

SARAH JOHNSON

Female Bodies, Speech, and Silence in *The Witch of Edmonton*

Henry Goodcole, in his capacity as the ordinary of Newgate prison, heard Elizabeth Sawyer's final confession two days before she was to be hanged following a conviction of 'witchery' in connection with the death of her neighbour Agnes Ratcliffe. In his published account of this last confession, Goodcole is relentlessly clear about what first caused Elizabeth Sawyer's downfall — her tongue. 'That tongue', writes Goodcole, 'which by cursing, swearing, blaspheming, and imprecating, as afterward she {B} confessed, was the occasioning cause, of the Divels accesse unto her, even at that time, and to claime her thereby as his owne, by it discovered her lying, swearing, and blaspheming'.¹ Goodcole goes on to describe how Sawyer's tongue is also 'the meanes of her owne destruction' at her trial, as it utters 'fearefull imprecations' leading 'both Judge and Jurie' to grow 'more and more suspitious of her'.² Citing the devil's first words to Sawyer as '*Oh! have I now found you cursing, swearing, and blaspheming? now you are mine*', Goodcole pauses in his report to reflect on the moral lesson about the dangers of unguarded tongues his readers should take from Sawyer's 'terrible example', and he chooses to close his pamphlet with yet another warning about the perils of 'cursing, swearing, and blaspheming'.³

The only topic that rivals Elizabeth Sawyer's tongue in Goodcole's pamphlet is the nature of 'the Divels accesse unto her' that her tongue provides. That access is emphatically physical. Goodcole noticeably presses for specific details of the physical interactions between witch and familiar, inquiring of Sawyer: '*In what place of your body did the Divell sucke of your bloud*' and whether the devil or Sawyer chose this place (which was 'a little above [Sawyer's] fundament'); whether she '*did ... pull up [her] coates or no when the Divell came to sucke*' her; '*How long*' the devil '*would continue sucking of*' her and whether she felt pain at the time; and finally, whether Sawyer would ever '*handle the Divell*'.⁴ These questions along with Sawyer's purported answers present a

vision of the witch's relationship with her familiar which, though sensational, is not unusual; intimate searches of an accused witch's body for witch-marks betraying where her familiar sucked her blood were often a part of witch-trials in England. The connection between these two dominant concerns in Goodcole is fairly straightforward: Sawyer's transgressing tongue opens the way for bodily transgression in the form of physical intimacy with the devil, who in turn visits physical harm on others. In short, Elizabeth Sawyer's unruly speech has very tangible consequences.

Dekker, Rowley, and Ford clearly draw on Goodcole as source material when they dramatize Elizabeth Sawyer's fate in *The Witch of Edmonton*, but they significantly challenge and revise Goodcole's primary warning about the dangers of unruly speech—and with specific attention to women's speech.⁵ Like Goodcole, the playwrights foreground the physical nature of Mother Sawyer's relationship with the sinister Dog, though to drastically different effect. On stage, Sawyer's interactions with Dog move beyond the sensational to become haunting and sad — especially if, as in Simon Cox's production of the play, Sawyer is portrayed as 'touchingly besotted' with Dog and 'it was implied that this was the first and only loving relationship the old woman had ever had'.⁶ This sensitive portrayal of Sawyer's connection with Dog aligns with the play's critical awareness — long recognized by scholars — of the extent to which economic hardship, social constructions, and prejudices create witches. Beyond enhancing the play's sympathetic treatment of Sawyer, however, Dekker, Rowley and Ford's staging of the relationship between witch and familiar turns Goodcole's central moral message about the tongue into a complex challenge of pervasive and dismissive attitudes of the period that problematically associate and even conflate unruly female speech with transgressive female bodies.

The immediate and most obvious connection between unruly speech and transgressive bodies (aside from the fact that the tongue is a body part) is that neither is appropriately confined in compliance with patriarchal codes — speech, to acceptable tones, subjects, times, and places, and the body, to traditional roles in the community, to the home, and even to its own physical boundaries. Scholars have articulated this association in different ways. Discussing the cultural significance of gendered forms of punishment reserved for 'the woman who was exercising either her sexuality or her tongue under her own control rather than under the rule of a man', Lynda Boose notes that both types of offenders were subjected to shame through the bodily degradations of being carted, bridled, or ducked in a cucking stool.⁷ 'As illogical as it may

initially seem', Boose comments, 'the two crimes — being a scold and being a so-called whore', that is, offending with speech and offending with the body — 'were frequently conflated'.⁸ The instruments of cart, bridle, and cucking stool each graphically signify a reassertion of patriarchal confinement imposed on the woman's body. The focus on forcibly containing and shaming the body with these instruments as punishment for unruly female speech discredits the content of or reason behind that speech by degrading the gendered body that gave utterance to it. Discussing explanations by Helkiah Crooke and other learned authors of why women were supposedly more prone to anger than men were, Gwynne Kennedy finds 'an attempt to minimize the potential force or legitimacy of women's anger by linking it to women's physiological (and thus natural and unchangeable) inferiority to men'.⁹ In her insightful investigation of how humoural theory works to produce gender difference, Gail Kern Paster claims that 'a culturally familiar discourse about the female body ... inscribes women as leaky vessels by isolating one element of the female body's material expressiveness — its production of fluids — as excessive, hence either disturbing or shameful'.¹⁰ Paster convincingly demonstrates a link in this discourse between 'this liquid expressiveness' and 'excessive verbal fluency'. 'In both formations', she explains, 'the issue is women's bodily self-control or, more precisely, the representation of a particular kind of uncontrol as a function of gender'.¹¹ Paster is concerned here with the particular bodily fluidity of urinary incontinence as it is linked to uncontrolled female speech in city comedy,¹² but as we will see, *The Witch of Edmonton* confronts us with a disturbing pattern of images that link excessive words with 'liquid expressiveness' in a much darker light. Common to Boose, Kennedy, and Paster's very different studies is an attention to early modern connotations of women's bodies with women's speech — or rather, an awareness of how a woman's speech could be discredited through the body.

Of course, the problematic tendency to align women's speech with the body is not always as clearly spelled out as in the central bawdy pun of a 1640 ballad about a 'scould that could not keep her lips together',¹³ but it does surface onstage in representations of men responding obsessively to women's bodies when challenged by women's speech. We see this in *A Tamer Tamed* when Maria must barricade her body from Petruccio's reach in order to force her new husband to engage with her on a non-physical level and seriously acknowledge her reasonably stated concerns about their future relationship. The necessity of initially barring her body from him is manifest when, instead of genuinely considering Maria's demands, Petruccio expresses his frustration that her body

is out of reach, responding to her concerns with appallingly violent threats to beat her severely with a ‘cudgel’ and then confine her to an uncomfortable ‘flock-bed’ to increase her pain, to make her sit on a wooden apparatus of punishment, to force her to eat food which will obstruct her ‘stool’ for ‘ten months’, and so on (2.3.20–3, 28–32).¹⁴ Shakespeare’s Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew* (which Fletcher’s play in part responds to) tames Kate’s unruly tongue by wearing down her body through food and sleep deprivation as a ‘keeper’ would physically train a wild ‘haggard’, a creature of instinct as opposed to reason (4.1.188–211).¹⁵ While not a ‘taming’ play in the same category as *Tamer* and *Shrew*, *The Witch of Edmonton* includes a scold figure, Mother Sawyer, who like Kate always speaks in anger or bitterness (excepting her conversations with Dog) and who like Maria is always critical of the status quo. Like these two plays, *The Witch of Edmonton* shows us repeated examples of men reading and reacting to the female body when confronted with the challenge of female speech. Dekker, Ford, and Rowley’s play is perhaps closer to *Tamer*, which debunks Petruccio’s misogyny by celebrating Maria’s exposure of his wife-taming tactics as laughable. But as ‘tragi-comedy’, *The Witch of Edmonton* does not comically resolve the Petruccio-like attitude toward women’s speech; it leaves us instead with disturbing examples of women whose bodies and speech have been violently yoked together — almost in a dark parody or condemnation of the often dismissive assumption that transgressive female bodies and liberal female speech are one and the same.

Dekker, Rowley, and Ford show us this assumption at work with Mother Sawyer’s very first appearance. Sawyer’s opening soliloquy reflecting on how she is called a ‘witch’ merely because she is ‘poor, deformed and ignorant’ immediately suggests her perceptiveness and eloquence (2.1.1–13).¹⁶ When Old Banks interrupts to chase Sawyer from his land, she turns this eloquence to expressive cursing, venting her anger toward him for refusing the charity of ‘a few rotten sticks to warm me’, and her curses are met with savage beating (20).¹⁷ Given contemporary fears that a justified curse might be divinely or demonically endorsed, cursing could provide an effective means of retaliation for a victim of injustice who had no recourse to financial or physical means of revenge.¹⁸ Even this last resort for retaliation, however, is empty for Mother Sawyer:

Old Banks. Down with them [the sticks] when I bid thee, quickly. I’ll make thy bones rattle in thy skin else.

Elizabeth Sawyer. You won’t, churl, cut-throat, miser! [*throws down sticks.*]

There they be. Would they stuck 'cross thy throat, thy bowels, thy maw,
thy midriff.

Old Banks. Sayest thou me so? Hag, out of my ground!

[*Beats her.*]

Elizabeth Sawyer. Dost strike me, slave, curmudgeon! Now thy bones ache,
thy joints cramp, and convulsions stretch and crack thy sinews!

Old Banks. Cursing, thou hag! Take that and that.

[*Beats her and*] *exit.* (21–30)

The stark juxtaposition of Sawyer's words with Banks's blows in this terribly unbalanced conversation would be all the more obvious and startling with the sounds and sights of performance. It shows us both the utter powerlessness of Sawyer's words against bodily degradation and emphasizes just how fully Banks's reaction to Sawyer's cursing is caught up with his repulsion for her body — the uncontained bag-of-bones body of a 'hag' not managed by any husband or male authority.

Banks's violent physical response to Mother Sawyer's curses does not differentiate between her bodily trespass onto his land and her logical and legitimate anger at being insulted, threatened, and refused a basic necessity of life; to Banks, both simply constitute a stepping out of bounds in an affront to his authority.¹⁹ His curt verbal responses compared with his extended physical response of repeatedly striking Sawyer indicate a refusal to engage with or even acknowledge her angry words rationally.²⁰ Instead, by punishing her body for her verbal audacity, Banks reveals his own conflation of Sawyer's liberal female speech with bodily transgression. Banks is not alone in this conflation. Sawyer's worst 'offence' confirmed in any villager's sight or hearing at this point in the play has been verbal, and Banks's countrymen perceive her, as Anthony Dawson points out, as a threat to the sexual order more than anything else.²¹ The sexual implications are clear in the first countryman's complaint that he found his wife 'thrashing in my barn' with 'a servingman', an occurrence which he blames on Sawyer; in a second countryman's claim that 'our wives will do nothing else but dance about other country maypoles' if the town is not 'rid' of Sawyer; and in a third countryman's assertion that not only 'our cattle' will 'fall', but 'our wives fall, our daughters fall and maid-servants fall; and we ourselves shall not be able to stand if this beast [Sawyer] be suffered to graze amongst us' (4.1.6–14).

The Justice and especially Sir Arthur are no more discerning than the countrymen when it comes to considering Sawyer's speech apart from her

body. The Justice makes no effort to address seriously the issues of social hypocrisy Sawyer raises in response to his question of whether she is a witch. Sawyer points to the unfairness that ‘coarse witches’ — ‘poor’ and ‘lean old beldam[s]’ — are the ones ‘abused’ with accusations, while the ‘fine’ witches — such as ‘painted things in princes’ courts, / Upon whose eyelids lust sits, blowing fires / To burn men’s souls in sensual hot desires’, or ‘The man of law’ who for personal profit cheats his ‘credulous client’ — are permitted (4.1.134–9, 118–20, 143–6). Tellingly, the Justice’s ultimate response to the incisive, powerful, and perfectly rational social critique Mother Sawyer skilfully articulates is to order her body back indoors: ‘get home and pray’ (162). The lascivious and devious Sir Arthur similarly dismisses Sawyer’s words by shifting attention to her body. Directly implicated in Sawyer’s comment that ‘Men in gay clothes, whose backs are laden with titles and honours, are within far more crooked than I am’, Sir Arthur immediately resorts to shaming Sawyer sexually and reducing her body to an instrument of evil, informing the Justice that ‘she’s bruited for a woman that maintains a spirit that sucks her’ (99–105). Linking verbal fluidity with sexual incontinence when Sawyer’s words come too near himself, Sir Arthur thus repeats Banks’s association of defiant female speech with a transgressing body, an association very much in line with the ‘social precept that associates silence with feminine chastity’.²²

Of course, although Sir Arthur relies upon hearsay to shame Mother Sawyer and to divest her words of force ironically by connecting them with her body, at this point Mother Sawyer indeed ‘maintains a spirit that sucks her’. When Sawyer’s unbridled tongue gives the devil, in the form of Dog, access to her body, Dog offers a means of retaliation that involves achieving the connection between transgressive words and body that has up until this point been unjustly imposed on her. Dog’s entrance with a line taken almost verbatim from Goodcole’s pamphlet, ‘Ho! Have I found thee cursing? Now thou art mine own’, registers Goodcole’s moral message about the dangers of giving free rein to the tongue but soon significantly complicates it (2.1.128). Although Dog is attracted by Sawyer’s swearing, he also objects to some of her words and aligns himself with Banks by pitting physical violence *against* her use of language. When Mother Sawyer questions having to give her soul and body to secure Dog’s promise ‘To give thee just revenge against thy foes’ (136) Dog threatens: ‘And that instantly, / And seal it with thy blood. If thou deniest / I’ll tear thy body in a thousand pieces’ (142–4). Mother Sawyer again tries to protect herself with language — this time with the ambiguous qualification that in giving herself to the devil, she gives ‘at least so much of me /

As I can call mine own' (151–2), and Dog renews his threat: 'Equivocations? / Art mine or no? Speak or I'll tear — ' (152–3). Faced with more physical abuse before she has even had time to recover from the blows delivered by Banks, Sawyer reveals her desperation when she tells us, 'I know not where to seek relief' (145). That Dog repeats Banks's violent reaction to Mother Sawyer's words within moments of Banks's exit exposes how Banks's response to Sawyer's speech is demonic, or at least criticizes it by revealing it to be the preferred approach of the devil. By mirroring the behaviour of Banks, who subscribes to the view that a woman's unlicensed speech is tied to a trespassing body, Dog clearly implicates him in forcing Sawyer into the pact that will make her a witch and give her curses physical impact by fusing her words with her body. This pact, in short, will enact Banks's assumptions.

In the play, Sawyer's tongue is clearly not the principal reason the devil is able to gain 'accesse unto her' as it is in Goodcole's account of the real Elizabeth Sawyer. Her words certainly invite the devil to enter her when she claims:

Would some power, good or bad,
Instruct me which way I might be revenged
Upon this churl [Banks], I'd go out of myself,
And give this fury leave to dwell within
This ruined cottage ready to fall with age. (2.1.114–18)

Mother Sawyer's very first words to the audience, however, suggest how her physical plight opens her to malicious words, inverting the moral that her own words make her vulnerable to the physical presence of the devil. Sawyer asks:

'Cause I am poor, deformed and ignorant,
And like a bow buckled and bent together
By some more strong in mischiefs than myself,
Must I for that be made a common sink
For all the filth and rubbish of men's tongues
To fall and run into? (3–8)

Sawyer significantly envisions the malicious words of others entering her body to define that body's meaning — making it into a receptacle of evil words before it becomes a receptacle of evil in the form of the devil himself. The

devil's entrance is simply the actual fulfilment of the polluted-vessel status which others' words have already imposed on Mother Sawyer.

The bodily mutilation that Mother Sawyer undergoes to seal her verbal contract with the devil is the first of a series of images in which body and words are violently yoked together. After this physical sealing of her words with blood taken from her arm, and by entering into a physical relationship with Dog, Sawyer's words are given physical force. In other words, whereas Mother Sawyer's speech was earlier dismissed unfairly as associated with bodily transgression, here, her verbal and bodily transgression do become one and the same. Significantly, Dog somehow touches or is asked to 'touch' all of Sawyer's desired victims. Mother Sawyer first asks Dog to 'Go, touch [Banks's] life' (2.1.160) and later asks him, 'hast thou struck the horse lame as I bid thee?' and 'did not I charge thee / To pinch that quean [Ratcliffe] to th'heart?' (4.1.161,172-3). Dog also mentions that he 'nipped the sucking child' (175), and the audience sees Dog rub against Anne Ratcliffe when Sawyer bids 'Touch her', upon which Anne's raving reaches a crescendo (203).²³ These 'touchings' are visually connected with the very physical contact Mother Sawyer and Dog share on stage, a contact which obscures Mother Sawyer's physical boundaries. Dog extends Mother Sawyer's bodily reach in that as the physical agent of evil deeds against Sawyer's enemies, he is nourished by her blood. He thus holds her to her vow that she would 'go out of' herself to be revenged upon her oppressors. And yet her oppressors seem to drain Sawyer's blood without Dog's help. Sawyer herself calls Banks a 'black cur / That barks and bites, and sucks the very blood / Of me and of my credit' (2.1.116-18), and after being attacked by the angry mob led by Banks, she regrets being 'dried up / With cursing and with madness' so that she has no blood to 'moisten' Dog's 'sweet lips' (4.1.154-6). Dog's blood-sucking, then, reproduces and renders more gruesome the life-sapping effects of the community's exclusion and harsh treatment of Sawyer, just as Sawyer's magic through Dog enacts the assumed connection between her words and body.

While for Sawyer's detractors the assumed link between her body and speech worked to discredit her speech, with Dog's help Sawyer joins her body to her words in a way that invests her words with physical force they cannot dismiss. That Sawyer's pact with Dog essentially turns her detractors' dismissive assumptions against them would seem to empower Sawyer. Yet far from empowering her, Sawyer's relationship with Dog foregrounds her desperate loneliness and evokes the audience's pity. Sawyer's interactions with Dog are intimate and disturbing at once. Cuddy disparages Dog for 'creep[ing] under

an old witch's coats' to 'suck like a great puppy' (5.1.186–7); we see Sawyer promising Dog her 'teat' (4.1.166); and besides the sensational detail from Goodcole's pamphlet that the devil sucked blood from 'a little above [her] fundament', the audience would know that it was not uncommon for witch-marks to be discovered on the lower parts of accused witches' bodies. This simultaneous perversion of 'sexual and maternal tenderness' to some extent closes Sawyer off from audience sympathy.²⁴ In his discussion of how Sawyer is made to represent social pollution, David Stymeist, for one, finds that 'by staging this picture of sexually perverted nurturing, the playwrights encourage the audience to accept Sawyer's difference, easing the process of her abjection and subsequent elimination'.²⁵ But in staging the impulse to nurture and showing its perversion, the playwrights equally draw attention to how Sawyer is not that different. Mother Sawyer is quite unlike a witch figure such as Lady Macbeth, who completely forsakes natural affections, claiming she could dash out the brains of a child she gave suck to and invoking evil spirits to 'unsex' her, block any 'compunctious visitings of nature' that might forestall her intended murder, and 'take [her] milk for gall'.²⁶ Sawyer is genuinely attached to Dog, as her string of affectionate nicknames for him — including 'my dainty' (4.1.175); 'My little pearl' (176); 'Tommy' (291); 'my Tomalin' (5.1.6); 'my best love' (9); 'my darling' (12); and 'My sweet Tom-boy' (86) — attests.²⁷ Although gruesome, Sawyer's regret that she is out of blood with which to 'moisten' Dog's 'sweet lips' strangely conveys her desire to provide care and nourishment. Sawyer's natural affections — which the audience *can* sympathize with — are not obliterated like Lady Macbeth's; rather, they are displaced when their only outlet is the devil beckoned by Sawyer's desperate cursing. Mother Sawyer's requests that Dog 'comfort' her, 'Kiss' her, 'tickle' with her, 'rub away some wrinkles on [her] brow', and make her 'old ribs to shrug for joy' (4.1.166, 170–3), evince her craving for warm physical contact (the only human contact she experiences is being beaten), and articulate her physical connection with Dog as one of illusory comfort and relief. Whether Dog is performed as aggressively sexual — as was Miles Anderson's 'terrifying' Dog of 'ferocious intensity', who appeared smeared in black body-paint and naked except for a criss-crossing harness which covered his genitals²⁸ (see figure 1) — or as a 'sweet and loveable puppy-dog' who could 'capture an impression of evil solely through the glint of malice in his eyes', and slip 'from innocent charm to cruel cynicism in an instant',²⁹ the visual effect of Sawyer tickling and cuddling with such a hideous, duplicitous creature could be quite haunting. We are haunted not because Sawyer has completely alienated the



Fig. 1. *The Witch of Edmonton* 1981 (Joe Cocks neg 171), dir. Barry Kyle. With permission of the Shakespeare Centre Library and Archives, and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

audience, but because her tender affection for one she believes to be her only friend is understandable and we witness Sawyer's intimate, endearing qualities being terribly wasted and misplaced. The dismissive attitudes towards Sawyer's body and speech which drive her into a relationship with Dog ultimately drive her into a tragically false experience of her own body.

Sawyer evokes pity the most strongly when she recognizes the trick that has been played on her both by Dog and by Banks. In her lament that Dog has not seen her 'in three days', Sawyer's admission of giving herself up to Dog's 'black lust' and of being 'on fire, even in the midst of ice, / Raking my blood up till my shrunk knees feel / Thy curled head leaning on them' again blocks

audience sympathy to some extent with the startling juxtaposition of decay and old age with youthful passion, and of love with bestiality (5.1.4–5, 10–12). Nonetheless, positioned in the role of a jilted lover, a ‘wronged’ lady longing for her knight to avenge her, but without ‘a dog’ to ‘Bark in his dame’s defence’ (1–2), Sawyer continues to evoke our sadness. She alludes to classical literature, invoking Dog to, Zeus-like, ‘fall upon me / In some dark cloud’ (13–14). A strain of self-immolating love comes through in her declaration that ‘Could I run / Like a swift powder-mine beneath the world, / Up would I blow it all to find out thee, / Though I lay ruined in it’ (20–3). Sawyer’s poetic complaint complete with grandiose allusions and visions of extreme self-sacrifice, all to express how she misses her pet, represents a wasted eloquence her community has failed to recognize and appreciate, while conveying her pathetic situation and the intensity of her consuming loneliness. Sawyer’s terror at the recognition of Dog’s true nature, therefore, is all the more painful to witness. Although black for the entire play, Dog significantly appears in white to herald Banks’s entrance to arrest Sawyer, a colour symbolic of death that ‘puts thee in mind of thy winding sheet’, as Dog explains; a ‘forerunner to light’ to make Sawyer feel exposed, or as he puts it, that ‘shows thy old rivelled face’, but also a colour that conveys the ghastly, blood-draining effect of extreme shock (37, 48). Indeed, the shock of an abrupt shift in Sawyer’s physical connection with Dog, from tickling with him to now warding off his lunge at her throat,³⁰ is matched by the shock of a violent re-separation of words and bodily force for Sawyer, which returns her to ineffectual and unheeded speech. When Sawyer bids Dog ‘go and bite such / As I shall set thee on’, for instance, Dog flatly refuses (57–8). When she threatens to sell herself ‘to twenty thousand fiends / To have thee torn in pieces, then’, Dog informs her, ‘Thou art so ripe to fall into hell that no more of my kennel will so much as bark at him that hangs thee’ (60–4). Sawyer can only impotently spit one empty curse at Dog that is broken off mid-sentence as Old Banks, Ratcliffe, and other countrymen ‘attach’ her and force her off-stage; her words are powerless against physical coercion, just as they once were against Banks’s blows (80).

Sawyer sees that she was never really in control of the fusion of speech and body Dog provided, as it is here taken away from her. Indeed, her entrance into a pact that would give physical clout to her speech is less a choice than a tired surrender to relentless attitudes toward her body and speech that Banks and others had already forced on her: as Sawyer herself reflects, ‘’Tis all one / To be a witch as to be counted one’ (2.1.125–6). In the beginning, Sawyer’s

words were in no real way linked to bodily transgression, yet her body was beaten for her words, and her words could be unheeded precisely because they came from the body of a woman, and an old woman at that — the kind of person thought to be most inclined to irrational anger that only proved her need to be ruled.³¹ Dog offers her real demonic power through witchcraft, and yet this power is nothing more than a fulfillment of Banks's assumptions, which do not distinguish between Sawyer's speech and body. The emphatic physicality of Sawyer's curses enacted through Dog, then, combines belief in witchcraft with implicit criticism of those who persist in associating women's speech with bodily transgression. For not only does this association force Sawyer to turn to witchcraft so that her words cannot be so easily dismissed, but Sawyer's witchcraft exposes the real horror and absurdity of this association, and the tragic effects it has on Sawyer herself.

Mother Sawyer is not the only woman in the play for whom transgressive speech and an uncontained body are violently yoked together. For both Susan Carter and Anne Ratcliffe, flowing words lead to spilling bodies. Susan, in an effort to delay saying goodbye to her new, secretly bigamous husband Frank (who married her only to please his father and procure his inheritance along with Susan's dowry), will not stop talking to Frank, who becomes increasingly exasperated until she finally reveals information (their fathers are on their way to walk her home once she parts with Frank) that tempts Frank's mounting desperation and results in her murder. Susan's refusal to stop talking when Frank repeatedly bids in his haste to depart secretly with his first wife, Winnifride, thus results in the spilling of Susan's blood. Once she is stabbed, Susan continues talking to her last breath, so that her words and her blood literally run out together. As Viviana Comensoli notes, that Susan 'dies ... at the moment when she is most talkative and assertive ... underscores the general fear of unauthorized female speech, a fear which', of course, 'underlies early modern witchcraft beliefs'.³² As for Anne Ratcliffe, her 'mad' ranting criticizes the disparity between rich and poor, much in the same way Sawyer does, as Comensoli also points out,³³ and the woman whose words are now unruly must be contained: Banks instructs 'Catch her fast, and have her into some close chamber' (4.1.210–11). But Anne's flowing words only end in an uncontained body as well, for 'she beat out her own brains, and so died' while repeating the words 'the devil, the witch, the witch, the devil' (224–6). As with Susan, her bodily spilling literally coincides with spilling words.

Each case presents slightly different echoes of Mother Sawyer's fate with troubling images of the destruction that results when excessive words and

uncontained bodies become one and the same for women, but Susan's story perhaps offers the clearest parallel to Mother Sawyer's. The unmistakable connection the play establishes between the demon Dog and attitudes of the community (as represented by prominent members such as Old Banks, Sir Arthur, and the Justice) towards women's speech and bodies is significant in terms of Dog's involvement in all three women's deaths. As already mentioned, Dog touches Anne Ratcliffe just before her raving becomes particularly intense and she escapes the men's restraining hands to go and dash her brains out. Dog also rubs against Frank Thorney immediately before he decides to murder Susan (3.3. sd 14–15). The timing of Dog's touchings strongly indicates that Dog is the trigger, if not the whole cause, of both women's deaths. Indeed, there is even some suggestion that Dog provides Frank's murder weapon, which seems to mysteriously appear for the occasion. Frank just finishes telling Susan that although he is going to murder her, 'You see I had no purpose. I'm unarmed. / 'Tis this minute's decree', when he suddenly draws a knife, exclaiming, 'Look, this will serve your turn' (22–4). 'You see' indicates that Frank actually shows Susan he is unarmed, while 'look' suggests he finds the knife almost unexpectedly.³⁴ Dog's presence tells us that demonic influence provokes Frank to murder, but since this demonic influence is so closely allied with the dismissive attitude that links women's unrestrained speech with transgressing bodies, the implication is that this attitude also surfaces with intensity in Frank, leading him to violently punish the body of the woman whose tongue he cannot control. Along with the knife, this attitude emerges, in a sense, as a deadly weapon Young Thorney did not realize he carried. As for Anne Ratcliffe dashing her own brains out, we can only raise the question as to whether her death results from an internalization of the attitudes linked to Dog, but the pattern emerging through Anne, Susan and Sawyer of free-flowing words, spilling bodies, and Dog's presence as the trigger to their destruction certainly invites such questions.

I have been considering how *The Witch of Edmonton* demonstrates and criticizes the violence of the tendency to link women's unrestrained speech to the transgressive body, garrulousness to promiscuity — a connection that literary critics have repeatedly focused on in a wide range of early modern writing.³⁵ This consideration would be incomplete without taking into account the final silences of Mother Sawyer and Susan Carter. On the 'flip side' of the connection made between women's loose speech and loose bodies is the earlier-mentioned and well-known equation of female silence with chastity and submission to male authority. Christina Luckyj notices that this particu-

lar equation has been taken for granted as a widespread early modern understanding of female silence, and far too commonly appears as a starting place in scholarly work on early modern women.³⁶ She explores how ‘early modern misogyny’, which prescribed silence as an ideal female virtue, also registered unmistakable anxiety about absolute female silence as something frighteningly ‘unfathomable’ and thus uncontrollable.³⁷ Indeed, Luckyj finds that ‘the dominant ideology of the conduct books recommends for women not silence but carefully circumscribed speech’, for, ‘as soon as woman uses language, she can be defined and controlled’.³⁸

But are women’s silences in *The Witch of Edmonton* subversively inscrutable, a defiance of the patriarchal discourse that has helped to destroy them, when Mother Sawyer resists speaking only as she is led off to execution, and Susan only visits Frank Thorney with silence as a ghost after he has murdered her? I would argue that although it is too late for silence to be useful as ‘a space of subjective agency which threatens masculine control’ for these two particular characters,³⁹ their silence can certainly function in this way in terms of the play’s overall critical engagement with the effects of patriarchal discourse on women, specifically the discourse that links women’s unrestrained speech with transgressive bodies. In other words, Sawyer’s and Susan’s performances of silence open up a space of subjective agency which the audience might enter to question, or conceive an unspoken challenge to, this patriarchal discourse.⁴⁰

Silence could be particularly potent on stage where, ‘in a theatre characterised by rapid delivery and dense verbal texture, in which “Speech was almost non-stop”, pauses and silences could ... be highly obtrusive’, and even ‘evoke powerful anxiety’.⁴¹ The silence, in particular, of Susan’s corpse (as opposed to its ‘mangled’ and bleeding appearance (3.3.98)) is what her father, Carter, fixates on in the turbulence of his grief. His first words upon discovering his daughter’s murdered body are, ‘Susan, girl, child! Not speak to thy father? Ha!’ (78). His next speech, directed at Frank’s father, Old Thorney, is disturbingly callous:

Sir, take that carcass there, and give me this [Frank].
 I’ll not own her now, she’s none of mine.
 Bob me off with a dumb-show? No, I’ll have life.
 This is my son too, and while there’s life in him,
 ’Tis half mine. Take you half that silence for’t.
 When I speak I look to be spoken to.
 Forgetful slut! (99–105)

Old Thorney's response to this rant, 'Alas, what grief may do now!', excuses it as a strange by-product of Carter's anguish, not to be taken seriously (105). But Susan's bleeding body, here, effectively demonstrates Luckyj's point that 'the silent body is often beyond simple translation'.⁴² She has become inscrutable, beyond patriarchal discourse and unresponsive to its claims on her ('girl, child!'), and thus unsettling, even threatening. Does Susan's corpse present some kind of unbearable challenge or accusation to her father? While it would be speculation to hazard a specific answer, Old Carter's description of the corpse as 'bob[bing] [him] off with a dumb-show' attributes agency to the corpse: he is clearly not seeing it as a passive object. Of course, the corpse on stage is not really a passive object: Carter's meta-theatrical language, here, draws attention to the fact that an actor is performing a corpse — an actor who hears, along with the audience, Old Carter's every word, but gives only a 'dumb-show' for answer. This awareness makes it possible for the silence of this corpse to open up that space potentially resistant to dominant patriarchal discourse.

Susan Carter's 'spirit' performs an actual dumb-show in a silent interaction with Frank, who lies in bed in her father's house with self-inflicted wounds meant to support his cover-up story that Susan's murderer also tried to murder him:

The Spirit of SUSAN his second wife comes to the bedside. He stares at it, and turning to the other side, it's there too. In the meantime, WINNIFRIDE as a page comes in, stands at his bed's feet sadly. He, frightened, sits upright. The Spirit vanishes. (sd between 4.2.69–70)

Significantly, Susan's silent spirit forces a terrified silence onto Frank himself, who only regains his voice when he recognizes Winnifride at the foot of the bed and convinces himself it must have been Winnifride he was seeing all along. His questions for her reveal his interpretation of the spirit's silence:

How darst thou come to mock me
 On both sides of my bed?
 ...
 Outface me, stare upon me with strange postures,
 Turn my soul wild by a face in which were drawn
 A thousand ghosts leapt newly from their graves
 To pluck me into a winding-sheet. (75–80)

Frank's choice of words such as 'dar'st', 'mock', and 'outface' clearly indicates that he perceives a challenge in the ghost, and his visions of being plucked into a winding-sheet convey his terror at this wordless challenge. Moments later, an enlightened Carter chooses to confront Frank with Susan's murder by bringing her corpse into his presence, provoking Frank's alarmed cry, 'For pity's sake, remove her. See, she stares / With one broad open eye still in my face' (149–50). Susan's silence, as both ghost and corpse, opens a space subversive of patriarchal discourse in more ways than one. Frank's description of Susan's ghost as mocking him is apt, for instance, since her ghost ironically reproaches him by freely giving the silence that he angrily commanded when she was alive and delaying his departure with her loving words. Clearly, this silence has been appropriated from a sign of obedience to become an unnerving silence that Frank cannot bear. Susan's ubiquitous, decidedly unmanageable body after death, appearing as it does instantly on both sides of Frank's bed (albeit as a ghost, but a ghost very corporeally staged) so that he cannot even turn away from it, and then staring on him moments later from her coffin, effectively severs the ties between unruly female speech and an unruly female body. Susan's unrestrainable speech was loyal to Frank while her threatening, uncontrollable body, here, has nothing to do with words. Finally, both Carter and Frank's affronted reactions to Susan's silent corpse and spirit underscore the absurd injustice of the claims they believed they had on Susan through patriarchal discourse. Carter angrily disowns Susan's body for not speaking when spoken to moments after she was murdered for speaking too much, while the only thing about Susan that offends Frank more than the ceaseless talking that he kills her for is her subsequent impenetrable silence. Susan cannot possibly 'win'.

On her way to the gallows, Mother Sawyer is not totally silent in the way Susan's ghost is, but in keeping with her last angry vow at Dog's betrayal to 'not confess one mouthful' and to 'muzzle up / my tongue from telling tales' (5.1.70, 72–3), she proves stubbornly unforthcoming on the topics her accusers wish her to speak. Compared with her overall readiness throughout the play to engage in verbal battles with her oppressors, and considering the social criticisms that she shares with the audience and levels at Banks and Sir Arthur even when under threat of being physically beaten, Mother Sawyer's reluctance to speak as she is led to her death is quite noticeable. Her reticence conspicuously departs from Goodcole's account of an Elizabeth Sawyer who 'freely confessed after her conviction', and who, following Goodcole's public reading of that confession at the place of execution, detailing the nature of

her intimacy with her familiar and which crimes she did and did not commit, states 'I here doe acknowledge, to {D2v} all the people that are here present, that it is all truth, desiring you all to pray unto Almightye God to forgive me my greevous sinnes'.⁴³ The play's Mother Sawyer is far removed from this Elizabeth Sawyer, who shares more similarities with Frank in his final scene. Frank assumes sole responsibility for his crimes; he does not even slightly allude to the intense pressure his father placed on him to marry Susan and save the family from financial ruin, nor does he hint at how he precipitated into a disastrous clandestine marriage with Winnifride under the false impression that there was no doubt about the parentage of her unborn child.⁴⁴ Instead, Frank declares his father and widow are 'both worthy of a better fate / Than such a son or husband as I have been', praises his execution as the 'just' return of 'blood and lust', and expresses his remorse to all at such length that even Old Carter admits that the murderer of his daughter 'hast made me water my plants spite of my heart' (5.3.139–45). Except for the mild wish that 'heaven send' Sir Arthur 'a new heart', Frank entirely exonerates members of his community from having a hand in his death, reassuring them that they 'are all merciful, / And send me to my grave in peace' (127–9).

Just before Frank's pious performance, Old Carter tries to badger Sawyer into publicly accepting responsibility for specific deaths, urging the kind of final disclosure Goodcole reports of the real Sawyer, 'Thoud'st best confess all truly' (5.3.48). Instead of complying, in accordance with the conventional gallows speech that was an expected, almost ritualistic part of public execution, Sawyer evades questions with her own questions and through her reticence refuses the role of scapegoat that Carter and the community impose on her. In response to the repeated accusation that she sent the devil to Frank and caused him to murder Susan, for instance, Sawyer asks 'who doubts' that the devil was with him, but demands, 'is every devil mine?' (28), implicating the whole community along with her in witchcraft. Similarly, when Sawyer finally does call upon the crowd to 'Bear witness', seeming to capitulate and signal the beginning of the speech that they desire from her, she leaves them with the brief and equivocal statement that 'I repent all former evil; / There is no damnèd conjuror like the devil' (51–2). She pointedly avoids any admission of 'my' evil or of conjuring on her own part, and could easily insinuate sorrow at the villagers' evil and their own alliance with the devil who has finally defeated her (her punning remark that 'These dogs will mad me' lends support to this reading) (41). Whereas Goodcole relates how Elizabeth Sawyer 'confirmed' his record of her full confession and prayed for forgiveness 'in

the hearing of many hundreds at her last breath',⁴⁵ the playwrights' Sawyer struggles to keep her last breath for herself. Claiming that her 'conscience / Is settled as it shall be', and, wishing to 'die without vexation' or 'torment', she challenges the accusing villagers in exasperation: 'Have I scarce breath enough to say my prayers, / And would you force me to spend that in bawling?' (45–6, 25, 49–50). Sawyer's uncooperative gallows speech, or rather her avoidance of such a speech, could be seen as throwing into relief the exceptionally 'good' death Frank makes, but more subtly, Sawyer casts a cynical shadow on Frank's emotional farewell by distinguishing between being 'resolved / To die in my repentance' and — what she consistently refuses — sparing everyone else from repentance (41–2). And with Sawyer's last angry question, once again we cannot miss the absurd injustice of a female character physically beaten when she speaks out of sheer necessity and relentlessly goaded for speech when she wishes to be silent. Like Susan, Mother Sawyer cannot 'win'.

The one female character who does 'win', to some extent, is Frank's first wife, Winnifride. Although Winnifride appears to sincerely mourn the loss of her husband to a shameful gallows death, and although she is left in a position that would be viewed as suspect — pregnant and single — the play's ending suggests that Winnifride's future financial comfort, and even happiness, will be remarkably secure: Sir Arthur is legally compelled to pay her a fine 'For his abuse' (5.3.158), and Old Carter, who might be expected to have problems with Frank's secret, 'other' wife, welcomes Winnifride into his home, as though a replacement for his murdered daughter. In further contrast to Susan and Sawyer and to their final silences, Winnifride has the last word, delivering the light-hearted epilogue expressing her 'modest hopes' for a second husband in her invitation for applause. That Winnifride's voice remains at the end, and that she is accepted by prominent village men (Old Carter, Old Thorney, the Justice) despite her compromising circumstances, is perhaps determined by her skilful use of disguise — a talent that involves her speech as much as her cross-dressed body (which gained her safe access to her husband around the Carters). We immediately witness 'how cleanly / [Winnifride] canst beguile', as Sir Arthur puts it (1.1.168–9), when our very first impression of Winnifride's sincerity — her intimate protestation to Frank that he 'had / The conquest of my maiden love' (32–3), and her plea for him to not absent himself too long for 'pity / Upon the child I go with that's your own' (51–2) — is swiftly overturned once Frank is offstage and we learn that she 'did not bring him / The dower of a virginity' and that there is a good chance Sir Arthur is really the child's father (162–3).⁴⁶

One view of Winnifride is that she is above all a model of self-preservation, unlike Sawyer, who is (understandably) bent on revenge, and Susan, who is entirely trusting. Before her marriage, Winnifride 'give[s] way' to the lust of her master (1.1.165), and considering Sir Arthur's place at the top of the village's social hierarchy, it could well have been precarious not to. Once she has escaped the dangerous position of an unwed mother by securing a marriage with Frank, however, Winnifride vehemently rejects Sir Arthur's advances, and though she cites moral reasons this move also protects her newfound security. Moral reservations soon take a back seat to future comfort when, despite her complaint that Susan's dowry is 'foul ill-gotten coin' (3.2.20), Winnifride is prepared to conceal Frank's bigamy and flee with him. Though she expresses moral indignation at Frank's murder, Winnifride does not disclose his confession to her until after Old Carter has confronted Frank with the bloody knife, his doom is sealed, and it is clear she will once again be husbandless. At Frank's execution, a weeping Winnifride whose 'weakness scarce can bear' the 'griefs' 'strong upon' her (5.3.18–19) earns the sympathy of both Old Thorney and Old Carter. In spite of her overbearing sorrow, though, Winnifride has the skill and presence of mind to strike a delicate balance between expressing the expected dutiful mourning of a wife for her husband and pointedly clearing herself of Frank's crimes in a way that plays down her own transgression by comparison:

My fault was lust, my punishment was shame.
 Yet I am happy that my soul is free
 Both from consent, foreknowledge and intent
 Of any murder but of mine own honour,
 Restored again by a fair satisfaction,
 And since not to be wounded. (10–15)

Winnifride likely exposes Sir Arthur's past sexual involvement with her (Frank was not aware of it, and it is doubtful Sir Arthur volunteered the incriminating information when his servant was tried for murder) — an added risk to her reputation, but one that brings her financial reparation.⁴⁷ Winnifride demonstrates throughout a remarkable ability to adapt to changing circumstances, concealing and disclosing information when it works out to her advantage. This adaptability makes Winnifride the most fitting to deliver a playful bid for applause so different in tone from the play's sombre ending. Epilogues leave room for stepping out of character, but Winnifride's optimistic last word

about a second husband, so closely juxtaposed with her expression of insupportable grief over Frank, draws attention to role-playing and encourages us to question just how much she is role-playing at other moments. Though it would indeed be difficult to argue that Winnifride is disingenuous in her new resolve to preserve her honour or in her lamentations over Frank, her willingness to protect herself through skilled performance — so evident in her first appearance with Frank and in her cross-dressing — does not entirely exclude her convincing and socially approved roles as reformed sinner and bereft widow. Winnifride's overriding concern with self-preservation, however, is hardly blameable. Rather, the play demonstrates through the fates of Mother Sawyer and Susan Carter, whose undisguised words and bodies are met with such violence, that for women such a preoccupation is necessary.

Notes

- 1 Henry Goodcole, 'The wonderfull disoverie of ELIZABETH SAWYER *a Witch, late of Edmonton, her conviction and condemnation and Death*' (1621), in Marion Gibson, *Early Modern Witches: Witchcraft Cases in Contemporary Writing* (London and New York: 2000), 302–315 (304). All references to Goodcole are to page number in this edition.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid, 308, 315.
- 4 Ibid, 310, 313.
- 5 Other sources now lost to us from which the playwrights could have drawn include the '*base and false Ballets*' that Goodcole mentions which '*were sung at the time of our returning from the Witches execution*' (303).
- 6 David Nicol, 'Review of *The Witch of Edmonton*', *EMLS* 7.1 (2001), par.2. Nicol is reviewing Enter the Spirit's production at the Southwark Playhouse, London, November–December, 2000.
- 7 Lynda E. Boose, 'Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman's Unruly Member', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42.2 (1991), 185, 189.
- 8 Ibid, 195.
- 9 Gwynne Kennedy, *Just Anger: Representing Women's Anger in Early Modern England* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, 2000), 8.
- 10 Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, 1993), 25.
- 11 Ibid.

- 12 Ibid, 23–63.
- 13 Anon., The discontented married man. Or, A merry new song that was pend in foule weather, of a scould that could not keep her lips together To the tune of, Shee cannot keepe her &c. , London, ca. 1640. STC 17232.
- 14 John Fletcher, *The Tamer Tamed, or, The Woman's Prize*, Celia R. Daileader and Gary Taylor (eds) (Manchester, 2006).
- 15 William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd ed., G. Blackmore Evans et. al. (eds) (Boston and New York, 1997).
- 16 Thomas Dekker, John Ford, and William Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton*, in Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge (eds), *Three Jacobean Witchcraft Plays* (Manchester, 1986). All references to *The Witch of Edmonton* are from this edition.
- 17 Applicable to interactions between Banks and Mother Sawyer are explanations of witchcraft based on patterns of refused charity and displaced guilt in Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London, 1971), 555–7, and Alan McFarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study* (1970; Prospect Heights, Ill, 1991), 173–4, 195–7. Viviana Comensoli, *Household Business: Domestic Plays of Early Modern England* (Toronto, 1996), 123, finds that Sawyer's dependence on Banks's lands for kindling reflects the effects of the enclosure laws.
- 18 Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 522. See also 505–12.
- 19 Kennedy, *Just Anger*, 13, discusses how anger is 'likely to be read as disobedience, hostility, or rebellion by those in positions of superior authority when that anger is directed at them' and explains that since anger involves assuming a position of judgment toward another, it constitutes a form of 'self assertion and a claim to possess equal worth, despite [a woman's] allegedly inferior status'.
- 20 Other editions of the play add different or no stage directions here. Etta Soiref Onat (ed.), *The Witch of Edmonton: A Critical Edition* (New York and London, 1980), does not add stage directions. Where Corbin and Sedge have 'He beats her' and 'He beats her and', Arthur F. Kinney (ed.) *The Witch of Edmonton* (1998; rpt London and New York, 2005) uses 'hits her', and 'strikes her and', while Robert G. Lawrence (ed.), *Jacobean and Caroline Comedies* (London, 1973), uses 'belabours her', and 'beats her, and'. E. Rhys's edition in *Thomas Dekker* (London, 1887) uses 'beats her', and 'beats her and'. '[B]eats her' seems most appropriate, as Banks's words 'take that and that' indicate more than one blow is given at once, and Sawyer's curse directed to Banks's 'hand and arm / Whose blows have lamed me' suggests more severe physical abuse than that constituted by two single blows.
- 21 Anthony Dawson, 'Witchcraft / Bigamy: Cultural Conflict in *The Witch of Edmonton*,' *Renaissance Drama* 20 (1989), 85, observes that 'Mother Sawyer's accusers ... are

concerned mostly with sexual transgression, which they attribute to the witch's powers', citing the claims of the townsfolk in 4.1. that follow. In contrast, David Stymeist, "Must I be ... made a Common Sink?": Witchcraft and the Theatre in *The Witch of Edmonton*, *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 25.2 (2001), 40, claims that 'being classified as a scold is integral to Sawyer's conviction; her iconoclastic verbal defiance rather than *maleficium* itself becomes the major basis for her execution'. Stymeist and Dawson each stress a different threat as the main danger that Sawyer poses and the main reason for her persecution, but Sawyer's persecutors conflate these two threats, as this paper explores.

- 22 Stymeist, 'Witchcraft and the Theatre', 40.
- 23 Stage directions indicating that Dog should rub Anne Ratcliffe here are added after Sawyer's command in Rhys ('*To the Dog, who rubs against her*'); Onat ('Dog rubs her'); Corbin and Sedge ('*Dog touches Anne Ratcliffe*'); and Kinney, ('DOG rubs against ANNE RATCLIFFE').
- 24 Dawson, 'Witchcraft / Bigamy', 87.
- 25 Stymeist 'Witchcraft and the Theatre', 43.
- 26 Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 1.5.40–8, 1.7.54–9, in G. Blackmore Evans et. al. (eds) *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston and New York, 1997).
- 27 As Thomas mentions in *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 525, domestic pets or uninvited animals may simply have been the only friends that lonely women such as Mother Sawyer knew, as records of names witches gave their familiars often suggest an affectionate relationship with them.
- 28 R.V. Holdsworth, qtd in Kinney's introduction to *The Witch of Edmonton*, xxxvii.
- 29 Nicol, 'A Review', par.3.
- 30 I am reading Dog's action of lunging at Mother Sawyer's throat between Dog's line 'have at thy throat!' and Sawyer's response, 'Off, cur!' (5.1.40–1).
- 31 Kennedy, *Just Anger*, 6, mentions how women were aligned with 'other weak beings' who were considered 'particularly susceptible to anger', and among these other weak beings are the elderly.
- 32 Viviana Comensoli, *Household Business*, 128–9.
- 33 Ibid, 124; see also Dawson, 'Witchcraft / Bigamy', 85.
- 34 See Corbin and Sedge, 15–16 and n for 3.3.24, on the overall 'impression that the Dog is the effective stage-manager of this murder scene' and on the likeliness of Dog providing Frank with his murder weapon.
- 35 Christina Luckyj, *A moving Rhetorick: Gender and Silence in Early Modern England* (Manchester and New York, 2002), 3–4, 8–9, provides a brief summary of this scholarship.
- 36 Ibid, 3.

- 37 Ibid, 59–62, 70.
- 38 Ibid, 62, 6.
- 39 Ibid, 60.
- 40 As Luckyj, *'A moving Rhetoricke'*, 78, points out, 'moments of silence in the theatre may also provide unique opportunities for audiences and actors to share the same auditory space; at such moments the stage mirrors the silent audience back to itself'.
- 41 Luckyj, *'A moving Rhetoricke'*, 78, and Andrew Gurr qtd in Luckyj, 78.
- 42 Luckyj, *'A moving Rhetoricke'*, 71.
- 43 Goodcole in Gibson, *Early Modern Witches*, 314.
- 44 It is possible that Frank still does not know about Winnifride's involvement with Sir Arthur before their marriage, and that by wishing Sir Arthur 'a new heart' he is referring to Sir Arthur's withholding of the financial support he promised to Frank for saving Winnifride's honour through marriage. It is more likely, however, that Sir Arthur would be compelled to pay a fine and that Old Carter would so harshly admonish him (Carter claims Sir Arthur has escaped too easily: 'If luck had served, Sir Arthur, and every man had his due, somebody might have tottered ere this without paying fines' 5.3.163–5) for the more serious offence of manipulating Frank to cover his own sexual use of Winnifride, rather than for simply refusing to financially support his two servants. Indeed, Sir Arthur could defend his lack of financial support with a claim that their fornication brought dishonour to his household. Frank's reference to Sir Arthur's need of 'a new heart' and Winnifride's admission of past 'lust' may suggest that the truth of Winnifride and Sir Arthur's liaison has come out at some point during Frank's trial.
- 45 Goodcole in Gibson, *Early Modern Witches*, 314.
- 46 Winnifride's conversation with Susan — in which under the guise of Frank's page she promises her that 'I'll be all your charge: / Servant, friend, wife to [Frank]' — provides a further example of speech that skilfully disguises the truth (3.2.85–6).
- 47 See note 44.

The Persons of the play

M^r Thrifty a Justice of Peace.
M^r Christopher Spruce Son to M^{rs} Mumble.
M^r Will Spruces friend
M^r Scribe a Lawyer.
M^r Wellcome brother to M^{rs} Mumble.
Peter Parchment Thriftys Clerk.
Crisp a barber Spruces man.
Godfrey M^{rs} Mumbles man.
Will Catch }
Tom Snap } two thieves
Ned Careless }
Jack Killman. } three other thieves.
Hodge Dingshrist }
Crutch, an old man.
Shepherds.
Constable & officers.
Some Country men.
M^{rs} Mumble, a deafe rich widow.
Sophia, her daughter
M^{rs} Wellcome.
Constance Thriftys daughter
Jens Peters wife Thriftys house keeper.
Country women.
Crutchs wife. } Musicians.

Fig. 1: Dramatis personae, the first folio in the Osborne manuscript play (University of Calgary, Osborne Collection, 132.27). Printed with permission of the University of Calgary Library, Special Collections.