch, like the body of the lactating mother accustomed to the sucking action, would seem to depend for relief on the presence of the suckling familiar. But because the content of the witch's body must be defined as antithetical to that of ordinary women, her engorged teat is full not of breast milk but "of corruption ready to burst." That is, her teat is like the ulcerated or infected breast of a lactating woman, full of matter which was thought to harm the nurseling.

We could argue that, as a mark of difference, the idea of the witches suckling their own and each other's familiars works to reinforce the normalcy of the wet-nursing culture and its surrogate mothers. But some slippage in the other direction may also be taking place, especially if we include in our thinking the female secrecy and hermetic enclosure of seventeenth-century birth practices. Not only do witches resemble lactating mothers, but thanks to the witch-hunters' fetishistic attention to the witch's teat, lactating mothers come to resemble witches. It is a resemblance that rests upon the identification of any female body as grotesque but the maternal body as particularly so. The maternal teat on the witch's body was systematically rezoned downward, from above to below the waist, from the breast, where suckling would be visible, to the privy parts, deep within the enveloping darkness and privacy of the witch's skirts. The nearness of this teat to the birth site is clearly not gratuitous, especially since "childbearing" (reproductive cause substituting for bodily effect) was one source of "naturall excressencies." Searchers were careful to insist that such teats, though they resembled hemorrhoids, were not: one Essex informant reported finding "three long teats or bigges in her secret parts, which seemed to have been lately sucked; and that they were not like pyles, for this informant knows well what they are, having been troubled with them herself."[51]

The defensiveness of the searchers is particularly evident in their repeated denials of the resemblance between their own piles and the witch's "bigge." And such defensiveness is understandable: one source of psychological terror in this kind of examination, for the witch and perhaps for the "grave matrons" and midwives who were

48. Hopkins, *Discovery of Witches*, p. 3.
49. Larner has convincingly made the case that witch-hunting was more or less synonymous with woman-hunting in *Enemies of God*, pp. 3–4, 89–102.
50. Hopkins, *Discovery of Witches*, p. 4.

51. "The Information of Francis Milles, taken upon oath before the said Justices, April 29, 1645," from *A True and Exact Relation of the Several Informations, Examinations, and Confessions of the Late Witches* (London, 1645), reprinted in Haining, *Witchcraft Papers*, pp. 162–63.

asked to search her, is precisely that the witch herself could not have seen or known her body's secret parts as her searchers did. Before the search, her warts and blemishes were not yet "tokens" either to herself or to anyone else, But in the course of the search her body underwent a shameful transformation, since one step involved shaving the accused woman's body hair.[52] Afterward, the witch might well have discovered not only a terrifying new body image but also sudden alienation from a body whose social meanings she could no longer control. Thus, poor Mary Greenleife, asked "how she came by those teats," replied "she never knew she had any such untill this time, they were found in those parts upon the said search."[53] It cannot be surprising that Mother Sawyer, the witch of Edmonton, tried desperately to resist the search by the "grave matrons" whom the court's officers had brought in off the street: "Fearing and perceiving she should by that search of theirs be then discoverd, behaved herself most sluttishly and loathsomely towards them . . . yet nevertheless niceness they laid aside."[54] As Eve Sedgwick has pointed out, the back of the body and especially the hind parts are the least subject to ocular control and, as a place of non- and misrecognition, the least easily defended. Hence they are the site of greatest psychic vulnerability, shame, and punishment, holding the "potential for a terrifying involuntarity of meaning."[55] To this involuntarity the executed bodies of the Jacobean witches attest.

Even before the imposition of any judicial pronouncement of guilt or innocence, the presence on her body of these demonic warts and nipples worked to class the witch with other kinds of deviant women, particularly sexually deviant ones: these were marks "which honest women have not."[56] Indeed Hopkins's introduction of the witch into the category of the sexually deviant and transgressive female suggests the kind of discursive transformation continually and necessarily at work in the witchcraft materials—the compulsory conversion of involuntary bodily events into the voluntary transactions of desire. In the ordinary meaning of the terms, sexual honesty or dishonesty in wom-

52. Rosen, *Witchcraft*, p. 17.
53. Quoted in Haining, *Witchcraft Papers*, p. 156.
54. I quote here from Henry Goodcole, *The Wonderful Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer a Witch* (London, 1621; STC 12014), reprinted with modernized spelling in *The Witch of Edmonton: A Critical Edition*, ed. Etta Soiref Onat (New York: Garland, 1980), p. 387.
55. Eve Sedgwick, "A Poem Is Being Written," *Representations* 17 (Winter 1987), 126. Her specific reference here, interestingly enough, is to the body of the child.
56. I am quoting from Hopkins, *Discovery of Witches*, p. 2, here but the phrase recurs in witchcraft materials.

an was thought to be a faculty of her will—to obey or transgress patriarchal strictures on female chastity before, during, and after marriage. Sexual honesty was a function of will mastering desire, but imputations of sexual dishonesty also assumed responsibility and free will in the female transgressor. The charges of witchcraft, too, necessarily depended on, presumed free will and responsibility on the part of the witch, for whom the taking up of witchcraft, the doing of *maleficium* was—like sexual transgression—thought to be a matter of choice. In the handy-dandy of grammatical transposition, a much-quoted phrase from Scripture—"Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft" (I Samuel 15:23)—precisely makes the point.[57] Indeed Christina Larner has linked the emergence of witch-hunting to the newly ambiguous, deeply contradictory status of women in post-Reformation culture, which gave women a new personal responsibility for their actions while continuing to inform them authoritatively of their "ritual and moral inferiority."[58] At moments of such ideological uncertainty, questions of voluntarity and involuntarity would make the crucial and bodily metonymies of that opposition deeply meaningful or, as in the case of the witch's teat, turn the involuntary bodily blemish into the symptom of freely chosen malevolence. Perhaps even more rebellious, offering the blood of one's body to be sucked by the devil's creatures inverts the symbolism of the Eucharist, especially in the context provided by the lactating Christ of medieval symbolism.[59] Like Christ, the witch would offer her blood voluntarily and as the expression of her allegiance to the Devil. Her motives—malice and revenge—would invert the merciful motives of Christ, and presumably the system of reward and punishment which led to the suckling of imps would parody the supernatural Christian economy. Furthermore, the suspicion of a forbidden eroticism which seems to haunt the inquisitors would also invert the sublimations of properly ordered and regulated forms of Christian love.

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Thus what was thought to take place physically between a witch and her familiar imagines a crucial change in ordinary bodily procedures, a morally weighted transformation from the involuntary to the volun-

57. For the contemporary reliance on this verse, see Stuart Clark, "Inversion, Misrule, and the Meaning of Witchcraft," *Past and Present* 87 (1980), 118–19.
58. On this issue, see Larner, *Enemies of God*, p. 101.
59. Caroline Bynum, "The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinberg," *Renaissance Quarterly* 39 (1986), 422–27.

tary. Lactation, obviously, is an involuntary consequence of parturition, but given a sufficient sucking stimulus it can be maintained long afterward. In other words, lactation begins involuntarily but is highly responsive to management. Maintaining lactation through demand suckling was (as we have seen) a relatively effective and presumably well-known form of contraception, and it had the benefit of conferring substantial personal and social power on some women by giving them a measure of control over their own reproductivity. To the degree that effective contraception through suckling necessarily implies planning, self-management, and purpose, it may have symbolized female self-sufficiency in the socially crucial arena of fertility and reproduction. It is ironic, as I noted in the last chapter, that wet-nursing endowed lower-class women with this form of bodily self-management only by systematically taking it away from the mothers socially above them. Perhaps just as threatening for a jealous and sexually insecure patriarchy, prolonged suckling and the extension of the nursing dyad to include a succession of nurse-children would also have given women a reliable source of physical pleasure, obtainable apart from or even despite a male presence. It is just this possibility that underlies the force of Cleopatra's conspiratorial whisper to her asp-baby to call Caesar an "ass / Unpolicied."

Thus a witch's bodily bond with her familiar would both resemble and invert the structure of relations within the nursing dyad, much as Cleopatra's taking up of the asp-baby does. It becomes a form of the carnivalesque which works to "decarnivalize" ordinary nursing relations. Barbara Rosen has sought to rationalize this aspect of the English witch-hunt by arguing that neighbors "*did* see old women with pets," and expressed the forbidden affection between the witch and her familiar by means of the "cosy, slightly perverted relationship of a lonely and poverty-stricken woman to her pet animal."[60] But this recourse to common sense does not explain the interrogators' fascination with the image of an old woman, usually past her reproductive and lactating years, giving suck; nor does it take into account the fact that cross-species suckling—such as the puppies drawing out engorged breasts—was known either in theory or in practice in early modern bodily culture. To me, the cultural preconditions for this aspect of the witch-hunt interrogation would seem to include fear of erotic self-sufficiency and suspicion of a female sensuality outlasting reproduction and marriage—both metonymized by the nursing dyad.

60. Rosen, *Witchcraft*, p. 32.

The witch-hunters' imagination focuses with intensity upon the imaginary erotic spectacle of the witch and her familiar. When the dialogic voice in Hopkins's pamphlet asks why a spirit like the Devil, wanting "no nutriment or sustentation, should desire to suck any blood," the barely suppressed eroticism of Hopkins's response suggests a kind of identification with the corporeal intensity and intimacy of the Devil's attachment to the witch's body: "In this case of drawing out of these Teats, he doth really enter into the body, reall, corporeall, substantiall creature, and forceth that Creature (he working in it) to his desired ends, and useth the organs of that body to speake withall to make his compact up with the Witches."[61] Minister Henry Goodcole's interrogation of Mother Sawyer, the witch of Edmonton, is even more fixated on the old woman's bodily practices, particularly on questions of sexual initiative, pleasure, and voluntarity: "In what place of your body," he asks, "did the Devil suck of your blood, and whether did he choose the place, or did you yourself appoint him the place? . . . and tell the reason if that you can, why he should suck your blood." The specificity of the question, according to Goodcole, was intended "to confirm the women's search of her, concerning that she had such a mark about her," which he then goes on to describe in length, breadth, location ("a little above my fundament"), conformation, and color. He also asked the witch if she pulled up her coats for the Devil, how long the sucking would last, whether or not it was painful, whether she handled the Devil when he came to her—questions that seem to an alienated modern reader distinctly voyeuristic, enhancing Goodcole's and his readers' vicarious enjoyment and graphic mental staging of her forbidden act. Goodcole's preface confirms this impression, for to a suspicious reader, it seems both to eroticize his own relation as writer to his audience of reader-suitors and to conceal from himself and them their erotic investments in his material. Thus he reports without any sign of textual unease that the suspicions of the local magistrate were confirmed "by some of her neighbours, that this *Elizabeth Sawyer* had a private and strange mark on her body."[62]

From Goodcole's secure place within the ideological framework of witchcraft belief, the vividness of his evidence and the specificity of

61. Hopkins, *Discovery of Witches*, pp. 4–5.
62. Goodcole, *Wonderful Discoverie*, pp. 392, 386. Kathleen McLuskie has argued that Goodcole, sensitive to the long-standing disbelief in witchcraft or to the scruples of many jurists involved in prosecution and sentencing, wants to "emphasize the importance of human agency in calling up the devil." See *Renaissance Dramatists* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1989), p. 64.

his questions are probably a form of legal realism intended to deflect negative judgment or skepticism. Though clearly the question of the mark's actuality—which might be substantiated by this kind of detailed textualization of Elizabeth Sawyer's body—is less relevant than the mark's function, about which the women searchers can only speculate: it "seemed as though one had sucked it." Thus Goodcole writes that the publication of the pamphlet has been "importunity extorted from me, who would have been content to have concealed it. . . . For my part I meddle here with nothing but matter of fact. . . . And the rather do I now publish this to purchase my peace, which without it being done, I could scarce at any time be at quiet for many who would take no nay." One should note (apart from the anarchic potential in a bawdy accidental pun on "meddle") his repetition of the verb *extort*, when he describes Elizabeth Sawyer's confession as having been "with great labour . . . extorted from her." Despite Goodcole's insistence that the confession is hers "*verbatim* out of her own mouth delivered to me," it is clear that the voice of Elizabeth Sawyer's confession belongs to her interrogator, part of the externalization of agency which is effected in the intimacy of torturer and tortured.[63] It does not matter that Goodcole was not Sawyer's torturer. (In England torture mostly involved deprivation of food and, especially, sleep.) The point is rather, as Scarry says, that in torture "one's own body and voice now no longer belong to oneself."[64] When Elizabeth Sawyer, having been convicted, is asked why she denied at her trial the practices she confesses to in Goodcole's pamphlet, she says simply, "I did it thereby hoping to avoid shame." But it is the imposition of shame on which Goodcole seems most intent, dismissing the "ridiculous fictions of her bewitching corn on the ground, of a ferret and an owl daily sporting before her" so that he can draw from her like a prosecutorial familiar the details of her intimacy with the Devil.[65] Thus the question of whose autoeroticism is being defended against here arises particularly in the context of a publication whose delivery to the importunate public is said to purchase its writer's peace.

In Thomas Dekker, John Ford and William Rowley's *Witch of Ed-*

63. Goodcole, *Wonderful Discoverie*, pp. 387–88, 381, 388. See Keith Thomas's discussion of Goodcole's and Hopkins's interrogations in *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (1971; rpt. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1978), pp. 617–18.

64. Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, p. 53.

65. Goodcole, *Wonderful Discoverie*, pp. 397, 382.

monton, the themes of the witch's shameful self-agency, which Goodcole defines narrowly and treats with obsessive detail, are imbricated in what Anthony Dawson has aptly called "a sharply delineated material context."[66] But Dawson underestimates, I think, the powerful social valences of the physical relationship hinted at between the witch and Dog, her familiar. Despite the playwrights' surprising measure of sympathy for and understanding of the witch's unfortunate role in her visibly imperfect, hypocritical community, Mother Sawyer also becomes the vehicle for a comic exposure of female bodiliness not unlike what we have already seen in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* or even *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Mother Sawyer's powerful opening speech, for example, plays upon the coarse trope of the degraded female body as privy:

> Why should the envious world
> Throw all their scandalous malice upon me?
> 'Cause I am poor, deform'd and ignorant,
> And like a Bow buckl'd and bent together,
> By some more strong in mischiefs then my self?
> Must I for that be made a common sink,
> For all the filth and rubbish of Men's tongues
> To fall and run into?
>
> (2.1.1–8)[67]

At the moment when the witch bitterly recognizes the recursive processes of scapegoating in which communal rejection makes her participate, the playwrights give her a complex trope that effects a violent, carnivalesque reversal of bodily strata: men's words, displaced downward, become excreta and the body of the old woman is encoded as a site of evacuation. We have seen this trope before in relation to the prostitute whose vagina is metaphorically a common receptacle for seminal evacuations. Here Mother Sawyer is the de facto product of her community's hypocritical social engineering—since filth must run off somewhere—but the metaphor of the "common sink" links her with another recognized form of deviant woman as homologous objects of deeply ambivalent desire, fear, and social utility.

66. In Anthony Dawson, "Witchcraft/Bigamy: Cultural Conflict in *The Witch of Edmonton*," *Renaissance Drama* n.s. 20 (1989), p. 77. Dawson's argument anticipates mine at many points.

67. Quotations from *The Witch of Edmonton* refer to *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, vol. 3, ed. Fredson Bowers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958).

It is difficult to decide how aware the playwrights might be of this circulation of meanings, but their decision to join the Mother Sawyer plot with the bigamy plot of Frank Thorney, as Dawson argues, does suggest their detailed awareness of social and ethical comparisons to be drawn up and down the Jacobean social hierarchy—in particular the illegal contracts on which both bigamy and witchcraft are based.[68] Certainly the play is very clear that its characters do not know, cannot know the real power relations in which they are enmeshed, in part because of sudden changes of desire and circumstance, in part because social and personal agency here is always complexly a function of specific material and symbolic variables that the characters cannot control. But despite, or perhaps because of, the play's social complexity, the power structure and the libidinal economy of this rural society do in fact overlap: Sir Arthur at the top of the social pyramid initiates the chain of events leading to Frank Thorney's bigamy; Mother Sawyer at the bottom occupies a place at the end of the libidinal economy as the "common sink." She is the site not of desire but of fear, revulsion, ridicule, and she partly understands the nature of her ideological interpellation and function as witch: "This [malediction] they enforce upon me: and in part / Make me to credit it" (2.1.14–15). All the other characters of the play are placed, with varying degrees of irony, somewhere between these poles of desire, agency, and reward. And at the end of the play, Sir Arthur has not been caught or punished for his sexual transgression, but Mother Sawyer is led off to trial.

Despite the playwrights' brilliant deconstructive exposure of the social mechanisms that victimize Mother Sawyer, however, their representation of the old woman's relationship to Dog continues to draw upon the kind of voyeuristic, misogynistic fantasy about the bodily secrets and occult powers of maternity we have already seen in Goodcole and before that in the Amazonian obsessions. Furthermore, they draw upon the comic potential of an absurd relation to the dug which we have already seen in Juliet's weaning and Osric's ridiculous "compliance." Not only is the relationship with a familiar peculiar to women accused of witchcraft, but it seems to be an occult part of a self-perpetuating culture identified as female. Mother Sawyer at first seems alienated from even this aspect of her society, since she does not know what other old women know:

68. Dawson, "Witchcraft/Bigamy," pp. 79–80.

> I have heard old Beldames
> Talk of Familiars in the shape of Mice,
> Rats, Ferrets, Weasels, and I wot not what,
> That have appear'd, and suck'd, some say, their blood.
> But by what means they came acquainted with them,
> I'm now ignorant:
>
> (2.1.97–102)

In the case of so isolated a woman, cursing rather than gossip seems to be the immediate means of coming by a familiar. "Ho! have I found thee cursing?" says Dog, "now thou art mine own" (116). But cursing in this context seems to signify as an attribute of womanhood, particularly in a period when, even apart from the witchcraft prosecutions, socially disruptive female speech was increasingly criminalized.[69]

In addition, then, to the fear of maternal nurture the fear of witches also reflects an even more paranoid anxiety about maternal conspiracy, which the witchcraft depositions seem to confirm. Perhaps it can be linked to the female hermeticism of birthing practices, and it certainly is related to the high incidence of midwives among both the women appointed as searchers and those accused.[70] The witchcraft depositions represent women who have received familiars from their mothers, passed them on to their daughters, or (as we saw in Hopkins's pamphlet) temporarily given them to another witch to suckle. One Anne Cooper confessed that she "offered to give unto her daughter Sarah Cooper an impe in the likenes of a gray kite, to suck on the said Sarah; . . . and told the said Sarah, there was a cat for her." Another Essex woman confessed to four familiars, "which shee had from her mother, about two and twenty yeeres since." In one case, the teats themselves seemed hereditary, for the daughters of one suspected witch were searched and an informant reported "that two of them had bigges in their privy parts as the said Margaret their mother had."[71] Such fears of maternal conspiracy may appear particularly ironic to the modern reader in view of the testimony elicited from women and girls against their own mothers and sisters. The

69. See Lynda E. Boose, "Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman's Unruly Member," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42 (1991), 184–85.

70. There is a somewhat outdated account of this preponderance in Thomas Rogers Forbes, *The Midwife and the Witch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 112–32. Larner discusses the connection somewhat skeptically in *Enemies of God*, p. 101.

71. Quoted in Haining, *Witchcraft Papers*, pp. 158, 172, 163.

witchcraft depositions testify not so much to female conspiracy as to the virulence and durability of village quarrels, particularly among women. A number of the village quarrels that led to witchcraft accusations revolve around the sudden deaths of young children or, in at least one recorded instance, around a quarrel over the wet-nursing of a child.[72]

Mother Sawyer signs her unholy compact by giving Dog her arm to suck; the more intimate relationship revealed in the sources is beyond the bounds of dramatic representation. With Dog's services, her power now seems to extend to the humiliation of her enemy, Old Banks, who confesses to a terrifying involuntarity of meaning in his own bodily behaviors and his own unnatural dependence on an animal: "I cannot chuse, though it be ten times in an hour, but run to the Cow, and taking up her tail, kiss (saving your Worship's Reverence) my Cow behinde; That the whole Town of *Edmonton* has been ready to bepiss themselves with laughing me to scorn" (4.1.53–58). This too is beyond the reach of dramatic representation. The anal kiss, enjoined by Satan, was a conventional ritual act, which, says Stuart Clark, inverted "religious worship and secular fealty."[73] Here the bovine instrument of Mother Sawyer's revenge seems to stand specifically for Mother Sawyer herself, who shares with the cow the critical attribute of femaleness. The even bawdier analogy—visible beyond this metonymic chain—of Banks's anal kiss to cunnilingus is made clear by Banks himself: "I, no lips to kiss but my Cows—" (4.1.67). Mother Sawyer's teat, we recall from the source in Goodcole, was "a little above my fundament." Furthermore, the nature of Banks's obsession collapses the otherwise clear distinctions between the wealthy old farmer and Mother Sawyer's familiar. Immediately after the witch has called her enemy a "black Cur, / That barks, and bites, and sucks the very blood / Of me, and of my credit" (2.1.111–13), the black Dog appears to enact the old widow's revenge.

The later reunion in act 4 of Dog and witch demonstrates the development of their mutual intimacy and dependency when Dog's demands to have the teat "now" (4.1.152) have to be denied. The play does invest this relationship with a remarkable, if finite, degree of sympathy, even while representing it as a parody of "both sexual and

72. See the information of Grace Thurlow against Ursula Kemp in *Witchcraft*, ed. Rosen, pp. 107–8.

73. Clark, "Inversion, Misrule, and the Meaning of Witchcraft," p. 126.

maternal tenderness."[74] The playwrights' ability to construct Mother Sawyer as a complex, persecuted, and lonely old woman could well have worked to enhance sympathy for the women caught up by the witch craze. But to the extent that a parody of maternal tenderness works to satirize not just old women but all women, the witch is functioning not simply as the representative of a particular, even extreme kind of social outcast but also as the emblem of universal and, not coincidentally, somewhat ridiculous female affectionateness and sensuality. We might imagine the Dog pawing her skirts, wanting access to the enveloping and apparently suggestive darkness beneath. She redirects his desire to the upper body instead: "Stand on thy hind-legs up. Kiss me, my *Tommy*" (155). And she equates her desire for his affection with the affection of ladies for "Hound, / Monkey, or Parakeet" (161–62).[75]

Lacking metadramatic awareness of her fictionality, Mother Sawyer does not tell Dog she cannot offer him her teat because such behavior is beyond the reach of dramatization. She excuses herself instead on the physiological grounds that her body works just like any lactating woman's. Her supply of blood, like theirs of milk, is affected by changes in her psychological state, here the humoral drying caused by heat:

> I am dri'd up
> With cursing and with madness; and have yet
> No blood to moysten these sweet lips of thine.
> (4.1.152–54)

My point is that any witch's reported relationship with her familiar was an extreme manifestation of suckling behaviors, even cross-species suckling, common to, or at least possible for, all childbearing women.

74. Dawson, "Witchcraft/Bigamy," p. 87.

75. The possible range of Dog's behaviors here may be more revealing of the modern critic's preoccupations than of anything else. Onat praises the dramatists for their restraint in detailing the relationship: "Had they been intent only upon capitalizing upon the sensationalism of the event, they might very well have emphasized such features" (gloss to 4.1.151, *Witch of Edmonton: A Critical Edition*, p. 345). My own argument leads me to imagine somewhat broader or at least more "sensationalistic" stage action here. My sense of the suggestiveness of the enveloping dark of a woman's skirts comes not only from my reading of the birth materials in Chapter 4, but also from Jonson's treatment of Dapper and the Queen of Fairy in *The Alchemist*. It is also worth pointing out that ladies and their pets were satiric targets well before Pope's Belinda.

We have seen the revulsion inspired by old women's dugs. If witch-hunts *were* woman-hunts, then the English fascination with the bodily features of witches, with the witch's teats, brings the bodies of all sexually mature women into a dangerous hermeneutic circle, into a zone of paranoid expectation. That this may be the case in *The Witch of Edmonton* is also suggested by the fact that Dog appears not only to the witch but also to Cuddy Banks. There, as in his relation to Mother Sawyer, Dog seems clearly to function as a projection of the character's desires, even desires for mischief. But Cuddy's affection for Dog is a function of the fact that even though he perceives him to be a devil, he always treats him and even protects him like a dog. He has "given him a bone to gnaw twenty times. The Dog is no Court foysting Hound, that fills his belly full by base wagging his tayl; neither is it a Citizens Water-Spaniel, enticing his Master to go a-ducking twice or thrice a week, whilst his Wife makes Ducks and Drakes at home: this is no *Paris*-Garden Bandog neither, that keeps a Bough, wough, woughing, to have Butchers bring their Curs thither" (4.1.230–36). In other words, Cuddy's "normal" relationship with Dog, set in a gallery of other man-dog relationships, works to mark a difference—at least in part of gender—from the witch's relationship with her familiar. Thus in the image of the teat the witch offers to her familiar is a memorial rejection, even a defiance, of a maternal dug that will *not* be complied with or sucked any longer.

❧

There are no witches per se in *The Winter's Tale*, no images of women putting animals to their breast, no narratives of a baby's late weaning. But I want to conclude my discussion of the new disciplinary regime for the maternal body by turning to its emplotment in this late Shakespearean romance. In it the meanings I have constructed for the figures and events of the birthing narrative converge in an extended familial and political crisis. Early modern patriarchy's suspicions about pregnancy, birth, maternal surrogacy and nurture are embedded here in a strikingly discontinous narrative, broken in two by the "wide gap" of sixteen years between acts 3 and 4.

I want to center my discussion on Perdita's key position in this two-part narrative. In its experience of the play's discontinuities, the audience finds in her its most reliable and meaningful counterpart within the fictional frame, though Perdita herself, of course, has no subjective awareness of the discontinuities of her experience. Alone among the characters, she belongs to and reconciles both of the play's sharply differentiated environments, one inhabited by her "blood" parents and the other by her "milk" parents. (Until Hermione's return, of course, both sets of parents are represented only by the paternal half, since the Old Shepherd's wife dies sometime before the events of act 4.) In her movement through the cyclical pattern of extrusion and return Perdita undergoes the common experience of the romance protagonist and also, as my imagery of blood and milk implies, the traumatic experience of the seventeenth-century nurse-child, sent away from home soon after birth and returned months or years later. The play enacts a narrative that roots the infant's trauma—its rage and oral deprivation—in its father's own infantile rage and jealous desire for a place near the maternal body. It is the recognition of this element of her experience, I suggest, which would resonate most profoundly for those members of a Jacobean audience who were themselves nurse-children. In the narrative discontinuities of the play, in its spatiotemporal derangements, the archaic content of their own repressed memories and wishes would be represented.[76]

Peter Erickson has formulated the play's motivating disturbance most succinctly and helpfully for my purposes:

> The most obvious disturbance in male control is the abrupt manifestation of Leontes' alienation from Hermione. Hermione's visible pregnancy activates a maternal image that seems in and of itself to provoke male insecurity. . . . To adapt Melanie Klein's language, what is called into question here is the "good breast" ("fertile bosom"): the "bounty" provided by maternal "entertainment" is suddenly suspect and inherently untrustworthy.[77]

But Erickson sees in Leontes' alienation from Hermione the *symptom* of a disruption in male relationships based upon a complex structure

76. I borrow the term "spatiotemporal derangement" from Michael D. Bristol, who connects it with the psychoanalytic trajectory. See "In Search of the Bear: Spatiotemporal Form and the Heterogeneity of Economies in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42 (1991), 145.

77. Peter B. Erickson, "Patriarchal Structures in *The Winter's Tale*," *PMLA* 97 (1982), 819. Erickson's argument dovetails with mine at many points, particularly in the emphasis we both place on maternal nurturance, and it has been helpful in clarifying my thinking about the play. But he is much less interested than I am in contextualizing the play within the material practices of a wet-nursing culture. Carol Thomas Neely, too, has centered her feminist discussion of the play on maternity, but again without siting it in the specific practices of childbearing. See "Women and Issue in *The Winter's Tale*," *Philological Quarterly*, 57 (1978), 181–94.