



PALGRAVE SHAKESPEARE STUDIES



Shakespeare, Tragedy and Menopause

The Anxious Womb

Victoria L. McMahon

67

TD

palgrave
macmillan

Palgrave Shakespeare Studies

Series Editors

Michael Dobson, The Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham,
Stratford-upon-Avon, UK
Dympna Callaghan, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, USA

Palgrave Shakespeare Studies takes Shakespeare as its focus but strives to understand the significance of his oeuvre in relation to his contemporaries, to subsequent writers and to historical and political contexts. By extending the scope of Shakespeare and English Renaissance Studies, the series aims to open up the field to examinations of previously neglected aspects or sources in the period's art and thought. Titles in the *Palgrave Shakespeare Studies* series seek to understand anew both where the literary achievements of the English Renaissance came from and where they have brought us, and provide the reader with a combination of cutting-edge critical thought and archival scholarly rigour.

Victoria L. McMahon

Shakespeare, Tragedy and Menopause

The Anxious Womb

palgrave
macmillan

Victoria L. McMahon
Winnipeg, MB, Canada

ISSN 2731-3204
Palgrave Shakespeare Studies
ISBN 978-3-031-27203-5
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27204-2>

ISSN 2731-3212 (electronic)
ISBN 978-3-031-27204-2 (eBook)

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2023

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors, and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover illustration: duncan1890/Getty Images

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

This book is dedicated to three indomitable spirits: Mr. D. Asherah, Dr. Chris Laoutaris, and Colin George Raynor “Ray” McMahon.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the following people without whose love and support this book would have been impossible: my nearest and dearest Michel and Verity Eve, Sara St. Godard, Catherine and Amelia Roberts. Olive and Maurice Fontaine, the McMahon family, W.S., W.B., Belial King. Zerael Vorago, Stephen Taylor, Trevor Boult, Mrs. Heathcote. Titus, Tansy. Dr. Catherine Alexander, Gail Kern Paster, Dr. Toria Johnson, Dr. Kate McLuskie for the inspiration. I would also like to thank the Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham. Finally, many thanks to Eileen Srebernik for giving me a chance, and all at Palgrave Macmillan who made this ten-year project happen.

CONTENTS

1	“Bedlam Dames and Fowle Hags”: Uterine Pathologies and Menopausal Ambiguities	1
	<i>Contemporary Menopause; Shakespearean Proto-Menopause</i>	1
	<i>Sociocultural Fears of the Ageing Woman</i>	5
	<i>Theatrical and Literary Archetypes of the Ageing Woman</i>	11
	<i>The Parameters of This Study</i>	13
	<i>Ontological and Semantic Challenges to Defining Early Modern “Menopause”</i>	16
	<i>Humoralism, Natural Science, and the Female Body</i>	19
	<i>Defining the Female Ageing Process</i>	25
	<i>Defining the Proto-Menopause “Event”</i>	28
	<i>The Proto-Menopausal Paradigm</i>	31
	<i>The Ageing Woman and Sociocultural Anxieties</i>	32
	<i>Silencing the Hag</i>	38
	<i>Historical Review of Early Modern Menopause and Ageing</i>	40
	<i>Structural Rationale</i>	47
2	Gertrude and the Petrifying Gorgon Womb	67
	<i>Introduction: Columba Chatry, Nostradamus, and the Stone Baby</i>	67
	<i>“The Heyday in the Blood Should Be Tame”: Furor Uterinus and Suffocation of the Womb</i>	72
	<i>The Basilisk Gaze: Ocular Fascination and the Heating Womb</i>	76
	<i>Petrifying Older Women: Niobe, Hecuba, and Medusa</i>	83

“Destroy Your Sight”: <i>The Old Woman in the Mirror</i>	91
<i>Silencing Through Petrification: Medusa’s Stare</i>	94
3 Tamora and the Invasive Vegetable Womb	109
<i>Introduction: “Gone to Seed,” the Vegetable Madonna and Proto-Menopausal Pregnancy</i>	109
<i>Fears of the Parthenogenic Womb</i>	118
<i>The Botanical Discourse of Alien Stock and Invasive Species</i>	120
“Base Fruit”: Of Bastards and Grafting	128
“In Due Season”: That Strumpet Fortune and Father Time	133
<i>Silencing by Consumption</i>	143
4 Volumnia and the Sacrificial Animal Womb	153
<i>Introduction: The Dog and the Woman at the Dissecting Table</i>	153
“Like Some Animal Within an Animal”: The Wandering Womb and Plethora	159
“She’s a Very Dog to the Commonalty”: The Bitch’s Animal Instinct	165
“The Lamb that Baas like a Bear”: The Danger of the Female Mouth	173
<i>Blood-sports and Bear-baiting: Purging the Animal Womb</i>	182
5 Lady Macbeth and the Envious Womb	195
<i>Introduction: “Fit Food for Spite”</i>	195
<i>The Proto-Menopausal Female: Envy, Madness, and other Passions</i>	201
<i>Thomas Wright and Early Modern Notions of the Psychosomatic</i>	205
“Bloody Instruction”: How Invidia Worked	209
<i>Melancholy: Invidia’s Humoral Sister</i>	217
<i>Reason as Prophylaxis</i>	222
<i>Abject Consumption: The Proto-Menopausal Female and Diabolical Foodstuffs</i>	226
<i>Silencing Through Self-Cannibalization</i>	233
6 Menopausal Cleopatra and the Hybrid Cyborg Womb	243
<i>Introduction: “Dreams of a New Heaven and Earth”</i>	243
<i>From Automaton to Cyborg</i>	245
<i>Mechanical Theory, Mechanical Metaphor</i>	251
“To Set a Bourn”: Reckoning the Immeasurable Womb	253
<i>“In the Lap of Egypt”: Masturbation, Strangulation, and Precipitation of the Womb</i>	257

<i>The Perpetual Sex Machine: Isis and her Mechanical Phallus</i>	
<i>Antony</i>	266
<i>“A Cistern for Scaled Snakes”: The Self-Replicating Womb</i>	270
<i>Silencing the Proto-Menopausal Dream: Descartes Kills</i>	
<i>the Cyborg</i>	274
7 Conclusion	287
<i>The Hag’s Enduring Legacy: The Menopausal Woman Today</i>	287
Index	293

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Victoria L. McMahon was born and raised in Warwickshire. McMahon holds advanced degrees in Education, English, and Theatre. As an arts educator for over thirty years, McMahon has written, taught, and implemented Drama and English curricula in Canada's public school system. Having lectured in the Faculties of Theatre and English at the University of Winnipeg, McMahon is also an actor, director, playwright, and dramaturge and holds a Ph.D. from the Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham.

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 2.1	<i>Illustration de Portentosum lithpaedion</i> , artist unknown, Jean Ailleboust author. In an agonising semi-sexual display, Columba Chatry opens her dissected womb to reveal her lithopedion. To her right, the same lithopedion is shown in its bounded space of stony death; to Chatry's left, it becomes a macabre souvenir displayed on a uterine-shaped cushion (Credit Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris)	70
Fig. 2.2	<i>Hecuba Polymnestorum Oculis Priuat</i> (<i>Hecuba plucks out Polymnestor's eyes</i>). Abraham Aubry, after a design by Johann Wilhelm Baur. Hecuba, the tragic Queen of Troy, is featured as the ideal mother figure in <i>Hamlet</i> , in contrast to the duplicitous Gertrude (Credit The Warburg Institute Library, London)	87
Fig. 3.1	Kerckring's "Dame Anatomica." The allegory of <i>Anatomica</i> (Anatomy) as both domestic butcher and as Ceres, the goddess of Nature. Frontispiece from Theodor Kerckring's <i>Spicilegium Anatomica</i> (1670) (Credit History of Medicine, U.S. National Library of Medicine)	111
Fig. 3.2	Cesare Ripa's "Nature." The Allegory of Nature in Cesaire Ripa's <i>Iconologia</i> (1603) displaying her vulture. Courtesy of the Wellcome Collection, London	112

Fig. 3.3	Albrecht Dürer's <i>Nemesis (Das große Glück)</i> . The Goddess of Revenge strides the world brandishing a horse's bridle as a symbol of her universal control (Credit The Metropolitan Museum of Art)	114
Fig. 3.4	Wheel of Fortune/Mere Nature. "Mere Nature"/"Temps" on the Wheel of Fortune (inscribed <i>Generation</i>) with her black-faced twin (at bottom of wheel), French miniature ca. 1400 (Credit Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris)	130
Fig. 3.5	Wolgemut, The Lineage of Semiramis. Workshop of Michael Wolgemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff. Sol; Diana; Ceres [left, lower image]; <i>Lineage of Semiramis, Queen of Asyria</i> . When she is called "Semiramis" (2.1.22) [right, upper image], Tamora can similarly claim kinship with Diana, goddess of the hunt (2.3.61), and Ceres, goddess of agriculture (Credit The Warburg Institute Library, London)	140
Fig. 4.1	Vesalius Frontispiece. Andreas Vesalius. <i>An anatomical dissection being carried out by Andreas Vesalius, attended by a large group of observers</i> . Frontispiece: <i>De humani corporis fabrica</i> . Basileae: Per Joannem Oporinum [colophon 155]. The dog in the dissection theatre (far right) bears witness to the opened womb of the dissected female cadaver (Courtesy of the Wellcome Collection, London)	155
Fig. 4.2	Jean Matheus, <i>Hecuba en Chienne (Hecuba as a dog)</i> . Hecuba tears out Polymnestor's eyes in a gesture of maternal rage. The presence of the dog foreshadows Hecuba's ultimate transformation into a howling bitch (Credit The Warburg Institute Library, London)	168
Fig. 5.1	After Jacques De Gheyn II, <i>Invidia</i> from <i>Virtues and Vices</i> . Print made by Zacharias Dolendo. Envy depicted as a menopausal Hag (Credit: The British Museum)	197
Fig. 5.2	Jacques Callot's <i>Invidia</i> from <i>The Seven Capital Sins</i> , 1620. Forever starving, Envy consumes her own organs (Credit: The Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco)	198
Fig. 5.3	Minerua va à Trouare L'Inuidia (<i>Minerva and Envy</i>), Italian. This engraving captures the moment as told in Ovid's <i>Metamorphoses</i> when Athena was sent to <i>Invidia</i> 's cave, "a filthy slimy shack" with "stagnant air," sunless and filled with frost (Credit: The Warburg Institute Library, London)	215

Fig. 5.4	De Gheyn's Witches. Jacques de Gheyn II, <i>Witches' Sabbath</i> , the Hague. The ultimate fear of the proto-menopausal diabolical body: ingesting children to replenish drying uterine fluids (Credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art)	217
Fig. 6.1	Giovanni Fontana's "Flaming Witch" from <i>Bellicorum instrumentorum cum figuris</i> . BSD cod. Icon. 242, fol. 63v (Credit Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München)	247
Fig. 6.2	Jacques Dalechamps (1513–1588), Pessaries from <i>Chirurgie française</i> . Lyons: G. Rouille, 1569. Courtesy of the Wellcome Collection, London	260



CHAPTER 1

“Bedlam Dames and Fowle Hags”: Uterine Pathologies and Menopausal Ambiguities

CONTEMPORARY MENOPAUSE; SHAKESPEAREAN PROTO-MENOPAUSE

Did early modern woman experience menopause? Assuming the continuity of biology, logic dictates that she must have. Given the ageing woman’s relative absence from the medio-historical record until the mid-seventeenth century, though, a meaningful exploration of how this transition affected her remains challenging. “Menopause” did not exist medically or culturally until the early nineteenth century when it was recognized as a holistic condition. Before this time, one might encounter euphemisms for its varying symptoms, such as “drying of the flowers,” but symptomology alone was not enough to serve as the aetiology of what we would recognize today as “menopause.” Menopause or the “climacteric” was to have no consistent ontology, medical morphology, or lexicon until after Shakespeare’s lifetime. And yet, in the humoral conception of female embodiment in the sixteenth century, there was an implicit recognition that changes to the body, in tandem with ideas about ageing, signalled a medical crisis that had complex implications for society-at-large. For those reasons, the medical, sociocultural, and literary representations of an older woman were aetiologically housed within perceptions of her enfleshed body—specifically her womb. My central argument is centred upon how history can elucidate how myriad complex sociocultural forces and institutions inform conceptions of the “body.”

Although the flesh of that body doesn't alter as material, biotic matter, its conception and reception *does* change throughout history. This study doesn't intend to exclusively medicalize early modern "menopause" even though it identifies key markers of symptomology and, more importantly, pathology for its analysis, but embraces the recognition that conceptions of the female body were informed by differing belief systems—not only of how that body was physiologically constituted, but also how that body was expected to perform in social space. When one imagines menopause today, it is usual to think of it in terms of certain culturally accepted precepts: menopause is an entirely natural process that happens to middle-aged women; women experience menopause differently, some struggle with the changes to their physical and mental selves, whilst others do not; menopause is heralded by the cessation of menstrual periods which indicate that a woman's reproductive years are now over. Although these may be given assumptions, it may be surprising to discover how oversimplified menopause's contemporary medical definition is: menopause is the absence of menstruation for the chronological span of thirteen months.¹ As medical scholar Wulf Utian notes, "An adequate independent biological marker for the event [of menopause] does not exist."² Although menopause is recognized as likely to occur in women with a mean age of fifty-one years, this finding does not feature in menopause's technical definition; it is a tangential acknowledgement.³ Menopause is described as "a retrogressive diagnosis,"⁴ therefore from her fortieth year onwards, a woman in the twenty-first century can never be sure whether the newfound "symptoms" she may be experiencing indicate menopause's onset or not. It is only recently that medical experts have decided that menopause is not a disease or syndrome requiring medicalized treatment.⁵ However foreign, bizarre, or contradictory the ontology of "menopause" was in Shakespeare's era, we can hardly claim that it enjoys a more stable understanding or identity today.

There is much that remains a mystery about menopause to twenty-first-century medical science; its only clear aetiology rests on how fluctuations in hormones affect the regular homeostatic menstrual rhythms of the uterus. This central fact of the importance of the uterus to the diagnosis of contemporary menopause is something that the early moderns would have understood but with far more complexity, profundity, and mystery. The "organ of increase" (1.4.290), as King Lear refers to the uterus, enjoyed an almost supernatural cultural importance, in part because prior to 1610 as Mary F. Fissell argues, women were taught to associate their

own bodies with the mysteries and divinity of the Virgin Mary.⁶ The difficulties in finding pregnant cadavers for dissection in the anatomical theatre also meant that the womb was the most secret and coveted organ of all by male physicians.⁷ In fact, it was the uterus and its functions that for centuries had come to define what it was to be “female” rather than “male.”⁸ Unlike today’s medical definition of menopause, early modern changes within the microclimate of the older woman’s womb were understood with much more complexity than the mere cessation of the menstrual cycle (*amenorrhea*). It seems incredible to us now, but in Shakespeare’s era, the connection between the lack of menstruation and pregnancy had not clearly been established; it was understood by some physicians that women could still menstruate during the whole of their gestation period.⁹ Thus, the absence or intermittency of menstrual bleeding was not the sole physiological indicator of either pregnancy or menopause.¹⁰ Not only was it believed that middle-aged and elderly women could continually menstruate, but they could also conceive all manner of living creatures and inanimate objects, even in the absence of sexual intercourse. The interior of the ageing woman’s womb could also generate poisonous fumes that could escape the body proper to infect people and blight the spiritual and physical environment. It is no accident that the immensely powerful womb metaphorically became conflated with woman herself: the womb, or matrix, was commonly known as “the Mother.” After the early seventeenth century, the uterus’ identity became more fraught, associated less with the mysteries of the female body and more as the aetiological source of all female diseases. As the physician John Sadler (1615–1674) noted:

Amongst all diseases incident in the body, I found none more frequent...– more perilous then [sic] those which arise from the ill affected wombe for through the evill quality thereof, the heart, the liver, and the braine are affected.¹¹

Mary Fissell argues that the conception of the “bad womb” was not necessarily “more rational and scientific than the good womb,” but that the negative aspects of the womb were chosen to fit the narrative of the particular writer, and that these choices “were shaped by larger social concerns about the nature of woman.”¹² Although not all uterine function was cast as pathological, it was a different proposition in the case of the older woman as symptomatic variations and fluctuations within

the ageing uterus were overwhelmingly read by physicians as pathological and, therefore, met with great medio-social suspicion. Thus, the nature of the ageing womb was inherently pathological, transcending mere metonymic representation to encompass the material reality of the older woman's identity and existence within early modern society. A material exploration of Shakespeare's Gertrude, Tamora, Volumnia, Lady Macbeth, and Cleopatra must begin with the presupposition, then, that their embodied identity is rooted within their wombs, but as this site of origin is now defined only by its pathologies, this has implications for how those characters function within their respective plays as a reflection of an ageing woman's subjectivity within the greater early modern society. Each female character under consideration can be understood to embody sociocultural anxiety¹³ about the ageing woman's place, her agency, power, and usefulness, especially after the cessation of her reproductive abilities. Shakespeare's creative hesitancy to extend agency and power to his tragic older female characters through to the end of their respective dramas mirrors the early moderns' anxiety in general about how to handle the post-reproductive woman.¹⁴ Essentially, an ageing woman lost her value once she lost her reproductive facilities, but she remained an intrinsic member of the community whether her cultural value had diminished or not.

By exploring certain undercurrents of tension and anxiety in the Shakespearean tragedies under consideration, and by correlating these concerns with medical, literary, mythological, artistic, and other classical and Renaissance sociocultural disciplines, it is possible to argue that a complex psychosocial phenomenon approximating contemporary menopause *does exist* in the early modern era. In a boarder sense, my method is to explore locutions, symbols, and complex metaphors in Shakespeare's tragedies featuring the female characters in question as textual evidence for phenomenological and material considerations of the ageing pathological body and extend that exploration to encompass a variety of texts. Shakespeare creates the formidable female characters of Gertrude, Tamora, Volumnia, Lady Macbeth, and Cleopatra, and tries them in the tragic arena, an arena where the "death" of the body is the ultimate outcome. The ageing body is the vehicle through which Shakespeare essays sociocultural anxieties about the post-reproductive woman in early modern society-at-large. But because these trials are embodied, phenomenological events, anxiety becomes coterminous and analogous to the state of the ageing womb. In other words, if one traces uterine

change in the older woman as pathology, one arrives at a semiological, ontological, epistemological, and materialist exploration of a state approximating contemporary menopause, or what I define in this study as “proto-menopause.” The pathology *is* the sociocultural fear. To borrow egregiously from Marshall McLuhan, “the medium is the message”¹⁵: the ageing woman’s pathologized body is the sociocultural anxiety. My basic agenda then is to argue that early modern “proto-menopause” is characterized by the following paradigm: it is rooted in humoral theory and is centred upon the uterus as the organ of corporeal and psychic origin; it is characterized by the womb’s mutability within the ageing female body; in the older woman, these changes are consistently coded as pathologies; such pathologies are manifested through a variety of dangerous symptoms affecting the patient herself as well as the greater body politic; thus, the ultimate embodiment of the older woman reflects a generalized cultural suspicion and psychosocial anxiety. As such, proto-menopause informs the literary archetypes of the ageing female by grounding its creative processes in corporeal, sociocultural, and medically discursive modes of knowledge.

SOCIOCULTURAL FEARS OF THE AGEING WOMAN

In 1584, the English Gentleman Reginald Scot (c.1538–1599) wrote the *Discoverie of witchcraft*, a treatise refuting the existence of witchcraft. Reissued in 1651, the *Discoverie*’s “uncompromisingly skeptical” position on the witchcraft debate made it unique in the early modern European canon of the occult.¹⁶ Consider these oft-quoted lines from Scot’s *Discoverie*:

One sort of such as are said to be witches, are women which be commonly old, lame, bleare-eyed, pale, fowle, and full of wrincles...what mischief, mischance, calamity, or slaughter is brought to passe, they are easily perswaded the same is done by themselves; imprinting in their minds an earnest and constant imagination thereof. They are leane and deformed, shewing melancholy in their faces, to the horror of all that see them. They are doting, scolds; mad, devilish...These miserable wretches are so odious unto all their neighbours; and so feared...¹⁷

As a function of his skepticism, Scot acknowledges the familiar cultural trope of the elderly witch, a conception that had already gained considerable purchase in the early modern imagination. Remarkably, Scot is

recognizing the immense cultural weight that burdens an older woman's body, a body that became the locus for misogyny, suspicion, and superstitious hatred. As Naomi Baker has written, the old, ugly woman is "a vulgar, outrageous character in body, word and deed overstepping the boundaries of social and physical decorum." The older woman frequently became the scapegoat for a community's collective dread of the unknown, the different, the marginal, "she embodies a region beyond order, beyond identity...[a] potential point of collapse."¹⁸ The fervency and severity of such sociocultural scorn, according to Scot, caused the accused victim to labour under the self-delusion that she was capable of ridiculous acts of *malefica* such as flying to sabbats or generating tempests. The prevalence of this collective psychosocial delusion was such that it affected multitudes of ageing females across England and Scotland.¹⁹ These collective fears and anxieties were consistently projected onto the older woman's body.²⁰ Within the dominant humoral economy of the early modern period, the accused witch's body betrayed her malevolent identity as she exuded "fowle[ness]" from every pore. With her rheumy "bleare" eyes and her melancholic physiognomy, even though her reproductive organs and fluids may have dried up,²¹ the hag's cold, moist humours still oozed from her orifices, tainting her complexion. The cultural depiction of the ugly, malefic post-reproductive woman is an archetype that William Shakespeare knew well, putting it to good use in plays such as *Macbeth* (1606) and *The Tempest* (1611). But Shakespeare also conceptualized another kind of ageing woman, one who, like the archetypal Hag, similarly disrupted the social stability of the body politic. In Shakespeare's history play *King John* (1594–1596), Constance, an ageing widow and mother to the rightful heir to the throne, is granted a scene of spectacular grief when accosting the two most powerful men in England and France upon learning that her young son Arthur is to be imprisoned. Shakespeare's characterization of Constance is the embodiment of the socially untenable "unruly" woman of the early modern period: unrestrained and immoderate speech, lack of silence or decorum in the presence of men, and the refusal to be shamed as a wife and mother. With her scolding tongue, overflowing body, and her self-referencing to the reproductive body, Constance is the embodiment of "Bedlam" (2.1.87). Hair streaming, wracked with a virulent "madness" (3.3.44), the "unadvisèd scold" (2.1.199) Constance has "come undone," unhinged, broken, insane, a mere "grave unto a soul" (3.3.17). Threatened by an older woman who dares to speak back, the powerful men in the scene have

been forced to acknowledge that the seat of all patrilinear power finds its site of origin within the female body, a body with the potential to disrupt the very patriarchy itself.²² In this way, like Scot’s cultural depiction of the abject body of the old witch, many of Shakespeare’s ageing female characters embody the same social fears about an ageing woman’s agency and power, “unnatural” behaviours, and continued capacity to disrupt the social order from the seat of the “mother’s womb” (2.2.44).

To consider these larger questions of sociocultural anxieties about the older woman, we must bring ourselves back to her body as the material site of contestation, after all, as Jonathan Sawday has pointed out, the project of “embodiment” was a “culturally fashioned object” in the arenas of the artistic, philosophical, and scientific, an endeavour that occupied the European mind for over 150 years.²³ The aetiology of corporeal change and pathology and how it shaped reception of the post-reproductive body found its genesis in the complexity of early modern medicalized thinking—a protean epistemology that encompassed such diverse approaches as occultism, alchemy, iatrochemistry, the use of herbs and “simples,” apotropaic amulets, and religious relics. The written record of psychosomatic symptomology and how it was consciously shaped by male physicians and natural philosophers provides an entry-point into understanding how and why the ageing woman’s *corpus* embodied myriad sociocultural fears and anxieties. If one starts from the position that female humoral ageing was recognized by the symptomology of certain uterine changes, the evidence—gathered from medical treatises, works of natural philosophy, classical mythology, various literary works, and more—incontestably establishes that the older woman’s body was, de facto, pathological in nature, a proposition that informed Shakespeare’s own writing.

In understanding what Michael Stolberg calls “the overarching and shaping influence of culture” in how medical systems function as discrete cultural and historical expressions of humanity, it is possible to approach early modern notions of pathology as not just simple expressions of medicalized thinking, but as important locutions of culture itself:

This is not to deny the reality of pathological phenomena. They are not figments of the imagination. Yet, which phenomena and changes we give attention to, how we interpret them, how we distinguish between different

diseases, how we deal with them – all this is shaped to a high degree by culture with its specific conception of the world and the human being and by the disease concepts derived from it.²⁴

For this reason, it is important to note that although the formulaic pattern of proto-menopause appears to be relentlessly pathological and therefore medicalized by twenty-first-century western standards, I approach symptomology, disease aetiology, and pathology in this study as complex articulations of material culture and phenomenological embodiment. As previously stated, the pathology of the ageing womb as a sociocultural embodiment of anxiety also functions reciprocally to articulate cultural concerns about the older woman through ever-multiplying and escalating disease concepts connected to her body. My aim is to expand upon conversations about how embodied fears of the ageing early modern woman were created, perpetuated, and amplified by sociocultural and literary vehicles; a corollary consideration leads one to question how those *topoi* have shaped our perception of today's menopausal and post-menopausal woman.

As David Hillman and Carla Mazzio argue, the “whole body” remains a “fantasy” in early modern representation inevitably emerging as “a body in parts.”²⁵ Whilst focusing on the uterus as a singular part, I do not divorce it from the total body. One must recognize that any organ functioned as a complex phenomenological expression of the pre-Cartesian mind-body continuum of embodied affect and behaviours, representing a *corpus* capable of transformation, dynamism, and of “unfolding activity.”²⁶ As an extension of such a body, the uterus becomes a repository of complex social, phenomenological, and cognitive forces. Although Shakespeare wouldn't have recognized “menopause” as a holist concept, he does clearly articulate the connection between body and mind and the anxieties that are engendered when the body's psychosomatic equilibrium is disrupted by physical forces arising from within and social forces acting from without. Thus, Shakespeare is contributing to the cultural conversation of the ageing woman's place within society and the cultural imagination from a pre-Cartesian mind-body perspective, a complement to the humoral view of the body as a contained vessel with delineated (albeit permeable) boundaries.

In early modern society-at-large, the older woman's existence was ambiguous, a liminal status that began and ended with her body, relegated to “the ‘marginalia’ of surviving texts on senescence.”²⁷ In her

absence from the historical and medical record, the old woman’s body was not constituted as a *whole*, for to be conceptualized as such would render her a material reality, an integral member of the body politic. Her fragmentation, her disarticulation is the savage, satirical inverse of the beautiful, ephobic body celebrated in poetic blazon.²⁸ In the wake of the post-reproductive woman’s subjective erasure, the anatomical part that remains in the written medical record is her womb, but contrary to being the symbol of youthful, fertile womanhood, the ageing uterus becomes metonymic of a disease-riddled body, mind, and soul.

The fluid taxonomies of being in early modern natural philosophy allow one to consider the female body as existing within a multi-species, multi-dimensional continuum unknown to Linnaean and Cartesian absolutes, partaking equally of the animal, plant, and mineral worlds. Shakespeare draws upon these fluid taxonomies and ontologies with their capacity for transgressing boundaries of the self and other for the generation of complex relational metaphors. Shakespeare’s use of metaphor and metonymy become the literary tools through which he considers the ageing female body with an embodied, material sensibility. The uterus can become a “beast,” but also enters Shakespeare’s literary discourse as a scorpion, an invasive plant, a Basilisk, a dog, a cauldron, and an alembic. In *Richard III* (1593), the ageing Queen Margaret imagines Richard as a “hell hound” birthed from “the kennel of [thy] womb” (4.4.49–50). That Margaret imagines the conception and birth of a monstrous and deformed child in terms of canine procreation speaks not only to the fears surrounding human generation, reproduction, and inheritable traits, but also to the suspicion that the very site of conception might be an inhuman locus of animality and filth at the core of the female body. All uncertainty, misogyny, and fear of the early modern proto-menopausal woman nascently manifests within the womb, and radiating outwards, such material anxiety is absorbed by myriad cultural disciplines including religion and mythology, medical and surgical knowledge, natural philosophy and mechanical theory, alchemy, and the occult. Thus, it is at the juncture of uterine pathology and symptomology and the womb’s literary metaphorization that early modern proto-menopause can be identified and explored.

When the astronomer and physician Simon Forman (1552–1611) wrote that the “womb is a world unto itself,”²⁹ he was speaking not only of how this organ regulated life itself, but also that it dictated the value of a woman within both the mundane and spiritual world. Giving

the uterus' singular importance to all aspects of womanhood, my analysis of proto-menopause as it affects the women of Shakespeare's tragedies is womb-centred or uterocentric: as a metonym for woman herself, the uterus becomes the material and symbolic *locus* of all cultural anxiety surrounding the ageing female of the early modern period. Suspicions of the womb undoubtedly stemmed from classical doctrine where the organ became like an untamed beast roaming the body proper according to its own drives and proclivities. For Plato, the essentially bestial nature of the female womb was first noted in his *Timaeus* where he wrote that the matrix was, “like an animal disobedient to reason, and maddened with the sting of lust, seeks to gain absolute sway.”³⁰ This uterocentric “disobedient to reason” also had implications for the moral and spiritual health of the female: a woman’s weak intellect housed in an inferior body made her naturally susceptible to bestial lusts, an idea developed at length by such physicians as Helkiah Crooke (1576–1635). The documented “unruliness” of the ageing womb and its tendency to “wander” can also be found in Hippocrates’ *Diseases of Women*.³¹ Leaving its appointed anatomical seat to travel the length and breadth of the female body, the womb settled like a nesting viper next to the spleen, liver, heart, or brain. Like a poisonous animal it would “sting” or “bite,” infecting the body: like a beast, though, it could be “frightened” back into its lair before it might deliver its killing stroke.³² The Hippocratic text *De morbis mulierum* (1542) noted that this displacement of the womb occurred more frequently in older women around the cessation of their menses.³³ The implication here is that the more a woman aged, the more uncontrolled and uncontrollable her own body became. Such boundary slippage was indicative of a woman who was no longer capable of exercising self-control or knowing her subservient sociocultural place in the patriarchy. How an older woman’s embodied “identity” might have defined her sense of existence within Shakespeare’s world, as well as how she experienced her ageing body is almost entirely unknowable, but as Séverine Pilloud and Micheline Louis-Courvoisier express it, “to feel” is “to recognize, localize or identify some phenomena in relation to corporal maps established from biological and cultural data.”³⁴ The centrality of the womb to the early modern woman’s existence is to recognize that the organ itself, and by extension, the body, is one such “corporal map” of societal belief and community identity, as well as being a material indicator of psychosomatic health. That maternity, menstruation, and ageing were considered symptomatic of “six hundred diseases”³⁵ means that the early modern

male medical community, at least, had already cast women’s physiology as inherently pathological: in the case of the older woman, this teleology that had far-reaching consequences for the proto-menopausal woman’s reception and value in society.

THEATRICAL AND LITERARY ARCHETYPES OF THE AGEING WOMAN

The ageing woman is very present within early modern drama. She stands as a figure of fun, the “lusty widow” with her tremendous sexual appetite; she is the poverty-ridden hag on the margins of society like the crone Elizabeth Sawyer in *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621); she is the bawd and procuress who must be physically tortured for her role in defiling virgins and aborting babies; a “toad-bellied bitch” to have her nose slit, her eyes put out, and to be burnt to ashes “for example’s sake.”³⁶ At the heart of the Shakespearean embodied female, whether defined through metaphor, mythology, or medical doctrine, resides an anxiety bordering on fear. Although Shakespeare doesn’t employ the actual word “anxiety,” the fact that the term enters the language around 1611, denotes that its affect was widely familiar.³⁷ Because of such anxiety, the cultural and theatrical characterization of the older woman looms large in early modern society, a paradoxical status given that the societal project was to frequently render her presence invisible. As a creative construct, the ageing woman’s character on Shakespeare’s stage would already evoke suppositions about the “real” body behind this theatrical representation. As Amy Kenny notes, “Staging the body exposes it to a type of dissection, even if only rhetorically.”³⁸ Thus, the audience could “dissect” this staged embodiment beyond simple representational and rhetorical models to consider these characters as flesh-and-blood humoral beings acting *within*, as well as acting *upon*, the theatre’s environment, a mediated process resembling the concrete actions undertaken in the anatomical theatre. The fact that the anatomy theatre or “temple” was shaped like the womb emphasizes Jonathan Sawday’s central argument that this era was essentially a “culture of dissection” obsessed with the conjunction of life and death as revealed within the depths of the body’s interior.³⁹ In the humoral economy, this immediacy of the actor-audience interaction would reinforce existing sociocultural beliefs about how the body, even the body-in-representation, could literally influence all those within a shared geohumoral space.⁴⁰ Gail Kern Paster identifies the “ecology” of

such reciprocal sharing of fluid passions between peoples and their environment as evidence of what she calls the “psychophysiology” of early modern mental and emotional operations.⁴¹ Thus, the ageing body as both material and representational thing was an organism that penetrated the macrocosmic world with its continual flow of sympathies, antipathies, influence and confluence, disruption and change. Under the mantle of humoralism, any transgressive actions by female characters on the stage serve to reaffirm the ambiguities of the female body, a “leaky,”⁴² fluid body where the pooling, thickening, cooling, and putrefaction of its composite matter is akin to pollution and defilement.⁴³ Read within a humoral scheme, Shakespeare’s older female characters would not just be seen by an audience, but *experienced*: each sigh, gesture, vocalization taken as a complex semiotic indication of the character’s turbulent physiology as “she” moved from moment to moment in space.⁴⁴ As befits the tragic plot, that journey inexorably leads towards a theatrical and organic psychosomatic “death.”

The focus of this work, however, does not concern itself with theories of theatrical performativity of the character (for instance, the implication of the character being played by a boy actor), but concentrates instead on how *this particular* body evoked by such theatrical representation would be informed by existing sociocultural anxieties and how the audience would see these ambiguities projected back to them. As Maurizio Calbi points out, “the regulatory production of the body entails a series of complex, cultural dynamics...an ongoing cultural process that is fragmentary, contradictory, and contested.”⁴⁵ These complexities and contradictions of the cultural production and creative characterization of these particular female bodies follow a remarkable pattern: Shakespeare creates powerful women who, by early modern standards, are close to, or past their childbearing years, grants them charisma, agency, and a desire for power, and then “silences” them in some capacity. Evelyn Tribble, Laurie Johnson, and John Sutton have recently argued that they wish to consider the early modern theatre “as offering fertile ground for reassessing the mind-body” continuum without the “inherent limitations” of the “subversion-containment” debates in Shakespeare studies.⁴⁶ For Shakespeare, the ageing female *corpus* becomes a text inscribed with fears and anxieties that cannot easily be rationalized through dramatic convention alone: thus, debates about her character’s ultimate dramatic “subversion” or “containment” remain stubbornly ambivalent. This proposition, though, still raises questions: is the older woman written out of the drama

to satisfy a collective atavistic desire to nullify her sociocultural presence? Is her “silencing” at the end of the tragedies under consideration merely the destination of a journey that began with her absence from the written record?⁴⁷ Or is her characterization a part of the creative process where the playwright drew upon his awareness of the place of the ageing woman in his own world? I pose these rhetorical questions merely as a way of drawing attention to the myriad and complex sociocultural forces as mediated through the literary that bring us ultimately to this point of conjecture.

THE PARAMETERS OF THIS STUDY

This study is not a history of menopause.⁴⁸ Due to an inconsistent ontology and morphology during the sixteenth century to mid-seventeenth century, the event of early modern “menopause” is neither quantifiable nor identifiable: instead, one might turn to the literary works of the era to examine how medical and sociocultural traceries inform the characterization process of the ageing, post-reproductive female. My particular iteration of corporeal feminism is to observe Shakespeare’s characterization process as it situates itself at the crossroads between an early modern phenomenology of the ageing female body, and the sociocultural forces that attempt to invest such a historically situated body with an embodied subjectivity. My aim is to add to the conversation about the early modern reproductive and post-reproductive body as a means of understanding the ambiguities and anxieties afforded by the unique historical, sociocultural, and creative construction of the older woman, especially as she appears in Shakespeare’s tragedies. In exploring these intricacies of body, culture, and creative representation, the text itself is placed at the centre. I concentrate primarily on the works of Shakespeare out of a desire to ascertain how the medical knowledge he had at hand, shaped by his sociocultural beliefs about the female condition, informed his creation of such powerful ageing females. We cannot know how much access Shakespeare had to the academic medical writings or lay knowledge of the female condition,⁴⁹ but he does reference Galen and Paracelsus in several of his plays.⁵⁰ Although Shakespeare’s medical knowledge may have been limited, he did have a profound ability to draw upon tropes, mythologies, folktales, religious writings, allegories, historical, and cultural allusions about the older woman in order to fashion his creations. Again, though, I need to stress the limitations of this study.

This book does not proport to be an extensive history of the early modern post-reproductive female. Nor do I want to suggest that “menopause,” in the sense that we understand it today, is clearly and self-consciously identifiable to writers and physicians of Shakespeare’s era.

In a similar vein, this book expends only a small portion of its argument to what would constitute an “ageing”—and therefore, potentially menopausal—woman of an era where high mortality rates, poor nutrition, disease, and constant childbirth would have ravaged and rendered decrepit a woman’s body in ways much more alien and accelerated than today. Shakespeare was well-placed historically to bear witness to an intellectual period where the maternal body and the known nature of its physiological embodiment was being reconsidered in light of new gynaecological discoveries and invasive anatomical procedures, therefore placing it at the nexus of various conceptual “crises.”⁵¹ Although it would not be until the late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century, well after Shakespeare’s death, that the menopause entered the medical writings as the “cessation of flowers,” or the “female climacteric,”⁵² and women themselves started to write of their experiences, it would be difficult to assert that Shakespeare was afforded no insight into the entire reproductive lives of the middle-aged women in his circle. As this book focuses primarily on Shakespeare’s tragic female characters, the chronological period that I am looking at roughly is situated from the sixteenth century and into the early to mid-seventeenth century, in other words, just before and during Shakespeare’s lifetime. I make no apology for focusing on Shakespeare’s works primarily. I am drawn to his female characters in a manner that evades the privileging of *logos* and taps into something far more visceral, a latent marrow-deep desire, a memory of the enormity of emotional impact that my own bodily changes afforded through *menarche*, pregnancy and beyond.⁵³ I return to Shakespeare’s ageing females once more as I find myself on my own menopausal journey: a very “humoral” response, if you like.⁵⁴

Because of textual considerations, I have focused this study solely upon several ageing female characters who appear in Shakespeare’s tragedies and not his comedies, romances, or histories. In writing only of the tragedies, it would be tempting to draw a correlation between tragic *catharsis*—“purging”—and its literal enfleshment in the older woman’s body: the pathologies of the ageing womb stemmed from the organ’s increasing inability to purge blood, pent-up female sperm, and noxious emanations. The Aristotelian tragic model was deemed successful if the

play's resolution could psychically purge the audience's feelings of “fear and pity” generated by the hero's *peripeteia*,⁵⁵ but as Tom McAlindon argues, Shakespeare was more influenced by the Roman tragic models of Seneca rather than that of the Greek playwrights.⁵⁶ But whether the tragic form revolved around the Senecan trope of revenge or the tragic hero's fatal flaw or error, his “vicious mole of nature” (*Ham.*1.4.652), barring Cleopatra and the other females of Shakespeare's “double tragedies,”⁵⁷ the woman's lot was only to throw the male hero's death into relief. Many of the female characters, of course, also meet their deaths.⁵⁸ Gail Kern Paster has argued that tragic protagonists are changed by their “great passions,” but because this change brings about change to others, “The social character of emotion is particularly true for the figures of Shakespearean tragedy.”⁵⁹ Recognizing that the tragic hero (excepting Cleopatra) is inevitably male, Paster's approach of looking at how that male protagonist's humoral passions are so “oceanic” in social scale that they transform the bodies of those in their proximity offers a means to assess the tragic action's effect on its female characters. With the recognition that the Shakespearean tragic hero is unavoidably male, nonetheless, the tragic form's emphasis upon the change (of the humours and passions) of bodies in their progression towards death means that the ageing female characters might additionally be considered under this humoral aegis. I agree with Philippa Berry who has argued that the tragedies combine “an aesthetic entwining of the signs of death with an occluded female matrix,” making the female body “an absent presence” meeting an “indecipherable end...allied with the mysterious flux of nature...”⁶⁰ By arguing that the tragic embrace of *thanatos* is a means to confront the maternal matrix and its mysteries, an analysis of the Shakespearean tragic form makes the most sense. Although older women certainly feature in other Shakespearean genres, I believe that they function differently, in what I call a far more “transactional” manner whereby uterine pathologies, and hence sociocultural concerns about the ageing body, are nullified by a reincorporation into the bodies of younger, virginal “daughters.”

ONTOLOGICAL AND SEMANTIC CHALLENGES TO DEFINING EARLY MODERN “MENOPAUSE”

It seems an obvious statement to make but the female body has not, in and of itself, changed over time. Baring nutritional deficiencies and the ravages of disease and hard physical labour, the basic physiological structure of the woman’s body remains the same. What has changed are the sociocultural perceptions of that body, and consequently how the biological processes are interpreted and treated. Menopause’s effect on the entire somatic, biotic, and psychic systems is profound. The contemporary woman who enters this state does so replete with a catalogue of monumental life changes: loss of sexual allure, the end of reproductive capability, and often with an economic impact upon her domestic existence. Poised between middle and old age, the woman who crosses this physiological and sociocultural threshold is a liminal creature. In our post-Cartesian, post-Freudian world, a woman’s essential self, her fixed identity is, with menopause, rendered entirely suspect. The menopausal body is as foreign and alien to the middle-aged woman as it was during *menarche* and pregnancy but with one notable exception: this transition is neither celebrated nor even widely acknowledged.⁶¹ Within medical, scholarly, and literary realms, menopause has traditionally been neglected.⁶² On an atavistic level, the creature that emerges from the other side of menopause is the stuff of nightmare: the bitch, harpy, diabolical witch, the dreaded hag. But scholars of the early modern body are faced with a challenge in writing about historical menopause: we cannot simply overlay the contemporary term “menopause” onto the early modern female body. But if the physiology of the woman over time does not change, then we can look to the symptomology that menopausal women experience today and work backwards to trace similar symptoms experienced by early modern women as they feature in the early modern record. We might conjecture that the symptoms of intermittent menstrual spotting, hot flashes, aches and pains, heavy bleeding, confusion and anger, and sudden onset depression known to the contemporary menopausal woman must have been experienced to some degree by her early modern ancestor. An example of a common contemporary symptom of menopause is known as the “hot flash,” or “flush,” an uncontrolled sensation of extreme bodily and facial heating, often accompanied by extreme sweating and confusion. Prior to the mid-seventeenth century, there appear to be only two continental physicians who note this sensation in their older female patients.⁶³ So it is not that

the early modern woman did not experience the hot flash, but we can only conclude that the physicians of Shakespeare's era thought it a negligible, inconsequential event, or that it was recognized but might not have been a symptom necessarily connected to the ageing reproductive system. It is important to note that during the time frame that Shakespeare was writing, few extant records can be found where a woman comments upon this period in her reproductive life.⁶⁴ Consequently, we can only explore the early modern male perspective—whether he be physician, anatomist, natural philosopher, or playwright—as a means to identify those incidences of physiological transformation in an ageing body that resemble what we have come today to recognize as the condition of menopause.⁶⁵ As Roy Porter has argued, this lack of first-hand reportage about women and their sense of their own bodies is more often than not, “mediated through maps and expectations derived from the culture at large.”⁶⁶ But in addressing the culture-at-large, one must also recognize that there existed a gap between the scientific tradition of medical treatises with their prognoses and suggested prophylactic regimes, and with the actual treatment of ailments given by local physicians, midwives, mothers, and laypeople.

We must be cognizant of the fact that there can never be a clear ontological, morphological, and aetiological alignment between early modern symptomatology and that experienced by the twenty-first-century woman. Even today, menopause's symptoms differ widely depending on such diverse factors as where the woman lives, her cultural beliefs about ageing, and the type of medical care she receives.⁶⁷ The early modern body with its constituent matter was conceived of quite differently, so even if one attempts to retrospectively apply today's symptomatology to the female of that era, those symptoms may have addressed a very different psychosocial and physiological body.⁶⁸ When a commonality of symptoms does occur in the medical treatises, the patient might have been diagnosed with illnesses that may or may not align with our contemporary understanding of “menopause.” Early modern physicians and natural scientists do describe what we would recognize today as menopausal symptoms: lack of menstrual bleeding (*amenorrhea*), excessive bleeding or “flooding” (*menorrhagia*), melancholia (depression), bodily pain, excessive sweating, and sleep disturbances. However, using symptomatology alone to identify menopause presents its own set of problems as there is not a singular, consistent criteria to indicate this condition, both in the early modern era as well as today. Some symptoms such as loss of breath

and fainting, deriving from early modern diseases such as “suffocation of the womb,” have no contemporary equivalence.⁶⁹ Today, scientists and doctors recognize that over 70% of menopausal women experience menopause-related symptoms,⁷⁰ but they cannot explain why or how these effect certain bodies and not others. These symptoms, to a greater or lesser extent, would have been experienced by the early modern woman but she would have had an entirely different understanding of their aetiology as well as a completely different vocabulary of which to talk about it—if, indeed, she did.

Menopause’s inconsistent and unstable ontology is reflected not just in early modern medical writings and notebooks, but also within its very semiology and semantic construction. It is not possible to seamlessly substitute the word “menopause” for its early modern equivalence. The term “menopause” was a term coined by the French physician C. P. L de Gardanne in 1821,⁷¹ so it would be technically anachronistic to use that term to apply to the female bodies of Shakespeare’s era. Looking for alternative terms becomes difficult. The term “climacteric” does enter the medical treatises, but it is originally connected with the theory of the “seven ages of man” where it was believed that every seventh year (“the climacteric”), the body could be assaulted by forces that could detrimentally affect its health; it was a term that was used to describe *both* male and female bodies. The term “climacteric” to refer to “menopause” in its current iteration isn’t employed during Shakespeare’s time, gaining prominence only later in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁷² The euphemism “the cessation of flowers” or “terms” doesn’t yet consistently enter the common parlance during this time.⁷³ Given that we aren’t provided with a historically accurate term, one that covers the complexity and multiplicity of phenomenological and sociocultural changes undergone by the early modern woman, we must look instead to the female menstrual cycle and the regularly of its rhythms as recorded at that time.

As Sara Read has argued, it was vaginal blood loss in early modern England that was “imbued” with a special kind of meaning, not just related to female physiology, but to important “cultural and social dimensions too.”⁷⁴ Read argues that these changes to the menstrual cycle were of such importance because they marked a change in the way in which a woman “was perceived by those around her.”⁷⁵ Read’s insistence on connecting menstrual flow to sociocultural status is important but it does imply that there was a certain cultural transparency to recognizing these

events, even outside of the signs of obvious pregnancy. This is a problematic proposition given the ambiguity surrounding the female ageing processes (what constituted “old”?), especially the physiological inconsistencies of blood loss associated with the older woman’s cycle. The lack of extant writings by females of Shakespeare’s era also means that we cannot know to what degree interrupted or irregular menstrual flow was met with trepidation, or to what extent these changes were hidden from or shared with spouses, friends, and neighbours. This inconsistency is perhaps why Read is compelled to argue that “Menopause was not a transition in the early modern period because it did not mark a key cultural status change,”⁷⁶ and because women possibly anticipated this event with some “anxiety,” it “indicates a medical and social concern for the perceived physical and perhaps cultural effects of menopause” but that “the reasons for this remain hidden.”⁷⁷ I suggest that the “reasons” may remain “hidden” about these concerns because, in fact, all three—medical, social, and cultural identity—were inextricably bound to perceptions and conceptions of the woman of menopausal age, and, ultimately, these forces were in such flux that any kind of stable or consistent ontology of an older woman’s senescence was impossible to establish. Barring her position on early modern menopause, Read does provide an effective sociomedical means by which to consider the older female’s changing physiology: her insistence upon the primacy of menstruation as to how the early modern woman was conceptualized.

HUMORALISM, NATURAL SCIENCE, AND THE FEMALE BODY

I explore proto-menopause through the interrogation of the early modern boundaries that dictated female social power, agency, and cultural worth. But at the centre of my study is the female body—both reproductively and post-reproductively—ruled by the vicissitudes of humoral theory. Early modern medicine and natural philosophy had their roots entwined in classical thought. Beliefs about conception and birth continued to place Hippocrates (c.460–c.370 BC) and his teachings at their centre, although by now, Aristotle’s model of human reproduction had generally fallen out of favour. Aristotle (384–322 BC) has argued that the male body, which was considered perfect and prototypical, emitted “seed” during the sex act; the female uterus supplied only the “matter” in which the male seed could grow. By contrast, Hippocrates’ “two seed model,” held that both

the male and the female body contained seed and it was through a combination of both qualities of seed that an embryo was formed in the womb, sustained by the nutriment of menstrual blood. The male fetus took up position in the “warmer” right side of the uterus which made it superior, and the female fetus occupied the left side which was the “colder,” inferior position. Aristotle argued that it was the physical quality of “innate heat” that “concocted” the developing embryo to maturity. As a part of this economy, males inhabited bodies that were hotter and drier than that of the female, whose flesh was naturally cooler and moister. All biological life operated on a fluid principle where the temperature, consistency, flows, and fluxes of bodily liquids both influenced, and were influenced by, various atmospheric elements. These fluids suffused the tissues of every living thing including animals and plants. General mental and physical health resulted from the ability to keep these fluids in balance by moderating levels of sleep, exercise, air, thought, evacuation, and diet.⁷⁸ Classical medical treatments were based primarily upon helping patients to adjust any immoderate fluids or “humours” within the body proper: blood, phlegm, yellow bile (“choler”), and black bile (“melancholy”). Treatments to restore the homeostatic body might include taking plant and mineral-based compounds, introducing different “hot” or “cold” foods into one’s diet, fumigating body parts, bloodletting, or purges of various sorts.

In recognizing that the female body was unique because of menstruation, the Hippocrates monitored a woman’s menstrual cycle with particular focus. The quality, quantity, or absence of menstrual blood was key to diagnosing any pathology from infertility to mental illness. The natural processes of menstruation were viewed ambiguously in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For many, menstruation was viewed as a necessary way to either purify the blood of females, or to remove excesses of the humoral blood from the body. Hippocrates had argued that menstruation was essential to ridding female bodies of disease-causing impurities. Hippocrates’ sentiment was clear: “the womb is the origin of all diseases in women.”⁷⁹ But even if there was a medical recognition of the need for menstruation, the process itself was also bound to notions of biological, spiritual, and moral defilement. Both Jean Fernel (1497–1558) and Jean Riolan (d.1606) supported the view that the menses were malignant. The respected midwife Jane Sharp (fl.1650) noted that when “the courses are mingled with ill humours, and degenerate into a venomous nature,

[they] are little better than poison.”⁸⁰ The poet Claude Quillet’s (1602–1661) menstrual conceit imagined that, “... the Blood monthly rushing from the Veins, / The flowing Womb with foul Pollution stains.”⁸¹ The Hippocratics believed that menstrual blood was clean and healthy, only presenting a problem to a woman’s health if it became *plethora*—that is, if it pooled in the body and couldn’t be released. Anthropologist Mary Douglas (1921–2007) described menstrual blood as “matter out of place”—a polluted substance that had escaped its natural boundaries as “marginal stuff.”⁸² It was because of its status as a polluting, impure substance that blood became a symbol for anything immoral or defiled in the early modern period.⁸³ This fear of the contaminating womb as the site of moral and physical degeneration is a trope that echoes throughout this study. Menstrual blood, first milk or *colostrum* (considered a toxin), retained female “sperm,” and superfluous menses were all fluids that defiled both body and macrocosm. The shameful, polluting nature of female leakage is echoed by Hamlet’s horror of the “incestuous sheets” of his mother’s marital bed, a “nasty sty,” soaked in “rank sweat,” and “stewed in corruption” (*Ham.3.4.85–87*).⁸⁴ Albertus Magnus’ (1193–1280) opinion was that the lack of menstruation would engender “many evil humours,” especially in old women as, “these women are more venomous than others.”⁸⁵ Retained humours were believed to generate toxins which could, in turn, cause detrimental “inordinate passions,” such as would afflict the mind. Thomas Wright (1561–1624) argued that melancholic spirit, a key example of an inordinate passion, could overpower the body proper, increasing both desiccation and the failure of natural heat, eventually leading to death.⁸⁶ The drying effects of melancholy, so similar to those of ageing, were exacerbated by spirits that would “ascend into the imagination” generating feelings of “disgrace, fears, affrightments, ill surcease and such like.”⁸⁷ Melancholy was particularly life-threatening in the “clymactericall” years.⁸⁸ Wright asserted that, not only could the passions affect the humoral constitution of an individual body, but that such an afflicted body could also exert material and diabolical influence upon another. Linked to the ageing woman’s ability to “fascinate” others through the emanation of poisonous eye beams, such phantasies “would work upon another body,” sending forth “health or sickness.” Wright singled out old women as being most adept and malign in this ability, particularly witches. The ambiguous cultural and religious nature of menstrual blood continued to be debated way beyond the sixteenth century. Recognizing that menstrual blood and, therefore,

the origins of life were housed in the uterus, it is little wonder that this organ assumed almost mythic proportions. By Shakespeare's era, the womb's importance, and its influence upon a woman's entire reproductive life as well as her general "temperament," had not diminished. Shakespeare's son-in-law, the physician John Hall (1575–1635), would have drawn upon the medical knowledge of many post-Hippocratic natural philosophers, such as the influential Galen of Pergamum (AD 129–c.216) and Soranus (fl. second century AD) for his remedies. Basing his treatments upon classical humoral theory, Hall would be in little doubt about the absolute influence of the womb upon the health of his female patients.

Although this study is placed firmly within the humoral economy, it would be wrong to assume that humours are the whole story: as important as the humoral female body is, it would be an over-simplification to argue that once a woman's humours were either dried, depleted, or thickened into poisonous effluvia, this was the end of her life's journey. Indeed, it is this state of ambiguity that a non-menstruating body occupied, a state where the historical and medical record seems to have been abruptly suspended, that made it just as potent and mysterious as the much-documented youthful female body. Kaara L. Peterson argues that:

It is not overstating it, then, to say that handbooks directed at female subjects indicate substantial interest in describing various pathological conditions and their management; they focus less on what they understand as the essential female humoral condition...Thus, while a belief in woman's flawed humoral system operates indeed as the "given" behind any text's focus on women's pathologies, after writers establish this axiom...their focus lies in noting secondary and tertiary symptoms.⁸⁹

For this reason, Peterson argues that she departs from Gail Kern Paster's emphasis upon caloric deficiencies in the body as the "central concern" in medical texts and argues that it is a "volatile 'fluid economy' of the womb" that focuses medical attention, "the effects of decomposition of noxious fluid admixtures." Peterson does not dismiss the central importance of the humoral economy in diagnosing uterine pathologies, however, noting that "the Galenic pathology models still command citation in sidebar commentaries of the era."⁹⁰ As a means to address the corporeality and health of the female, Peterson's position on the primacy of the pathological over humoral homeostasis is congruent with my own position of the importance of establishing uterine *pathology* as the primary

indicator of the onset of proto-menopause within a humoral constitution. Recently Barbara Duden has written that humorality:

does not primarily refer us to medical theories that were based on a humoral framework but to somatic autoception, to the feel of one's flesh as proportionate liquids, admixture of humours, interior fluid movements, vital fluxes and ominous stagnations.⁹¹

Duden's fears are that if we apply categories such as humoral pathology or humoral theory to the body prior to the eighteenth century, we “inadvertently and retroactively medicalize the past.” Duden's solution to this is that “we begin the analysis by taking the humours seriously as experience, as autoception.” For Duden, “autoception” is analogous to “self-perception,” “intuitive self-reference,” the balance between “ego and the haptic perception of some dis-ease...” It isn't that I necessarily disagree with Duden's assessment as I fully support the argument that humorality was so complex a physiological and psychosomatic experience of embodiment that it cannot merely be reduced to its various medical pathologies, but given the virtual silence of the older woman's personal experience of the proto-menopause, the analysis of experiential autoception is simply not possible for this particular historical period. Uterocentric humoral changes recognized within the ageing woman of the sixteenth to mid-seventeenth century were invariably pathologized, therefore the *experience* of them was moderated by a pre-Cartesian body that could not allow for interiority, for self-awareness in the way in which we recognize such cognitive processes today. In the case of the older woman, humoral mutability could only be mediated and interpreted through sociocultural and sociomedical institutions in which that particular body participated, institutions that insisted upon a flawed, diseased body without hope of remedial cure.

Whilst humoral theory gives us an overriding insight into the female (and male) physiology of the early moderns, it is by no means the sole criteria by which to consider the ageing female body. Lesley Dean-Jones and Patricia Crawford have argued that the lack of written record about the ageing female is perhaps to do with the fact that once a woman's reproductive years were over, she became useless and therefore unremarkable to her society, hence her diminishment in sociocultural and

anatomical speculation.⁹² I argue, however, that this “invisibility” is actually born out of a cultural wish-fulfilment that longed for an ageing woman’s erasure *precisely because* her body was now more unknowable and frightening than ever before. In the wake of a woman’s supposed bodily decline, other philosophies crept in to augment or even supersede the place of humoral theory. Born out of a body that was suspect yet still highly indebted to “Nature,” when these philosophies considered the ageing body, they encompassed the realms of the supernatural and occult, natural philosophy’s treatment of the plant and animal world, Ovidian transformation, as well as classical notions of temporality and moral justice. Fears and anxieties about the proto-menopausal body were diverse and manifold: superstitious beliefs in witchcraft, parthenogenesis or spontaneous generation, unrestrained speech acts, poisonous bodily emanations, suspicions of the older woman’s pleasure in the sex act. The presence of the old woman *disturbs*; unlike her younger counterpart, the older woman’s inferiority, the inner space of her body’s workings, is far more unknowable. Whilst a young woman’s face and physical exterior might be read as a sign of moral virtue or, indeed, moral laxity, the ageing woman’s face and body scopically revealed nothing but decline. Physical decrepitude was often equated with “ugliness”: the Hag is ridiculed as a creature inspiring sexual disgust in others, whilst her own sexual desires are rendered suspect. Fear of the flesh is fear of the ageing female in all her manifestations from Abject Mother to the sexually voracious Widow. Katharine Park has argued that from the middle of the fifteenth century onwards, women’s bodies epistemologically and semantically became identified as “secrets.”⁹³ It was because of the womb’s volatility, the inscrutability of its interior “secrets,” that preserved the organ’s absolute mystery; in the case of the ageing woman such suspicion was reinforced by the literary employment of archetypal personae that marked her body as hideous, shameful, or frightening. The womb exacted an influence like a loadstone—malevolent sympathies and antipathies that could affect everything from the weather to the potency of the male member. The ageing body remained a sexualized body; framed by sexual activity and open to scrutiny by all, it could suggest “inconstancy, unpredictability or promiscuous sexuality.”⁹⁴ There was also the sociocultural fear that such a body could “hide” its hideousness as a means to seduce men into unbridled sex acts, “The horror generated by the desiring older woman’s body is partly the fear of her uncomfortable proximity to the self, the potential

desire rather than the revulsion she might provoke.”⁹⁵ Hamlet’s revulsion of Gertrude’s sexualized body might have become more extreme if he knew that the medical prescription for ageing widows was vigorous sex.⁹⁶ Lack of the moistening effect of male semen from regular sexual intercourse forced the proto-menopausal womb to wander more often.⁹⁷ Like an animal, the womb craved regular deposits of semen as if it was “food,” a sweet treat to subdue its movements. This uterine quest for male seed, whether or not the owner had the benefit of regular sex—the “marriage comfort”—would give rise to misogynistic sexual fantasies of diabolical possession.⁹⁸ It is in this fantasy that the alliance between a woman’s two “mouths” emerges. The metonymization of the womb as another “hungry” and garrulous “mouth” requiring constant surveillance and restraint⁹⁹ inspired a particular cultural anxiety by connecting the proto-menopausal woman to the diabolical. The real terror, though, lay in the fact that the ageing womb could still conceive, generate, and birth both the miraculous and the monstrous.

DEFINING THE FEMALE AGEING PROCESS

One practical way to identify proto-menopause’s physiological and psychosocial influence in the major tragedies under consideration, is to explore the corollary state of “ageing” or “old age” as it was then defined. This is not an exact lining-up of ontologies or material phenomenologies, however, for the woman of this era was in possession of a body inconceivable to contemporary medical understandings. Not only was the early modern body ruled by humoral fluctuations of fluids in various stages of heating and cooling, thinning and thickening, but it was also part of a biological and spiritual continuum that included the animal and the vegetal. It is difficult to pinpoint when and how the early modern body ceased to be considered a menstrual, sexual, and reproductive body and then transitioned into “old age” proper—a life stage in humoral theory that was marked by the extreme drying, thickening, and cooling of humours.¹⁰⁰ Even as it was understood by theorists such as Bernard de Gordon (1270–1330) and Vesalius (1514–1564), ageing in the Galenic tradition of humours was marked by a decline of “innate heat” and drying out of “radical moisture.”¹⁰¹ Such desiccation, together with a thickening and slight warming of the body, led Jacob Ruëff (1505–1558) to conclude that an old woman’s body became that of an old man’s.¹⁰² Ambroise Paré (1510–1590) similarly

argued that ageing caused “women to degenerate into men,”¹⁰³ and Agrippa von Nettersheim (c.1486–1535) recorded Pliny’s examples of middle-aged women transforming into men.¹⁰⁴ Such varied humoral phenomena, well-recognized by the Hippocratics, Galen, and Paracelsus (1493–1541), helped generate myriad archetypes about the ageing female body. The volatility of the humoral body is reflected in the semiology, symptomatology, mythology, and fearful pathology of the old woman.

The life cycle of both men and women was conceptualized as an individual having reached certain “stages” or “ages”; its dynamic state not always conforming to linear, chronological, or “calendar” time.¹⁰⁵ If, as Helkiah Crooke (1576–1635) argued, the reproductive years of a female were regulated and charted according to temporal units of seven years, by the time a woman had attained “seventh seven, that is at 49,” all biological and physiological time entered into a liminal stasis until death. Levinus Lemnius (1505–1568) argued that this suspended stage transpired at “sixty three, or sixty five yeeres of age”:

For then Age hasteneth on apace, and draweth toward his long home, and then beginneth the body to be cold and dry, being the first enterance and step into Old Age.¹⁰⁶

The “ages of man” were not measured according to the passing of years, nor was there an absolute correlation between biological senescence and the calendar. Shakespeare rarely identifies the age of his characters, but like Jaques, marks life’s transition from the “mewling and puking” infant, through to the body’s oblivion “sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything” (*AYL* 2.7.138–165). Some chronological identification of the age of Shakespeare’s characters is possible but it involves limited speculation. In *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), Lady Capulet asserts she became Juliet’s mother “much upon these years / That you are now a maid” (1.3.74–75). Since we are told that it is a “fortnight or odd” until Juliet’s fourteenth birthday, that would make Lady Capulet between twenty-six and twenty-eight years of age. History records that in Shakespeare’s era, the mean age of women marrying for the first time was twenty-five or twenty-six years of age.¹⁰⁷ In Stratford between the years 1570 and 1630, the greatest number of marriages took place for men at age twenty-four.¹⁰⁸ The minimum legal age at which women could marry was twelve.¹⁰⁹ Many brides approached the altar already pregnant: some twenty to thirty per cent of them bore their first child within the first eight

months of marriage.¹¹⁰ We know from the Gravedigger’s account that he came to his profession on the day that Hamlet was born (5.1.140) thirty years previously (5.1.152–30). This would seem to indicate that Hamlet is thirty years old during the play’s action. If the Player King’s marriage of thirty years (3.2.145) is commensurate with that of Gertrude’s first union, and Hamlet was Gertrude’s first child, her age could be anything from forty-two to fifty-six. But such clues in the tragedies remain negligible. Given that life expectancy was much lower on average during this period, this creates even more of a relative problem in defining “young” versus “old.” Edward Bever suggests that old age for women during this period of history began at forty.¹¹¹ Antonia Fraser points out that although there were certainly old people during this period, it would be the dearth of middle-aged people that would shock us today.¹¹² Lynn Botelho has suggested that menopausal symptoms would have been visible in women, who, after a lifetime of heavy labour and poor diet, would manifest decreased bone density, excess facial hair, and tooth loss.¹¹³ These bodily experiences of ageing, argues Laura Gowing, would have been contingent upon the social and economic conditions that accompanied old age.¹¹⁴

Not only was biological “age” an inconsistent early modern marker of senescence, but one would be unable to find a homologous ontological understanding of what it means to be “old” today. Many chronological, biological, environmental, and psychosocial models of health and longevity are married to our contemporary understanding of the female lifecycle.¹¹⁵ The assumption is that the post-menopausal body is an ageing one but the ambiguity as to whether menopause heralds the onset of old age continues, a fact reflected by the lack of clear terminology and ongoing debates in medical and social spheres about how to label a stage that lasts ten to fifteen per cent of a woman’s lifespan.¹¹⁶ Described by Wulf Utian as a veritable “Tower of Babel,” since the first International Menopause Conference in France in 1976, the research community has struggled to find a universality in terminology so that clinicians might be able “to speak the same language” when conducting medical care.¹¹⁷ In terms of diagnosis, it has been decided that the age at which a woman enters menopause is not a singular defining factor, only a tangential acknowledgement of an age range for those undergoing the process. It is now agreed upon that the term “menopause” is identified primarily by its symptomology, to the “permanent cessation of menstruation resulting from loss of ovarian follicular activity...following 12 months

of amenorrhea,”¹¹⁸ and that the term “perimenopause,” “describe(s) the transitional period from reproductive to post-reproductive life... as well as the first year following menopause.”¹¹⁹ In an interesting Shakespearean parallel, the Stages of Reproductive Aging Conference in Utah in 2001 concluded that there are five stages prior to a woman’s FMP (Final Menstrual Period) and two stages after that.¹²⁰ In order to avoid confusion in my study, I conflate the terms “ageing,” “elderly,” and “old” as being a condition of early modern proto-menopause—given the understanding that the consistency of chronological and biological age as an indicating factor is problematic. In the sixteenth to mid-seventeenth century, *amenorrhea* was not always connected to the ageing of the biological body, in other words, a physician would not automatically assume that a woman’s periods had ended because of her chronological age. That is why this study does not rely on the definition or identification of proto-menopause in Shakespeare’s characters as contingent solely upon speculation regarding their supposed age.

DEFINING THE PROTO-MENOPAUSE “EVENT”

Even though the contemporary medical definition of “menopause” appears straightforward, there is a multifaceted complexity to the event that encompasses far more than simple *amenorrhea* for a prescribed period of time. Women that have experienced menopause have noted its totalizing effects on the body, mind, and psyche, a complex physiological series of changes that modern medicine still cannot fully explain. Although scientific invention and innovation may have provided a new medical lexicon where we have swapped “humours” for “hormones,” we cannot claim that the ageing process for early modern woman was any less complex, but our understandings of it are limited because of the lack of a shared language of phenomenological affect. Before the mid-seventeenth century, we are also lacking first-hand accounts from women themselves.¹²¹ So how do we talk about early modern “menopause” in scholarship? Recognizing that there cannot be a simple mapping of contemporary understandings of menopause’s psychosomatic and physiological influence onto the early modern body, nonetheless, it is necessary to conceptualize a radical event that would approximate such a comprehensive biological and psychosocial transformation as today’s “menopause.” This is an ontological as well as semantic enterprise: early

modern expressions for what came to be known as “menopause” cannot simply be substituted for an approximation of their contemporary terms.

Many scholars of the early modern body continue to employ such terms as “menopause,” “the cessation of flowers,” “the climacteric,” or simply “amenorrhea” when writing of this event even though, technically at least, if they are referring to the female body before and during Shakespeare’s lifetime, these terms are anachronisms.¹²² I agree with Sara Read and Joel Wilbush, however, who point out that any number of these terms might be a-historical and, therefore, ontologically, and epistemologically inaccurate depending on the specifics of the historical time span they are said to refer to.¹²³ Michael Stolberg correctly points out that the term “climacteric” was not used in the modern sense until 1792 by Alexander Hamilton.¹²⁴ Joel Wilbush employs the term “climacteric” to refer to the social, cultural, emotional, and hormonal affects on a woman’s body as opposed to the term “biological menopause,” as “an isolated state” for a woman undergoing endocrinial changes.¹²⁵ Sara Read notes that “menopause” wasn’t seen in print until the late nineteenth century but that scholars of history need to guard against the fact that they often employ the term “climacteric” as a synonym for “menopause.” Read suggests that this mistake has arisen because, according to the “seven ages of man theory,” menopause would have transpired during the female climacteric at the age of 49, or, according to Jane Sharp, 63. Read advises scholars to check that if the term “climacteric” is used in a historical record that they subsequently must verify if it applies to a woman (as opposed to a man), and consequently, check that “even if the subject is a female in her climacteric age, that the topic is menopause, and not another climacteric event.”¹²⁶ Presumably, Read must mean if the research topic is menopause in the historical record after 1872 when it first appeared in English. Recently, Sarah Toulalan has explored the centrality of fertility to early modern bodies and sex, arguing that if the age of the woman was too young or too old, “neither was regarded as fit for the act of sex and its outcome.”¹²⁷ Toulalan uses the term “menopause” freely to refer to older bodies before the seventeenth century at a time when, barring a few continental physicians who connected age with conception and menstrual *amenorrhea*,¹²⁸ “menopause” wasn’t recognized as a holistic syndrome that could connect aetiological notions of conception, fertility, and the age of the patient. Clearly, then, if one wants to explore female “menopause” before the mid-seventeenth century, the use of both terms “climacteric” and “menopause” is historically problematic. I don’t mean

to find fault with Toulalan's excellent scholarship but merely intend to use her writing as an example of semantic and ontological difficulties when writing of the “menopause” in historical contexts prior to the general acceptance of the term and the syndrome itself.

Maria Margaroni writes of the potential for historically informed mapping of feminist ontologies, semiologies, and epistemologies upon the body to generate “new or newly invested corporeal vocabularies” as these may “open up fresh perspectives on twenty-first century enfleshed existence.”¹²⁹ We need a new language to talk about this menopausal event; one that is historically accurate given the limitations of the medio-historical record. The semantic and semiological challenges of such a neologistic construct of a “new corporeal vocabulary” would recognize the period-specific exclusion of women’s voices and the differing early modern ontologies of “ageing,” “selfhood,” and “disease.” But we also need an inclusive language that recognizes the embodied complexities of the early modern body, one which partook of the vegetable and animal worlds, where humoral flesh was shaped by environment and functioned as an extension of the body politic. We need to fashion a novel term, one that can be used to talk about the early modern “menopause” as both a sociocultural event, and as a medical, humoral condition connected to uterocentric change and transformation. Such a term would recognize this transformation as propulsive, dynamic, continually in flux, and, hence mysterious. In short, a conceptual term is needed to talk about this “event,” or “eventing,” given that this unbounded process has no discernable beginning or end. I use the word “event” recognizing, as Emanuela Bianchi has argued, that feminist “new materialisms” are needed to recast “matter” from being “passive, feminine, and objectal,” to recognizing and encompassing more active principles of “motion, force, activity...intensity, animacy, and agency.”¹³⁰ And although the criterion of this early modern event may differ in some regards to its present morphological, medical, physiological, and sociocultural incarnation—the menopause—it should be a term that acknowledges the shared complexity of representation. Consequently, in considering the early modern older female body in all its medical, literary, sociocultural, material, phenomenological, and historical complexity and ambiguity, I propose to employ the term “proto-menopause.” Subsequently the term “menopause” and all its variations will only be used when referring to the contemporary event, or when quoting those scholars who employ such terminology.

THE PROTO-MENOPAUSAL PARADIGM

I approach the proto-menopause from the perspective of early modern physiology and not from our contemporary understandings of the body. Therefore, rather than conflating evidence of *amenorrhea* in the early modern female as evidential proof that her body could similarly be mapped onto that of her contemporary, thus arguing that “menopause” did exist as a phenomenological equivalent, I instead assess any condition linked to *uterine change* in an older woman as being key factor in identifying the aetiology of proto-menopause. Janet Adelman argues that Shakespeare’s characters struggle to break free from the maternal matrix, the “suffocating” site of psychic origins, the womb that is the “embodiment of hell and death.”¹³¹ In concurring with Adelman that the womb in Shakespeare is a physiological site that characters seek to be “enfranchised” from (TA.4.2.124–125), Shakespeare’s proto-menopausal characters become creative catalysts to think through the myriad ontologies that might constitute that maternal matrix. With its quasi-occult status, the ageing womb and its attendant pathologies had a transactional influence upon the macrocosm itself and every being—animate, inanimate, or supernatural—within it.¹³² Because of their corporeal source within the ageing body, these universal pathological influences can be said to generate myriad social and cultural anxieties about the nature and place of the older woman in early modern society. Thus, there is a sequence, a pattern to the proto-menopausal event that makes it identifiable and unique in the works of Shakespeare. The event of “proto-menopause,” then, consists of the following paradigm informed by the following understandings: the early modern female ageing process is not triggered by such singular factors as biological age, cessation of menses, or the end of reproductive capacity, although these factors may be present; the process is initiated through changes within the womb’s microclimate; these uterine changes are diagnosed primarily through medical symptomatology; in the ageing woman, unlike necessarily the younger woman, these symptoms invariably acknowledge a womb that is pathological in nature; some of these pathologies are treatable, but because the uterus was a crucial organ that regulated entire humoral systems of fluids, passions and spirits, the complexity of psychosomatic function sometimes meant that certain pathologies might be lethal to the entire *corpus*; such pathologies had the capacity to “infect” any living creature as well as instigate adverse environmental change. Shakespeare’s theatre becomes one of the arenas in which

these sociocultural fears about the infectious and malignant older woman are explored. Because his ageing female characters ultimately have their (limited) agency “silenced” through death or some other theatrical means precluding communal reintegration or liberation, these characters, whilst they can be said to artistically explore the condition of ageing womanhood, ultimately reinscribe and are reinscribed by these sociocultural anxieties. For example, to avoid the uterine pathology of “strangulation of the womb,” Gertrude must keep her womb moist through regular sexual intercourse. The sexually incontinent older woman, however, reinforces the social suspicion of the “lusty widow” who would seduce any man—particularly young men—to fulfil her sexual desires. In the humoral economy, a proto-menopausal woman’s lack of intercourse would physiologically result in an even greater danger to those around her: trapped menses would cause her body to emanate poisonous vapours, particularly from the eyes. This taps into cultural fears of the older woman whose body is so monstrous that it becomes the incarnation of the Basilisk and Gorgon. Each embodied uterine change, expressed as a pathology particular to the ageing woman, represents a particular sociocultural anxiety. In the chapters that follow, some of these inherent sociocultural fears, materially embodied as uterine pathologies include: the still-sexually desirous body; the invasiveness of racially encoded offspring; doubts about the male contribution to conception and patrilineal legitimacy; the demonic trade in body fluids as “fungible commodities”¹³³; extreme, uncontrollable passions; the thirst for political power; the rejection of motherly “instinct” and nurture; monstrous conceptions; gendered power dynamics; parthenogenesis and hybridization of offspring; and mechanical intervention and innovation.

THE AGEING WOMAN AND SOCIOCULTURAL ANXIETIES

The menopausal woman’s liminality begins and ends with her body. The physiological, social, and cultural abjection of the ageing female body needs to be explored within a historical context if we are to understand its ambiguity, complexity, and invisibility. Given all the sociocultural anxiety that the ageing woman generated, it is surprising to find that the historical record about her life experience remains scant.¹³⁴ The old woman exists in a liminal space within academic study; her experiences and status remain relatively unexplored,¹³⁵ a cultural anomaly given that

the so-called “unruly woman” was a “preoccupation” within Renaissance culture.¹³⁶ Such women actively disrupted the social boundaries and hierarchies of patriarchal power, forcing the “negotiation and cultural meaning of femininity.”¹³⁷ Many social historians’ studies continue to neglect an analysis of menopause arguing that the dearth of historical commentary about this life stage from both women and men must have arisen either from feminine shame, or from the woman’s social irrelevance once deemed incapable of childbearing.¹³⁸ Sara Mendleson and Patricia Crawford’s argument proposes that the deficit of research into menopause stems historically from women’s own silence on this matter; they conjecture that this must have meant that women “were not interested in the menopause” or that its arrival could also have signalled “a taboo or trauma.”¹³⁹ Similarly, Sara Read in her historical study of menstruation in early modern England (2013), argues that the lack of women’s commentary in extant letters, journals, and other writings “suggest that on the whole women were as silent on the effects and implications of menopause as they were about menstruation.”¹⁴⁰ Certainly, whilst there is a deficit of women’s own documented response to this particular stage of ageing, I have found no evidence that this might have been due to a lack of interest, a sudden psychic trauma, or sociocultural prohibition—indeed, given the many concerns surrounding the ageing English female that percolate throughout both literary and medical writings of the time, the findings of this book argue to the contrary. I do concur, however, that many upper-class, literate English women left behind extremely limited evidence about their experience of menopause: many of these women who did record changes to their reproductive life lived in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, far removed from Shakespeare’s actual lifetime, and therefore beyond this study’s scope.¹⁴¹

The lack of menstruation, *per se*, was not the sole marker of what we today would recognize as indicating menopause: older women of the early modern era were still believed capable of menstruation, conception, and lactation. Thus, the absence of menstrual bleeding (*amenorrhea*) was not the decisive indicator of either pregnancy or menopause. In fact, many medical treatments for women who suffered *hypomenorrhea* (scant periods) or *amenorrhea* since classical times well into the early modern era, were based upon the use of the emmenagogue—treatments to kick-start the menstrual cycle.¹⁴² The exact point at which a woman was considered too old to preclude the possibility of medically “re-starting” menstruation is unknown. It is difficult to pinpoint, therefore, how the

proto-menopausal body ceased to be considered a menstrual, sexual, and reproductive body as it journeyed into old age. In the physician Simon Forman's (1552–1611) papers, we can trace many women of proto-menopausal age to whom he prescribes emmenagogues to reestablish bleeding: nowhere does Forman indicate that this absence of periods can be attributed to the woman's age. Forman's medical casebooks offer a fascinating insight into the menstrual problems afflicting his middle-aged patients. Fifty-year-old Margaret Missenten was therapeutically bled by Forman to restart her periods, a procedure that Forman deemed successful because her “flow lasted six weeks.” Similarly, the Countess of Bedford, who would have been well within contemporary perimenopausal age, sent to Forman “for her former powder and stiffe for a drinke to drawe down the Courses.” One can also trace those patients of contemporary menopausal age, such as 46-year-old Goody Blea, “Old Mrs Cayno” (age not given), 55-year-old Mary Watson, and 52-year-old Ellen Barber, whose “abundance of courses”—that is, uncontrollable, heavy menstrual bleeding—is indicative of the common perimenopausal condition *adenomyosis*. Forty-eight-year-old Constance Smith’s heavy flow was also accompanied by “a burning heate,” perhaps an indication that she was also enduring “hot flashes” or “flushes.” There are several women who visited Forman to consult him as to why their “courses had stopped.” Such was the case with 50-year-old Elizabeth Kilpine and 48-year-old Elis Knight.¹⁴³ Presumably, given the lack of knowledge that the cessation of menstruation in a woman over forty was likely indicative of menopause, these women consulted Forman either to ascertain what might be wrong with their reproductive systems upon failure of regular bleeding, or to be given an emmenagogue to reinstate menstruation.

From the intimate but limited records of pathologies affecting women of menopausal age in physician’s casebooks, we might turn to the public scrutiny levelled at two of England’s ageing queens to gauge the historical and sociocultural record regarding the implications of menopausal women of power. Because missed menstrual periods were not necessarily deemed to be an indication of pregnancy, nor were the signs of a “great belly,”¹⁴⁴ the actual determination of whether a woman was pregnant or not was extremely fraught. Most often the physician relied upon the woman herself to confirm pregnancy once she had registered fetal movement or “quicken.” So when in September of 1554 the newly married thirty-seven-year-old Mary Tudor (1516–1558) announced that she knew herself to be with child, no one was to doubt her claim. The date for

her unborn child's birth was given out by doctors to be in early May 1555, but by the following July, there was no baby. Mary insisted that she was still pregnant, claiming that she felt her child move in the womb.¹⁴⁵ Mary Tudor's womb and its ability to bear a healthy male child would dictate the political and religious future of England, so Mary's ageing body was intensely scrutinized; political and cultural decorum, however, meant that no one would dare challenge her claims to pregnancy. Doubts about the veracity of Mary's pregnancy were privately raised by Simon Renard who wrote to Charles V in July 1555 saying that although Mary publicly insisted she was pregnant, “it is doubted whether she is really with child.”¹⁴⁶ Bizarrely, at the end of April, a Spanish advisor recorded that news of the successful birth of a male child had somehow reached the collective ears of the “people of London” who “held great rejoicings, with bonfires, true evidence of joy.”¹⁴⁷ By August of 1555, all hopes of a royal pregnancy had ended, so when Mary announced she was pregnant for a second time in 1557, few were quick to believe her. By 1558 Mary was dead, many claiming that she had died of a “tympany” or uterine tumour, or of a “false conception.”¹⁴⁸ So might a uterine tumour have accounted for Mary's phantom pregnancies? The extreme psychological pressure that Mary must have been under to produce an heir might have accounted for her phantom pregnancies; the other explanation might reference the physical pathology of “false conceptions” or “moles” that particularly afflicted older women.¹⁴⁹ “Moles,” sometimes also known as “Molas” or “Moone-calfes,” were an “unprofitable mass, without shape of from, hard and firm, bred within the matrice.”¹⁵⁰ Shakespeare's Caliban from *The Tempest* (1611) is frequently alluded to as a “moon calf,” a “hag-born” monster birthed seemingly parthenogenically from the “hag seed” of the “damned witch” Scorax.¹⁵¹ Whilst it is true that Mary's abdomen swelled and her breasts even produced some milk during both of her phantom pregnancies, those signs alone would not necessarily have been enough to convince her doctors that she was pregnant as she believed herself to be. Whilst physician Pierre Dionis (1643–1718) argued that the surest sign of a “true conception” was a swelling abdomen, he also acknowledged that a woman might become “big” in the belly and if she were suffering from a “false conception.”¹⁵² Many might have believed that at thirty-seven, Mary's age might have inclined her to a swollen belly caused, not by pregnancy, but by a molar conception. A contemporary medical prognosis of Mary's condition might reveal the onset of

uterine cancer or the growth of ovarian cysts, pathologies common to the middle-aged woman.¹⁵³

The level of reproductive scrutiny that her half-sister had to endure was similarly, if not more fervently, applied to Elizabeth Tudor's (1533–1603) body. As soon as the young princess became queen in 1559, Elizabeth was expected to perform the mental gymnastics required of any newly anointed monarch in acknowledging that her body now ceased to be her own and had essentially been divided in two: the fleshly female who was subject to “a thousand natural shocks” (*Ham.3.1.64*), as well as the quasi-divine embodiment of the body politic. As a shrewd orator, Elizabeth later apologized for her “weak and feeble” woman’s body, assuring her countrymen that her humoral seats of passion and courage—the heart and stomach—were generated from a long line of royal males.¹⁵⁴ Although such speeches may have gone far in reassuring her subjects that she was fit enough for the demands of rulership, it also meant that Elizabeth’s body—primarily her uterus—was the focus of intense public and private observation. The stability of the realm relied upon Elizabeth’s ability to produce an heir to safeguard the English throne from the potential of future Catholic rule. To this end, Elizabeth’s monthly periods were carefully monitored and recorded. She was reputed to have a thin, “cold and waterish” humour during her menstrual cycle which would often lead to pain or *dysmenorrhea*.¹⁵⁵ To regulate her bleeding, she was frequently bled from the ankles and arm. Elizabeth’s “clouts” or cloth pads that she wore when menstruating, were counted and collected by her Ladies, and their contents reported to her physician as well as to Robert Cecil, Lord Burghley (1563–1612). During possible marriage negotiations to François, the Duke of Alençon (1554–1584), Cecil assured the French that Elizabeth was very apt “save for the numbering of her years” for “the procreations of children.”¹⁵⁶ Therefore, in 1579 when diplomatic negotiations were tentatively being brokered to marry a 45-year-old Elizabeth to the 23-year-old Duke, her ageing body’s potential for pregnancy was of paramount importance to all involved. The fortunes of an entire nation found their anxieties concentrated on the “Virgin Queen’s” womb. Her anatomical “secrets,” however, remained inviolable: Elizabeth’s cervix was purportedly blocked by a “certain membrane” that grew across it, presumably barring penile penetration. Ben Jonson (1572–1637) wrote that a French surgeon was employed to remove the membrane but, at the last moment, the queen changed her mind when “fear stayed her.”¹⁵⁷ Motivated by his anti-Catholic fear of seeing a French king, the lawyer

John Stubbs (c.1541–1590) wrote, “how exceedingly dangerous...for her majesty at these years to have her first child, yea, how fearful the expectation of death is to mother and child.” Stubbs’ pamphlet *The Discoverie of a Gaping Gulf* (1579) argued that the ageing Elizabeth was putting her own lustful desire before her duty to “protect the welfare of her body politic or commonweal body, which is her body of majesty.” Elizabeth ordered all copies of this seditious tract to be gathered and burned. Stubbs, however, publicly persisted with his argument that for an old woman to marry such a young man would be “quite contrary to his young appetites,” a backhanded way of implying that it was really Elizabeth’s sexual desires, like that of *Hamlet*’s Gertrude, that were abhorrent and, at her age, “should be tame” (*Ham.3.4.68*). Stubbs was arrested and charged with seditious libel, the price of which was the public amputation of his right hand. Elizabeth’s body remained the absolute and unquestioned seat of political power, a fact that she liked to exploit well into her later years. When she was sixty-four and visited by a French ambassador, Elizabeth teasingly appeared in a sheer chemise that she consciously fingered open to display her naked belly,¹⁵⁸ a willful act of self-emblemizing in front of the nation that had once sought to possess her womb and its offspring through an Anglo-French marriage.

As she lay upon her deathbed in the year 1603 still wearing the cosmetic concoction of lead and crushed beetle she daily smeared across her elderly features, Elizabeth demanded that Lady Elizabeth Southwell provide her with a “true” mirror and not her regular mirror, a tinted looking glass that was specifically manufactured to blur wrinkles, smallpox scars, sprouting facial hairs, and rotting nubs of teeth.¹⁵⁹ As the weakening queen looked and saw the naked truth of her face stripped of the artifice of illusionary filters, she was so shocked that she condemned all her ministers as duplicitous flatterers and banned them from her bedside. It was at this moment that Elizabeth’s lifelong psychological ability to conceptualize her body as being both that of the anointed *corpus* of the body politic as well as that of a woman with the “heart and stomach of a king” disintegrated. The mirror revealed what she truly was: an old woman, childless and husbandless, dying alone. The drive to sustain the public myth of the inviolability and, perhaps, virginity, of her body was to be maintained even after Elizabeth’s demise: one of her final edicts decreed that her corpse should remain intact and was not to be eviscerated to allow for burial preparations. The forty-five-year project of creating and

policing the iconic image of the quasi-divine Diana, Gloriana the Virgin Queen, was over, finally defeated by the decline and failure of mortal flesh.

SILENCING THE HAG

Older women have always been “silenced,” and in the Shakespearean tragedies, challenging patriarchal boundaries is always problematic for the ageing woman who seizes political and social power. As the Queen of the Goths, Tamora’s governance in *Titus Andronicus* (1594) is quickly overwhelmed by a passionate desire for revenge, culminating in cannibalization of her own children; similarly, Volumnia’s prized oratorical skills and political acumen may be celebrated for saving Rome from destruction in *Coriolanus* (1609), but it comes at the price of her son’s brutal death. Lady Macbeth’s ambitious thirst for power in *Macbeth* (1606) is no less than that of her “partner of greatness” (1.5.10), but it plunges her into a world of insanity, diabolical malevolence, and suicide. The literary traceries of such anxieties regarding female power were reflective of similar concerns of the early moderns. Little has changed. The position of women today in political, spiritual, and economic leadership remains problematic: less than 26.7% of women are board members of FTSE 350 company boards,¹⁶⁰ and globally women still earn considerably less than their male peers.¹⁶¹ As the so-called “sandwich generation,” women of menopausal age still assume the bulk of child-rearing responsibilities, housekeeping duties, and care for elderly parents, all whilst keeping a fulltime job.¹⁶² As with Lady Macbeth’s and Lady Constance’s “melancholia,” depression in women rises steeply over the age of forty-five.¹⁶³

The proto-menopausal woman of the early modern period was sexually volatile, dangerous, verbally and physically unbound, an abject monster, but Shakespeare’s ageing women embody a wonderful irony: their potent grandiosity and fearful presence generate a psychic space where the ageing body at once looms with nightmarish potency, even as it moves towards total annihilation. That same psychic dissonance resonates today. Writer Mariana Benjamin describes her liminal personal experience of menopause as being:

How you perceive things and intuit connections when you are in the middle of casting aside old ways of being in the world...but are still desperately unsure of what you are groping towards.¹⁶⁴

As Jane Ussher argues, menopause positions a woman’s subjectivity between perceptions of biological change and various discursive constructions such as “social, political and cultural practices and traditions.”¹⁶⁵ But those various social and historical constructions remain opaque: perceptions of subjectivity are hard to gauge about a historical era that silenced women’s voices regarding their own ageing bodies. Today, some menopausal women speak of the liberation and power that comes with choosing to cast off the societal and cultural pressures to look beautiful and the demands associated with childbearing and rearing.¹⁶⁶ Many speak of finally finding their “voices” in society.¹⁶⁷ The social and political “silencing” of women finds its origins in both classical and Renaissance tropes of the “unruly woman” whose outspoken loquacity turned her into a scold at best, and, at worse, a harridan facing witchcraft accusations. Contemporary biocultural studies argue that menopausal women experience more debilitating symptoms of menopause if they are denied the validity and value of their collective voices, especially within cultures that are youth-oriented.¹⁶⁸ If women are “urged to take control” of their ageing process, and “become active participants in addressing the challenges of symptoms,” then this remedial self-assertion might stymy the onset of depression, a condition that substantially increases during the menopausal transition.¹⁶⁹

The ageing female of the Shakespearean tragedy becomes “invisible” through a creative impetus that will eventually see her written out of the story, perhaps echoing a larger collective psychosocial desire to expulse the ageing woman from the community. In the cultural story of the early modern era, the drive to deny, ignore, or shun the ageing woman’s presence appeared to heighten anxieties, ones that inevitably metamorphosed into the superstitious, the bizarre, the grotesque. As Edward Bever has noted, the vast majority of those accused of being witches in England were of menopausal age.¹⁷⁰ These discursive and disruptive reverberations ensured that much of the early modern social project sought to render the older woman silent and invisible, but her continued status as Crone, Witch, Hag, Widow, or Gossip, indicated a tenacious and persistent presence within the community. Shakespeare is well-aware of this dissonance: his writing is such that he creatively experiments with the various seen and unseen sociocultural influences of the embodied proto-menopausal woman only to find that her complexities are too difficult to resolve. The weight of cultural and social anxiety is simply too heavy to allow him to grant total agency to his middle-aged female

characters. The proto-menopausal woman of the early modern period lost her value as a commodity once she couldn't bear children: in the early twenty-first century, the menopausal woman is rendered invisible once she loses her sexual attractiveness to males (and females) in the greater society. As Lynne Segal opines, "we are all too aware of our growing erotic invisibility."¹⁷¹ Further credence can be given to the strong presence of the ageing woman in early modern culture and society as evidenced by the sheer prevalence of the proto-menopausal body referenced in popular sequences of allegories, myths, metaphors, jokes, songs, poems, and gossips' tales. Therefore, to think through the various articulations of proto-menopausal fears, one may turn to metaphorical discourses of the older woman found in early modern medical, religious, superstitious, theatrical, poetic, and mythological tracts. Interpreted both phenomenologically and metaphorically, these diverse literary conceptions offer fruitful clues about the proto-menopausal woman's life.

HISTORICAL REVIEW OF EARLY MODERN MENOPAUSE AND AGEING

The physiological, social, and cultural abjection of the ageing female body needs to be explored within a scholarly context if we are to understand its ambiguity, complexity, and absence. As far back as the 1970s and 1980s, feminist scholars were addressing the dearth of scholarship about the lives of the ageing early modern woman. Joan Kelly-Gadol posed the question, "Did women have a Renaissance?"¹⁷² in her seminal 1977 essay, querying why, when historical research regarding the lives of females in the early modern period was so very necessary, it remained negligent. Marjorie Feinson posed the question succinctly in her 1985 article entitled, "Where are all the Women in the History of Aging?" concluding that "despite [the] proliferation of feminist scholarship, the historical experiences of *aging women* [have] not been examined systematically" even as she attempted to look for the "shards of evidence available for piecing together the social aging process."¹⁷³ Kathleen Woodward has argued that the body has become the locus of academic and artistic research for many years, "but the older female body has been significant only in its absence."¹⁷⁴ Woodward goes on to advocate for the inclusion of the ageing body within current academic discourse: "We must add age to recent debates on difference, which have been linked to desire and have resulted in some of the most important criticism in the

last few decades in the areas of sexual difference, colonialism, ethnicity, race and cultural difference.”¹⁷⁵ In identifying with the schism between woman-as-representation, and woman as a gendered, cultural construction demarcated by the cross-hatchings of power and ideology, this tension invariably highlights the negotiation for power and agency within any patriarchal system. The place of the disorderly woman was a “preoccupation” within Renaissance culture where the unruly woman became “the means of the interrogation...of the series of boundaries induced by dominant paradigms.”¹⁷⁶ Such boundaries, as Valerie Traub has identified them, include women’s social position “within hierarchies of the patriarchal” and the “negotiation and cultural meaning of femininity.”¹⁷⁷

Whilst over the past several decades scholars of women and gender have revealed much of the richness of the female experience in premodern Europe, we know little of the texture of her life past middle age. Patricia Crawford, Lynn Botelho, and Pat Thane have been instrumental in exploring early modern attitudes to menstruation, reproduction, and the state of the old woman in Europe. As Lynn Botelho has argued, by leaving old women out of much of the discussion of sex and gender we are left with only a truncated understanding of early modern woman.¹⁷⁸ The old woman exists in a liminal space within academic study¹⁷⁹; her experiences and status, until recently, have been relatively unexplored.¹⁸⁰

Whilst historical menopause studies in the late twentieth century were minimal, interest in the scholarship of the body has been extremely rich, what Keir Elam noted as academe’s “corporeal turn” “from word to flesh, from the semantic to the somatic.”¹⁸¹ In 1990, Ruth Formanek wrote one of the first cultural and historical studies of menopause but with an anthropological focus.¹⁸² In the 1970s, Joel Wilbush added his voice to menopause scholarship, being recognized as the foremost expert in the field. In 1999, Ian Maclean undertook to explore the lives of early modern women essentially through an anatomical and physiological lens noting Renaissance doctors’ “struggle” to “harmonise received texts” about female physiology “with a growing body of fresh knowledge.”¹⁸³ Maclean’s research, like that of Michael Stolberg, Michael Schoenfeldt, Joel Wilbush, Jonathan Sawday, Mary Floyd-Wilson, Katherine Park, Roy Porter, and others, have considered the history of the female body by focusing on reproductive and anatomical knowledge—both classical and newly received empirical findings—arguing that, in general, this medico-social endeavour resulted in on-going anxieties and ambiguities about female embodiment.

In 1981, Patricia Crawford argued that there is “no record of climacteric disturbances prior to the eighteenth century,” and that any medical records of menopause during the eighteenth century “clearly predate its later medicalization.”¹⁸⁴ Michael Stolberg has since refuted Crawford’s position by pointing out that there are many findings to indicate that prior to the eighteenth century, “physicians and women considered menopausal disorders to be a common and often serious medical problem” but that the “description and interpretation of these disorders varied substantially.”¹⁸⁵ Although my own findings differ substantially from those of Crawford’s, she is correct in that the actual term “climacteric” to describe what later became known as “menopause” was not in use until 1792 and, therefore, a common set of symptoms identifying the cause of these disturbances as the “climacteric” does not appear in the medical records prior to the eighteenth century. But this is just an exercise of semantics rather than nosology: uterine disorders that we would recognize today as being menopause-related were certainly present in the early modern medical record and these were most definitely identified as serious pathologies. This absence of any ontological and nosological classification of “menopause” explains Stolberg’s assertion that during Shakespeare’s lifetime and for thirty years afterwards, the medical record on menopause as a unified syndrome does not appear in a form that we would expect or necessarily recognize.

Towards the end of the millennium, humoral theory took centre stage in early modern studies of the body. Arising from the seminal work of Gail Kern Paster, humoral theory has been seriously reevaluated as a means to understanding the early modern interaction between bodily self-experience, what Paster called “being-in-the-body,” and its discursive realization as mediated through culture.¹⁸⁶ In *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (1993), Paster argued that the humoral body was essentially “a physical and social body perceived, experienced, and imagined from within.” Such a body was a product of affective formations of an “anxious symptomatologic discourse,” that inscribed the female body with its overproduction of fluids as a shameful, disturbing “leaky vessel.”¹⁸⁷ In her later *Humoring the Body: Emotions on the Shakespearean Stage* (2004), Paster engaged with the exploration of early modern emotions during a period when “the psychological had not yet become divorced from the physiological.” This connection between the “inner and outer” of “historical phenomenology” articulates a relationship between the emotions of the humoral body

and its environment as a “premodern ecology of the passions.”¹⁸⁸ It is Paster’s work in theorizing the humoral body, not only as a means to explore the phenomenological experience of early modern selfhood, but also as a social body mediated through culture that I find crucial as a corollary condition for the exploration of the womb as the metonymic, symbolic, and pathological organ imprinted with sociocultural concerns about the ageing woman. The importance of Kern Paster’s influence cannot be overstated enough.

The symbolic and ethnocultural power of menstrual blood and other bodily fluids so central to arguments regarding humoral theory have been extensively explored within the work of Julia Kristeva (1941–) and Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975). Kristeva and Bakhtin’s work takes into account humoral fluids as defining what has been known respectively as the “abject” maternal body and the “grotesque” or “carnivalesque” body.¹⁸⁹ Bakhtin’s medieval carnivalesque body, with its emphasis on the grotesquerie of scatological function, “gay matter,” fluids and flesh, functions as an emblematic symbol, an incarnation of the sociocultural psychic need of collective laughter and chaos in systems that are ordinarily repressive. Bakhtin’s theory elevates the body of the old woman, suggesting that the grotesque body is represented by the “senile pregnant hags” of the terracotta Kerch figurines who embody a “pregnant death, a death that gives birth.”¹⁹⁰ Kristeva’s work is useful in exploring the aspects of the deep psychological fears and revulsions generated by the M/Other’s body and the Freudian desire to return to it even as one must be cast away (“abjected”) from the maternal site of origin in order to enter the social order as a complete individual.¹⁹¹ The “Abject Mother” lives on the borders, in the “in-between,” “the ambiguous,” and is terrifying because of her “generative power.”¹⁹² Kristeva’s interpretation of this “Archaic Mother,” particularly as an expression of “Nature,” resonates with the pre-Freudian mother’s presence as the “devouring maternal,” the monstrous maternal that enters the work of Shakespeare via superstition, the occult, and Ovidian and Hesiodic classical mythology. The classical allusions to the pre-Christian Archaic Mother are ever-present in the Shakespearean tragedies: her ageless, cruel, and dangerously erotic power is inherent in the many mythological references to creatures like the Gorgon, the Fury, the Siren, the Crone, and the Hag. The Devouring Mother’s power is metamorphosed into organic and inorganic lifeforms, embodied by personae such as Niobe or Hecuba, as well as incarnations of Revenge, *Invidia*, Fortune, and Nature. Janet Adelman’s impactful work

Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to the Tempest (1992), like Kristeva's oeuvre, is primarily based in psychoanalytical theory, but is crucial to underscoring the struggle undertaken by Shakespeare's characters to break free from the "maternal matrix," the womb that is the "embodiment of hell and death." This battle to defeat the terrible power of the mother's "loathsome"¹⁹³ body is an integral part of the ripples of somatic, psychic, and social anxiety generated by the proto-menopausal body in Shakespearean tragedies.

Over three decades ago, Elizabeth Grosz called for a "corporeal feminism" to reconsider the embodied nature of subjectivity as a complex nexus of manifold forces. Rosi Braidotti argued that the female body in this scheme "is to be understood as neither a biological nor a sociological category but rather as a point of overlapping between the physical, the symbolic, and the sociological..."¹⁹⁴ It is through an exploration of the "overlapping" of these forces—particularly those early modern sociocultural forces mediated on and through the proto-menopausal body—that may facilitate the reclamation of the ageing women of the early modern era who have been "silenced" by omission or cultural "invisibility."¹⁹⁵ In tracing the cultural connections between the way that beliefs, practices, and institutions legitimate patriarchal thinking about the menopausal woman, it is useful to remind oneself of the original project of feminist cultural materialism even as we search for fresh and novel perspectives. In the first wave of 1980s cultural materialism, Jonathan Dollimore wrote:

A materialist feminism, rather than simply co-opting or writing off Shakespeare, follows the unstable constructions of, for example, gender and patriarchy back to the contradictions of their historical moment. Only thus, can the authority of the patriarchal bard be understood and effectively challenged.¹⁹⁶

Kathleen McLuskie's feminist materialist approach has long since argued that recognition of the sources of a play's dominant ideology has the potential to "assert the power of resistance, subverting rather than co-opting the domination of the patriarchal Bard."¹⁹⁷ Again, the "pleasure" of potential subversion is useful when thinking of the ageing body: rather than simply replicating and reinscribing the myriad cultural anxieties under scrutiny, it allows one the ability to "reframe" discourse to allow for desire in the monstrous, joy in the uncanny, and attraction in the grotesque. I want to conceive of a theorization of the Shakespearean

proto-menopausal female as a fluid and protean cultural construction whose complex, multifaceted influence might ripple between distinct cultural arenas and eras, including our own, but always offering the potential for revaluation and reclamation.

Christine Couch has cogently summarized the whole historicist project as being focused upon making another period “recognisable” by “educating ourselves about the experiences and reality of the time in question,” always “deferring authority to the text’s historical moment”:

This kind of reading does not preclude authorial intent (how can Shakespeare have written about something that was not known in his time?) but allows that the phenomena existed in Shakespeare’s time but it was unexplained and accepted as such.¹⁹⁸

In writing of postnatal psychosis in *Macbeth*, Couche argues that, paradoxically, the condition is “both of the text in its time” but “available to us now in only recent times”:

The answer to this paradox is the coexistent continuity of biology and the difference of cultural construction over time, the pairing of the persistence of a biological reality with its temporally contingent apprehension and representation.

Like postnatal psychosis, “menopause” has been available to us in various texts (and subtexts) of the time, but it is only now returning to us through a historical and cultural re-evaluation of its psychological, sociological, and medical complexities. A project to incorporate the literary, medical, and sociocultural origins of the ageing female body into current conversations about the menopausal woman might be accused of being a specious, “presentist” endeavour and, therefore, doomed to fail because of anachronistic inconsistencies. For the past two decades, Shakespearean scholars Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes have proposed the theory of “presentism” as a legitimate critical approach to literary texts.¹⁹⁹ Presentism has, in some circles, garnered the unflattering status of critical theory’s “new Shakespearean kid on the block.”²⁰⁰ John Holbro, who is highly critical of the movement, defines presentism as “the false projection of features of the present onto the past; obstruction of features of the past by those of the present.”²⁰¹ Grady and Hawkes have noted that presentism’s:

engagement with the text will take place precisely in terms of those dimensions of the present that most ringingly chime – perhaps as ends to its beginnings – with the events of the past. Deliberately employing crucial aspects of the present as a trigger for its investigations, its centre of gravity will accordingly be “now,” rather than “then.”²⁰²

As historical research is placed at the forefront of my work, I do not consider it to be presentist. Although this study occasionally considers the “now” of the menopausal condition, this is not the focus or “centre of gravity,” but functions as tool of contextual differentiation. Sociocultural and literary history are vital mechanisms by which the changing conception and reception of the “body” can be explored as an amalgam of dynamic forces even though, at heart, the material, biotic flesh of that body remains consistent. The “body” is always in flux; hence “menopause” today still has no fixed and stable social, medical, physiological, and psychological ontology, a fact that can be confirmed by the historical record. In defining “proto-menopause,” I am acknowledging that, although early modern uterocentric symptomologies may find some psychosomatic concordance with today’s menopausal woman, its aetiology remains inconsistent: the historical body undergoing those changes was conceived of differently and regulated by disparate sociocultural forces than today. “Proto-menopause” is a self-conscious neologistic construction suggested as a means to supply a consistent language to discuss this early modern event without employing terminology or theory that is historically inaccurate or anachronistic. Although I embrace tenets of various critical studies, drawing evidence from several various disciplines, the centrality of history serves as the fulcrum for this study.

My methodology might best be identified as being “interdisciplinary.”²⁰³ Lynette Hunter argues that any interdisciplinary approach is “vital” for it illuminates “lives [that] are often obscured, evaded, hidden, erased, or invisible to dominant hegemonic norms and assumptions.” These “conversations” are essentially a “phenomenological experience” because they call upon processes that are “sensory, somatic and affective events.”²⁰⁴ It is Hunter’s emphasis on the phenomenological, especially the embodied, somatic experiences of “obscured” lives, that focuses and directs my own methodological approach. I agree with Harvey J. Graff who argues that literary and interdisciplinary studies “can be better understood with more attention to a longer chronological span of intellectual and socio-cultural development.”²⁰⁵ To search for those common

embodied experiences of history’s ageing women, one must return to the liminal, an engagement with the shadowy margins: the clues are hidden in such varied historical, literary, and sociocultural “texts”—both mundane and esoteric—as gardening manuals, treatises on animal husbandry, documented witch trials, medieval medical tracts, sex toys, and mechanical dolls. Interdisciplinarity, therefore, precisely because it resists and evades a stable theoretical and polemic underpinning and is free to explore the liminal and marginal, makes it the perfect *non*-methodology with which to explore the Shakespearean and early modern proto-menopausal woman. The “anatomiz[ed]”²⁰⁶ body of interdisciplinarity takes apart the body of the ageing woman not to diminish its power through fragmentation but in order to reassemble it with new understandings, new knowledge.

STRUCTURAL RATIONALE

In summation, the proto-menopausal paradigm can be expressed as the following: the uterus occupies a key position of importance, not just as the metonymic organ representing the woman herself, but as the site of origin; changes within the microclimate of the uterus are serious, having negative implications for the health of the individual, and more importantly, for the health of the body politic itself; these uterocentric changes are often linked to humorality but also pseudo-sciences such as the occult, and emergent sciences such as mechanical theory and iatro-chemistry; because these uterine changes are greeted with sociocultural suspicion outside the medical realm, they are met with fear and anxiety; these changes happen in the “ageing” female but with the understanding that the early modern definition of “age” has an unstable and contested ontology; because these uterine changes happen in the older woman’s body, the anxieties that such mutability affords are echoed and reinforced by existing prejudices about the social place of the old woman and cultural conceptions about the abject nature of her body; the tragic form is identified for exploration of these anxieties as an appropriate organizing principle; these sociocultural anxieties are not resolved, therefore these characters are “silenced” in some repressive capacity; the reasons for Shakespeare doing this aren’t clear but this lack of theatrical resolution might be a direct reflection of the ambivalence of the place of the ageing woman in culture-at-large. The deaths of these proto-menopausal characters are individually distinctive, each action of annihilation being a direct response to the psychosocial fears engendered by these particular

bodies. In her last moments, Tamora embodies the proto-menopausal “swallowing womb” by a grotesque act of auto-cannibalization of the “flesh that she herself hath bred” (5.3.63); Gertrude’s body in petrified in death by drinking in the poison that her contaminated womb had emanated into the environment; Cleopatra’s suicide is the destruction of the Galenic womb’s reproductive mysteries; Lady Macbeth’s fatal leap is the crushing obliteration of a diseased and diabolical *corpus* riddled with envy; and Volumnia’s silenced mouth is a relational metonymizing of a womb sacrificially ripped open and publicly bled. So however structurally ambiguous or stylistically unsatisfactory these characters’ ends are, there has been an attempted *catharsis* to purge the embodied anxiety of the proto-menopausal womb. Perhaps the true ambiguity comes from speculating as to what Shakespeare’s intentions are with these creative choices, to what ultimate ends this silencing serves.²⁰⁷

In terms of structuring this study’s proto-menopausal argument, each chapter is named after a particular uterine pathology embodied by five of Shakespeare’s tragic female characters. Every chapter follows a similar line of argument: each of the characters under consideration is connected to a uterine change that is a medical function of early modern ageing in the female; this uterine change engenders a specific pathology, and each pathology is explored as an expression of sociocultural anxiety about the place of the ageing woman in Shakespeare’s society-at-large.

Chapter 2 explores the implications of a proto-menopausal drying womb and its corollary influence upon the female sex drive in *Hamlet* (1609). Humoral theory underscored the fact that as the female body aged, it became subject to extreme desiccation, particularly in the womb. Such uterine petrification was caused by the depletion of emolliating fluids, such as menses and female “sperm,” and could only be replenished through regular sexual intercourse, a problematic sociocultural proposition if an older woman was a widow or unmarried. The ageing womb’s desire for male sperm gave rise to the trope of the “lusty widow,” the sexually hungry woman who constantly craved sexual intercourse. Without regular sex, the womb gradually transformed into matter akin to stone; any retained fluids stagnated, petrified, and eventually were believed to emanate as poisonous emissions from the older woman’s eyes and mouth. These escaping noxious humours had the power to taint and transform the flesh of others within the proto-menopausal woman’s proximity, a fear symbolized by *Hamlet*’s many mythological allusions to both monsters and women connected with the powers of petrification. This

petrifying aspect of the proto-menopausal body taps into the atavistic fear of the Monstrous Maternal in the form of the Basilisk and Gorgon. The terrifying power of both the womb and eye (as its metonymic equivalent) to petrify others from *without*, as well as their apparent ability to desiccate and ossify life *within*, becomes most apparent in *Hamlet* when linked to the Prince’s fears of his mother’s on-going sexual desire. Hamlet’s mission of revenge is not only connected with ridding Denmark of the “foul and unnatural” (1.5.25) murderer Claudius, but also to remove the “taint” (1.5.84) of the mother’s sexually appetitive flesh, the heart of which, Hamlet hopes, is still “penetrable stuff” (3.4.34). In challenging Gertrude as the sexually abject Devouring Mother, Hamlet attempts defeat by embodying a “moral mirror” refracting his mother’s ocular poison back to the site of origin. Ultimately, if Hamlet wants his mother to “tame” her widow’s sex drive “in the blood” (3.4.77), Gertrude must purposefully choose to avoid intercourse with her new “bloat king” (3.4.181), but to do so would mean that the subsequent drying of her body would result in fatal consequences—both for herself and others.

Identifying the character of Tamora from *Titus Andronicus* (1594) as proto-menopausal might be a controversial choice, but Chapter 3’s argument is based in the assertion that Tamora’s gravid body is not subject to the same epistemological and ontological certainties of human reproductive physiology as we understand them today. For the first part of the play, Tamora is pregnant with Aaron’s baby and yet it is a fact not acknowledged by anyone, including her lover and new husband. That Tamora’s pregnancy is all but “invisible” posits an argument that her last child’s conception is “wondrous” in the sense of having engendered a life form that appears to be born within an accelerated timeframe. Tamora’s proto-menopausal body lies at the juncture between the complexities of Nature and Time and as such, her body’s reproductive rhythms do not conform to strict species or biological categories. I argue that in order to explain Tamora’s strange accelerated and invisible pregnancy, one might consider botanical life and its relationship to the human as part of a natural continuum as understood by the early moderns, therefore Tamora’s reproductive capabilities align her with notions of the vegetable as a “species.” The intricacies of botanical growth and its relation to the human is further complicated by the early modern understanding of “Time”—a concept that was yet to be established with a uniform, consistent definition. This chapter will show how Tamora’s pregnancy can be explained by early modern notions of vegetable Nature refracted through

several classical and Renaissance definitions of Time. Tamora's ontological ambiguity reflects the sociocultural fears of the ageing woman's ability to conceive through parthenogenic means, as well as the ageing womb's ability to infiltrate dynasties through hybrid offspring divorced from patriarchal notions of legitimacy. That Tamora in her emblematic guises of Nature, Fortune, and Revenge might be able to bend, arrest, or accelerate Time perpetuates sociocultural fears about the "timeless" generative mysteries of the ageing woman's body capacity to transcend taxonomical, biological, and morphological boundaries.

Chapter 4 focuses on how proto-menopause was experienced through the affliction known as "the wandering womb" and its metaphorical connection to the bestial as revealed through the many animal images in *Coriolanus* (1609). This chapter explores the anxieties generated by the ageing woman's wandering womb as a transgressive organ through a corollary lens of animal metaphorization. This argument is partly centred on the notion of humoral sympathies of transmitted blood, and the commonalities of maternal instinct shared between woman and beast. This animalistic blood kinship reveals, not only how Martius is inextricably linked to his mother Volumnia through these sympathies, but also how his body becomes an extension of hers—her *body-by-proxy*. The social anxiety of unrestrained female speech, coupled with the need for medicalized plethoric release, coalesce to give new meaning to understanding the ageing woman through the animal body, where all bodily "mouths" needs must be silenced in a public bloodletting. Once Martius is sacrificed like an animal scapegoat, the connection between the animal and the human is severed: the wandering womb with all its "mouths," expressed in *Coriolanus* through the relationship between animal and woman, is finally "tamed" through an abject and violent silencing.

Thomas Wright's (1561–1623) influential treatise *The Passions of the minde in general* (1604) is a prime example of a work that emphasized the extent to which it was understood that the "Passions engender Humors, and humors breed Passions."²⁰⁸ Wright's assertion is a remarkable expression of holistic psychosomatic influence or "sympathy" between the bodily humours that constituted the early modern *corpus* as well as those operations that controlled all mental faculties or "passions." Thus, when Lady Macbeth calls to spirits to "unsex" her body in Act 1, Scene 5 of *Macbeth* (1606), she recognizes that this passionate desire to embody *maleficia* will reciprocate a change to her biofunctions that will mimic the uterine pathologies of *amenorrhea* and *menorrhagia*. By offering

herself up to demonic forces as a means to trade her bodily “fungible” fluids for earthly power, she has already initiated the reciprocated physiological forces of “inordinate passions”; thus, regardless of her actual biological age, Lady Macbeth has willingly called down proto-menopause upon herself. Lady Macbeth’s embodiment of proto-menopausal pathologies forms a unique template documenting several sociocultural anxieties about the ageing body: the toxic effects of poisonous menses to the body proper and its subsequent influence upon those bodies in immediate proximity; the ageing female’s affinity with diabolical forces; the use of humoral fluids as tradable commodities for power; and cannibalism of the young to replace depleting humours. Chapter 5 concentrates on the particular “inordinate passion,” the somatic and sociocultural “illness” (1.5.19) of *Envy*, or *Invidia*. Lady Macbeth’s decision to fully commit herself to evil begins a chain reaction whereby her body and her “mind diseased” (5.3.39) become the source of infectious *Invidia* that plagues both her husband and the “sickly weal” (5.2.28; 5.4.50) of Scotland itself. As she is overcome with *Invidia*, her abilities to utilize other passions, such as reason, to fight its physiological effects are thwarted. Lady Macbeth’s fate is to inhabit a toxic proto-menopausal body wracked by madness, somnambulism, and eventual self-slaughter.

Chapter 6 imagines the implications for a proto-menopausal womb housed within a body that might transcend the world of humoral flesh to incorporate Mechanical Theory’s newly conceptualized matter. Shakespeare’s Cleopatra occupies a kind of transitional period, one that looks backwards to Galenic medicine but one that also anticipates the coming of Descartes. When Charmain exclaims, “Let me have a child at fifty!” (1.2.29–30), the early modern audience would have interpreted her words, not as a reproductive fantasy or biological implausibility, but as a definite possibility for a humoral body where biological age had diminished relevance. Sexual desire in the ageing woman was also connected to the womb’s ability to spontaneously generate new lifeforms. Ontologically and epistemologically, these lifeforms—both organic and inorganic—raised questions about what kind of body could “birth” them. For the trajectory of *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607), Cleopatra’s body reflects the genesis of Mechanical Theory, a transitional, liminal moment that I am terming the “proto-Cartesian,” by assuming the transitional figure of the cyborg—an entity neither wholly Galenic flesh nor machine, but a hybrid combination of both, “a wonderful / piece of work” (1.2.153–154). Cleopatra-as-cyborg ingeniously transcends “Roman” phallocentric

notions of power and containment by utilizing a variety of prosthetic “tools” to heal, strengthen, and ameliorate the physical changes that come to an ageing female body—especially uterine prolapse and “strangulation” of the womb, uterine pathologies reflective of an errant organ that escapes the body’s confines. Socioculturally, then, these pathologies represent fears of the woman that cannot control herself nor be controlled. As the cyborg, Cleopatra’s body refuses containment and is a direct threat to Roman norms. The Roman world with its desire to measure and quantify boundaries as a means to conquer, possess, and control the female body, presciently anticipates full-blown Cartesian doctrine where the ageing body will be conceptualized as a generic machine devoid of mystery and sexuality, subject to “break down” and obsolescence. The tragedy of *Antony and Cleopatra* is the tragedy of our post-Cartesian age where all menopausal cyborgs have, in the manner of Cleopatra, been transformed into the fleshless, sexless, impotent automaton with “nothing” of life within it (5.2.239).

NOTES

1. Siobán Harlow et al., “Menopause: Its Epidemiology,” *Women and Health* (Cleveland: Elsevier Inc., 2013), 371.
2. Wulf Utian, “The International Menopause Menopause-Related Terminology Definition,” *Climacteric* 4 (1999), 284.
3. For instance, the International Menopause Society does not refer to age at all; their current definition is “the last day of a woman’s last period ever,” <https://www.imsociety.org/education/menopause-terminology/>.
4. Utian, 284.
5. Menopause was still considered an oestrogen deficiency “disease” in 1981. Emily Martin, *The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 51.
6. Mary E. Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 53.
7. Mary Floyd-Wilson, *Occult Knowledge, Science, and Gender on the Shakespearean Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 16.
8. The sheer medical, cultural, and religious importance of the uterus as an organ that defined womanhood makes Thomas Laqueur’s argument of the “one sex model” highly problematic. See *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (London: Harvard University Press, 1990).

9. For example, François Mauriceau wrote in *The Diseases of Woman with Child* (1673), “there are many with Child who have had the Courses; and I have known some who have had them all the time of their Great-Belly till the fifth or sixth month,” <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>. See also Sara Read *Menstruation and the Female Body in Early Modern England* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 83; 126; 147; 153. Read also notes that there may have been confusion about certain “floodings” that affected women during pregnancy and that these incidences may have been placental abruption rather than menses.
10. Read writes, “a lack of menstruation was only considered to be a minor indicator of pregnancy,” *ibid.*, 83.
11. John Sadler, *The SICK Womans PRIVATE Looking-Glasse* (London, 1636), A4v, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
12. Fissell, 53–54.
13. Laurie Johnson notes that the word “anxiety” first entered the English language around the year 1611, Shakespeare contributing to “the cultural moment” out of which the word “anxiety” came into being. See *Embodied Cognition and Shakespeare’s Theatre*, ed. Laurie Johnson et al. (New York: Routledge, 2014), 5.
14. See Jeanne Addison Roberts, “The Crone in English Renaissance Drama,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 15 (2003), 116–137.
15. Marshall McLuhan, “The Medium Is the Message,” *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Men* (New York and Scarborough: McGraw-Hill, 1964).
16. S.F. Davies, “The Reception of Reginald Scot’s Discovery of Witchcraft: Witchcraft, Magic, and Radical Religion,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 74, no. 3 (2013), 381–401, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jhi.2013.0021>.
17. Reginald Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London: Printed by R.C. and to be sold by Giles Calvert), 1651, Cap. III, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
18. Naomi Baker, *Plain Ugly: The Unattractive Body in Early Modern Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 99; 106.
19. For theories as to why post-menopausal women was targeted more with accusations of witchcraft see Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995).
20. See Lyndal Roper who asserts that “a hatred of older women’s bodies” was “a rich seam of early modern culture.” *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 168.

21. The desiccation of humours was an understood function of old age according to the Aristotelian-Galenic tradition.
22. Janet Adelman makes this her central thesis in her seminal work *Suffocating Mothers*, but she approaches fears of the maternal womb almost exclusively from a psychoanalytical standpoint. See *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest* (New York: Routledge, 1992).
23. Jonathan Sawday, "Self and Selfhood in the Seventeenth Century," *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, ed. Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1997), 48.
24. Michael Stolberg, *Learned Physicians and Everyday Practice in the Renaissance*, trans. Logan Kennedy and Leonhard Unglaub (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2022), xxii.
25. David Hillman and Carla Mazzio, *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 1997), xii.
26. Tim Ingold in Johnson, 1.
27. Daniel Schafer qtd. in Amie Bolissian, "Masculine Old Women or Feminine Old Men? Rethinking Gender and the Ageing Body in Early Modern English Medicine," *Gender and History* (2022), 1.
28. Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1996), esp. 188–221.
29. Simon Forman, "Matrix and the Pain Thereof: A Sixteenth-Century Gynaecological Essay," Barbara H. Traister, *Medical History* 35 (1991), 420.
30. Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Harold Tarrant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 249.
31. Hippocrates, *On the Diseases Vols. 1 and 2*, trans. Paul Potter, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 1.2.18.
32. Hippocrates, *Diseases of Women Vols. 1 and 2*, trans., Paul Potter, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018) 2, 137.
33. Nicolaus Rocheus, *De morbis mulierum curandis*, 1542 ed., 310, EEB Wellcome Records, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
34. Séverine Pilloud and Micheline Louis-Courvoisier, "The Intimate Experience of the Body in the 18th Century: Between Interiority and Exteriority," *Medical History* 47 (2003), 452.
35. Democritus qtd. in Michael Stolberg, "A Woman Down to Her Bones. The Anatomy of Sexual Difference in Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries," *Isis* 94, no. 2 (June 2003), 289.
36. Such is the fate of the crone Putana in John Ford's "Tis a Pity She's a Whore" (4.3.240–245; 5.6.145).
37. Johnson, 5.

38. Amy Kenny, *Humoral Wombs on the Shakespearean Stage* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 14.
39. This is a simplified summary of Sawday’s thesis of *The Body Emblazoned*.
40. “Geohumorism” and its implications for the humoral body within a geographical space is a concept developed by Mary Floyd-Wilson, see *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
41. Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: UCP, 2004), 11–20.
42. Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 25.
43. See Julia Kristeva on the abject nature of certain bodily fluids, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), and Mary Douglas’ seminal work *Pollution and Danger* (London: Routledge, 1966).
44. Laurie Johnson argues that if we approach the early modern actor’s pre-Cartesian body using a “distributed cognition,” then we may recognize that these bodies are “points of reference for any representations that might otherwise be called the work of cognition,” and, therefore, the actors’ bodies would not be seen by the audience as “the threshold across which philosophical conundrums need to be thought out.” “Cogito Ergo Theatrum: Redistributing Cognition on the Early Modern Stage,” *Embodied Cognition and Shakespeare’s Theatre*, ed. Laurie Johnson et al. (New York: Routledge, 2014), 216–233.
45. Maurizio Calbi, *Approximate Bodies: Gender and Power in Early Modern Drama and Anatomy* (London: Routledge, 2005), xix.
46. Laurie Johnson et al., “Re-cognising the Body-Mind in Shakespeare’s Theatre,” *Embodied Cognition*, 1–11.
47. The records of early modern women commenting upon their experience of what we would identify now as menopause remains absent until the mid-to late seventeenth century.
48. The following influential texts deal with menopause in the early modern era, often in tandem with studies of ageing and approximating medical pathologies: Jenijoy Labelle, “‘A Strange Infirmitiy’: Lady Macbeth’s Amenorrhea,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 30 (1980), 381–386; *The Meanings of Menopause: Historical, Medical and Clinical Perspectives*, ed. Ruth Formanek (London: Analytic Press, 1990); Lynn Botelho, “Old Age and Menopause in Rural Women of Early Modern Suffolk,” *Women and Ageing in British Society Since 1500*, ed. Lynn Botelho and Pat Thane (Harlow: Pearson, 2001); Michael Stolberg, “A Woman’s Hell? Medical Perceptions of Menopause in Preindustrial Europe,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 73 (1999), 404–428. Sara Read has a section on

menopause in her *Menstruation and the Female Body in Early Modern England* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 171–180. See also Emily Martin, “Medical Metaphors of Women’s Bodies: Menstruation and Menopause,” *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*, ed. Katie Conboy et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Patricia Crawford, “Attitudes to Menstruation in Seventeenth-Century England,” *Past and Present* 91 (May 1981), 47–73; Sarah Carvallo, “Ageing in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” *Science in Context* 23, no. 3 (2010), 267–288; Joanna Levin, “Lady Macbeth and the Daemonologie of Hysteria,” *ELH* 69, no. 1 (2002), 21–55; Ian Maclean, “The Notion of Women in Medicine, Anatomy, and Physiology,” *Feminism and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), and *The Renaissance Notion of Women: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Susannah Ottaway, *The Decline of Life: Old Age in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Joanna Levin, “Lady Macbeth and the Daemonologie of Hysteria,” *ELH* 69, no. 1 (2002), 21–55; Alice Fox, “Obstetrics and Gynecology in Macbeth,” *Shakespeare Studies* 12 (January 1, 1979), 127–141; G.S. Rousseau, “‘A Strange Pathology’: Nerves and the Hysteria Diagnosis in Early Modern Europe,” *Nervous Acts: Essays on Literature, Culture and Sensibility* (London: Palgrave Books, 2004); Marjorie Chary Feinson, “Where Are the Women in the History of Aging?” *Social Science History* 9, no. 4 (1985), 429–452; Maurice Charney, *Wrinkled Deep in Time: Aging in Shakespeare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009). Susan Mattern’s recent book, *The Slow Moon Climbs: The Science, History, and Meaning of Menopause* (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), explores menopause from the aspect of cultural anthropology.

49. Shakespeare had knowledge of classical anatomical and natural histories of the body, and his son-in-law, John Hall, was a practising physician.
50. See *All’s Well That Ends Well* (2.3.9–10); *Henry IV, Part 2* (1.2.118); *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (3.1.62); *Coriolanus* (2.1.1035).
51. See Chris Laoutaris’ *Shakespearean Maternities: Crises of Conception in Early Modern England* (Edinburgh: EUP, 2008), esp. Ch.1.
52. After 1710, the “female climacteric” became important in the medical writings of Salomon Constantin Titius (1766–1801), Georg Ernst Stahl (1660–1734), Jean Astruc (1684–1766), Nicolas Chambon de Montaux (1748–1826), and John Fothergill (1711–1780). “Menopause” was not named as a syndrome until 1821 in France, and used as a term in England in 1872, see Read, “When menopause is not...” 224, and Stolberg who claims that “medical writing before 1650, does not abound in discussions of menopause,” (1999), 406.

53. Catherine Belsey has described her persistent need to return to Shakespeare because he invokes “[a] complexity of passion; the ways in which texts elicit desires.” *Shakespeare in Theory and Practice* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 10.
54. In thinking of the era’s “persistent materialism of thought” as far as the construction of selfhood is concerned, I take inspiration from Gail Kern Paster: “...the whole interior of the body – heart, liver, womb, bowels, kidneys, gall, blood, lymph – quite often involves itself in the production of the mental interior...” “The Tragic Subject and Its Passions,” *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy*, ed. Claire McEachern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 142–159.
55. Aristotle, *Poetics*, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Revised Oxford Translation (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).
56. Tom McAlindon, “What Is a Shakespearean Tragedy?” *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy*, ed. Claire McEachern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1–22.
57. This would include Juliet and possibly Cressida, neither of whom would be proto-menopausal.
58. Marlena Tronicke argues that the female suicides of the great Shakespearean tragedies can be read unanimously as “connoting voice, agency, and revolt...” See *Shakespeare’s Suicides: Dead Bodies That Matter* (London: Routledge, 2017), 12. I argue to the contrary. I agree with Molly Ziegler’s assessment that in revenge tragedies, because the female body is associated with danger and disease, it precludes the possibility for female empowerment and instead contributes to a “culture of female vilification of female bodies and agency.” “For Fear to Be Infect’ Reading the Female Body in Early Modern Revenge Drama,” *Journal of Early Modern Studies* 10 (March, 2021), 291.
59. Paster, “The Tragic Subject,” 3.
60. Philippa Berry, “Disclosing the Feminine Eye of Death: Tragedy and Seeing in the Dark,” *Shakespeare’s Feminine Endings: Disfiguring Death in the Tragedies* (London: Routledge, 1999), 73.
61. Sara Read argues that this was also the case in the early modern era and suggests that this is one of the reasons that there is no extant record of the menopause because it wasn’t recognized as a “key cultural status change.” *Menstruation and the Female Body in Early Modern England* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 171. Michael Stolberg argues that menopause doesn’t appear in the medical record prior to 1650 because scholarship was still based in classical models and menopause didn’t feature there, also menopause may have been amassed with other menstrual irregularities (1999, 406–407).
62. This negligence is changing, certainly since I began this research over ten years ago. Because of social demand, new medical treatments for

menopausal complaints, such as hot flashes, are currently under development. Literary scholars and social historians are also turning their attention to menopause.

63. Jean Liébault wrote of red flushes and excessive sweating in the year 1598, as did Georg Handsch (fl.1562) circa 1563 [See Michael Stolberg, *Learned Physicians and Everyday Medical Practice in the Renaissance*, trans. Logan Kennedy et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2022), 33]. It wasn't until two decades later that James Primrose (?-1659) referred to flushing in the face in *De mulierum morbis*, 1655.
64. It wasn't until around 1650 that we have extant commentaries on the menopause and its personal affect on the lives of the women who wrote about it. See Stolberg, "A Woman's Hell?" 404-428, and Sara Read, *Menstruation*.
65. This isn't to suggest that a woman's experience of menopause is consistent and homogenous in the twenty-first century.
66. Roy Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason: The Modern Foundations of Body and Soule* (London: W.W. Norton, 2003), 44-45.
67. See Formanek.
68. See Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: UCP, 2004).
69. Peterson, 2010.
70. Taken from a BMS, IMS, EMAS, RCOG, and AMS joint statement on menopausal hormone therapy (MHT), May 2020, www.imsociety.org.
71. Gardanne's original term was "ménèpause," later changed to "ménopause."
72. Germaine Greer and Joel Wilbush employ the term "climacteric" when writing about menopause in its historical context whereas most other contemporary body scholars, such as Michael Stolberg, Michael Schoenfeldt, Patricia Crawford, Sara Read, Amy Kenny, Lois W. Banner, Cristine Couch, Sarah Toulalan, Ruth Formanek, and Hilda Ma employ the term "menopause" when writing of the early modern period.
73. Jacob Ruëff in his 1554 *The Expert Midwife* recognized that the "drying of flowers" (*amenorrhœa*) did indicate the inability to conceive but his book was not translated into English until 1637:

And for the same cause the Germans do name this Purgation, Flowers... so also every woman deprived of these Flowers, I say, of this purging in her due season by the cause of Nature, can neither conceive nor engender, being like unto an unfruitfull and a barren man... (1637 ed. Ch.I.11).

74. Read, *Menstruation*, 1.

75. Ibid., 1.

76. Similarly, in a recent article, Sara Luttfring only examines what she calls the four “crucial stages” of female reproduction of conception, pregnancy, childbirth, and parental influence, but neglects menopause as a stage. See *Bodies, Speech, and Reproductive Knowledge in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 2019).
77. *Ibid.*, 175.
78. These six factors were known as the “Galenic non-naturals.”
79. Hippocrates, *Places in Man* 47, trans. Paul Potter, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), VIII, 94.
80. Jane Sharp, *The Midwives Book, 1671 ed.* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1985), ch.1.
81. Claude Quillet, “Callipaedia: or, The Art of Getting Beautiful Children. A Poem” (1655). <http://archive.org>.
82. Douglas, 150.
83. Lesel Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 469.
84. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet Revised Edition*. ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2016).
85. Pseudo-Albert Magnus, *Women’s Secrets: A Translation of Pseudo-Albertus Magnus’s ‘De Secretis Mulierum,’ with Commentaries* (New York: SUNY Press, 1992), 37.
86. Thomas Wright, “The Passions of the Minde in General. Corrected, Enlarged, and with Sundry New Discourses Augmented,” 1604 ed., 63, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
87. The sequence of quotes from Wright are as follows: 65; 4; 145; 146; 146; 4.
88. See Wright’s added chapter, “A succinct philosophical declaration of the nature of the Clymactericall years...” in *The Passions...*
89. Kaara L. Peterson, *Popular Medicine, Hysterical Disease and Social Controversy* (London: Routledge, 2010), 34. I also concur with Peterson who dismisses the isomorphic models of the womb because these models do not use the criteria of pathology as the primary factor in means of sex differentiation: “pathology is a more reliable indicator of female difference above and beyond isomorphism [and caloric insufficiency] as a model and pathology accounts for the wide discussion of fluids’ roles in uterine ailments...” (34–35).
90. *Ibid.*, 34. Peterson first developed her theory of the womb’s “fluid ecology” in her “Fluid Economies: Portraying Shakespeare’s Hysterics,” *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 34, 1 (May 2001), 35–39.
91. Barbara Duden, “Fluxes and Stagnations,” *The Body in Balance: Humoral Medicine in Practice*, ed. Peregrine Horden and Elizabeth Hsu (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 54.

92. Patricia Crawford, "Attitudes to Menstruation in Seventeenth-Century England," *Past and Present* 91, no. 1 (May 1981), 65; Lesley Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 108.
93. Katharine Park, *Secrets of Women: Gender, Generation, and the Origins of Human Dissection* (New York: Zone Books, 2010).
94. Laura Gowling, "Women, Status and the Popular Culture of Dishonour," *Transaction of the Royal Historical Society* 6 (1996), 469.
95. Baker, 113.
96. Sharp, 325; Hippocrates, *Diseases of Women* 1., A.7.33.
97. See for instance Hippocrates, *Diseases of Women*, 1.1. (L8.10–14); 1.2 (L8.14–22); and in 1.7 the suffering individual is described as an older woman.
98. Jakob Sprenger, and Henry Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum*, trans. M. Summer (London: Pushkin Press, 1951), 45A, 170.
99. Lynda Booze, "Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman's Unruly Member," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (1991), 64.
100. See for example, Hippocrates, *Regimen* 1.33, Loeb IV, 278–280.
101. Chris Gilleard, "Ageing and the Galenic Tradition: A Brief Overview," *Ageing and Society* 35, no. 3 (2015), 501.
102. Sharp, ch.1.
103. Ambroise Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, trans. Janis L. Pallister (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), ch. 7, 32.
104. Agrippa Von Nettersheim, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy, Translated Out of the Latin into the English Tongue by J.F.*, 1651 ed., bk.1, 142., <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>. Amie Bolissian refutes this frequent claim in academic studies, arguing that between 1570 and 1730, medical texts actually saw generic ageing as being more 'feminine' than 'masculine.' See "Masculine Old Women."
105. Kathleen Woodward, "Youthfulness as Masquerade," *Discourse* 11, no. 1 (Fall-Winter 1988–1989), 121.
106. Levinus Leminus, *The Touchstone of the Complexions Expedient and Profitable for All Such as Bee Desirous and Carefull of Their Bodily Health*, 1633 ed., 47, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
107. Reginald W. Rampone, *Sexuality in the Age of Shakespeare*, ebrary Inc., 2011, 37, Proquest Ebook Central.
108. Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare, Sex and Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 69.
109. Ibid., 153.
110. Rampone, 37.
111. Edward Bever, "Old Age and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe," *Old Age in Preindustrial Society*, ed. Peter N. Stearns (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982), 37.

112. Antonia Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel: Woman’s Lot in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Phoenix Press, 2002), 123.
113. Poska et al., 301.
114. Gowing, 225–234.
115. cf. Harlow et al., 2013.
116. Wulf H. Utian, *Menopause-Related Definitions* (Cleveland: Elsevier B.V., 2004), 133.
117. Ibid., 133; 135.
118. Harlow et al., 371.
119. Utian, 137.
120. Ibid.
121. One exception of female writers for the sixteenth century is the Lady Margaret Hoby (1571–1633) who kept diary entries about her menstrual cycle, but not about any symptomology resembling menopause as she aged. Women reflecting on menopause does not become evident before the early eighteenth century.
122. See note 69.
123. Sara Read, “When Menopause Is Not Climacteric,” *Notes and Queries* 59, no. 2 (2012), 224–226.
124. Stolberg, “A Woman’s Hell?” 417.
125. Joel Wilbush, “What’s in a Name?: Some Linguistic Aspects of the Climacteric,” *Mauritas* 3, no. 1 (1981), 4–5.
126. Read, “When Menopause,” 224–226.
127. Sarah Toulalan, “Age to Great, or to Little, Doeth Let Conception’: Bodies, Sex, and the Life Cycle, 1500–1750,” *The Routledge History of Sex and the Body* (London: Routledge, 2013), 279.
128. Jean Liébault (1535–1599), and Giovanni Marinello (fl. 1563) were a few who did make the connection between a woman’s advancing age as a cause of amenorrhea. See *Trois livres appartenans aux infirmités et maladies des femmes*, 1598. gallica-bnf.fr.urnl.idm.oclc.org.
129. Margaroni in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of 21st Century Feminist Theory*, ed. Robin Truth Goodman (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 81.
130. Ibid., 391.
131. Adelman, 12; 26.
132. See Mary Floyd-Wilson’s excellent *Occult Knowledge, Science and Gender on the Shakespearean Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
133. See Paster, *Embarrassed*, Intro.
134. Stolberg, “A Woman’s Hell?” 406–407.
135. Lynn Botelho, “Old Women in Early Modern Europe: Age as an Analytical Category,” *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. M. Poska, K. McIver et al. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 237.

136. Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 95.
137. Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 132.
138. Patricia Crawford, “Attitudes to Menstruation in Seventeenth-Century England,” *Past and Present* 91, no. 1 (May 1981), 47–73; M. Poska and K. McIver, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Poska, McIver et al. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); Lesley Dean-Jones, *Women’s Bodies in Classical Greek Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Lynn Botelho, and Pat Thane, eds., *Women and Ageing in British Society Since 1500* (London: Longman Books, 2001).
139. Patricia Crawford and Sara Mendleson, eds., *Women in Early Modern England 1550–1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 49.
140. Read, *Menstruation*, 177.
141. I have referenced the noted midwife Jane Sharp (fl.1650) who wrote technically later than the chronological parameters of this book because her strong female voice reinterprets and builds upon much earlier, established medical practice that would have been common knowledge to physicians of Shakespeare’s era.
142. Physicians such as John Sadler (1636), and Jakob Ruëff (1637) note that there was a potential for abuse by women who might trick their doctor into prescribing an emmenagogue with the clear intention of it acting as an abortifacient, or those who unwillingly became “mudereres to the fruit of their own bodies” through simple “ignorance” of the fact that they were pregnant when taking it. See John Sadler, *The Sick Womans Private Looking-Glasse* (London, 1636), 143, and Jakob Ruëff, *The Expert Midwife*. 1637 ed., <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
143. Simon Forman, *The casebooks of Simon Forman and Richard Napier*, 1596–1634: a digital edition, ed. Lauren Kassell et al., <http://casebooks.lib.cam.ac.uk/cases>. The cases I have mentioned are listed in the following order: 12381; 77330; 53464; 11762; 66929; 12177; 10172; 73826; 43454.
144. See François Mauriceau in *The Diseases of Woman with Child* (1673).
145. Carol Levin, “Pregnancy, False Pregnancy, and Questionable Heirs: Mary I and Her Echoes,” *The Birth of a Queen: Essays on the Quincentenary of Mary I*, ed. Sarah Duncan and Valerie Schutte (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 40.
146. Calendar of State Papers, Spain, Vol. 13, 1554–1558 ed., Royall Tyler (London, 1954), 239–249, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk>.
147. Calendar of State Papers, Spain, Vol. 13, May 1555, 1–10, Royall Tyler (London, 1954), 168–170, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk>.

148. Anonymous, *The History of the Life, Bloody Reign and Death of Queen Mary* (London: Printed for D. Browne and T. Benskin, 1682), 178, <https://www.proquest.com>; Francis Fullwood, 1655, qtd. in Levin, 2016, 40.
149. Pierre Dionis, *A General Treatise of Midwifery* (London, 1719), 109, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
150. Jacques Guillemeau, *Child-Birth or, The Happy Delivery of Women*, 1612 ed., 14, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
151. See (1.2.261–293), (1.2.365), (2.2.102). William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, *The Oxford Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Orgel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
152. Dionis, 109.
153. Milo Keynes conjectures that Mary might have suffered from either ovarian cysts or a pituitary endocrine gland tumour, “The Aching Head and Increasing Blindness of Queen Mary 1,” *Journal of Medical Biography* 8, no. 2 (May 2000), 102–109.
154. Elizabeth I, *Tilbury Speech*, <https://www.rmg.co.uk>.
155. Anne Whitelock, *The Queen’s Bed: An Intimate History of Elizabeth’s Court* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013), 130.
156. Carole Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 86; 61.
157. Kaara L. Peterson, “Elizabeth I’s Virginity and the Body of Evidence: Jonson’s Notorious Crux,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 86, no. 3 (Fall 2015), 840–871.
158. See Sawday, *The Body*, 198.
159. Whitelock, 341; 344.
160. *U.K. Gender Equality Monitor 2017/18*, 15.
161. Esteban Ortiz-Ospina, and Max Roser, “Economic Inequality by Gender,” <https://www.OurWorldindata.org>. 2019.
162. *U.K. Gender Equality Monitor 2017/18*, 13.
163. E.W. Freeman et al., “Hormones and Menopausal Status as Predictors of Depression in Women in Transition to Menopause,” *Arch Gen Psychiatry* 61 (2004), 90. At this time of writing, the world is recovering from a global pandemic: the economic and social fallout from Covid-19 quarantine with its resultant job losses and economic recession, and how this will affect the lives of middle-aged women is yet to be known.
164. Mariana Benjamin, *The Middleopause: On Turning Fifty* (London: Scribe Publications, 2016), 97.
165. Jane Ussher, *Fantasies of Femininity: Reframing the Boundaries of Sex* (London: Penguin, 1997), 199.
166. Lynne Segal, *Out of Time: The Pleasures and the Perils of Ageing* (London: Verso, 2013).

167. Benjamin, 2016.
168. E.W. Freeman et al., 62–70.
169. Harlow et al., 379; 374.
170. Bever, 181.
171. Segal, 26.
172. Joan Kelly-Gadol, “Did Women Have a Renaissance?” *Feminism and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
173. Marjorie Clary Feinson, “Where Are the Women in the History of Aging?” *Social Science History* 9, no. 4 (1985), 429–452.
174. Kathleen Woodward, “Performing Age, Performing Gender,” *NSA Journal* 18, no. 1 (Spring 2006), 162–189.
175. Woodward, “Youthfulness as Masquerade,” *Discourse* 11, no. 1 (Fall-Winter 1988–1989), 119–142.
176. Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 95. Other scholars who have explored the place of the unruly woman in the Renaissance include Lynda Boose, Penny Gay, Carol Rutter.
177. Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 132.
178. Botelho, 2006, 237.
179. Stolberg, “A Woman’s Hell?” 406–407.
180. Lynn Botelho, “Old Women in Early Modern Europe: Age as an Analytical Category,” *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. M. Poska, K. McIver et al. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 237.
181. Keir Elam, “In What Chapter of His Bosom?: Reading Shakespeare’s Bodies,” *Alternative Shakespeares Volume 2*, ed. Terence Hawkes (London: Routledge, 1996), 144.
182. *The Meanings of Menopause: Historical, Medical and Clinical Perspectives*, ed. Ruth Formanek (London: Analytic Press, 1990).
183. Ian Maclean, “The Notion of Women in Medicine, Anatomy, and Physiology,” *Feminism and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 137.
184. Patricia Crawford, “Attitudes to Menstruation,” 47–73.
185. Read, 175.
186. Paster, *Embarrassed*, 3–4; 9.
187. *Ibid.*, 3.
188. Paster, *Humoring*, 6.
189. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).
190. Bakhtin, 25.

191. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 64; *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, trans. Thomas Gora et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).
192. *Ibid.*, 4; 77.
193. Adelman, 2; 26; 17.
194. Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2011), 4.
195. Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).
196. Jonathan Dollimore, “Introduction: Shakespeare, Cultural Materialism and the New Historicism,” *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 11.
197. Kathleen McLuskie, “The Patriarchal Bard: Feminist Criticism and Shakespeare: King Lear and Measure for Measure,” *Political Shakespeare*, 106.
198. Christine Couche, “A Mind Diseased: Reading Lady Macbeth’s Madness,” *Word and Self Estranged in English Texts, 1550–1660*, ed. Phillipa Kelly et al. (London: Routledge, 2010), 138.
199. See Terence Hawkes, *Shakespeare in the Present* (London: Routledge, 2002), and *Presentist Shakespeares*, ed. Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes (London: Routledge, 2007).
200. Helen Moore, *Times Literary Supplement*, 15 August (2003), 22.
201. John Holbro, “Shakespeare Now: The Function of Presentism at the Critical Time,” *Literature Compass*, 5.6 (2008), 1097. Holbro deconstructs presentism’s arguments concluding that its proponents “have failed to face up to the simple consideration that ‘presentism’ means a species of error, or it means nothing” (1097).
202. Grady and Hawkes, *Presentist Shakespeares*, 4.
203. Although not identified as a Critical Theory or School per se, academic scholars have written of such a heterogeneous approach as “interdisciplinarity,” a term that is problematic. Jan C. Schmidt has noted that “the term is quite misty, foggy, fringed, and shadowy,” and that, “this vagueness challenges philosophy.” As far back as 1977, George Gusdorf wrote of interdisciplinarity that, “even those who advocate this new image of knowledge would find it hard to define.” In terms, then, of placing my own work within this “shadowy” philosophy, I embrace both Schmidt’s position that, as a methodological approach, interdisciplinarity “organise[s] the transfer between disciplines,” and Harvey J. Graff’s assertion that interdisciplinary and literary studies “can be better understood with more attention to a larger chronological span of intellectual and sociocultural development and a broader, more dynamic focus

- on its place and play among a wide array of disciplines and institutional locations.” See Jan C. Schmidt, “Towards a Philosophy of Interdisciplinarity.” *Poiesis and Praxis* 5 (2008), 20; 41; 53–69; George Gusdorf, “Past, Present, and Future in Interdisciplinary Research,” *International Social Science Journal* 29 (1977), 580–600; Lynette Hunter, “Being in-Between: Performance Studies for Sustaining Interdisciplinarity,” *Cogent Arts and Humanities* 2 (2015); Graff, *ibid.*, 282.
204. Hunter, 6.
205. Harvey J. Graff, “Literacy Studies and Interdisciplinary Studies: Reflections on History and Theory,” *Valences of Interdisciplinarity: Theory, Practice, Pedagogy*, ed. Raphael Foshay (Edmonton: AU Press, 2011), 282.
206. I am drawn to Lynette Hunter’s reminder that any interdisciplinary approach to scholarship is rooted in the etymology of the word “inter” meaning “between” or “among,” and “*discere*,” to “see” by “separating, *dis/capere*.” Hunter describes this interdisciplinary approach as one that “anatomizes” its subject (2015), 3.
207. Scholar Amy Kenny has recently argued that the “bloodless” corpses of female characters on the Elizabethan stage was a means for Shakespeare to grant agency to these women, arguing that the static presentment of bloodless corpses, “preserves” their “impenetrability” “recuper[ating] bloodshed within a narrative of somatic control,” a “reverse of the leaky womb.” As the resulting ends of the tragic women under consideration involve a sudden or violent silencing enacted upon their bodies thus precluding any chance of social reintegration, then my thesis argues to the complete contrary. See *Humoral Wombs on the Shakespearean Stage* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 139.
208. Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Minde in General. Corrected, Enlarged, and with Sundry New Discourses Augmented*, 1604 ed., 64, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.



CHAPTER 2

Gertrude and the Petrifying Gorgon Womb

INTRODUCTION: COLUMBA CHATRY, NOSTRADAMUS, AND THE STONE BABY

1516, Sens, France. A newly married tailor's wife, Columba Chatry, fell pregnant with her one and only child. But when the usual nine-month gestation period ended, there was consequently no labour and no baby. For the next twenty-eight years, Chatry continued to believe herself pregnant. When she died of apparent natural causes, her husband engaged two surgeons to dissect his wife's body with the hopes of solving the mystery of her decades-long pregnancy. Opening up Columba's womb, what the physicians found shocked and amazed them: like an abject parasite growing inside Chatry's proto-menopausal uterus, her fully developed infant had completely transformed into stone:

Within the womb was a child, perfectly formed and partly petrified, its skull shining like a horn...the child...which was so grown to the mother...was perfectly developed and of such hardness that to this day that the little body defieth all kinds of corruption.¹

Reports of the “stone baby” went on to cause a continental sensation. Dr. Theophilus Garencières (1610–1680) was convinced that Chatry’s petrified child was the literal embodiment of one of the visions of the infamous

prognosticator Nostradamus (1503–1566). Readers of Garencières’ lurid tale were provided with two “observable wonders”:

One, that the Child dying in the womb, did not corrupt, and so cause the death of its Mother. The other, by what virtue or power of the body this Child was petrified, feeling that the Womb is a hot and moist place, and therefore more subject to putrefaction.

This wonderous baby, argued Garencières, was material evidence of Nostradamus’ twenty-third quatrain: “That which shall live and shall have no sense.” Garencières was convinced that the “birth” of the ossified baby was so influential that it sympathetically changed the very atmosphere of the town’s climate, for the year that the foetus was surgically removed, Sens suffered “much damage by Hail and Ice.” Fame of this grotesquerie was so great that eventually Charles I offered to buy it.

Columba Chatry’s tale was still being written about as late as the eighteenth century. Nathaniel Wanley (1634–1680) was to elaborate upon the story in his *The Wonders of the Little World* by suggesting that “the slimy matter of the child’s body” was “hardened” by “the extraordinary heat of the matrix.”² Wanley explained the oddity of this phenomena by alluding to the classical fable of Niobe, the tragic “Statue-Wife,” with “her harden’d mouth upseal’d,” who turned to stone through grief at the loss of her children, a myth re-told by Ovid (b. 43 BC) in his *Metamorphoses*. At the very heart of Chatry’s tale lay the fears and suspicions of the unseen “secret ways” of gestation, traceable only by miraculous signs in the “strange and uncouth” female body. Both Garencières and Wanley were disturbed by the ambiguity surrounding the Chatry baby’s petrification: the matrix, contrary to all reason, should not yield stone when its interior was understood to be a “hot and moist” place of “slimy matter.” Thus, the early modern surgical project to dissect the womb in order to explore its mysteries, generated corollary anxieties when its contents and composition challenged received notions of what constituted the uterus’ “normal” humoral microclimate.

Chatry’s condition conforms to a documented medical syndrome known as *lithopaedia*. A “lithopedion,” or “stone baby,” is believed to be the result of a non-viable pregnancy whereby the ova is fertilized in the fallopian tubes or in the placental or stomach cavities. It is a pathology usually discovered in post-menopausal women with a mean age of fifty-five.³ It is a rare phenomenon. There have only ever been

three hundred cases discovered worldwide since the first documented incident by the tenth-century Spanish Muslim physician Abulcasis (936–1013).⁴ The open display of Columba Chatry's proto-menopausal womb offered a way to view Nature's wonders, but its stony contents generated disturbing questions about the ageing uterus, questions that could only be answered through a violent and invasive penetration. Illustrations of Chatry's opened womb highlight the petrified infant still conjoined to the dead body of its mother, it is the lithopedion's physical attachment to the maternal matrix that most arouses interest for the artist (Fig. 2.1). In *Hamlet* (c.1600), Janet Adelman argues that the turn to the woman's body, "is always felt as a turn to the devouring maternal womb," not just with the potential for "incestuous nightmare," but also for the "total annihilation implied by that return."⁵ I am concerned less with the implications for incestuous fantasies of maternal reunification, but I do agree with Adelman that the death-drive implicit in Hamlet's motivating desire is overwhelming. Hamlet's return to the maternal body is a longed-for annihilation: an obliteration of the self based on a fantasy where female flesh has changed in its humoral disposition to become a bounded space of "stony" gestation, the child still petrified and clinging to the site of origin. It is this same binding to the maternal body that Hamlet simultaneously desires and is repulsed by; a return by the child to the mother as an alternate vision of the "one flesh" that binds husband and wife (4.3.50). As with Chatry, the petrified womb precludes the threat of being born, for to be born of his mother's flesh torments Hamlet with the knowledge that his ageing, widowed mother is still sexually active, a thought that obsesses and disgusts him in equal measure. Hamlet, in fact, longs to be a lithopedion. Hamlet's death-drive to see his own "solid" or "sullied" flesh transformed into the "dew" of alien matter (1.2.129), resides within his desire to materially transform his mother's ageing flesh. By embodying the "unborn" lithopedion infant, Hamlet could achieve a miraculous stasis; a suspension rejecting life, vitality, the erotic impulse, "the thousand natural shocks / That flesh is heir to" (3.1.68–69). Hamlet's "dream" is "to sleep" in the maternal stony womb without acknowledging the still-sexualized orgasmic body of the proto-menopausal female (2.1.70–71). Hamlet's mission of revenge, therefore, is not only connected to ridding Denmark of the "foul and unnatural" murderer Claudius (1.5.25), but also to remove the "taint" (1.5.84) of the ageing mother's moist and, therefore, sexual flesh, the heart of which, Hamlet hopes, is still "penetrable stuff" (3.4.34).



A. Figura & situs infantis in utero.
B. Infans extractus cum parte uteri & tunicarum.
C. Corpusculum in quam potuimus dimensionem extensum.

Fig. 2.1 *Illustration de Portentosum lithpaedion*, artist unknown, Jean Ailleboust author. In an agonising semi-sexual display, Columba Chatry opens her dissected womb to reveal her lithopædion. To her right, the same lithopædion is shown in its bounded space of stony death; to Chatry's left, it becomes a macabre souvenir displayed on a uterine-shaped cushion (Credit Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris)

As the early modern woman aged, according to both the Hippocratic and Galenic medical tradition, her humours were believed to dry out. Indeed, as Galen (AD 129–216) had argued, desiccation or *marasmus* was one of the defining qualities that marked the entrance into old age.⁶ Of consequence is how such drying might affect the ageing female libido, and how such *marasmus* might, in turn, influence a proto-menopausal woman's overall physical constitution. Equating drying with sexlessness, as much Hamlet might desire the desiccation of Gertrude's flesh, in the humoral economy, the extreme drying out of proto-menopausal tissues could prove mortally dangerous to the woman herself. The desiccation of a proto-menopausal female body generated such poisonous toxins that her mere physical presence might prove fatal to any living thing in proximity. To avert such disaster, regular sexual intercourse, even into old age, remained vital to the ageing woman's health concerns—concerns whose treatment was frequently at odds with social and religious custom. The same cultural contradictions are implicit in *Hamlet*: if Hamlet wants his mother to “tame” her widow's sex drive “in the blood” (3.4.77), Gertrude must purposefully choose to avoid intercourse with her new “bloat king” (3.4.181), but to do so would mean that the subsequent drying of her body would result in fatal consequences—both for herself and others. The prescription for sexual intercourse was based primarily in the supposition that as male sperm was believed to have a moistening effect on the womb's interior, as the womb dried it continued to need this emollient to fend off such serious physiological conditions as “rage of the womb” (*Furor Uterinus*), and uterine “strangulation,” sometimes known as “fits of the Mother.”⁷ Many aspects of this disease in the proto-menopausal body are explored further in Chapters 5 and 6, but for the purposes of this chapter, I want to explore the specific implications of a drying womb and its corollary influence upon the female sex drive, the pathology of which caused the desiccating body to emanate deadly, petrifying toxins, both within and without the body proper. Thus, Hamlet's desire for his mother's complete sexual abstinence can only be realized through phenomenological and material transformation of the womb, an embodied annihilation of both mother and son.

**“THE HEYDAY IN THE BLOOD SHOULD BE TAME”:
FUROR UTERINUS AND SUFFOCATION OF THE WOMB**

The Dutch physician Levinus Lemnius (1505–1568) viewed ageing as a natural continuum whereby the ultimate matter of the female body moved from fecund moistness towards a desiccated state heralding death: “the extinction of nature, that is to say, of the natural heat, and natural humour” was the first indication of oncoming old age.⁸ Lemnius’ view was in accordance with the dominant Aristotelian and Galenic theory which held that as a person aged, their humours dried out, the female body ageing quicker than the male’s. Galen’s theory of the “wasting” of the body could result from too much heat being generated, as was the cause of contracting fevers, or too little heat together with drying that would result in old age and senility.⁹ Galen had argued that in the thermal economy of humours, men were hotter than women, an idea that contradicted the pseudo-Hippocratic theory expressed in *De morbis mulierum* (1585) that had held that women were hotter than men.¹⁰ But if gender was a question of heat, we have no standardized marker by which to measure the differences in degree between “female” versus “male” heat—only that a hotter body was considered superior.¹¹ Thus one of the ways that we can examine heating and drying of the female body is through the lens of medical “health” and how the detrimental changes to the homeostatic female body that came with ageing needed to be managed medically. Without knowing the exact characteristics of thermal changes to her humoral temperament, let us propose that the apotheosis of the proto-menopausal woman would be when her flesh became a kind of “[im]penetrable stuff” (3.4.34), comprised of transformed matter more akin to that of stone than flesh. This drying and heating of the ageing female body is primarily articulated in *Hamlet* as a question of proto-menopausal sexuality, penultimately expressed in Hamlet’s supposition that the “heyday in the blood” of his mother’s body “*should* be tame” (3.4.68 *italics mine*). The play’s obsession with the moral “health” of the body politic makes Gertrude’s own metonymized womb the perfect receptacle of these sexual anxieties: the Galenic and Hippocratic assertion that a woman’s moist, cold nature corresponded to her perceived passive and inferior moral character still held considerable sway and would do well into the eighteenth century.¹² The womb as the poisonous site of moral and physical corruption was a common trope amplified in Claude Quillet’s (1602–1661) poem “Callipaedia: or, The Art of Getting Beautiful

Children,” where the womb’s “pollution” is so potent that it is physically capable of blighting the child’s body *in utero*:

The flowing Womb with foul Pollution stains...
 And with th’ impurer Dross of Nature mix...
 Foul Leprous Spots shall with his Birth begin,
 Spread o’er his Body and encrust his Skin;
 For that same poison which that Steam contains,
 Transfer’d affects the forming Infant’s Veins.¹³

This maternal taint is expressed in *Hamlet* in terms of various poisonous toxins that have their origins in the contaminating proto-menopausal womb. Gertrude’s “dross of nature”—her nascent sexuality—causes the “leprous spots” that manifest as the poisonous eruptions that “bark[ed]” about the dying Hamlet Senior’s flesh with a “vile and loathsome crust” (1.5.76–77). Thus, the “pollut[ed]” inner workings of Gertrude’s body are mirrored by, indeed may even engender, the “rank” (3.3.39) offence of Claudius’ fratricide, the macrocosmic “rotten[ness]” (1.5.72) of the state. Hamlet’s misogyny is humorally expressed as the penultimate: “Frailty, thy name is woman!” (1.2.146). This moral and spiritual dimension of humoral theory results in Hamlet’s belief that the means to his mother’s salvation is through the alteration of her humoral constitution: Gertrude’s threat can be removed if the cold, moist humours that dictate her still-youthful sex drive are forced into an accelerated desiccation by her deliberate and willing choice to refrain from sexual intercourse. This bond of physiology with moral rectitude means that Hamlet’s demand for Gertrude’s rejection of sexual temptation by Claudius’ “padding” (3.4.184), underscores the early modern belief that such libidinous restraint could actually transform a woman’s humoral constitution: “For use almost can change the stamp of nature” (3.4.166). Any wilfully chosen abstinence would also result in the eventual cooling of Gertrude’s own sexual desires: “But go not to my uncle’s bed: / Assume a virtue, if you have it not? Refrain tonight, / And then it shall lend a kind of easiness / To the next abstinence” (3.4.165–169). Hamlet implies that feigning sexual disinterest coupled with foregoing the sex act itself, will allow Gertrude’s body to work in conjunction with her mind to eradicate the sex drive altogether. This is a remarkable expression of what today we would recognize as a psychosomatic connectedness, but conceptually one might trace its roots to early modern physiology. The humours were

understood to form a synchronous bond with the “passions,” that is, the emotions, imagination, and instincts. “Passions engender Humors, and humors breed Passions,”¹⁴ was an accepted phenomenon documented by numerous natural philosophers such as Robert Burton (1577–1640). Hamlet proposes that proto-menopause *should* render his mother’s sex drive more “tame” in the “blood” (3.4.70), thus suggesting that sexual heat might be naturally subject to a further cooling: coupled with the complete stoppage of sexual activity, Gertrude’s womb would end up becoming as “safe” and inert as lifeless stone, a “sterile promontory” (2.2.301).

Humoral doctrine also had an important, inextricable connection to the overall health of the proto-menopausal female, for if ageing women, particularly widows, could not purge “trapped” menses and female “sperm” through coition, then the resulting pathologies suggested that she might be driven mad by the percolated heat and toxicity of such fluids. Such retained fluids could cause serious, if not fatal, pathological conditions such as “Strangulation of the Womb,” and “Rage of the Womb.” In the Hippocratic tradition, the properties of male semen were believed to act as a necessary and natural much-needed lubricant, especially for elderly and childless women: if the “moistening activity” of sexual intercourse was absent, then the “dry and light womb may suddenly turn around and move up in search of moisture.”¹⁵ Jane Sharp (fl.1650) noted that vigorous sex was needed to help combat diseases in the older woman that would otherwise make her grow “mad with carnal desire.”¹⁶ This physiological imperative forced an elderly widow or woman “advanced in age” to counter the “wandering” of her uterus by engaging in regular intercourse, or risk death after the sixth month of abstinence.¹⁷ The continued moistening of the womb, therefore, was essential for on-going health. Even etymologically, the Latin word for woman—“mulier”—was likely derived from the source “mollier,” meaning “moist” or “malleable.”¹⁸ The health and longevity of the ageing woman was completely dependent upon continued sexual intercourse in the wake of proto-menopause. There is a direct conflict here between the societal expectations placed upon the proto-menopausal woman, especially if she happened to be a widow, and the medical and therapeutic need for continued sexual activity if a woman was to keep her uterus *emollient*. Post-menopausal sexuality, therefore, was cause for anxiety because in the absence of any telling pregnancy, it could not be policed.¹⁹ Hamlet echoes this sociological anxiety

about his mother's short-lived widowhood: choosing to remarry, especially to satiate her own sexual urges, Gertrude has undertaken "Such an act / That blurs the grace and blush of modesty, / Calls virtue hypocrite" (3.4.42–44). Gertrude's "lust[y]" (1.5.60) fluid attributes are inscribed upon her flesh as the "blister" of the harlot's brand (3.4.46). Hamlet's fantasy is that the darker, corrupt, and feminine half of a woman's corporeal heart, the seat of lust, might be "cast away" leaving the remaining de-sexualized flesh as "purer" matter (3.4.154).

The uterus continued to be the seat and source of many mysterious internal changes in the female body, sympathies and atmospheric influences that would spill out into the environment,²⁰ as was the case when Chatry's uterus was dissected. These mysteries are what made the uterus the most prized anatomical organ in the surgical theatre.²¹ "Nero-like," Chris Laoutaris argues, Hamlet indulges in an "anatomical investigation of his mother" where he ultimately seeks "evidence of his mother's crime in the vivisection of her body."²² Physician Edward Jorden (1569 – 1633) drew such a parallel between uterine pathology, moral sensibility, and the health of the entire body proper, by writing that if a womb appeared to be "depraved," the "*offense*" is communicated from thence to the rest of the body.²³ Hence the "depravation" of Gertrude's ageing womb sympathetically engenders the "offense" that Hamlet tells Horatio is acknowledged in the speech of the "honest ghost" (1.5.136–139). Through a kind of sympathetic connection to the body politic, microcosmic uterine dysfunction works to shape macrocosmic disorder, the "rank" "gross[ness]" of things gone to seed in an "unweeded garden" (1.2.135–136). The medical and spiritual focus upon the womb was to "pluck out" the "heart" of a woman's "mystery" (3.2.357) in an effort, not solely to explain her fundamental anatomical difference to man, but also to account for certain behavioural and moral differences. Female morality included a "natural" proclivity towards sin, and "sin" in this equation was nearly always identified as lust, a belief endorsed by Hamlet's father (1.5.58–62). In the early fourteenth century, Albertus Magnus (1193–1280) wrote in the *Secretis Mulierum* that, "the womb of a female is like a sewer situated in the middle of a town where all the waste materials run together," and the Elizabethan physician Simon Forman (1552–1611) identified the womb as the seat of all disease because "Eve harkened to the serpent."²⁴ Traces of this moral panic can still be outlined in *Hamlet*, where Gertrude's womb becomes the sinful macrocosmic locus of the "foul and pestilent congregation of

vapours" (2.2.296) befouling the body politic, revelling in its "corruption" (3.4.93). On a microcosmic level, this image suggests trapped and poisonous menstrual vapours circulating within the proto-menopausal womb. The proto-menopausal body with its implicit pathological relationship to disease rendered it a body overflowing with stagnating and poisonous humours, a body already destined for the grave:

The retention of menses engenders many evil humours. The women being old have almost no natural heat left to consume and control this matter...These women are more venomous than others.²⁵

Even when it was at its most fertile or when it was inscribed by old age, the womb was the natural repository of danger and disease: "The place from whence comes life, is also the breeder of most deadly poison."²⁶ In *Hamlet*, the ageing womb is imagined as the grave, the mouth of "hell" that "breathes out contagion to this world" (3.2.369–370).

THE BASILISK GAZE: OCULAR FASCINATION AND THE HEATING WOMB

Without regular sexual intercourse to emolliate her womb and help purge it of its trapped fluids, pathologies were believed to arise in the ageing female, myriad syndromes connected with the womb's "wanderings." The specifics of these utero-centric complaints are dealt with in subsequent chapters, but for our exploration of *Hamlet* and the petrifying womb, there is one particular pathology of note: that is to do with how a proto-menopausal woman's trapped, poisonous menses were believed to escape the body proper through her mouth, and, in particular, her eyes. Collectively, these poisons were transmuted into noxious and vaporous fumes that had the power to kill all animate life. In the literary and medical tomes of the era, this malefic pathology metamorphosed the proto-menopausal woman into the fearful Cockatrice, Basilisk, and Gorgon—all mythological creatures connected with physical petrification. The allusions to these creatures articulate anxieties regarding the monstrous and unnatural womb, as well as the pre-Oedipal "Devouring Mother" who utilized the ocular as a vehicle to strike fear and terror into the infant. The lithopedion is visual and material proof—an icon—of the mother's unnatural sexual activity. That is why Chatry's baby was kept as a freak souvenir,²⁷ a fetish object: the lithopedion is the Medusa eye turned

inwards, the hungry womb denied male sperm, forced to feed upon its own juices, cannibalizing its own offspring. The eyes, then, become the means of focusing and refracting mortal poison, a deadly emanation that can target victims over vast distances: this is a form of what was known as “fascination.” “Fascination” was a powerful force believed to be generated within those with strong imaginations: such a force of will was so influential, it could transmit or receive extreme passions using the eyes as the vehicles of that transmission. One could be an active “fascinator” or the passive “fascinated.” Petrification became the ultimate state of fascination, the ability of the Gorgonian monster to arrest the life force by turning others into stone. Thus the literal petrification of victims that one encounters in classical mythology could now be imagined as embodied by the abject proto-menopausal woman; the Hag who could blight other bodies through her poisonous eye emanations. These deadly eye beams, then, are a way of extending the trope of the “greedy womb” as an organ that consumes, for the eye was also said to imbibe the fluids of others in an almost parasitic, vampiric way. When Hamlet speaks of his dreams of sleep and death, he talks about a “consummation / Devoutly to be wished” (3.1.69–70). The word “consummation” is telling: not only does it suggest the sex act itself, but it also denotes being consumed as food, sustenance. The “eye” itself in *Hamlet* becomes the synecdochical extension of the Devouring Mother, the Mother who assumes the classical personae of various petrifying creatures: Cockatrice, Basilisk, and Gorgon.

The Cockatrice, a cryptozoological figure, is mentioned numerous times in the Bible and seems to have been perceived as a creature that resembled a winged snake.²⁸ Some legends argued that the monster was hatched from a cock’s egg and could only be defeated by the weasel. The terrifying Cockatrice was deadly to all biological life: it was said to emit such toxic poisons that it could kill with its breath or with a mere glance from its eyes. As recorded by the early modern naturalist Edward Topsell (1572–1625), the Cockatrice was a creature “[that] killeth by seeing, then by the breath of his mouth.”²⁹ Associated with heraldry and alchemy, the creature’s notorious mythology reached its apex at the end of the twelfth century, its prominence dying out towards the end of the seventeenth century, apparently due to its lack of clear species identity within newly defined scientific taxonomies.³⁰ The Cockatrice, it seems, was always a liminal creature—not wholly reptile, mammal, bird, or imagined monster. To add to its ambiguity, the Cockatrice was also confused with the Basilisk, similarly a venomous serpent described by Pliny as a

creature known to kill at a distance by its sight and breath.³¹ In his *Practica seu Lilium medicina* (1542), Bernard de Gordon recorded the pervasiveness of the Basilisk's contagion that could "corrupt" the very air, and "kill over a great distance." The vapours that arose from the Basilisk's body, according to Niccoló Bertruccio (d.1347), poisoned the very air surrounding its lair: "There is absolutely no cure. If you see a person perish suddenly, without evident cause...you should know that this is due to a Basilisk."³² The Pseudo-Paracelsus argued that the Basilisk's birth made it "against the order of nature," and that it was responsible for "the greatest slaughter of humans, such as has never come to be, or existed." Paracelsus (1493–1541) compared the Cockatrice's ability to inflict death to an angry or jealous woman's ability to generate macrocosmic pestilence. The pseudo-medical nature of the proto-menopausal woman's affinity with the literary Basilisk and Cockatrice means that, like the ambiguity surrounding the notion of the "wandering womb," it is sometimes unclear as to how much of this analogy is purely metaphorical in scope, and how much is actually based on an understood physiological pathology: do the poisons that emanate from a proto-menopausal body render the subject *like* a Cockatrice, or, is the fearful ageing woman understood *to be* a human embodiment of such teratology? Certainly Shakespeare himself connected the figure of the Basilisk and the Cockatrice to the female body. In *Richard III* (1593), the Duchess of York, perhaps alluding to the Biblical "cockatrice's den,"³³ likens her own womb to the "miser[able]" nest of a Cockatrice, which has "hatched" her monstrous son:

O my accursed womb, the bed of death,
 A cockatrice thou hast hatched to the world,
 Whose unavoids eye is murderous. (4.1.49–51)

In the same play, Richard enunciates the common Elizabethan trope for sudden love sickness by maintaining that Lady Anne has "infected" his eyes; Anne counters with the furious wish that, as for her own eyes, "Would they were basilisks to strike thee dead" (1.2.145–148). Paracelsus warned that, filtered through her eyes, a woman's uterine *menstruum* could be projected into the heavens causing plague.³⁴ It is highly relevant that in these examples, both the "womb" and the "eyes" become synonymous as the organs of poisonous transmission and infection.

The alchemist would encounter both the Basilisk and Cockatrice as metaphorical entities integral to the chemical transmutation of matter known as “the stone.” Guido Magnus de Montanor (fl.1400) wrote of a liquid called “the Basilisk,” that once coagulated into stone, could “kill” Mercury into Silver, a mystical transmutation where, “If you hold a mirror to it, it kills itself.”³⁵ The terms “Basilisk” and “Cockatrice” were connected with the final stages of the Great Work, the extraction of the “Quintessence,” the “perfect substance...the essence of all celestial and terrestrial creatures”³⁶ from the fabled Philosopher’s Stone.³⁷ When he considers the material nature of mankind, Hamlet employs a common alchemical allusion to describe what happens when the magical elixir of Quintessence is separated from the body upon death: “What is this quintessence of dust?” (2.2.310). Hamlet is obsessed with the composition and decomposition of flesh: for if the sum of Man’s material nature is simply dust, then what remains after this quasi-divine fifth essence degenerates is the worthless stuff of “base us[age]” (5.1.192)—clay, loam, daub, food for worms. In biological terms, the identity of both the Basilisk and the Cockatrice seemed to transcend the mere metaphorical and mystical to assume a real, embodied threat, housed, not within the confines of an alembic, but within the body proper of the proto-menopausal woman as “a product of unnatural generation... and as an exemplar [of the] feminine imagination run wild.”³⁸ In his *Compendium medicine*, Gilbertus Anglicus (1180–1250) centred the Basilisk’s poisonous capabilities within its eyes thereby making a direct comparison between its power and that of a menstruating woman who “infects a mirror and whatever she looks at...by the infecting spirits of the eyes and through the infection of the air.”³⁹ The rays sent by the fascinating eye could produce numeral physiological effects in others, everything from sudden infatuation to malefic forces of rage and envy.⁴⁰ As an entity, the Basilisk generated suppositions about the puzzling nature of sudden death from disease and contagion, especially infection born from poisonous air or “miasma.”⁴¹ Paracelsus argued that the vitreous humours of the Basilisk’s deadly eyes could be equated the poisonous interior of all women’s wombs.⁴² This emitted ocular poison, received in turn through the victims’ eyes, targeted the heart, thus allowing the venom to course through the entire body. This is a perverse inversion of the heart of Hamlet, the sun/son (1.2.67) being flooded, not with heavenly rays of “golden fire” (2.2.303) from his Father Hyperion (1.2.140), but from the Dark Mother phallically penetrating the

“brave o’erhanging firmament” with “a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours” (2.2.268–269) issuing from her proto-menopausal body.

The Basilisk’s fascination was closely aligned to the same purported spiritual and physiological malevolence levelled by the Hag of nightmare and her so-called “Evil Eye.” According to Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), the Evil Eye was the source of all forms of fascination, and he linked it to the strong imagination that manifested itself through the eyes of malicious old women.⁴³ The Evil Eye’s malefic intent was rooted in envy of the looked-upon—children, younger women, pregnant women, fertile crops, or cattle. The Evil Eye’s primary power was its ability to desiccate—literally evaporate—moist fluids within the entity it gazed upon. This notion harkens to the classical belief that warm and fluid entities were replete with a vital life force, whereas cold and dry bodies were those that were closest to death.⁴⁴ The purveyor of the Evil Eye, then, craved the fluids of that which it envied. This is surely the same logic that underlay the Hippocratic and early modern belief that the proto-menopausal womb, when denied the emolliating fluid remedies of menstrual blood and semen, “wandered” about the body in search of moist organs such as the liver and heart to “feed” upon. Claude Quillet’s satirical poem notes that “lusty Nature” required that the “dull Drieness of old Age” would force an older woman “to feed its drying Fires” by seeking vigorous sex with a younger man yet unfortunately would remain “still unsated with the Wat’ry Store.”⁴⁵ In classical Mime, one encounters the persona of the old woman Petreia (“Stony”), an archetypal Hag who sought moisture through excessive alcohol consumption: she was named after her body’s dryness, “the blight of the field, the stones.”⁴⁶ As the “bloat king” (3.4.180), swollen and “stewed” (3.4.91) with the corrupt juices of unbridled lust, wine, and sweat, Claudius now stands in perfect place to supply the fluids required by Gertrude’s drying womb. As the Satyr (1.2.140), Claudius becomes an analogous figure to the mythological god Priapus who, as a “prodigiously juicy” entity, assured his followers that he had no sexual need of any “sapless” lover, “like crumbling, holey pumice.”⁴⁷ The act of malefic fascination, then, whether exercised by the Basilisk or Cockatrice and linked to the vehicular transmission of an older woman’s eye, had the ability to transform the body’s fluid humoral constitution. Invariably the victim’s healthy, clean, and flowing liquids, were poisoned, blocked, stagnated, or completely petrified in the manner of stone.

As established, most early modern physicians wrote that the “excrementitious” menstrual poisons that originated within the womb, unless released through menstruation or sexual intercourse, would reach a critical mass and escape through the eyes. Giambattista della Porta (1535–1615) argued that analogous to “spontaneous generation” where the “heat of the sun” brought forth “all kinds of living Creatures” from “putrified stuff,” red toads, frogs, and lizards could be also generated from “womens (*sic*) putrified flowers.”⁴⁸ Della Porta’s belief that all menstrual blood was “corrupted” furthered his own theory that “the efflux of beams out of the eyes” of an “unclean women” (*sic*) could produce spirits that would “strike through the eyes of those they meet” and attack the heart whereupon a “contagion” would “infect” the entire victim. Intimately aware of this process, della Porta recounted that he had once fallen victim to such a foul act of infection:

I suffered from such an accident myself: for the eye infecteth the air, which being infected, infecteth another: carrying along with itself the vapors of the corrupted blood, by the contagion of which, the eyes of the beholders are overcast...So the Wolf maketh a man dumb; so the Cockatrice killeth, who poysoneth with looking on.

Because of the innate connection between this form of “poysoning” and unclean menstrual fluid, it was obvious, argued Della Porta, why more women were witches than men. In addition, such “fascination” was “found more often in old women.” The cessation of menstruation did not seem to diminish this power: indeed, old women could use this power to “wast” the bodies of those they envied, especially the young and beautiful. Della Porta, then, made the connection between the power of the envious old woman’s eye and the greedy mouth—the vapours her ageing body emitted sought “to feed” upon the victim’s fluids.

Reginald Scot (1538–1599) reiterated the general cultural belief that the desire of the witch to capture the “sweet and subtil bloud” of “a child, or a young man” meant that her eye was the ultimate vehicle for the “expulsion of the Spirits” that might “infect...the heart of the bewitched”:

For the poison and disease in the eye infecteth the air next unto it, ... carrying with it the vapour and infection of the corrupted bloud...whereof, the eyes of the beholders are most apt to be infected. By this same means, it is thought that the cockatrice depriveth the life.⁴⁹

Again, as with Della Porta, Scot argued that proto-menopausal women were particularly adept at this kind of diabolical fascination:

Old women, in whom the ordinary course of nature faileth in the office of purging their naturall monthly humours...leave in a looking glasse a certain froth, by means of the grosse vapours proceeding out of their eyes... but the beams ... from the eies of one body to another, do pierce to the inward parts and there breed infection...[they]... infeebleth the rest of his body and maketh him sick.

Scot advocated for the immediate execution of any old woman caught fascinating in this manner.

The “eye” in *Hamlet* is not just deadly: it is also sexual. As “eye” stands metonymically for “womb” as the site of such fearful proto-menopausal power, the poisonous “eye” functions analogously to the notion of the proto-menopausal “stone womb.” The terrifying power of both womb and eye to petrify others from *without*, as well as their apparent ability to desiccate and ossify life *within*, becomes most apparent in *Hamlet* when linked to the Prince’s fears of his mother’s on-going sexual desire. In Hamlet’s mind, the key to denying or eradicating the female sex drive is to restrain it within a desiccated proto-menopausal body. The petrified womb is a sexless womb. By contrast, the feminine sex drive makes men into monsters in image of themselves: “...for wise men know / Well enough what monsters you make of them” (3.1.143–144). It seems appropriate, given the *mythos* surrounding the ageing woman, that the organ of the eye and the faculty of sight should be the vehicle of the counter-measures needed to thwart the threat of the proto-menopausal body’s power: for if the eye can “devour” and petrify like the womb, then the means to stymie this power is to turn sight back upon itself, resulting in a fate similar to that which befell both Niobe and Hecuba in classical myth. Giambattista della Porta acknowledged that a refractive defensive technique could be enacted with “unclean” women in order to repel their malefic power: “[Like the Basilisk] ... with the beams of his eyes: which being reflexed upon himself by a looking glass kill the Author of them.”⁵⁰ The mythological allusions in *Hamlet*, then, also offer the theoretical means by which to defeat the Monstrous Feminine. Gazing with a Nero-like voyeurism onto the “celestial bed” (1.5.56) of his origins, now transformed into a “nasty sty” (3.4.92) of “garbage” (1.5.57), Hamlet attempts to combat the threat of the maternal body

by becoming a kind of “glass” (3.4.18) reflecting the metonymic eye/womb of Gertrude *back upon herself* to arrest her lustful power. The Evil Eye refracted inwards, blocks, stagnates, and dries out all scant humoral fluidity into its own type of “bung” (5.1.194), the “clay” and “loam” (5.1.199–200) of total desiccated life-in-death. The preponderance of references to mirrors in *Hamlet* indicates that in a pre-Freudian, pre-Lacanian sense, the mirror becomes the material means by which the terrible eye beams of the proto-menopausal mother can be deflected and potentially turned back upon the surveyor, thus petrifying the womb/eye in the manner of Columba Chatry. It is necessary, therefore, to explore the connections between the “eyes,” “womb,” and petrified matter as the apotheosis of the poisonous female humoral body, and how that might relate to the characters of Niobe, Hecuba, and Medusa as they appear in *Hamlet*. With the medical, teratological, and mythological concepts of petrification, Shakespeare gives us a whole new way to consider to “what base uses” the ageing *female* body “may return” (5.1.192).

PETRIFYING OLDER WOMEN: NIOBE, HECUBA, AND MEDUSA

The impenetrable stuff of Columba Chatry’s petrified womb aligns her, as Nathaniel Manley suggested in 1673, to the mythological mother Niobe. Niobe (1.2.149) is the first female figure in a chain of embodied mythological allusions in *Hamlet* that sets up how Gertrude’s persona might be compared and contrasted with that of Niobe, as well as her mythological sister, Hecuba. Like the Basilisk, Gorgon, and Cockatrice, these classical females are associated either with stone itself, or with petrification. Niobe was a Theban princess who boasted that because she had birthed fourteen children, she was superior to Leto who had borne only two: the gods Apollo and Artemis. To punish her for her insolence, Leto sent her Divine Twins to strike all of Niobe’s children dead. Surrounded by the bodies of her slaughtered children, Niobe’s ceaseless tears aroused pity in the gods who petrified her into a stone that fountained water.⁵¹ Throughout the medieval and early modern era, Niobe became associated with stultifying, excessive feelings of grief experienced by both men and women. There is a scene in Homer’s *Iliad* where Achilles, who is still grieving the loss of his lover Patroclus, consoles the mourning King Priam by reminding him that “even Niobe” whose “twelve children were destroyed” “remembered to eat” before she was turned “into stone still.”⁵² In speaking of

his grief, Achilles likens the transformative effects of his own emotions to the same processes that petrified Niobe's sorrow stricken body. In Ovid's re-telling, Niobe's grief causes total petrification whereby she remains trapped in a stony body, the terrifying life-in-death of "a likeness without life," with eyes "star[ing] fixed and hard," her innards "congeal[ed]."⁵³ In John Donne's (1572–1631) moving epigram "Niobe," the poet imagines the repetitive cycle of his paternal grief from the perspective of a humoral female where the awareness of his bodily "dry[ing]" affords him the intimate sympathy of being trapped within his body's stony sepulchre: "By childrens (*sic*) births, and death, I am become / So dry, that I am now mine owne sad tombe."⁵⁴ A similar humoral transformation was envisaged by Barnabe Barnes (c.1569–1609) who added an alchemical dimension to the desiccating actions of the "alembic" of his heart in prayer: "From my loves lymbeck still still'd teares, oh teares! / Quench mine heate, or with your soveraintie / Like Niobe convert mine hart to marble: / Or with fast-flowing pyne my body drye."⁵⁵ Barnes' Niobe is a liminal creature—neither wholly fluid, nor stone, animate or inanimate: "All within is stone. / Yet still she weeps." To Niobe's petrification myth is added the cruelty of complete inertia; unlike other transformed Ovidian women, she is denied the agency to at least re-integrate into nature as a tree, bird, or beast: "Fastened there / Upon a mountain peak."⁵⁶ This image of intractable fixation is echoed in Hamlet's memory of Gertrude "hang[ing]" off Hamlet Senior almost like a rocky outcrop or promontory attempting to bind the King's body to her own: "Why, she should hang on him / As if increase of appetite had grown / By what it fed on" (1.2.143–145). The image here is one where the embodied source of Gertrude's humoral tears, her "galled eyes" (1.2.155) "feed" upon Hamlet Senior in a double sense: Gertrude leeches the life force from the King coterminously as she attempts to incorporate him into her own body through a kind of petrification where false "flushing" tears dry to "salt" (1.2.153–155). Hamlet is clear in his intimation that, although Gertrude followed his father's body in the funeral procession "Like Niobe, all tears" (1.2.149), unlike the mythical wife and mother Niobe, Gertrude's grief is a sham. Like the mythical succubus Lamia or one of the vampiric Empusae,⁵⁷ once Gertrude has leeched out Hamlet Senior's life force, his body becomes an obscene humoral bag of posseted, curdled, leprous, and thinned blood (1.5.73–78), the dregs of a body not fit for reintegration into the environs of the earth's womb, for even his "canonized bones" have "burst their cerements" (1.4.47–48) and have been vomited

out from the grave (1.4.48–51). The “forms, moods, shows of grief” (1.2.82) that Hamlet experiences, far from indicating as Claudius suggests sentiments that are “unmanly” (1.2.94), are ones that he hopes will bind him to the fidelity of Niobe, a fidelity that his mother can only shamefully mimic. Gertrude opines that Hamlet “still seek[s] for [his] noble father in the dust” (1.2.70), an act of filial love and remembrance that gives Hamlet far more of a common connection to Niobe than his mother. Niobe stands as the anti-Gertrude. As her devotion to her family is celebrated in *Hamlet*, Niobe’s stony transformation makes her a laudable antidote to the poisonous and pernicious proto-menopausal womb of the false “be[stial]” (1.2.150) and “cold” (1.2.77) mother.

The elderly Hecuba, wife of Priam of Troy, is the ultimate embodiment of the idealized proto-menopausal woman in *Hamlet*: her stony, bestial metamorphosis mark her, not as an ageing figure of fear and dread, but as the ultimate maternal contrast to Gertrude. The mythological Hecuba, the ageing Queen of Troy, was a figure held up as the ideal of womanhood in the literature of the early modern period, enjoying a “remarkable popularity.”⁵⁸ Hecuba is “both a victim and avenger, and her myth encompasses great sorrow, violent revenge, madness and bestial transformation.”⁵⁹ During Hecuba’s metamorphosis that sees her first transformed into a dog and penultimately into a rocky promontory, she is also metaphorically compared to a “moral mirror” with its magical power to reflect truth and integrity. In the first English translation of Seneca’s *Troas* (1559), Jasper Heywood added the following lines:

Hecuba that wayleth now in care,
 That was so late, of high estate a queene
 A Mirrour is, to teache you what you are,
 Your wavering welth, O princes, here is seene.⁶⁰

Heywood’s suggestion is that Hecuba functions as a sort of reflective *vanitas*, an embodied warning to rulers about the transient nature of temporal influence and wealth. Similarly, in Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville’s *Gorbolduc* (1561), Hecuba is described as “the woefullest wretch / That ever lived to make a myrour of.”⁶¹ In crafting the “Murder of Gonzago” as the vehicle to “catch the conscience of the king” (3.1.591), it is clear that Hamlet has been greatly inspired by the Player

King's impersonation of Hecuba's fidelity to her murdered husband, a moving performance that "would have made milch the eyes of heaven" (2.2.507). The play as a moral "trap" (3.2.224) works because of its ability to reflect moral conscience, the means to "hold as 'twere a mirror up to Nature: to show virtue her own feature" (3.2.20). This is why Hamlet chooses *to become* Hecuba, or at least assume her virtuous powers as a "mirror," a tactical means to refract his mother's sin back through her own eyes and into her body during the decisive "closet scene": for as much as the mirror can show the truth, it can also force Gertrude to "see the inmost part" of herself (3.4.24). By becoming the mirror of Hecuba, like the polished shield of Perseus (explored later), Hamlet employs an active means to impel the "rank corruption" (3.4.154) of the maternal body to confront itself. By looking to the myths of Niobe, Hecuba, and the monstrous Basilisk and its kin, Hamlet is afforded the expedient by which this confrontation will unfold by employing the metonymic organs synonymous with the proto-menopausal woman's uterus—the eyes. But there is a shadow side to Hecuba, one where her devotional love is quickly metamorphosed into a violent rage when her family is threatened: unlike Hamlet, Hecuba is not slow to enact revenge in the name of both father and son, certainly not "pigeon-livered, lack[ing] gall" (2.2.563). For Ovid, Hecuba becomes like a wild Fury whose sole motivation is revenge for the sacrilegious treatment of her son Polydorus' corpse. But it is interesting that in enacting maternal vengeance in her "motive and cue for passion" (2.2.546) the organs that Hecuba penetrates are the eyes of her enemy King Polymestor (Fig. 2.2). Rather than direct her own poisonous eye beams onto her victim to petrify him in the manner of a pseudo-Gorgon or Basilisk, Hecuba blinds the King of Thrace through an analogous act of rapacious savagery. Such maternal violence, however, does not escape apparent divine punishment: her body pays the price through a complex sequence of corporeal transformations. "Wild with rage," "like a rock / Of granite, stood rigid," Hecuba:

... attacked
 The king and dug her fingers in his eyes
 His treacherous eyes, and gouged his eyeballs out
 (Rage gave her strength) and plunging in her hands,
 Scooped out, all filthy with the felon's blood,
 Not eyes (for they were gone) but eye-sockets.
 Incensed to see their king's calamity
 The Thracians started to attack the queen



Fig. 2.2 *Hecuba Polymnestorum Oculis Priuat* (*Hecuba plucks out Polymnestor's eyes*). Abraham Aubry, after a design by Johann Wilhelm Baur. Hecuba, the tragic Queen of Troy, is featured as the ideal mother figure in *Hamlet*, in contrast to the duplicitous Gertrude (Credit The Warburg Institute Library, London)

With sticks and stones, but she snapped at the stones,
Snarling, and when her lips were set to frame
Words and she tried to speak, she barked.⁶²

The Thracian crowd responded to Hecuba's blinding of their King by attacking her with "stones." Hecuba's body, galvanized from an inert, petrified state by her rage, discovers that, whilst her violent strength is now concentrated in her fingers, her mouth remains incapacitated and fixed; all human speech falls away from her until the only corporeal shape she embodies is that of a dog. The metaphor of the petrified body is extended in Euripides' *Hecuba*: before she blinds him, Polymestor levels a prophecy at Hecuba that she shall become a "dog with fiery eyes" and that her tomb will be a promontory known as Cynossemma or the "tomb of the bitch."⁶³ As a visual sign, Hecuba's tomb, a rocky extension of

her own body, continued to symbolize her canine fidelity because the promontory's function was to act as a landmark guiding ships to safety.⁶⁴

Although for most writers Hecuba's maternal qualities were lauded and her bestial transformation pitied, occasionally she was mocked for her extremity of passion. As Sarah Carter notes, both Niobe and Hecuba seem to exemplify a tradition that both ridicules women for their age and the excesses that mark them "as implicitly less attractive."⁶⁵ Certainly in Martial's (AD 40–104) translated "Epigram 32," the old woman Matrinia is mocked for asking if the narrator might wed her:

Even *Niobe* I could take,
And Mother *Hecuba* a Mistress make:
But then before they were transform'd so fur (*sic*),
One to a Stone, the other to a Cur.⁶⁶

Martial's narrator suggests a continuum of female degradation where transformative passions are only marginally more monstrous in a woman than the embodied state of being old. For Francis Rous (1579–1659), Hecuba-as-bitch's apoplectic barking elaborates upon the common misogynistic trope whereby the female tongue transmits "poison" to the (presumably male) hearer: "As one whom raving Hecuba hath bit / Whose blood corrupted with her venom'd tung."⁶⁷ In penetrating the eyes of her enemy, Hecuba's fierce wrath is refracted back onto her own body, the orifice now paying the price for her unnatural rage is her oral cavity: she is literally made to "eat" her own poisonous anger.

In the Hippocratic tradition, passionate excesses such as rage and lust on an ageing female body like Hecuba's with its "lank and o'er teemèd loins" (2.2.498) would have the humoral effect of heating it. Ovid notes that in the presence of Polymestor, Hecuba "eyed him savagely and rage, / Her seething rage, boiled over."⁶⁸ Hecuba's anger is reflective of the symptomatology recorded by Hippocrates who wrote that in the case of blocked menses:

...the woman rages, from the putrefaction she becomes murderous...they are desirous of throttling themselves...She names strange and frightful things, and these urge the women to take a leap and to throw themselves down wells, or to hang themselves.⁶⁹

As Robert Burton argued, humoral changes in the body had a directly proportionate influence upon the passions themselves and vice versa, thus

causing an ever-greater combustion of choler or wrath.⁷⁰ For Thomas Wright (c.1561–1623) old age was “infect[ed]” by the “poysons” of “pettish rage.”⁷¹ Jane Sharp argued that the power of a frustrated sex drive was ferocious, driving females “mad with carnal desire” making them stop at nothing to “entice men to lie with [them].”⁷² Whilst it is true that female anger of the early modern period was not treated with the same seriousness as male anger, which was deemed to be more righteous and less petty,⁷³ men could nevertheless purge their choler through the heavy sweating that came with manual labour and activity, an image that Hamlet conjures of the necessity of having to “grunt and sweat under a weary life” (3.1.83). As with most Galenic and Hippocratic thought of the early modern era, it was believed that the excesses of such humoral passions as wrath and grief could be purged out of the body thus restoring a temperamental equilibrium. In this sense, anger, grief, and lust, because they indicated an “excess of Passions,” were interchangeable, having the similar humoral effect of drying and heating on females “whose passions are most vehement and mutable,”⁷⁴ a state that the Player Queen confirms, “For women’s fear and love holds quantity, / In either aught, or in extremity” (3.2.156–157). Hecuba and Niobe, then, whilst given to different passionate excesses, form an embodied sisterhood with Gertrude: all meet violent ends. The drying and heating that would accompany the ageing female body given to these “extreme” passions (3.2.157) *should* logically be released partially through sweating,⁷⁵ especially during sex, “honeying and making love” in “the rank sweat of an *enseamèd* bed” (3. 4.93–94). Hamlet wonders why his mother’s cheeks aren’t heated to blush by shame (3.4.81), and his several references to lust as cogitating heat in the female body (3.4.83–87) means that he evidently is aware of the ageing body as a *heating* body, yet most treatises argue the opposite: the humoral changes afforded by extreme passions were the result of the moist and cold female body.⁷⁶ The implication, however, is that the caloric expenditure of heat from a woman’s sudden onset of passions was temporary, and that her body would return to its natural state of coldness and moistness once the fit passed.⁷⁷ Such unpredictable and sudden thermal events may be analogous to one of the most common physiological signs of the onset of menopause, the “hot flash” or “hot flush” (*vasodilation*). Contemporary medical theory postulates that as the hormone oestrogen fluctuates and eventually diminishes altogether, the endocrine system responds by sending “signals” to the body that are comprised of the sudden, uncontrollable onset of overheating, copious sweating, and “irrational” mood

swings, anger most noticeably apparent.⁷⁸ Vasodilation can also cause women a great deal of embarrassment, a shame that often has to do with how these sudden hot flashes change a woman's regular appearance. The sudden heating and drenching of the body are such that, as Emily Martin has documented, many women fail to recognize themselves in the mirror: "I rushed to the mirror...It was my face but it started to disappear and, in a minute, it was all gone."⁷⁹ Some women have noted that their faces appear to be transformed into monsters; Martin connects this physiological transformation to the feelings of "fear and anger" that many menopausal women experience. Could the Basilisk's and Cockatrice's baleful and petrifying stare, like that of the Medusa, just be another manifestation of the woman who is crazed and momentarily "struck" by a menopausal hot flash? Indeed, Paracelsus argued that Basilisks were formed from *menstruum* because such fluid generated such obsessive and powerful imaginations in women that they could alter the macrocosm itself, for they "are *hotter* in revenge, with greater jealousy and hate."⁸⁰ It is interesting that the snaky-haired Furies and Gorgons of myth were inevitably connected to the furious passions of the female. If the poisonous eye beams of the early modern woman are just another form of purging trapped fluids without sexual coition, I would like to suggest that these heated and wrathful beams are indeed an embodied signifier of what today we would recognize as the hot flash.⁸¹ The fact that many women report the hot flash as beginning as a physical manifestation in the head, particularly the face, draws attention to the proximity of the eyes themselves. The same overheating that accompanies this event is perhaps recognized by Hamlet when he is shocked by the lustful heat of the "matron," strong enough to melt the "wax" of youthful ardour as well as the assumed "frost" that should encase the ageing woman's sex drive (3.4.82–87).

The passionate woman was a feared woman, a threat to others and herself, breaking all corporeal and social boundaries in both actions and words, the pathology of which was revealed with noxious humours bursting out of the body proper. The ultimate punishment for such a body in the literature and mythology of the era was embodied transformation as a precursor to total annihilation. Ovidian transformation to the unnatural flesh of a beast or stone offers no liberation or agency for the maternal body in *Hamlet*: instead, it is a monstrous body to be fought against, controlled, and ultimately destroyed. If so, then together with the proto-menopausal woman's physiological connection to petrifying mythological

personae, this would pave the way for Hamlet to consider the possibility of forcibly altering his mother's humoral constitution by refracting her petrifying gaze back upon herself. A stony female body is, as stated, a body divested of any sex drive and, therefore, in Hamlet's mind, offers the safety of desexualized oblivion at the site of origin.

“DESTROY YOUR SIGHT”: THE OLD WOMAN IN THE MIRROR

As a material object, the mirror held much symbolic significance for the early moderns. It was often associated with the allegory of *Vanitas*, a kind of *memento mori* that warned women of the brevity of life and of the futility of the pursuit of beauty, especially the flattery of cosmetic arts.⁸² As an icon, *Vanitas* is often portrayed as a middle-aged woman riding a bear, thus emphasizing the all-consuming nature of the vice itself, as well as being suggestive of the devouring, furious maw of the womb. *Vanitas* is also shown carrying a mirror.⁸³ In a number of engravings, *Vanitas* and her sister *Luxuria* (Lust), are shown flying pennants on which a Basilisk is depicted⁸⁴: thus the extended metaphor of the hungry womb is not only connected to the monstrous, but also incorporates the petrifying eye. Eventually the traditional allegory of *Vanitas* was often fused with carnality.

The mirror also served as a potent visual symbol to ridicule the old woman's pursuit of youth. In Bernardo Strozzi's (c. 1581–1644) painting “Old Woman Before a Mirror,” an elderly noblewoman looks intently upon her reflected image as her two young handmaids complete the ritual of her toilette. Whilst her servants mock this fading aristocrat with her denuded breasts and wrinkled skin, the lady herself is completely self-absorbed. Although undoubtedly painted to satirize the ageing woman, the subject's singular state is remarkably self-aware: the onlooker's judging gaze is clearly neither wanted nor needed. It is this self-absorbed, focused gaze that Hamlet desperately hopes he can make his mother assume in her glass: forced to face her own moral vanity and mortality, Gertrude might then purge her own sin through sexual abstinence. In his 1596 *Lively Anatomie of Death*, preacher John More (d.1592) used the analogy of the looking glass to indicate the “anatomical” revelation of God's truth shown as a reflection that could not obfuscate the lies and deceipts of the “rotten tabernacle” of the body:

I shew you some Anatomie, in which you may see (as in a glasse) the original of Death...The conscience is lyke a Chrystall Glasse, wherein ... wee may lyvely viewe our selves. It will shewe everything that is amisse in soule and body. Let us therefore take our spundg in hand, to clense our spots.⁸⁵

More's implication is that the qualities of sin and shame can hide under a duplicitous mask, but that with the right kind of "mirror," they might be forced to reveal the moral and spiritual truth of their nature; like the tainted "black and grieved spots" (3.4.90) and "thorns" (1.5.87) of Gertrude's conscience. Such "spots" are also a reminder that the power of a menstruating woman was believed to ruin the surface integrity of mirrors.⁸⁶ In the "closet scene" of Act 3, Scene 4, Hamlet insists that his mother must be compelled to confront her transgressions within such a "Chrystall Glasse":

Come, come, and sit you down. You shall not budge.
 You go not till I set you up a glass
 Where you may see the inmost part of you. (3.4.17–19)

As a catalyst, Hamlet believes both the metaphorical and physical mirror might provoke the necessary changes within Gertrude's conscience whereby he might "wring her heart" (3.4.33) to face an "act" that "plucks / The very soul from the marriage contract" (3.4.43–44), rendering even Heaven "thought-sick" (3.4.48) at such infidelity. Hamlet's "mirror," not only functions to generate feelings of guilt and shame, but its power also appears to wreak bodily changes as physical indicators of spiritual and psychological turmoil that no "unction" will salve (3.4.151). Gertrude's sex act "takes off the rose / from the fair forehead" (3.4.40–41) and "sets a blister there" (3.4.42): the harlot's brand disfigures the skin, reminiscent of the guilt of Claudius who compares his "most painted word" (3.1.52) to the "harlot's cheek beautified with plastering art" (3.1.50). Even if the skin's corruption could be covered cosmetically, its rot works its way into the "pith and marrow" (1.4.24) of the tainted maternal body: "It will but skin and film the ulcerous place / Whiles rank corruption mining all within / Infects unseen" (3.4.145–147).

The tainted maternal body is not just disfigured through sin, but it is also imagined as a voracious beast with an insatiable appetite. Like a ruminant, Hamlet questions why Gertrude would leave off "feed[ing]"

(3.4.64) on the “fair mountain” (3.4.64) that was his father “to batten on” the “moor” that is Claudius (3.4.65). To “batten” is a verb that means “to feed, as in an animal,” but also “to feed glutonously on; to glut oneself.”⁸⁷ Having replenished her depleted uterine fluids from feeding upon Hamlet Senior, Gertrude now turns to glut her greedy womb by “prey[ing] on garbage” (1.5.57). Like a surgeon practising precision cutting, Hamlet must excise the tumorous growth, the “ulcerous place” (3.4.153) of the hardened heart of sin from the maternal body: he must “set” the bones of a dislocated body politic that is “out of joint” (1.5.206; 1.2.20). In Hamlet’s imagination, Gertrude’s “sickly” (3.4.74) body has been “cozened” by malign forces forcing a breakdown, a “mutin[y] in a matron’s bones” (3.4.81), where the entire female *corpus* is frozen in a prison of ossified matter. The “mirror,” then, that Hamlet sets up in front of Gertrude traces sexual shame and spiritual turmoil primarily as signs inscribed upon and within the maternal body. Those signs, though, are monstrous. The humoral menstrual flesh that engenders boils, ulcers, toads, and lizards, “like the owner of a foul disease” (3.4.229), becomes no less repulsive when its matter hardens and petrifies, where words become “daggers” (3.4.92) penetrating the “heart” (3.4.154) and “soul” (3.4.88) of the proto-menopausal mother. Hamlet deftly wields the “glass” to deflect Gertrude’s Gorgonian gaze, to confront her “inmost part” (3.4.19):

... let me wring your heart. For I shall
If it be made of penetrable stuff,
If damned custom have not brazed it so
That it be proof and bulwark against sense. (3.4.32–36)

Hamlet fears that his “mirror” will only be effectual for this purpose if Gertrude’s flesh is still emollient enough to be receptive and not already completely hardened like brass or armour (“proof”). The “particular fault” (1.4.40–41) of Eve’s sin where the marriage “dowry” becomes a “plague” (3.1.134), is envisioned by Hamlet as “a vicious mole in nature” (1.4.29) “stamp[ed]” (1.4.31) upon the malleable soul at birth. This “corruption” (1.4.35), this “mole,” is suggestive of the proto-menopausal “molar pregnancy” where tainted seed or retained menses could create non-viable foetuses, some in the form of “stones as large as duck’s eggs.”⁸⁸ James Macmath (1648–1696) argued that “Lustful Cogitations” in “Lascivious Widows,” “especially with a Suppressions of

Courses” and the “Heat of the Womb,” would produce Moles, “yea hardned like a Stone.”⁸⁹ Jane Sharp wrote that, “There are many other things bred in the womb besides these moles,”⁹⁰ and then went on to relate her own version of the story of Chatry’s child that “was turned into a stone”: “Cold and heat, and drieness might keep the child from corrupting, but there was also *a petrifying humour mixt with the seed and blood*, or it could never have turned into a Stone (*italics mine*).”⁹¹ The significance here is that Sharp speculates about the existence of a mysterious “petrifying humour.” Sharp does not go on to identify this humour, but it is an important discovery as it suggests that this singular humour could permeate the fluid matter of semen and blood to affect an actual—not metaphorical—physical transformation of flesh into stony matter. In a sequence that traces the metamorphosis of fertile menstrual flesh into stony proto-menopausal flesh, the Gorgon is the ultimate monstrous incarnation of the Devouring Mother, the final destination of Niobe and Hecuba in the continuum of the changeable and fearful proto-menopausal womb.

SILENCING THROUGH PETRIFICATION: MEDUSA’S STARE

Like her cousins the Cockatrice and the Basilisk, the Gorgon is a mythological monster frequently aligned with the powers of the proto-menopausal woman. According to the classical myth, the beautiful Medusa and her two sisters were transformed into immortal snake-haired monsters, or Gorgons, as a punishment by Athena.⁹² The Gorgons were sisters to the three grey-haired yet youthful Graeae who shared one eye and one tooth: like the Gorgons, these ambiguous creatures were said to be simultaneously beautiful yet ugly, old yet young.⁹³ According to the Pseudo-Hyginus (second century BC), before decapitating Medusa, Perseus blinded the Graeae by throwing away their single eye so that they were unable to protect the Gorgons from his onslaught.⁹⁴ The powers of the Gorgons and their sisters were thus aligned with an ambivalence surrounding beauty and monstrosity, youthfulness and old age, and the ocular as a unique form of defensiveness. It was Apollodorus (second century BC) who first recorded the Gorgons’ ability to turn men and beasts into stone if their bodies were gazed upon or if the Gorgons looked directly at a victim.⁹⁵ The only means to deflect the petrifying power of Medusa’s eyes was to gaze upon her face’s reflected image.⁹⁶ In order to kill Medusa, Perseus used a mirrored shield gifted to him by Athena to

avoid looking directly into Medusa's eyes. As Alan B. Rothenberg points out, the Gorgon or Medusa is referred to far less frequently in Shakespeare than the Basilisk or Cockatrice: a total of two times in all, compared to fourteen allusions to the others.⁹⁷ Nonetheless, the Gorgon's influence, I believe, still resonates strongly through *Hamlet* as a means to confront the petrifying horror of the proto-menopausal body.

Linking menstrual blood to the same poisonous eye emanations of Gorgon and Basilisk, the Pseudo-Paracelsus specified that the alchemist who sought to manifest the chemical Basilisk whilst working with the *menstruum*, should never attempt such an undertaking without first “donning a protective suit of mirrors.”⁹⁸ Medusa's blood was particularly potent matter, akin to the menstrual blood Pliny suggested be applied to a rabid dog bite⁹⁹; it could be used as a bodily poison so powerful that a mere drop of it engendered snakes and scorpions.¹⁰⁰ But the fluid humour that coursed through the Gorgons' veins was also a powerful *pharmakon* used to treat and cure many mortal illnesses.¹⁰¹ Even as a severed trophy, Medusa's head still had the power to turn all living things to stone. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the sea nymphs are delighted to find that when Perseus places Medusa's severed head by the side of the shore, the “living spongy cells” of the “fresh seaweed” absorbs the Gorgon's blood to create fronds “stiff and strange” and “turn[ed] to stone”—the first coral of the deep.¹⁰² Jonathan Sawday asserts that Medusa's body, head, skin, and blood “are emblematic of a fragmented and dispersed body-interior – a profoundly ambivalent region – whose power can somehow be harnessed for good or ill.”¹⁰³ The ambivalence of the Gorgons' bodies—old yet young—situate their biological bodies at the same chronological juncture of the woman of menopausal age. The humoral changes of proto-menopause even mimic the “black poison” of the Gorgons' blood, insalubrious fluid that could “rot flesh.”¹⁰⁴ In *Macbeth* (1606), the Gorgon is curiously aligned with the corpse of Duncan, a terrifying embodiment that still possesses the ability to petrify the onlooker: “Approach the chamber, and destroy your sight / With a new Gorgon” (2.3.74–75). The “horror” (2.3.66) of this “great doom's image” (2.3.80) paralyses the surveyors: “Tongue nor heart cannot conceive, nor name thee” (2.3.67). Apocalyptic and primal, Duncan-as-Gorgon perverts the very reproductive processes where, not only is “conception” aborted, but also the male body is twisted into a parody of that of the female's, where the “gash” has been forcefully yet fruitlessly penetrated by phallic wounding: “And his gashed stabs looked

like a breach in nature / For ruin's wasteful entrance" (2.3.114–115). The "breach," an orifice that invites "ruin" to commit an unnatural rape, also suggests the miscegenation of both a failed conception as well as a breach-birth. Like King Lear's suggestion of all women being "Centaurs" "down from the waist" (*KL* 4.6.125–126), the Gorgon is a maternal nightmare because her means of birthing children does not conform to that of the natural female: released through the bloody phallic trauma of decapitation, the offspring of Medusa, Pegasus and the giant Chrysaor, were "born" from the mock-vaginal orifice of the neck.¹⁰⁵ As an apotropaic amulet carved in carnelian or porphyry stone, the head of Medusa—the Gorgoneion—features predominantly on ancient birth talismans, a simulacrum of her terrible power deflected outwards. As Medusa's decapitation released her unborn children from the birth canal of her neck, her severed head can be viewed as the petrifying child or the petrifying womb. Hamlet sadistically fantasizes about a similar violent and otherworldly birth when he concludes that Gertrude shouldn't have birthed him in a natural way: "I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me" (3.1.121). Recognising he could "do such bitter business" (3.2.371), Hamlet imagines opening up the maternal body to espy the abject site of his conception, forcibly willing himself in his murderous, sexualized fantasy not to be overcome by the "unnatural" "soul of Nero"¹⁰⁶ (3.2.384–385). Instead, Hamlet seeks to cast himself along more heroic lines as "heaven's scourge and minister" (3.4.173). But although Hamlet is warned by the Ghost to allow only the metaphorical weapons of "thorns" to "prick and sting" his mother's "bosom" (1.5.87–88), clearly Gertrude believes that her son is prepared to use real weapons to penetrate the maternal body (3.4.20–22). In his role as heaven's avenging angel, Hamlet casts himself as the heroic Perseus to confront the dreadful maternal body as if it were a Gorgon to be defeated. As the pseudo-Perseus, Hamlet finally makes his first definitive move to penetrate his mother's monstrous body with a violent phallic wounding. Piercing the closet's arras, the symbolic and material substitute for the "eye" of the womb, Hamlet only succeeds in "blinding" (penetrating) the voyeur Polonius (3.4.31). After Polonius' death, the only voyeurs of this dreadful maternal confrontation are Hamlet himself together with the sudden apparition of his father. His father, though, is a mere phantom, an illusion concocted from "the very coinage of [his] brain" (4.3.143), for it is made apparent that Gertrude cannot "see" the ghost (4.3.135). The apparition is a mirage, a miasma generated

by Gertrude's poisonous emanations refracted through Hamlet's own eyes, thus creating a psychic "doubling." Hamlet's "conscience" (3.1.89) overwhelmed with guilt and shame, is an imaginary "ecstasy" (3.4.143), generating a "bodiless creation" (3.4.143) in the illusionary form of his father, born of toxic "incorporeal air" (3.4.122). This vision irrevocably changes the "matter" of Hamlet's brain (1.5.108), a poisoned imagination that causes his own body to undergo corporeal petrification, his hair standing on end, and his own humoral "spirits" "peeping" forth from his eyes (3.4.123). Although Quartos 1 and 2 and the Folio edition of *Hamlet* indicate Hamlet's lines at 3.4.123–126 are spoken to the *Ghost*, I would like to suggest that it would be interesting to consider the implications if Hamlet delivered them to Gertrude instead. By asking her to "not look upon me / Lest with piteous action you convert / My stern effects" (3.4.123–125), Hamlet might conceivably be petitioning the Medusa Mother to avert her eyes lest he be paralysed in his actions, his "true colour" (3.4.126), by her fascinating eyes leaking false female "tears" (3.4.126). The killing stroke, initially misaimed, is redirected: Hamlet must now compel the Abject Mother Gorgon to face her own petrifying reflection in the mirror.

When Elizabeth Tudor addressed her troops at Tilbury in 1588, she was fifty-five. According to the eyewitness account of Dr. Lionel Sharp in a letter to Lord Buckingham, Elizabeth appeared "as armed Pallas."¹⁰⁷ An engraving of this event by artist Thomas Cecill captures this martial and, perhaps, idealized splendour of the queen's presentment by showing her dressed in the style of the classical goddess mounted on horseback, sporting a moulded breastplate, helmet, lance, sword, and shield.¹⁰⁸ In the illustration's background, the seascape shows a configuration of the English fleet sailing against the Armada; in the left foreground, a naked allegorical figure named "Treuth" emerges from a fiery cave, clasping the tip of Elizabeth's lance. The queen gazes steadily out to the viewer as she tramples a multi-headed Basilisk under her horse's hooves. Although the military connotations of victory in the image are obvious, if one considers the proto-menopausal pathology of the ageing womb with its attendant cultural anxiety as revealed within the Gorgon mythos, then it is also an image that shows the Virgin Queen triumphing over her own body. Dressed as Pallas Athena who was the patron goddess of Perseus, or even assuming the role of Gorgon-slaying Perseus herself, Elizabeth is thus placed to conquer the site of her ageing womanhood. Displaced from her body as a wandering organ, Elizabeth's womb has

been physically transformed into the monstrous Basilisk. This uterine symbolism is echoed by both the womb-shaped ship formation and cave. By removing the seat of malignancy in her body, the viewer is free to look directly upon Elizabeth with no fear of ocular petrification from her proto-menopausal body. Elizabeth's own lance phallically penetrates the site of female contagion, triumphing over the weakness of her "feeble" female body whilst reinscribing her power as a genderless monarch. Like the breast plate that protects her kingly heart and stomach, Elizabeth-as-Athena guards her inviolate, sexless body thus offering the assurance that her ageing body is not subject to the same corporeal monstrosities that proto-menopause brings to lesser women. In her role as pseudo-Perseus, her bodily divorce from the site of origin allows Elizabeth to function as an ageless, genderless protector of the body politic.

If Hamlet's mission is to stymy the dreadful power of Gertrude's eye/womb, it remains to be explored *how* he becomes Gertrude's mirror, especially when the understood power of the petrifying gaze logically should rest with Gertrude as the Medusa-like onlooker. The key here is to understand some of the counter-logic associated with the beliefs surrounding ocular fascination. Firstly, it was argued that the gazer could become so replete with the poisonous vital spirits destined for ocular evacuation, that, indeed, their own body could turn against itself: thus the fascinator might be fascinated by their own humours. Plutarch (AD 45–127) recorded this phenomenon of "autofascination" in his *Quaestiones Convivales* (circa. AD 100):

The most active stream of such emanations is that which passes out through the eyes...being reflected from sheets of water or other mirror-like surfaces, rising like vapour, and returning to the beholders, so that they themselves are injured by the same means by which they harm others (namely noxious emissions from the eye).¹⁰⁹

Secondly, the victim of such a fascinating attack might survive the initial onslaught, but their own body, in turn, could become so suffused with these poisons that their chemistry might change: the fascinated went on to become fascinator. Alexander of Aphrodisias (c. AD 198–211) wrote that toxic feelings such as envy could enter a body like "a poisonous destructive beam," transforming the very humoral disposition of the victim's body: "When it penetrates the envied person through the eyes, it changes soul and nature into an insalubrious mixture, decomposes the bodily

fluids, and leads the bodies of these persons to illness.”¹¹⁰ The fascinating eye beam could be refracted or repelled by using amulets in accordance with the homeopathic principle that “like repels like.”¹¹¹ Hamlet is able to use the metaphorical “mirror” of his own body as a kind of apotropaic amulet where the poisonous eye beams of his mother are reflected back into her own body:

Oh Hamlet speak no more.
 Thou turn’st my very eyes into my soul
 And there I see such black and grieved spots
 As will leave there their tinct. (3.4.87–90)

Hamlet’s refraction of the poisonous powers of the mother’s body seem to both “blind” her as well as turn her own poisons inwards, altering her very physiology. Hamlet remarks that Gertrude is not only “cozened” in the manner of a grotesque parlour game of “hoodman-blind,” an act that auto-fascinates her in an apparent “thrall” (3.4.75), but also that her “sense is apoplexed” (3.4.70–71). In the final analysis, however, the role of Hamlet as the “moral mirror” attempting to refract the proto-menopausal mother’s poison back to the site of origin is ultimately unsuccessful. The stony womb is too powerful: it cannot be triumphed over, so it must be returned to. Petrification becomes fear of the ageing woman’s power to transform living flesh into something alien, the end process of extreme desiccation where humoral blood, skin, and tissue become like stone, devoid of vital heat and impulse. The mother’s gaze reconstitutes the son’s fluids back into her own body: “thaw[s] and resolve[s] itself into a dew” (1.2.130). The price to be paid for such transmutation, however, the longed-for eradication of female sexual desire, is really a negation, an annihilation of the life force itself: this is the “sterile” (2.2.265) womb to which Hamlet is drawn. But the only “dreams [that] may come” (3.1.72) in such a space would be the Yeatsian nightmare of the “rough beast” spawned and rocked for “twenty centuries of stony sleep,”¹¹² waiting for its own monstrous and unnatural birth.

At *Hamlet*’s conclusion, the unassailable poison of the proto-menopausal body is ingested, overwhelming the already “rotten” body politic (1.4.90) and all those who live within her. As Gertrude imbibes what was meant for her son, the poison is re-absorbed back into the maternal body via the reciprocal orifice of the metonymic mouth. The

poisonous woman's toxicity has been turned back upon the proto-menopausal body at its monstrous source; the sympathetic ripples that primarily caught up Gertrude's first husband in their "strange eruption" (1.1.68), extend to catch both her son and second spouse in a lethal act of "drinking." But as to Hamlet's desire to see his mother's body humorally altered in order to relinquish its sex drive, the evidence is far more ambiguous than the confrontational drama of the "closet scene." Although Gertrude promises not to return to Claudius' "enseamed bed" (3.4.94), there is nothing in the rest of *Hamlet* to suggest that the mother's body has been cleansed of its moral "taint" (1.5.84). As with the "foul and most unnatural" (1.5.29) weather that proceeded the birth of Chatry's lithopedion baby, the "foul and pestilent congregation of vapours" (2.2.304–305) that identify the microcosmic climate of Gertrude's womb, continue to spill out into the "unweeded garden" of "things rank and gross in nature" (1.2.136), spreading contagion and death. Gertrude's body continues to be wracked by both sin and guilt: "To my sick soul – as sin's true nature is – / Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss: / So full of artless jealousy is guilt, / It spills itself in fearing to be spilt" (4.4.18–21). If, as Janet Adelman has argued, Gertrude's "contaminated body initially serves as a metaphor for the fallen world,"¹¹³ then the maternal site of origin continues to pollute the kingdom with madness, murder, and treachery until *Hamlet*'s conclusion. As in John Oliver's (1601–1661) *Present for Teeming Women*, the womb transmits to the child: "deeper sicknesses and maladies... Its body...- partakes unavoidably of [my] natural pollution."¹¹⁴ As the embodiment of Original Sin, the garden-as-womb is "stained" (4.4.56) and "rank" (3.3.36; 3.4.146), its once-beautiful flowers "blast[ed]" into a "mildewed ear" (3.4.63–64). The "blossoms" of Gertrude's menstrual "flowers" become the unshaven blossoms of Hamlet Senior's "sins" (1.5.76); the menstrual womb is transformed from a "celestial bed" to garbage heap (1.5.56–57). The fear of the "dram of eale" (1.4.36) that facilitates the heavenly fall from grace can be traced back to a corrupted maternal origin, a birth wherein all men cannot be held "guilty" (1.4.25) for Eve's sin.

Hamlet concludes with a final tableau of corpses petrified into a gruesome rictus, "such a sight," according to Fortinbras, that would be more becoming to the battlefield (5.2.371–372). The "carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts" (5.2.349) of Gertrude's hungry womb/eye are now personified by "proud Death," whose "feast is toward in [her] eternal cell" (5.2.331–332). Indeed, when Laertes talks of the "foul practice"

of the poisoning “turned against” him (5.1.278–279), he is articulating how Hamlet’s quest to turn his mother’s poisonous womb back upon herself has functioned to wipe out Laertes’ entire family as well as that of the House of Denmark: a “most pernicious woman” (1.5.105) indeed. The fatal reunion with the mother’s body is underscored twice by the utterances of, “Thy mother’s poisoned” (5.2.280), and “I am poisoned” (5.2.271). The “union” that Hamlet speaks of when he forces his uncle to “drink off this potion” (5.2.287), not only represents the “one flesh” of husband and wife (4.2.55), but also the flesh of the child and mother: in death, Hamlet is finally reunited with the proto-menopausal body, resting in stony “silence” (5.2.323) with his “wretched queen” (5.2.295).

In preparation for the self-annihilation of reabsorption back into the stony maternal site of origin, Hamlet’s own body undergoes the final transformation that will change him into the “wish[ed]” for lithopeddion (3.1.63). As he becomes overwhelmed by poison, Hamlet’s body shuts down, his own orifices begin to seal, shutting out all embodied senses. This breakdown had been foreshadowed by Hamlet when he told Gertrude that her matron’s “shame[full]” lust manifested the power to overwhelm senses (3.4.79): “Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight, / Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all” (3.4.76–77). So, too, “o’ercrow[ed]” with the mother’s “potent poison” that smothers his vital “spirit” (5.2.318), Hamlet moves towards the climactic “silence” of the stony womb: he “cannot live to *hear* the news from England” (5.2.319); he asks Horatio to “*tell* [my] story” (5.2.312–313); and gives his “dying *voice*” to Fortinbras (5.2.321, *italics mine*). The proto-menopausal “Evil Eye” and the “stony womb” give way to the synecdochic male “strong arm” (“*Fortinbras*”). Already “prophes[ised]” by Hamlet and confirmed as his choice for “election” (5.2.320–321), Fortinbras (“Fort-in-brass”) becomes the brutal embodiment of Hercules and Hyperion, the hot “mettle[d]” (1.1.95) warlord who would willingly sacrifice “twenty thousand” (4.4.59) souls for a “little patch of ground” (4.3.90). There are no identified women that move in Fortinbras’ circle; his *coup d'état* means a return to the patriarchal, a world devoid of any woman’s influence, “pernicious” or not. The solution, therefore, to stymie the power of the lustful, ageing woman is to eliminate her presence altogether, to clear the body from the stage (5.2.345–346). Medusa’s head may have been used as Athena’s apotropaic trophy *par excellence*,¹¹⁵ but Gertrude’s body, an

embodiment of what's "amiss" (5.2.372) in the world, is cast aside and forgotten whilst her son is afforded a hero's burial (5.2.365–375). In the end, then, it is the son who is turned to stone, likely immortalized in the canonized statue of the conquered hero, or entombed in the stony sepulchre. Hamlet's wish to return to the stony proto-menopausal womb devoid of life, sexuality, and female power is finally fulfilled.

NOTES

1. Theophilus Garencières, *The True Prophecies or Prognostications of Michael Nostradamus* (London: 1672), 17, 18, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
2. Nathaniel Wanley, *The Wonders of the Little World* (London: 1774), chap. 11, 546, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
3. N. Lachman et al., "Lithopedion: A Case Report," *Clinical Anatomy*, no. 14 (2001), 52–54; Efrain M. Miranda, "Lithopedion," *Medical Terminology Daily*, March 30, 2017, <https://www.clinicalanatomy.com>.
4. Daniel Ramos-Andrade, "An Unusual Cause of Intra-Abdominal Calcification: A Lithopedion," *European Journal of Radiology Open*, no. 1 (2014), 60–63.
5. Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 28.
6. Chris Gilleard, "Ageing and the Galenic Tradition: A Brief Overview," *Ageing and Society* 35, no. 3 (March 2015), 492.
7. Hippocrates, *Nature of Women* 3, trans. Paul Potter, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 197–198.
8. Levinus Lemnius, *The touchstone of the complexions expedient and profitable for all such as bee desirous and carefull of their bodily health* (London: 1633), 299, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
9. Galen, *On Marasmus*, trans. T.C. Theoharides, *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 26, no. 4 (1971), 369–390.
10. Ian Maclean, "The Notion of Women in Medicine, Anatomy, and Physiology," *Feminism and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 127–155.
11. The ambiguities of these gendered thermal states are explained well in Gail Kern Paster's "The Unbearable Coldness of Female Being' Women's Imperfection and the Humoral Economy," *English Literary Renaissance* 28, no. 3 (1998), 416–440.
12. Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 99.

13. Claude Quillet, *Callipaedia: Or, The Art of Getting Beautiful Children*, bk. II, 3rd ed. (London: 1733), 54, Hathi Trust Digital Library.
14. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholie*, ed. Thomas C. Faulkner et al. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).
15. Hippocrates, Heracleitus, *Nature of Man. Regimen in Health. Humours. Aphorisms. Regimen 1–3. Dreams. Heracleitus: On the Universe*, trans. W.H.S. Jones, Loeb Classical Library 150 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 4.
16. Jane Sharp, *The Midwives Book (1671)* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1985), ch. 13.
17. Hippocrates, *Generation of the Child X*, trans. Paul Potter, Loeb Classical Library (London: Harvard University Press, 2012), 486.4., 39–40.
18. Nancy Caciola qtd. in Laura Jose, “Monstrous Conceptions: Sex, Madness and Gender in Medieval Texts,” *Comparative Critical Studies* 5, no. 2–3 (2008), 206.
19. Patricia Crawford, “Attitudes to Menstruation in Seventeenth-Century England,” *Past and Present* 91, no. 1 (May 1981), 56.
20. Jacob Sprenger and Henry Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum*, trans. M. Summer (London: Pushkin Press, 1951), 53.
21. Mary Floyd-Wilson, *Occult Knowledge, Science, and Gender on the Shakespearean Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 16.
22. Chris Laoutaris, *Shakespearean Maternities: Crises of Conception in Early Modern England* (Edinburgh: EUP, 2008), 73.
23. Edward Jorden, *A briefe discourse of a disease called the suffocation of the mother* (London: 1603), cap. 2, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>. I have italicized the word “offense” in Jorden’s quote for emphasis.
24. Albertus Magnus, *Women’s Secrets: A Translation of Pseudo-Albertus Magnus’s De Secretis Mulierum with Commentaries*, trans. Helen Rodnite Lémay (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 133–134; Lauren Kassell, *Medicine and Magic in Elizabethan London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 44.
25. Magnus, 90.
26. Daniel Sennert, *Practical Physick* (London: 1664), 202, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
27. Garencières reported that the lithopedion passed into the hands of a medic called Mèdill who would charge visitors a small fee to view it, 18.
28. Isaiah. 11:8; 59:5 (Authorized Version).
29. Edward Topsell, *The history of four-footed beasts* (London: 1607), 667, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
30. Laurence A. Breiner, “The Career of the Cockatrice,” *Isis* 70 (1979), 36.

31. Pliny, *Natural History Books 8–11*, trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library (MA: Harvard University Press, 1940), VIII: 38, 78.
32. Bernard de Gordon, *Practica seu Lilium medicine*, qtd. in Luke Demaitre, *Medieval Medicine: The Art of Healing from Head to Toe* (Santa Barbara: Praegar, 2013), 74; Niccoló Bertruccio, qtd. in Demaitre, 74.
33. Isaiah. 11:8 (AV).
34. William R. Newman, “Bad Chemistry: Basilisks and Women in Paracelsus and Pseudo-Paracelsus,” *Ambix* 67, no. 1 (2020), 30–46.
35. *Aurora consurgens*, qtd. in Alexander Roob, *Alchemy and Mysticism: The Hermetic Museum*, trans. Shaun Whiteside (Roseburg: Taschen Books, 1997), 301.
36. Paracelsus, *Four Works of Paracelsus, The R.A.M.S Library of Alchemy, Vol. 6* (Virginia: R.A.M.S Publishing Group, 2015), 25.
37. Newman, 35.
38. Newman, 74.
39. Gilbertus Anglicus, *Compendium medicine*, qtd. in Demaitre, 177.
40. Joshua C. Gregory, “Magic, Fascination, and Suggestion,” *Folklore* 63, no. 3 (1952), 46–47.
41. Demaitre, 74.
42. Paracelsus qtd. in Newman, 36.
43. Gregory, 143–151.
44. Alan Dundes, “Wet and Dry, the Evil Eye,” *The Evil Eye: A Casebook*, ed. A. Dundes (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), 21.
45. Quillet, *Callipedia*, bk. 1, 25.
46. Pauline Ripat, “Roman Women, Wise Women, and Witches,” *Phoenix* 70, no. 1–2 (Spring–Summer 2016), 121.
47. Anonymous, *Carmina Priapeia*, trans. Leonard C. Smithers and Sir Richard Burton, 1890 ed., 32.7, <http://www.sacred-texts.com>.
48. Giambattista della Porta, *Natural Magic*, ch. 1., Boston Public Library, 1658 ed., <https://www.archive.org>.
49. Reginald Scott, *A Discovery of Witchcraft*, bk. 16. ch. IX., 350; ch. III, 15 (Princeton Theological Seminary Library, 1886 ed.). <http://www.archive.org>.
50. Della Porta, ch. 1.
51. Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths Vols. 1 and 2* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 258–260.
52. Homer, *Iliad* 24, 601–617, The Internet Classics Archive: 441 searchable works of classical literature (mit.edu).
53. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A.D. Melville, bk. VI. (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 285–316.
54. John Donne, “Niobe,” *Epigrams, Works by John Donne: Vol. 1*, ed. Herbert J.C. Grierson, 2012, <https://www.oxfordscholarship.com>.

55. Barnabe Barnes, *Parthenophil and Parthenophe Sonnettes* (London: 1593 ed.), <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
56. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 312–313.
57. Graves, *The Greek Myths*, 205; 189.
58. Tanya Pollard, “What’s Hecuba to Shakespeare?” *Renaissance Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (December 2012), 1064.
59. Sarah Carter, *Ovidian Myth and Sexual Deviance in Early Modern English Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 45.
60. Jasper Heywood, trans. Seneca’s *Troas*, in Jessica Winston, “Seneca in Early Elizabethan England,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (Spring 2006), 41.
61. Pollard, 1065.
62. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XIII, 529–560; 1265.
63. Euripedes, *Hecuba*, trans. Tony Harrison (London: Faber and Faber, 2005).
64. Casey Dué, *The Captive Woman’s Lament in Greek Tragedy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 118.
65. Carter, 77.
66. Martial, *Epigrams*, trans. Henry Killigrew (London: 1695 ed.), <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
67. Francis Rous, *Thule, or Vertues Historie*, bk. II. canto I.1598. sig. K3v.159–160, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
68. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, bk. XIII, 558–589.
69. Hippocrates, *Diseases of Women* 1, 105.
70. Robert Burton, *Anatomy* 1, 2, 3, 1: 248.
71. Thomas Wright, “The Passions of the minde in general. Corrected, enlarged, and with sundry new discourses augmented” (London: 1604 ed.), 40, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
72. Jane Sharp, *The Compleat Midwife’s Companion*, chap. 13.
73. Gwynne Kennedy, *Just Anger: Representing Women’s Anger in Early Modern England* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 7.
74. Wright, 4.
75. Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrocosmographia*, 1631 ed., 274, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
76. Ian Maclean, “The Notion of Women in Medicine, Anatomy, and Physiology,” *Feminism and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 134; Gail Kern Paster, “‘Unbearable Coldness’ ...”.
77. Paster, *Humoring*, 85–86; 99–100.
78. Christine Northrup, *Women’s Bodies, Women’s Wisdom: Creating Physical and Emotional Health and Healing* (New York: Bantam Books, 1998), 526–528.

79. Emily Martin, *The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 167–169.
80. Paracelsus, qtd. in Newman, *italics mine*, 35.
81. The hot flash was recognized only by two continental doctors during this era, Jean Liébault in 1598, and Georg Handsch circa 1563. See Chapter 1.
82. Jill Dolan, *Presence and Desire: Essays on Gender, Sexuality, Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 229.
83. Helena Goscilo, “The Mirror in Art: Vanitas, Veritas, and Vision,” *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature* 34, no. 2 (2010), 282–398.
84. *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*. Lust (*Luxuria*), riding a bear, talks to the devil Asmodeus who flies a banner featuring a Basilisk. Thus the female is linked to the bestial, cryptozoological, and the demonic. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek – Cgm 3974, fol. 72r – 1440 (circa), <https://iconographic.warburg.sas.ac.uk>.
85. John More, *Lively Anatomie of Death* (STC 2nd ed: 1807), 3, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
86. Pliny, *Natural History*, bk. VII, trans. W.H.S. Jones, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963).
87. *Oxford English Dictionary*.
88. Jane Sharp, *The Expert Midwife*, bk. VI., 335.
89. Macmath, 47.
90. Jane Sharp, bk. II., 110.
91. Ibid., 110, *italics mine*.
92. In some versions, whilst her sisters were immortal, Medusa herself was mortal.
93. Hesiod, *Theogony and Works and Days*, trans. Dorothea Wender (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), 270.
94. Pseudo-Hyginus, *Astronomica, Star Myths of the Greeks and Romans: A Sourcebook Containing the Constellations of Pseudo-Eratosthenes and the Poetic Astronomy of Hyginus*, trans. Theony Condos (Grand Rapids: Phanes Press, 1997), 2:12.
95. Apollodorus, *The Library, Vol. II: Book 3.10-End. Epitome*, trans. James G. Frazer, Loeb Classical Library (London: Harvard University Press, 1921), 157.
96. Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths, Vols. 1 and 2* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 239.
97. Alan B. Rothenberg, “Infantile Fantasies in Shakespearean Metaphor: Scopophilia and Fears of Ocular Rape and Castration,” *Psychoanalytic Review* 60, no. 4 (Winter 1973), 533.
98. Pseudo-Paracelsus, *De natura rerum*, qtd. in Newman, 32.
99. Pliny qtd. in Floyd-Wilson, *Occult Knowledge, Science, and Gender on the Shakespearean Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 15.

100. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IV., 617–620.
101. Euripides, *Ion*, trans. Robert Potter, 1003–1005, <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu>.
102. Ovid, IV., 740–745.
103. Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1996), 9.
104. Apollonius, *Argonautica* 4, trans. William H. Race, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 1505.
105. Graves, *The Greek Myths*, 239.
106. According to classical tradition, Nero had his mother Agripinna's womb dissected after he had ordered her murder in order to see the place he was conceived.
107. *Cabala, Mysteries of State in Letters of the Great Ministers of K. James and K. Charles, Wherein Much of the Publique Manage of Affaires Is Related/Faithfully Collected by a Noble Hand* [Cabala, sive, *Scrinia sacra*. Part 1. Further continuance of the Grand Politick Informer] (London, 1654), <https://uml.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/books/cabala-mysteries-state-letters-great-ministers-k/docview/2240953615/se-2> (accessed May 15, 2023).
108. *Elizabetha Angliae et Hiberniae Reginae*, can be located at The British Museum, 1849,0315.2.
109. Plutarch, *Questiones conviviales*, Ibid., 680F–681A; 5.7.2., <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu>.
110. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Problemata physica* 2.53, qtd. in Alan Dundes, “Wet and Dry, the Evil Eye,” *The Evil Eye: A Casebook*, ed. A. Dundes (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981).
111. Allan S. Berger, “The Evil Eye: An Ancient Superstition,” *Journal and Religion and Health* 51, no. 4 (December 2012), 1101.
112. William Butler Yeats, “The Second Coming,” *Selected Poems: Penguin Modern Classics* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 1919.
113. Janet Adelman, 27.
114. John Oliver, “A Present for Teeming Women,” 1688 ed., <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
115. Graves, 241.



CHAPTER 3

Tamora and the Invasive Vegetable Womb

INTRODUCTION: “GONE TO SEED,” THE VEGETABLE MADONNA AND PROTO-MENOPAUSAL PREGNANCY

In the engraving that adorns the title page of Theodor Kerckring’s (1640–1693) *Spicilegium anatomicum* (1670), the allegorical figure of *Anatomica* appears as a middle-aged matron who strips the flesh off a hanging male cadaver with the adroitness of a housewife butchering an animal carcass for her family’s dinner (Fig. 3.1). As she dresses the meat, *Anatomica* casts her eyes down towards two *putti* playing at her feet: they are arranging sheaves of wheat within a winnowing basket. Jonathan Sawday interprets Kerckring’s image to suggest that the *putti* are trying to distract the goddess *Anatomica* from her dissecting labours in order that she might reassume her abandoned mantle as Ceres; theirs is an act designed to seduce the matron away from “preferring the role of goddess of knowledge to that of Ceres, goddess of fertility.”¹ Whilst my interpretation may not completely concur with that of Sawday’s, I am fascinated by the correlation that he argues exists between the allegory of *Anatomica*, and Ceres the goddess of agriculture and vegetation. To Lucretius (fl. first century BC), Ceres was “the Great Mother of the Gods, and Mother of wild beasts, and maker of our bodies.”² As “She who brings destruction,” and the Mistress of Beasts, it was Ceres who opened up the animal body as well as the earth itself to provide nourishment, and she dictated the time when the grain was to be harvested.³ For Ovid

(43 BC–AD 17), Ceres was “the first / To split open the grassland,” she who possessed the power to engender organic fertility as well as to “make all seed sterile” and the earth “barren.”⁴ The goddess of Kerckring’s treatise consolidates notions of agrarian fruitfulness and the passage of the seasons with the mysteries of human anatomy. The *putti* playing with the corn stocks are instructed by Dame Anatomy to draw the parallel between vegetal dynasties, agrarian growth patterns, and the bloodlines of human “stock.” Butchered by Anatomy in her guise as Mother Nature, the bloody corpse also underscores both Nature and Time’s destructive and “ravenous” (3.5.195) quality. In *Titus Andronicus* (c.1594), the character of Tamora is the murderous aspect of Nature incarnated as the devouring goddess Revenge, “that strumpet, your unhallowed dam, / Like to the earth, [who] swallow[s] her own increase” (5.2.190–191). As Nature, though, Tamora, like Ceres, is also linked to the allegory of Time: as such, Tamora embodies the latent power to master and manipulate the temporal rhythms of nature’s cycle.

The allegory of Time oversees all life, death, and regeneration, a status that would logically place her presence alongside *Anatomica* within the dissection theatre. As *female* incarnations, the imagery of these “reductive goddesses”⁵ points to the maternal body as being the origin of all human life as well as vegetable fertility, but they are also the entities that govern death and rebirth. Nature’s connection to generation is highlighted in the *Boke of Astronomy and off Philosophye [sic]*, now housed in the Bodleian Library, where it is the fertility goddess Venus who holds the Wheel of Fortune in one hand whilst flourishing a lush tree branch in another. Lucretius’ *Venus Genetrix* was the primal cosmic force that gave life and shaped all things in Nature,⁶ similar in concept to Marsilio Ficino’s (1433–1499) force of *Venus Vulgaris*. In the Ficinian cosmology, however, one who willingly succumbed to overriding lust and debauchery had fallen prey to *amour ferinus*, a “bestial love,” or diseased form of insanity caused by the retention of poisonous humours in the heart.⁷ In Cesaire Ripa’s *Iconologia* (1603), Nature’s moribund and ravenous aspect is represented by the vulture that the goddess holds aloft (Fig. 3.2). In *Titus Andronicus*, the vulture is conceptualized as an aspect of a crazed mind whose pathology can only be expiated through vengeance:

I am Revenge, sent from th’ infernal kingdom
 To ease the gnawing vulture of thy mind
 By working wreakful vengeance on thy foes. (5.2.30–32)



Fig. 3.1 Kerckring's "Dame Anatomica." The allegory of *Anatomica* (Anatomy) as both domestic butcher and as Ceres, the goddess of Nature. Frontispiece from Theodor Kerckring's *Spicilegium Anatomica* (1670) (Credit History of Medicine, U.S. National Library of Medicine)

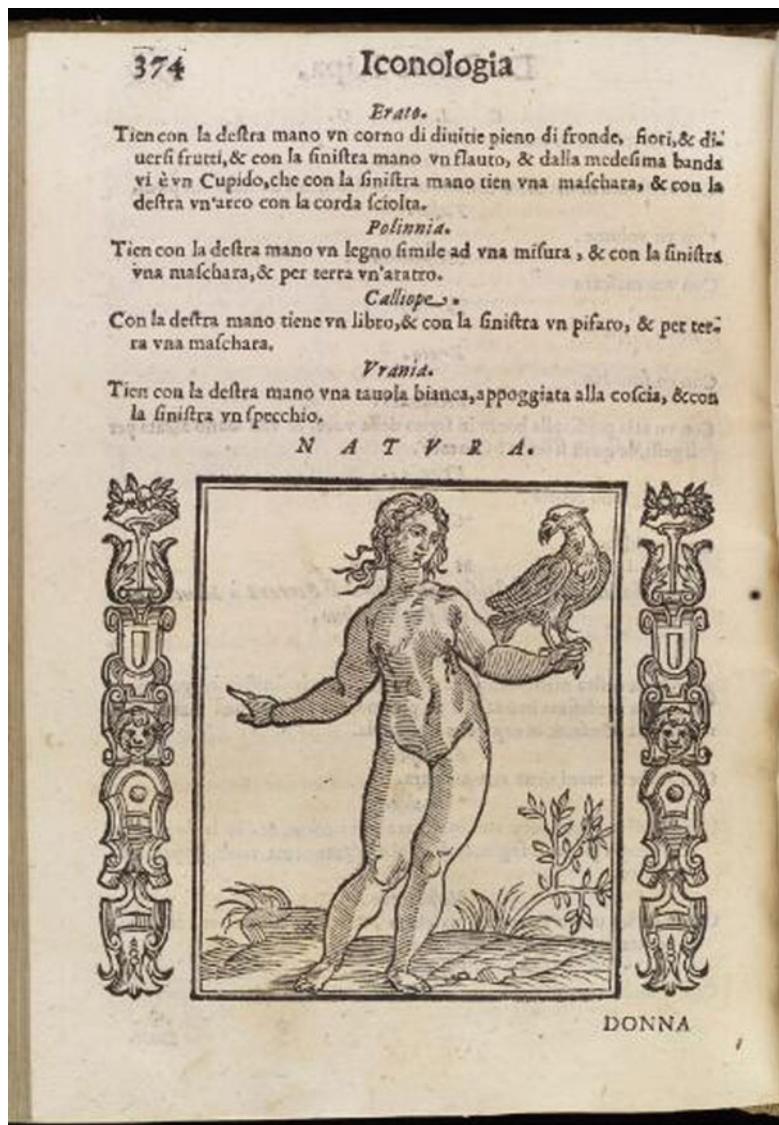


Fig. 3.2 Cesare Ripa's "Nature." The Allegory of Nature in Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (1603) displaying her vulture. Courtesy of the Wellcome Collection, London

Similarly, when Tamora is named a Fury (5.2.82), she embodies a form of a cruel, natural vengeance born of the soil, a trait common to all chthonic deities. As Hesiod (fl. 700 BC) noted in his *Theogony*, “the mercilessly punishing Furies [who] prosecute the transgressions of men and gods – never do the goddesses cease from their terrible wrath until they have paid the sinner their due.”⁸ According to Apollodorus (fl. 2 BC), the Furies had been born from the blood of the castrated Uranus when it soaked into Mother Earth.⁹ The darker side of the infernal female deities can similarly be recognized in changing conceptions of “Mother” Nature. As the early modern period advanced, even though the icon of Time became gendered as the male figures of Chronus or Saturn such as in Godefridi Bidloo’s 1685 edition of the *Anatomia Humani Corporis*, the notion of temporality as being inextricably bound to the human lifecycle remained a recurrent trope. George Wither’s (1558–1667) emblem is complete with a motto that states: “Time is a Fading Flowre, that’s found / Within Eternities wide Round,” and features the combined natural imagery of flower, snake, baby, and human skull in order to represent the circular brevity of nature’s temporality.¹⁰ Before the more familiar figure of scythe-wielding “Father Time” took hold of the Renaissance imagination,¹¹ the female incarnation of Time was either sister to Nemesis, the goddess of Revenge,¹² or she became fused with the goddess Fortuna (“Fortune”).¹³ The goddess of Time, then, from the late Middle Ages to the Renaissance, was known as “Fortune,”¹⁴ and her iconography, that of a woman holding a spoked wheel, was a familiar sight to the early moderns.¹⁵ Nemesis (“Revenge”) was also associated with the winged wheel, the agrarian tiller, and the bridle,¹⁶ thus connecting her to time, agriculture, and animal husbandry (Fig. 3.3). The wheel represented both the rise and fall of men, all of whom were subject to the capriciousness of Fortune’s whims, but as a solar symbol, the wheel also came to represent Time, the Biblical recognition that for life’s brief tenure, “All flesh is grass.”¹⁷ Thus Nature, Time, and Revenge are innately linked to the female body and its rhythms in *Titus Andronicus* and nowhere is this more apparent than in Tamora’s mysterious pregnancy.

Not only is Tamora the mother to three grown sons in *Titus Andronicus*, but if reproductive events are to culminate with the birth of the “blackamoor” child in Act Four, Scene Two, then logic dictates that Tamora must be pregnant throughout most of the action of the play—a fact that seems to escape the notice of all of the other characters, including her new husband Saturninus and her longstanding lover Aaron. There



Fig. 3.3 Albrecht Dürer's *Nemesis* (*Das große Glück*). The Goddess of Revenge strides the world brandishing a horse's bridle as a symbol of her universal control (Credit The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

are clues about Tamora's reproductive history: she is mother to three grown sons who are either pubescent or older, and she is also pregnant with Aaron's child for the early scenes of the play. Even if she had been married at an early age, given facts indicate that she must be at the end of her natural reproductive cycle. It would also be logical to assume that due to poor nutrition, frequent ill health, and being physically worn out by multiple births, the early modern woman could have entered menopause far earlier than today.¹⁸ However, outside of contemporary medical parameters, Tamora embodies the proto-menopausal paradigm where the early modern female ageing process was not triggered by such singular factors as biological age, cessation of menses, or the end of reproductive capacity. Therefore, as a subject of the ageing process, Tamora's "invisible" pregnancy speaks to how changes within the womb's microclimate transpiring under certain environmental conditions were perceived as pathological and likely to result in unnatural conception. We know that Tamora has great status as the "Queen of the Goths" (1.1.139), and matched against Titus as his Nemesis, identifying her as an older woman makes sense for characterization purposes. Tamora tells Saturninus that "She will a handmaid be to his desires, / A loving nurse, a mother to his youth" (1.1.333–334), thus suggesting that she straddles the divide between a sexualized wife and older maternal figure. But there is a deeper rhetorical artistry at play within *Titus Andronicus* that transcends the human: as part of Shakespeare's conceptualization of Roman and barbarian empires, so many of his metaphors surrounding conquest, sexuality, revenge, and familial inheritance, are crafted from the world of the botanical. Species hybridity, mutability, and early modern views of botanical taxonomies must therefore be considered as part of the environmental factors influencing Tamora's pathological womb.

Just as Ceres is linked to Anatomy in the Kerckring illustration, the botanical aspect of Mother Nature is also inextricably bound to Time. Because Shakespeare conceives of Tamora as being the embodied goddess of Nature in all her guises as Revenge, Venus, Fury, Astraea, and Diana, he is drawing attention to her ability to master Time: all of her immortal namesakes were also given provenance over chronological and agrarian rhythms. Tamora's reproductive capabilities align her with early modern notions of the vegetable as a "species," part of the natural continuum of "spirits" that constituted the whole human being. Although theories about how foetal matter might be "concocted" by either female or male seed differed between Aristotle and Hippocrates, both classical schools

of thought regarding human conception were still widely accepted at the time that Shakespeare was writing.¹⁹ In classical and early modern doctrine, notions of the female body's receptiveness to conception formed a complex relationship with nature: plant, human, and animal life were part of a fluid epistemological and ontological continuum. Near the start of his *On the Natural Faculties*, the physician Galen (AD 129–216) noted that “seed” (sperm) was “cast into the womb or into the earth (for there is no difference).”²⁰ Such homogeneity between female flesh and the soil accounts for early modern anxieties regarding any issue “born” from the proto-menopausal womb, an organ that could birth such natural objects as snakes, worms, lice, seeds, toads, and tadpoles.²¹ As corporeal, vegetal, and animal “spirits” were believed to control everything from locomotion, sensation, physical generation, memory, and moral will, this blurring of the empirical categories of plant and animal was not able to find a relatively fixed taxonomy until the species categorization of Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778) in his 1735 treatise *Systema Naturae*.²² As previously argued, the womb’s capacity to bear life did not conform to the strict physiological and natural biological indicators of how we define menopause today. Indeed, what was considered as “natural” to the early moderns was so fluid and complex that it escapes any straightforward ontological definition. “Nature” could equally be conceived of as the world of plants and animals, a man’s disposition or temperament, the biological and physiological differences between men and women, or the creative power of God himself. Additionally, “Nature” was always understood as being innately wedded to such weighty concepts as both “Time” and “Justice,” concepts that feature heavily in *Titus Andronicus* as agents of both the conception of life, as well as the vehicles through which to enact revenge. Therefore, one also needs to consider what Tamora can be said to embody within such a schema: how do we read the proto-menopausal body in the domain of Nature, of the vegetable, of the not-quite human? I ask that Tamora’s body can be considered through this lens of fluid species categorization or “hues.”²³ This endeavour means one needs to consider the early moderns’ understandings of the biological impulses of creation and destruction, and of those patterns believed to dictate the temporal rhythms of organic growth. When read through the ageing womb, these biological irregularities, especially if they resulted in the conception of alien matter, were understood as innately pathological.

As I am exploring the female humoral body and the reproductive womb through Tamora’s conceptualization as the embodiment of both

“Nature” and “Revenge” in *Titus Andronicus*, my analysis is focused upon how Tamora’s pregnancy becomes an incarnation of competing notions of “Time” as an expression of botanical, vegetable growth housed within a fleshly body in the midst of reproductive and material flux. Within the classical tradition inherited by the early moderns, the concept of time had yet to assume a unified definition or singular understanding. As the incarnation of Vegetable Nature, Tamora exists *outside of chronological* or “*chronos*” time. Not subject to the chronological timetables of female reproductive physiology, Tamora stands poised to manipulate the conditions and duration of her pregnancy. The fact of a proto-menopausal pregnancy is perfectly congruent with humoral physiology of this era; early modern physicians had no trouble imagining pregnancy in a much older woman. And, like a plant, the ageing womb was plastic, given to premature “seeding” and wilful accelerated or retarded growth cycles, producing strong offshoots or stunted scions. In *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare explores these anxieties connected with the proto-menopausal womb by associating the organ’s “timeless” generative qualities to the various classical and Renaissance conceptions of Time and Justice as *lived through plants*.

The wealth of classical thought inherited by early modern natural philosophers, as well as those scholars interested in the newer sciences of botany and horticulture, resulted in an excitement about the ongoing potential of a system where all vegetal life could be intentionally manipulated to either accelerate or retard normal growth patterns, an activity that Francis Bacon (1561–1626) called “a noble experiment.”²⁴ Natural philosophers were fascinated by a plant’s ability to apparently manipulate its own growth factors in order to thrive and proliferate in hostile environments, a process they named “species mutability.” With her ability to infiltrate the land of Rome as well as her apparent manipulation of her own reproductive capabilities, Tamora’s vegetable body, so immune to strict conventions of chronological time, is a vital living example of species mutability at play: it is what makes Tamora and her lineage (“stock”) of plant “hybrids” so threateningly potent. That Tamora’s pregnancy is all but “invisible” posits an argument that her last child’s conception is wondrous: Tamora has conceived a lifeform gestated and born within a biological timeframe outside of our contemporary understanding of human generation. Tamora’s strangely accelerated and unnoticed pregnancy is a result of reproductive rhythms that do not conform to contemporary understandings of strict species or biological

categorization. Indeed, once born, Tamora's baby defies categorization: he is likened at once by Aaron to a "beauteous blossom" (4.1.74) as well as "Typhon's brood" (4.1.96). The fears of this uncontrollable power of the ageing reproductive womb arise from this ontological ambiguity. If one considers Tamora and her "stock" (1.1.303) as belonging to the early modern world of the botanical, then alternative notions of accelerated time, "invisible" and prolific growth, species hybridity and mutability can account for Tamora's "vegetable womb" and its proto-menopausal pregnancy.

FEARS OF THE PARTHENOGENIC WOMB

Pregnancy was not easy for the early modern physician to ascertain. The male physician could only rely on a limited knowledge of a suspected pregnant woman's symptomology such as milk in the breasts, changes to the stomach, or the "quickenings" (movement) of the foetus. Missed menstrual periods were not necessarily deemed to be an indication of pregnancy, nor were the signs of a "great belly." François Mauriceau (1637–1709) in *The Diseases of Woman with Child* (1673) stated that, "there are many with Child who have had the Courses; and I have known some who have had them all the time of their Great-Belly till the fifth or sixth month."²⁵ Similarly Jacques Guillemeau (1550?–1613) wrote that "Some women when they be with child have their courses."²⁶ The age of the woman herself could also become irrelevant: a lack of knowledge about the exact physical parameters of menopause as part of the biological cycle meant that a great or diminished abdomen in an older woman might equally be believed to be caused by a viable foetus or a diseased "molar" pregnancy. James Macmath (1648–1698) was adamant that a woman could conceive well into her late forties²⁷; Mauriceau identified the upper limits of conception for a woman in her fifties "or later" "according to her nature and disposition."²⁸ Elizabeth I's physicians estimated that when the queen was forty-six, she had another six years of fertility left.²⁹ Simon Forman's (1552–1611) casebooks reveal that the oldest woman who came to consult him as to whether she was pregnant was aged sixty, and another thirty-two women under Forman's care between the ages of fifty to fifty-nine similarly believed that they were pregnant.³⁰ Pierre Dionis (1643–1718) argued that the surest sign of pregnancy was a swelling abdomen: "When a Woman is with Child, her Belly keeps up, is prominent, and rais'd...which is the surest Sign of a true Conception."³¹

By contrast, Mauriceau alluded to the popular belief that a woman's abdomen could flatten during pregnancy due to a kind of "pulling in" of the cervix after a successful conception had transpired.³² Given that her gravidity is not commented upon, Tamora's body does not demonstrably show her pregnant status; her condition does not reveal itself until Tamora has actually gone into "her great unrest" (4.2.31) and her labour is talked about for the first time. Women might also confuse such ocular proofs of the size and dimension of their abdomens as being indicative of pregnancy when, in fact, a swelling belly could have been symptomatic of other uterine pathologies. Dionis also indicated that a woman's age might invariably be connected with these "false conceptions" because of perceived irregularities to the menstrual cycle:

Women are most subject to these false Big-Bellies from the thirty-fifth to the fortieth Year of their Age, because they then begin to have their Courses irregularly; and either the too great Quantity or the Badness of the Blood evacuated this way, is the reason of this disorder.³³

Many of these "false conceptions" were identified as "molar pregnancies." The most common form of hybrid matter said to make a proto-menopausal woman appear as if she were with child was that known as a "mole" or "moon calf": "The Mole is nothing but a fleshy substance, without Bones, Joints, or distinction of member: without form or figure regulated and determined; engendered against Nature in the Womb."³⁴

An even greater anxiety about the ageing womb than phantom pregnancies or moles seems to have been aroused by the kind of parthenogenesis or "spontaneous generation" whereby the matrix could engender both organic and inorganic lifeforms without any inseminate of male seed. Ambroise Paré (1510?–1590) noted that: "Many animal forms are likewise created in women's wombs...such as frogs, toads, snakes, lizards and harpies."³⁵ Jean Fernel (1497–1558) argued that vermin could be "procreated without seed" in the corrupted womb: "Serpents, locusts, worms, flies, mice, bats, moles, and any others of that kind, you will agree arise of their own accord, without seed, from rotten matter, from foul slime, and after birth they breathe and move."³⁶ Jane Sharp often reported of the inorganic "strange things" that the womb voided in the form of "Stones and Gravel," a nun in her care having once passed a "rugged Stone as large as a Duck's Egg."³⁷ When Giambattista della Porta (1535–1615) wrote that when he considered natural philosophy

to be the most “sublime” of all sciences, he had in mind the various ways in which the discipline “considers and investigates the arcana of nature,” with a mind to “bring[ing] forth” all natures of “marvels and monsters.”³⁸ There was a desire in natural philosophy, not only to explore the wonders of natural cause and effect, but also to posit how those forces might be manipulated. Such wonder was initially expressed as a desire to explain “miraculous” births: were they evidence of God’s displeasure, forewarning of retribution (such as was the case with the birth of the so-called Monster of Ravenna in 1512), or as the result of the mother’s overactive imagination at the moment of conception? Indeed, the 1736 chapbook of the prose *History of Titus Andronicus* relates the story of how, with the birth of Tamora’s mixed-race child, the Emperor’s fears about his wife’s adultery were allayed by Tamora’s insistence that the infant was black because she had looked at a “blackamoor” during her pregnancy and thus this image was “imprinted” upon the foetus “by force of the imagination.”³⁹ This was possibly inspired by Ambroise Paré when he referenced Hippocrates’ anecdote about how the philosopher had saved a white princess who was accused of adultery after birthing “a child as black as a moor” by explaining how it was caused by her gazing at “a portrait of a Moor...which was customarily attached to her bed.”⁴⁰ The womb was feared and marvelled at in equal measure: not only could the mother’s body spontaneously generate myriad lifeforms at any age, but her imagination could also mould the foetus itself. Even though François Mauriceau argued that the physician was advised to become like an “expert Gardiner” who should “know Plants” and thus be able to spot fecundity in the womb,⁴¹ and Hugh Platt (1552–1608) was to argue that the natural scientist who manipulated Dame Nature served as a kind of terrestrial “midwife” and “mother” tasked with improving upon the Divine’s design,⁴² the physician was ultimately mastered by Nature Herself no matter how much he might have desired to usurp her role.

THE BOTANICAL DISCOURSE OF ALIEN STOCK AND INVASIVE SPECIES

For the ancients and the early moderns, all life found its origins in Nature. Indeed, the project of natural philosophy attempted to identify this vital essence of “spirit” or “soul” and then trace how it might become embodied within each animate (or even inanimate) entity.⁴³ The “corporalitie” of the human soul *in utero* shared the growth qualities of “spirits”

or “faculties” common to all living beings, including plants. Jakob Ruëff (1500–1558) clearly drew this comparison between this first faculty, that of the natural or vegetable spirit, and its influence upon the growth of flesh and living tissue:

[it] frameth the softer substance, such as flesh [as] in Living Creatures, but in Plantes or Herbes, the flowers and the pith ... it frameth the heart in living Creatures; in Plants, or Herbes [it] maketh the roots.⁴⁴

On a spiritual level, the trajectory of the human soul in its upward movement towards Godly perfection was likened to the “growth and increase” of plants and animals.⁴⁵ Aristotelian doctrine explained that the pattern of biological growth in the human body ascended from vegetable to bestial, and then to human. Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) claimed that as much as foetal life could “ascend” to the human, the adult was in constant threat of “descending” back to the animal, and perhaps even the vegetal. In his influential treatise *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1486), Mirandola employed the botanical metaphor that God had instilled in man at birth “every sort of seed and all sprouts of every kind of life” that he would need in order to “bear the fruit” that might make him “a heavenly being”: the failure, however, of man to cultivate his “intellectual seeds” in favour of cultivating his “vegetative seeds” threatened to have him revert back into becoming “a brute animal.”⁴⁶ Mirandola also noted that “wicked men” were “deformed into brutes” or, as noted by Empedocles (c.490 BC–430), “into plants as well.” Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), who adopted this Aristotelian theory and embedded it into Christian doctrine, expressed this same notion:

Hence it is just as in the generation of man there is first a living thing, then as an animal, and lastly a man, so too things, like the plants, which merely have life, are all alike for animals, and all animals are for man.⁴⁷

In such an ontology, the interconnectedness of both temporal and moral growth, and how those spirits might be both accelerated or decelerated, has a clear precedent in classical and Christian dogma. Reciprocally, the early moderns, building on classical doctrine, transposed human ethical and moral qualities onto the plant life of the natural world. This tenuous state of being finds its embodiment in Tamora, a creature that “bearest

a woman's face" (2.3.136) as a sham disguise for the "ravenous tiger" (5.3.195).

As the human body contained both the "vegetal" and "animal" spirit in addition to its own unique "vital" or "sensible" spirit, it shared some basic matter and substance with the animal and plant worlds. As a result of this botanical thinking, the qualities and relationships of all plants were frequently personified, and plant physiology and behaviour was modelled on that of the human. This innate connection to the vegetable was frequently expressed through patterns of analogy, mythology, and metaphorization in the writings of both classical and early modern authors. Creatively and conceptually, the female womb became synonymous with the earth and soil itself, a uterocentric metaphor envisioned in *Titus Andronicus* as "the swallowing womb / Of this deep pit" (2.3.239–230) together with the vaginal imagery of "the subtle hole," "whose mouth is covered with rude-growing briars" (2.3.199). Andrea Cesalpino (1519–1603) postulated that the vegetable soul met at the point where the root extended into the shoot and, drawing an analogy to the heart as the seat of vital spirit in animals, named this place the *cor* ("heart").⁴⁸ In his *Sylva Sylvarum* (1626), Francis Bacon argued that man "is like a plant turned upwards, for the root of the plant is as the head in living creatures."⁴⁹ Using Bacon's analogy, this physiological inversion is suggestive of a Roman population without their "heads" and, therefore, "rootless." The Senator's wish that Titus might help to "set a head on headless Rome" (1.1.186) anticipates a land that is ripe for a certain kind of invasive plant species to seize control, parasitical and deadly like the "subtle Queen of the Goths" (1.1.395).

As Jean Feerick has argued, Shakespeare's understanding of plantlife served as:

a powerfully attractive discourse for working through a range of relationships inhering among people, offering a supple and nuanced vocabulary for considering questions of reproduction and difference.⁵⁰

This botanical "difference" particularly underscores Tamora and Aaron's "blackamoor child." By placing the baby's conception and gestation at the nexus between all forms of organic existence, especially the vegetal, the unnatural gestation period can be explained by how time could be manipulated within the growth cycle. By adopting the plant analogy, the baby is also a hybrid species, therefore the key to Tamora and Aaron's

child's otherness lies in the fact that, as a product of the feared vegetable womb, the strength of its "stock" comes from the botanical conditions needed for species infiltration, assimilation, and eventual domination. The hybrid "evoked a horror" because its origins arose from "the violation of sexual norms."⁵¹ That Tamora's infant is called a "toad" (4.2.69), a "devil" (4.2.66), and a "tadpole" (4.2.87), speaks not only to the anxieties regarding the hybrid offspring of "the devil's dam" (4.2.67), but also to the ambiguities of the products of a proto-menopausal womb—organisms that may have self-generated from the "corrupted excrements" of the womb's "soil."⁵² This is the inverse nightmare of the munificent earth-womb—the gaping maw of death, the "abhorred pit" (2.3.98) that transforms into the "detested, dark, blood-drinking" den (2.3.224), and the "fell devouring receptacle" (2.3.235). Tamora's proto-menopausal womb is the embodiment of the quintessential "grotesque" body featured in the works of Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975). In his seminal *Rabelais and His World* (1965), Bakhtin noted that "birth and death are the gaping jaws of the earth and the mother's open womb,"⁵³ and that such an "open body (dying, bringing forth and being born)" was "blended with plants and animals": "as the swallowing up and generating principle, as the bodily grave and bosom, as a field which has been sown and in which new shoots are preparing to sprout." The "blended" body of Tamora thrives because of its plant-like ability to engender hybrids that straddle the vegetable-animal divide. This grotesque body is completely conversant with the early modern definition of hybridity—its disposition could equally encompass plants, trees, and fungi, especially those of a saprophytic nature. The plants that grow in the woods where Tamora shares her love-making with Aaron, as well as the site of Bassianus' murder and Lavinia's dreadful rape, are so variegated as to include both the beautiful as well as those botanical species considered harmful and deadly: thus these parasitical and poisonous growths, the "dismal yew" (2.3.107), the "moss and baleful mistletoe" (2.3.95), become as much a part of Tamora's complex reproductive *largesse* as the snakes, toads, urchins, and other chthonic denizens associated with her "swallowing womb" (2.3.239). *Timon of Athens* (1606) presents us with the same ambivalent image of Nature's womb: "Nature is the "damn'd earth, / Thou common whore of mankind," whose "womb unmeasurable" "engenders...all th'abhorred births below crisp heaven" (4.3.42–43; 179–190). Tamora's "overflow[ing] earth" (3.1.222), like many proto-menopausal wombs of the era, can spontaneously generate both the marvels and monsters that caused Jean Fernel

to argue that everything from winged supernatural beings to vermin could be “procreated without seed” within the womb.⁵⁴ This strangeness of the proto-menopausal womb was extended into the realms of the botanical by obliterating the hierarchical distinction between “species.” Indeed, all families in *Titus Andronicus*, including Aaron and his son, are “races” in the sense of “species” as defined by early modern understandings of life: although the word “hue” could refer to racial colouring, it was also a synonym for “species” during this era.⁵⁵ Lavinia is “lopped” and “hewn” in such a way that transforms living flesh into bark, a perverse theatrical staging of Ovid’s myth of Daphne who, to escape her intended rape, begged for justice and was transformed into a laurel tree.⁵⁶ Therefore, the punning of the words “hue” and “hew,” suggest both race and species, in addition to the health and longevity of “stock,” as interpreted through the metaphorical aperture of the vegetal and the mythical.

The Ovidian trope of metamorphosis and transformation in *Titus Andronicus* allows for notions of the botanical to form an easy link to the mythological, a fascinating yoking that incorporates Time, Nature, and Justice into the conceptual anxieties generated by the proto-menopausal womb. The Ovidian and mythological allusions in *Titus Andronicus* thus function to iterate this *embodied* notion of the blurred taxonomies of being, the species confusion between the “strange” and “wondrous” and the human. Is Tamora a goddess (1.1.319; 2.1.1), or a “most insatiate and luxurious woman” (5.1.88)? Is she connected to her Roman “brethren” (1.1.107), or is she a species or race apart? (5.3.195; 1.1.264–265). Lavinia concludes that Tamora is singularly unique as a mother and woman in that “no name fits thy nature but thy own” (2.3.119). As a vegetal entity—the “Vegetable Madonna”—Tamora’s body can manipulate both time and species distinction: in this, Tamora’s body mirrors the early modern project to manipulate nature by experimentation with plant acceleration or retardation. This horticultural endeavour was also concerned with the vegetal “offspring” that could be produced with the grafting of “young” scions onto “old” stock, an undertaking that Giambattista della Porta compared to “copulation in living creatures,” and a “most praiseworthy...and fittest means to incorporate one fruit into another,”⁵⁷ a project echoed by Tamora’s venal goal to be “incorporate in Rome” (1.1.465).

The botanical familial analogy extends from Tamora’s body to the Andronici and Rome itself, a conception of the world as “an unweeded garden / That grows to seed” (*Ham.*1.2.135–136). War-ravaged Rome

seeks “justice” that might be “ripen[ed]” like a fruit (1.1.230). After his humiliation by Lavinia’s apparent refusal of him, Saturninus rejects Titus: “No Titus, no, the emperor needs her not, / Nor her, nor thee, nor any of thy stock” (1.1.301–302). The rejection of the Andronici “stock” sees Saturninus’ immediate “adoption” (1.1.466) of Tamora’s alien “hue” (1.1.261). Titus’ grandson is a “tender sapling” (3.2.50), his son Lucius a “brave slip” (5.1.9). Tamora likens Lavinia to both a “wasp” as well as the floral source of “honey” (2.3.131–132). These botanical metaphors are embellished upon in Lavinia’s “lily hands” that “tremble like aspen leaves upon a lute” (2.4.44–45), and with the “wash[ing], cut[ting] and trim[ming]” of her hands (5.1.96), she is compared to a tree mutilated by clumsy horticultural practices:

...what stern ungrateful hands
Have lopped and hewed and made thy body bare
Of her two branches, those sweet ornaments
Whose circling shadows Kings have sought to sleep in. (2.4.16–19)

“Wreathèd in each other’s arms” (2.3.26), Aaron and Tamora’s “obscure plot” under the “quiver[ing]” “green leaves” (2.3.14–15) mirror Lavinia’s botanical “treasury” (2.2.131) until the couple’s “blood and revenge” (2.3.39) turns upon the virginial Lavinia with a savagery that transforms the Edenic woods into a site that is “ruthless, dreadful, deaf, and dull” (2.1.128). Francis Bacon wrote that trees were almost immortal, the only thing that could render them “hollow and rotten” was the botched application of pruning or hewing methods:

For “tis a misery to see how our fairest trees are defac’d, and mangl’d by
unskillful Wood-men...with their short Hand-bills, hacking and chopping
off all that comes in their way...to their utter destruction. 58

Lavinia’s once-beautiful “branches” are contrasted with Titus’ “withered herbs” of hands, “meet for plucking up” (3.1.178–179). This reimagining of the denuded quality of the Andronici line after Lavinia’s rape in the “ruthless, vast and gloomy woods” (4.1.55), leads Titus to conclude that: “Marcus, we are but shrubs, no cedars we” (4.3.45). This usage of botanical imagery to articulate familial and ancestral imagery elaborates upon the early modern notions of plant hierarchies where philosophers such as Albertus Magnus (c.1193/1206–1280) and Restoro d’Arezzo

(dates unknown, thirteenth century) organized plant species according to a vertical ordering principle. In such a hierarchy, plants placed at the top of the ladder were supposed to be closer to God.⁵⁹ Shrubs, because they grew closest to the ground, were considered inferior, for the height of a plant indicated its status. Titus' botanical "lowness," his recurrent speaking of "sorrows to the stones" (3.1.29; 37; 45) is contrasted with Tamora's Olympian height (2.1.1–9). Species hierarchy, then, accounts for both the downfall of the Andronici as well as the means by which Tamora achieves her "sudden" ascension and conquest of the Roman social body (1.1.396).

This botanical language that dictates relationships between families also articulates the nature of various enmities between species or "hues." For as soon as Saturninus comments on the differences in Tamora's "hue" (1.1.261) as well as the "othering" that marks Aaron, "the swarth Cimmerian" (2.3.72), the language of divisive factions enters the play in much the same way that plant species were said to either fear or favour one another. In one of the earliest treatises on botany, Empedocles (c.492–432 BC) wrote that amongst all creatures, including plants and trees, there was a kind of "sympathy" or "antipathy" which he also termed "consent or disagreement":

For some things are joined together as it were in mutual league, and some things are at a variance and discord among themselves; or they have something in them which is a terror and destruction to each other ... That is the pleasure of Nature to see it should be so.⁶⁰

The pseudo-Zoroaster (b.18–10 BC) suggested that barren trees might be "scared" into producing fruit.⁶¹ Empedocles also noted the "deadly enmity betwixt Coleworts (*Brassica*) and the vine," and the "greatest enemy" of all to trees was ivy.⁶² Theophrastus (371–285 BC) wrote that "special victims" could be "singled out" by "killer" plants. Again, like Empedocles, Theophrastus identified both ivy and mistletoe as the deadliest of "neighbours":

The destruction is more rapid if the neighbours are stronger and more numerous...[they] branch out and entwine about the tree, choking it, or grow into it like ivy. Indeed mistletoe too.⁶³

Both the ivy and the vine were plants known to be sacred to the god Dionysus⁶⁴ and as such, were connected to intoxication and the bloody ritual of the springtime death and resurrection of the Oak King, God

of vegetal nature.⁶⁵ The Combe emblem (c.1593) features an engraved oak tree entwined with ivy with the warning that, as the ivy climbs aloft, “it so doth bind, / It kills the stock that it was raised by.”⁶⁶ As a marriage or friendship emblem, the vine enjoyed a more positive position as a welcomed invasive species. The “friendship” of the vine and the tree was also translated into the ideal of marital love. Columella (AD 4–70) offered advice on ways in which “to marry” a vine and elm.⁶⁷ In Ovid’s tale of the fruit nymph Pomona, her would-be suitor, Vertumnus, disguises himself as an “old crone” to try to convince the nymph to become his wife by using the example of the vine and elm wedded together: “but you, unmoved by this tree’s lesson, shun / A husband and will link your life with none.”⁶⁸ In *The Comedy of Errors* (1594), Adriana tells Antipholus, “Thou art an elm, my husband, I a vine, / Whose weakness married to thy stronger state” (2.2.186–187). The image of Tamora’s ascension is a dark inverse of the traditional marriage symbol of the twining ivy for she “climbeth” (2.1.1) her new Roman husband only to destroy the elm of his “newly planted” kingdom (1.1.447). Tamora’s “sudden” (1.1.396) advancement in Rome elevates the barbarian queen from out of the “infernal kingdom” (5.2.30) of “vast obscurity” (2.1.1): “Now climbeth Tamora Olympus’ top, / Safe out of fortune’s shot” (2.1.1–2). The image here is a fascinating one: the newly ascended Tamora is portrayed as an Olympian goddess, “safe” from “fortune” and “secure” from the dangerous threats of “env[ious]” nature. As the parasitical ivy imagined by Theophrastus, Tamora is “chok[ing]” the life out of Rome, thus Tamora’s mercenary decision to marry Saturninus to achieve vengeance rather than out of true friendship or love, marks Tamora as the dangerous, the invasive, the “anti-vine.” The botanical language in *Titus Andronicus*, then, offers a means to consider the relationships between the two families as well as the vegetal vehicle through which Tamora achieves power and ascendency in Rome. These theories, married to the unique rhythms and growth patterns of the botanical, also encompass answers as to the resiliency, adaptability, hybridity, and dominance of the resulting offspring of such a “vegetable womb.” And nowhere did this fear to master the womb reveal itself more than in the sociocultural fear that the child *in utero* might be illegitimate. This patriarchal anxiety, revealing itself through the myth and metaphor of the early modern era, can be witnessed through attitudes towards the art of botanical grafting—the practice that wilfully shunned “legitimate” pedigree to generate “bastard” offspring.

“BASE FRUIT”: OF BASTARDS AND GRAFTING

Although the linkages that connect Time, Revenge, Nature, and the “race” of plants seem complex, they have their roots (so to speak) in classical mythology and were later to inform changing Renaissance perceptions of both the botanical and the temporal. An image where female Time, Nature, Fortune, and “race” coalesce can be found in a remarkable miniature dating back to around 1400 that was once housed in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris but is now lost.⁶⁹ A winged figure holding the Wheel of Fortune is identified as both “Mère Nature” (Mother Nature) and “Temps” (Time) (Fig. 3.4). It is the female figure at the wheel’s base, however, that commands the eye’s attention. Directly below Mère Nature/Temps, there is Nature’s mirror image, a duplication of a female figure that is naked from the waist upwards, and, more arrestingly, her face is clearly black in colour. I believe that this dark woman points to the “shadow side” of the admirable Dame Nature, that of the black-faced and capricious Harlot. A similar image but with Fortune herself bearing half a face painted black can be found in a miniature by Petrarch (1304–1374). The black-faced Nature-as-Whore displays her “hue,” marking her as the Mistress of the totality of biological “species.” The homophonic play on “hue/hew” also implicates the arboreal world whose generative power is controlled and shaped by the woodsman, farmer, or horticulturalist who prunes away unwanted growth to protect the integrity of the tree’s pedigree. But the inverse of Dame Nature as the Harlot of mixed species and variant hue resonates with the practice of grafting: to graft plant matter was to deliberately manipulate “conception,” thus making the original stock of the “legitimate” parent plant unclear. Dating back as far as Aristotle and Pliny, grafting was an ancient horticultural technique whereby a bud or “scion” of an existing plant was inserted into the sliced bark or stem of another species, bound together with clay and string, and then the “mother” plant would produce either fruit of the alien stock, or generate a completely new hybrid strain. In Pliny the Elder’s (AD 23–79) *Natural History* (c. AD 77), he wrote of the hybrid “nut-plums” created by grafting plums onto a nut tree as “show[ing] a great effrontery” to their “parents” from “whom they took their name” because they displayed both “the appearance of the parent tree” as well as generating “the juice of the adopted stock.”⁷⁰ Ovid’s Pomona slits the bark of trees with her sharp pruning knife to “set / A slip for sap to feed a foreign stock.”⁷¹ Varro (116–27 BC) argued that the

best trees to graft were those with *feminea molita*, or soft flesh like that of a woman.⁷² In his *The Herball, or General Historie of Plantes* (1597), the famous Elizabethan botanist John Gerard (1545–1612) termed several species of flowers “bastards.” Francis Bacon, knowing that “gilly-flowers” (carnations) were thought to be “bastards,” argued that the gardener would be able to identify them by the earth-as-womb’s apparent promiscuity: “the cause is...that in earth...there are several juices; and as the seed doth casually meet with them, so it cometh forth.”⁷³ In *The Winter’s Tale* (1611), Perdita notes that “the fairest flowers o’ the season / Are our carnations, and streaked gillyvors, / Which some call nature’s bastards” (4.4.95–97). Perdita later rejects planting such “bastards” as she fears, like the result of the gardener’s enforced hybridization, that she might equally be accused of being “painted” (4.4.120). Polixenes argues that by “marry[ing]” a “gentler scion to the wildest stock,” the “baser kind” of bark can produce “a nobler bud” (4.4.109–112), and yet Perdita persists in believing that any such “art” that manipulates “nature” will only produce bastard facsimiles. For Aaron, though, his son is a “sweet blowse,” a “beauteous blossom” (4.2.74) despite the horror that the infant causes to others. The poet Andrew Marvell (1621–1678) shared Perdita’s concern about plant manipulation: not only is there a certain anxiety in his so-called “mower poems” regarding the adoption of God’s role in the refinement of plant species, but also a definite fear about the intermixing of species whereby the true parentage might remain unknown:

No plant now knew the stock from whence it came,
 The grafts upon the wild the tame
 That the uncertain and adulterate fruit
 Might put the palate in dispute.
 His green seraglio has its eunuchs, too
 (Lest any tyrant him outdo),
 And in the cherry he does nature vex
 To procreate without a sex.⁷⁴

The same anxieties are raised by the birth of Tamora’s “fruit of bastardy” (5.1.48). Aaron argues that the baby is his (4.2.84; 107; 121), even though he admits that the child’s parentage can only really be confirmed through the mother as “the surer side” (4.2.128). In Marvell’s “green seraglio,” though, anxiety is generated by the cherry plant, the “adulterate” “mother” that is able to reproduce without need of any “father.”



Fig. 3.4 Wheel of Fortune/Mere Nature. “Mere Nature”/“Temps” on the Wheel of Fortune (inscribed *Generation*) with her black-faced twin (at bottom of wheel), French miniature ca. 1400 (Credit Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris)

By the late 1500s, natural philosophers, especially horticulturalists, imagined how such an “exalted and royal science”⁷⁵ might be purposefully employed to manipulate plant growth cycles to achieve diversity of stock and, more relevantly, acceleration in the growth and fructification of plant offspring. One of the more remarkable studies into the purposeful and “profitable” acceleration and retardation through horticultural techniques such as grafting, re-planting, and pruning of plant growth was conducted by Francis Bacon in his *Natural History* (1622). Equated to human sexuality, the fundamental way to encourage growth was: “to increase … the lust of the earth or of the plant.”⁷⁶ This “lust” was analogous to the rising of sap, a fluid that could be bettered through the “letting forth” of “[this] plant’s blood…or tears.” In yet another metonymic chain of correspondences, if one applied *actual* blood to the roots, it would “increase the lust or spirit of the root.” Wheat soaked in a mixture of urine, dung, and chalk would accelerate its growth as a “rich experiment for profit,” whereas salt and ashes would retard growth. Giambattista Della Porta had written that it was possible to make a vine “bring forth before her time” by mixing nitre with water, a concoction that would make the vine’s buds “shoot forth within eight days after.”⁷⁷ Della Porta had likened this ability of the horticulturalist to a “magician” who “either hastens or hinders [nature’s] work, making things ripe before or after their natural season.”⁷⁸ By adopting the metaphorical construct of the generation of plants as being like that of human reproduction, such man-crafted acceleration was likewise compared to female pregnancy and birth. In his *De Causis Plantarum*, Theophrastus wrote that one must always plant and sow “when the earth is in heat… just as in animals when the seed enters a womb desiring it.”⁷⁹ Francis Bacon had argued that a plant’s fruit might be made to ripen earlier and with more sweetness by a process of pricking the fruit known as “percolation.” Bacon believed that this method allowed the plant’s animating “vital spirits” to leave the fruit leaving only the “grosser” matter behind: this remaining material would then be subject to a kind of putrefaction that would hasten the ripening process.⁸⁰ Bacon’s language here is similar to the Aristotelian views regarding how the “grosser” matter of menstrual fluid was necessary to first “concoct” a foetus but later purged through the female body as maternal milk. In a cross-species reference, Tamora’s milk, the “grosser” matter left in her body after the birth of her children, has turned to unnatural “marble” (2.3.144). Bacon even argued that women, like plants, had their gestation periods either “accelerated” or lengthened, either by the

“lustiness” of the unborn infant or by the woman’s “indisposition.”⁸¹ Bacon revelled in the notion that Nature in both her botanical and human offices might be controlled by Man: “To make them clear [grow] before the Time, is a great work; For it is a spur to Nature, and putteth her out of pace.”⁸² The wonder of Tamora’s accelerated pregnancy and her propagation of Aaron’s baby as the “hybrid scion” perhaps explains the rapidity and the tenacity of her “incorporation” into Rome (1.1.462; 2.2.465) as both the “alien” and “invasive” plant species capable of manipulating Time’s growth patterns.

As we have established, Tamora’s rapid incorporation into Rome serves as her intended *modus operandi* for revenge by which she might annihilate her enemies’ “stock” (1.1.103). At the same time, Tamora’s methods of infiltration are like “grafted” scions in that she utilizes a kind of natural mimicry of existing forms. Baconian natural philosophy acknowledged the means of how species modification might lead to species infiltration and proliferation where the introduced alien species might quickly take over any native stock. Bacon argued that “divers” seeds could be made to have their “shoots incorporate,” young trees could “incorporate and grow together,”⁸³ and “foreign herbs” had their roots, barks, and seeds “confused together, and mingled with other earth.” As “mother” of the invading Gothic tribe, it is Tamora’s alien “hue” (1.1.261) that first attracts Saturninus to open his gates and invite the enemy inside Rome. As Francesca T. Royster has argued, Tamora’s “species,” her “hue,” is “racially coded” as “extreme whiteness,”⁸⁴ a “foreign” colouration that appears visually to make her “overshine the gallant’st dames of Rome” (1.1.317). Although Royster argues that the project to incorporate Tamora into the Roman social body has “failed,” I argue that if one is to reframe “hue” as being synonymous with “species” as it was in the early modern era, then Tamora’s infiltration as an invasive and alien plant species is entirely successful. Tamora and Aaron are quick to pick up Roman social custom (1.1.148). Not only is Aaron well-versed in Roman language and literature, but he is also cognizant of needing to warn Tamora’s sons to adhere to Roman behaviours or else face harsh consequences (2.1.75–77). We are never informed exactly as to why the Goths rebel so swiftly against their “cursèd” queen (5.1.16), but it is surely to do, in part, with Tamora’s willingness to assimilate so quickly and completely into enemy ranks. Lavinia’s rape had been characterized as “thresh[ing] the corn” and “burn[ing] the straw” (2.3.123). Lavinia’s violated body is like the pruned tree or winter-burned field

whose devastation is so complete that by the play's end Rome will require its obliterated "shea[ves]" of "scattered corn" to be "knit" together once again (5.3.69–71) or else consume itself (5.3.72–75). The introduction of any alien plant species within an established ecosystem forces both the native species to undergo rapid—often fatal—evolutionary change as well as bringing additional "alien predators, parasites, and disease agents" that might destabilize a fragile plant community even further.⁸⁵ Botanists will attest that the return of a native species to an original state is impossible, and a "ghost of alien influence" will remain for decades afterwards because the invasive species is always the strongest, especially if able to create hybrid stock. With both Tamora and Aaron's bodies being planted, starved, and devoured in Roman earth, one has the sense that their respective seeds of destruction have been tenaciously sown even with the "mutual closure" of the "house" of the Andronici (5.3.133). Tamora is so fearful of her own bastard child revealing its true paternity and thus being capable of "undo[ing]" her plan for revenge (4.2.55), that she asks Aaron to "christen it with [his] dagger's point" (4.2.70). This maternal cruelty, the "unhallowed dam" that "swallows its own increase" (5.2.190–191), consolidates Tamora's complete rejection of womanhood to embrace her singular role as Revenge. Thus, how Nature becomes embodied in a character that also encompasses the terrestrial powers of Justice and Revenge yields valuable clues as to how Tamora's reproductive capacity functions outside of normal human growth patterns. Accordingly, Tamora herself controls all natural growth cycles: such cycles vary according to the patterns of accelerated botanical growth, of species mutability, and are strongly influenced by conceptions of Justice and Time.

"IN DUE SEASON": THAT STRUMPET FORTUNE AND FATHER TIME

For Ovid, Time was the dread "devourer" of all life and yet Nature, "the great inventor, ceaselessly contrive[d]" with "change and innovation" to spite Time by creating life anew.⁸⁶ In the Ovidian scheme, Nature could only transcend ravenous Time if She learned to adapt through transformation: "what we call birth / is but a new beginning." The idea of change and the transformation of a living entity over time led many medieval and early modern philosophers to suggest that these tendencies were survival tactics that could lead to species mutability, a condition of growth where one plant could literally transform into a different species.

Wielding Lucius' book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Lavinia knows that this tome serves not only to act as a cypher to translate her "martyred signs" (3.2.36), but it also underscores her own species transformation from human to struck "doe" (2.1.93), to "withered lily" (3.1.113), and finally to "kill[ing]" "object" (3.1.113). In Julius Caesar Scaliger's (1484–1558) writings of species mutability, he noted that darnel changed into wheat, and water-mint could transform into mint, and that mushrooms could emerge from the "sap of a cut tree...as from the liver of a human being, a worm, or a louse."⁸⁷ Pier Andrea Mattioli (1501–1578) wrote in his *Commentarii* (1554) that the "natural brotherhood of all plants [leads] to the point that they can transform into one another,"⁸⁸ given the passage of time. When Shakespeare was writing *Titus Andronicus*, his own notions of temporality in all its variant guises would have been informed by earlier classical and Judeo-Christian understandings of Time and its intimate relationship to Nature. The Greek notion of temporality can be said to be experienced through three specific forms, each with their own complexities: *chronos*, *kairos*, and *aion*. Of the three forms, it is *chronological* time that has primarily directed western philosophy, science, and religion. In its most basic manifestation, *chronos* is time that is linear, progressive, and can easily be divided into measurable units; in its religious sense, *chronos* implies that history is moving towards an ordained conclusion, an eschatological understanding of time as the promise of apocalyptic revelation ordained by God as Providence. Hamlet's implicit recognition that there is "a special providence in the fall of a sparrow," and that death, if it "be not now, yet it will come" (*Ham.*5.2.220), is illustrative of his awareness of *chronos'* relentless forward impetus. But from Edgar's statement that "the ripeness is all" (*KL*.5.2.11), to Touchstone's truism that "from hour to hour we ripe and ripe, / And then from hour to hour we rot and rot" (*AYL* 2.7.26–27), and Gertrude's assertion that "all that lives must die, / Passing through nature to eternity" (*Ham.*1.2.72–73), *chronos* can only be phenomenologically experienced as the body's ageing *within the natural cycle*. Philosophically and religiously, the Renaissance fashioned its own definitions of temporality by marrying earlier Hellenic belief to the eschatological aspects of Judeo-Christian orthodoxy which stated that as man passed through his natural life cycle, death would culminate in reaching the nadir of "eternity," or, to use the Greek term, *aion*. By the onset of the fifth century BC, the concept of temporality was quickly being considered as distinct from that of the notion of eternity, or time as *aion*.⁸⁹ Chronological time, therefore, was said to comprise

of the smaller constituent parts that made up the totality of *aion*. In his *DeCaelo*, Aristotle defined the concept of *aion* as: “the length of life of every creature in nature...the sum of existence of the whole heaven, the sum which includes all time even to infinity is *aeon* (*aion*).”⁹⁰ At Philipopolis, there is a mosaic depicting the allegory of *Aion* turning Fortune’s wheel, accompanied by various agricultural deities including the Earth and corn goddess Ceres.⁹¹ *Aion*, then, as an expression of both life-lot and the infinite, had always been linked to both Nature and Fortune. For the Greco-Romans, *aion* was a “representation of time based on the biological metaphor of growth” and that aeonic time could only be understood as an “organism endowed with its own persistence and endogenous cycle, and capable of self-regenerating (*autozóon*).”⁹² *Aion* is the potentiality and the endurance of all human, animal, and plant forms, moving forward in eternal cycles but adapting for survival and propagation: this is the single-mindedness of plants that Michael Marder calls “plant-thinking,” the botanical organism’s “ceaseless striving towards the other and in becoming-other in growth and reproduction.”⁹³

In contemporary eco-feminist studies, some scholars have identified *chronos* as being equivalent to “patriarchal” temporal rhythms as opposed to circular “Goddess-centred” time, a conception of time without finality and attuned to nature’s organic processes of life, death, and (re) generation.⁹⁴ *Chronos* is a linear idea of time revealing itself through turning points and crises “that concern the destinies of men and nations.” *Chronos* time would also feature heavily in the cultural consideration of the continuation of one’s own bloodline, particularly in terms of the importance of patrilineal dynasties. Titus feels that he has no choice but to appease the “groaning shadows” (1.1.129) of ancestral ghosts so that they might not permeate the present, disturbing the living and the future Andronici “with prodigies on earth” (1.1.104). Titus’ metaphysical interpretation of justice-as-*chronos* is so resolute that he is willing to slay his son Mutius in perceived violation of its code of *virtus* with as much relish as he takes in feeding his sterile womb/tomb that he has “sumptuously edified” (1.1.354) with twenty-one other sons of his bloodline (1.1.198). It is living female flesh, however, upon which these conditions of justice are negotiated in *Titus Andronicus*: Tamora is seized first “to beautify” Rome’s “triumphs” (1.1.113) and then is taken as a marriageable trophy; Lavinia, as “Rome’s rich ornament” (1.1.55), has her virgin body “brabble[d]” over (2.1.62) like a “struck...doe” (2.1.93) or a “cut loaf” (2.1.93). Thus the conditions are set for how notions of Justice and

Time are embodied in the female, but as that body is hewn, trimmed, and lopped, their interpretation is focused through the lens of Nature, much like Aaron's mysterious inscriptions about death are "carvèd" on human flesh "as on the bark of trees" (5.1.138). I would like to suggest that *chronos* time, as it features in *Titus Andronicus*, can be identified as Roman time; in particular, it is *chronos* that rules the Andronici in defining what concepts such as "justice" and "revenge" mean and how they might be mediated and enacted within the natural world. By contrast, Tamora and her barbarian kin are subject to time as defined by the Hesiodic formula, or time as *kairos*.

Kairos is a complex idea that extends its reach into rhetoric, philosophy, mathematics, and medicine. It is first encountered in Hesiod's *Work and Days* (circa. 700 BC), and it is the Hesiodic formula of *kairos* that is most salient to this chapter. *Kairos* distinguishes itself from *chronos* and *aion* as a temporal expression of time: it is the qualitative aspect of time, suggestive of a season when something transpires that could not happen at *any* time but only *at that specific time*, "to a time that marks an opportunity which may not reoccur."⁹⁵ This kairotic "right time" or "timing" carries a number of meanings in rhetoric and natural philosophy including: "occasion," "opportunity," "due measure," "to cut," "to kill," "to destroy," and most interestingly, "fruit."⁹⁶ Not solely pagan in origin, the idea of nature's regenerative and spiritual prowess functioning according to its own kairotic rhythms was something that St. Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) termed as the spiritual *viriditas* of the world, where "an entire hagiography and a theography [is] mapped onto parts of plants in a kind of spiritual botany."⁹⁷ The new Emperor's request that Tamora "ascend" into the "Pantheon" (1.1.316) cements her abrupt seizure of the *opportunas* afforded by *kairos*, a rapid promotion that causes even Marcus and Titus to marvel: "How comes it that the subtle Queen of Goths / Is of a sudden thus advanced in Rome?" (1.1.395–396). Thus, like a parasitic and invasive lifeform, Tamora's tendrils infiltrate the enemy's compromised body politic by manipulating justice as it is realized in the kairotic, rather than the chronological. *Kairos* time is "matriarchal" because the biological flow and flux of a female's body can be said to be seasonal.⁹⁸ Pregnancy, menstruation, and menopause are *embodied* temporal concepts because they regulate themselves according to monthly signposts. If the proto-menopausal "vegetable womb" can defy temporality as defined by Greek and Judeo-Christian doctrine, then the duration of gestation, its particular "seasons," are irrelevant: the

chronological time-axis can be wilfully subdued. As the character of Time in *The Winter's Tale* makes clear, “it is in my power / To o'erthrow law, and in one self-born hour / To plant and o'erwhelm custom” (4.1.7–9). Tamora’s mythic nature means that, like the changing of the seasons modelled on embodied female rhythms outside of chronological temporality, she is immortal—locked into a cyclical sequence of birth, death, and regeneration. The awareness of the kairotic, and her ability to manipulate it, especially on a reproductive level, is what makes Tamora and her “blackamoor child” ultimately triumphant on a species level. As it appears in Homer’s *Iliad*, *kairos* also denotes a vital or lethal place in the body, an allusion to archery where there is a fleeting moment of time allowing for a deadly penetration.⁹⁹ *Kairos*, then, provides the timely opportunity to lethally wound or penetrate a vulnerable body. Tamora’s “subtle” (1.1.395) machinations to become “A Roman now adopted happily” (1.1.465–466), appear to be an embrace of Roman honour and justice where any future offspring might become integrated into the royal bloodline. But, like the cunning “siren” who exists only to “charm” the commonweal into “shipwreck” (2.1.23–25), or the “honey stalk” that rots with “delicious feed” (4.4.92–94), this is a ruse, for Tamora is already pregnant with an illegitimate child and is waiting for the perfect kairotic moment to enact revenge (1.1.453–458). Therefore Tamora’s threat to “raze” the Andronici faction (1.1.454) resonates in a much more complex and nuanced fashion: “I’ll find a time to massacre them all” (1.1.455), indicates “*a* time to,” not “*the* time to” and is, therefore, an expression of *kairos*, for it implies that there will come the correct qualitative rather than quantitative linear time (*chronos*) that is appropriate for Tamora’s revenge, when justice unfolds according to her “due season.” Tamora’s use of the verb “raze” also is suggestive of the word’s alternative definition meaning to “strike off corn at the level of measure.”¹⁰⁰ Already, then, we can see how Tamora’s actions and reproductive cycle function according to her own temporal rhythms not solely dictated by the chronological rotation of the calendar, a clear example of the Hesiodic understanding of *kairos*.

The Greek poet and natural philosopher Hesiod (fl. 700 BC) wrote his *Work and Days* in the form of an instructional homily advising a generic young man how to live a virtuous and just life in harmony with the gods as well with the natural seasons. In a pragmatic sense, Hesiod gives “Perves” advice as to when to plant and harvest crops, as well as when to marry.

The blending of such agrarian and social directives is based upon Hesiod's notion of a thing being "in due season":

In due season bring a wife into your house when you are neither many years short of thirty nor many beyond it: this is your seasonable marriage. As for the woman, she should have four years of ripeness, and be married in the fifth.¹⁰¹

For Hesiod, then, "due season" is the quintessential expression of *kairos* as it relates to both male and female cycles of the "ripe" time for sexual reproduction. "Nature" is most often represented in Hesiod's etiology as "the characteristics and seasonable processes of the earth," a correlation to the poem's title denoting the "tilled fields" of agricultural work.¹⁰² Hesiod argues that the correct use of *kairos* ensures a social order of "true justice" that thwarts "famine [and] disaster" to all men:

As for those who...do not deviate from what is just... Neither does Famine attend straight-judging men, nor Blight, and they feast on the crops they tend. For them Earth bears plentiful food... the womenfolk bear children that resemble their parents.

Hesiod's argument is straightforward: the threat to social and natural equilibrium is any action that threatens "Justice" herself. The punishment for such deviation means that the earth withholds food as well as blighting the human progeny of all women. Thus Justice, "that maiden, daughter of Zeus, esteemed and respected by the gods in Olympus," is connected not only with the agrarian cycle and social order, but also with female reproduction. The anxiety generated by the female's reproductive capabilities as well as her ability to evade justice, is highlighted by Hesiod's assertion that, as all women are descended from Pandora, their inherent abilities of deception are a direct threat to the "grain-giving sol" and "its honey-sweet fruits," as well as to social equilibrium and fair measure: "he who believes a woman, believes cheaters." This is the inherited "natural" trait of all women descended from the First Mother Pandora, shaped with "Aphrodite's charms" and "govern[ed]" by Venus (2.3.30) but also with "[a]consuming obsession, a bitch's mind and knavish nature" who negotiates life through "lies and wily presences." It is woman, concludes Hesiod, who "brought grim cares upon mankind." Tamora's knaveries and nature are transcendent within this Hesiodic formula: she is the beast, the "tiger's

dam" (2.3.142) who "bears a woman's face" (2.3.136), one whom "no name fits [thy] nature but thy own" (2.3.119). The Hesiodic formula was clear: to mitigate the duplicitous and destructive influence of Pandora, man had to invoke the powers of Justice by living a balanced, even-handed life—one where Justice's powers would show their force in timely ("seasonable") harvests, marriages, and births. To submit to luxurious sloth or the sly deceptions of woman, was to throw this harmony off-kilter and raise the shadow side of the goddess Justice: "Strife." For Hesiod, there were two distinctive incarnations of the Goddess Eris, or Strife. Both born out of primal chaos, one version was a deity who wreaked havoc upon the lives of men in a wholly capricious manner; the other was identified as a pseudo-benevolent force that goaded men out of laziness so that they might know her sister Justice:

I see there is not only one Strife-brood on earth, there are two... The one promotes ugly fighting and conflict, the brute... But the other was elder born of gloomy Night, and the son of Kronos, the high-seated one who dwells in heaven, set her in the earth's roots, much better for men. She raises even the shiftless to work...this Strife is good for mortals. (37)

This ambivalence and "splitting" of the retributive goddesses is equally represented in Tamora who is at once Venus (2.3.30), Dian (1.1.318; 2.3.57), and Revenge (5.2.30) (Fig. 3.5). The aspect of all these female embodiments that is most pertinent, however, is how these classical entities wreaked destruction and revenge, as well as influencing birth and natural reproduction by manipulating chronological time; in other words, these goddesses had the power to regulate or subvert the "natural" growth cycle.

In an early fragment written by the philosopher Heraclitus (c. 500 BC), he makes it clear that one of the roles of the Erinyes or Furies is to make sure Time runs according to its prescribed chronology: "The Sun will not transgress his measures. If he does, the Furies, Ministers of Justice, will find him out."¹⁰³ If these infernal revenge deities are granted the powers to punish deviations from nature's norm, then it stands to reason that they could also exert the power to pervert this natural rhythm. Hesiod explores this potential for the subversion of chronological time when he predicts mankind's eventual fall:



Fig. 3.5 Wolgemut, The Lineage of Semiramis. Workshop of Michael Wolgemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff. Sol; Diana; Ceres [left, lower image]; *Lineage of Semiramis, Queen of Assyria*. When she is called “Semiramis” (2.1.22) [right, upper image], Tamora can similarly claim kinship with Diana, goddess of the hunt (2.3.61), and Ceres, goddess of agriculture (Credit The Warburg Institute Library, London)

Now it is a race of iron; and they will never cease from toil and misery by day or night, in constant distress...Yet Zeus will destroy this race of men also, when at birth they turn out grey at the temple.¹⁰⁴

Hesiod is clear: for the sin of rejecting Justice, mankind's doom will be foretold in female reproduction gone awry: babies will be born old, all semblance of "seasonability" plunged into total chaos. Thus if mankind disrespects "natural" Justice, Nature re-visits such transgressions upon womankind herself, especially in terms of reproduction. For the ancient Greeks, the form of such retributive justice took on the form of the deity Nemesis, goddess of revenge.

This rapid ascension of Tamora's influence that only "the heavens can tell" (1.1.398), positions her as the plant entity that has achieved maximum height in the botanical ordering principle, a fact that reinforces her mythical position as Nemesis, the classical goddess also known as Revenge: "The mooste highe goddesse of correccion / Cleare of conscience and void of Affeccion."¹⁰⁵ Like Nemesis, Tamora quickly convinces the new Roman Emperor that "sharp" revenge is her ultimate goal (1.1.140). Tamora's "determined jest" (5.2.139) to drive Titus even deeper into madness is facilitated and amplified by her adopted disguise of Nemesis or Revenge (5.2.1-8), the deity with the office of, as Francis Bacon noted, "Revenge or Retribution": "Nemesis is said to be a Goddesse venerable unto all, but to be feared of none, but potentes and fortune's favorites."¹⁰⁶ This is an important conceptual link: "Revenge" is a dark expression of "Fortune," and its catalytic agent is "Nature." In *King Lear* (1608), Edmund the bastard prays to Nature as his patron Goddess to aid him on his journey for vengeful justice (*KL*.1.2.1). But Shakespeare himself, adopting another common belief about Fortune's capriciousness, makes it clear that Fortune "is a strumpet" (*Ham*.2.2.223), and thus her offspring, like "bastard scions," do not always reveal clear paternity. As Tamora is "govern[ed]" by Venus, and Aaron by Saturn, their baby is a product of Lust and Time (2.3.30-31). Ovid's Vertumnus warns the virgin Pomona that if she rejects sexual love then she risks upsetting Venus and might incur "the wrath, / The unforgetting wrath of Nemesis,"¹⁰⁷ a clear indication that Nemesis oversees both sexual and vegetal fertility in her dual role as Venus. In classical mythology, the two goddesses Revenge and Justice were often hard to distinguish. Justice was sometimes named Themis, Tyche, or Astraea; Revenge was Nemesis or Até in her singular incarnation, or collectively

known as the Furies or Erinyes.¹⁰⁸ Frederick Kiefer distinguishes between the Renaissance usage of these two allegories by arguing that “justice is identified with the heavens, revenge with humankind. Revenge, then, is associated with the underworld or hell.”¹⁰⁹ Publius attempts to placate Titus’ mad quest to “solicit heaven” (4.3.51) by telling him that Pluto will send to “Revenge from hell” because Justice “is so employed ...in heaven, or somewhere else” (4.3.38–44). That “somewhere else” intensifies the ambiguities of Tamora’s identity as Revenge/Justice. Tamora’s influence seems to place her at the nexus between regions; her powers of retribution are celestial, terrestrial, and chthonic: she is at once “sent by the heavens” (1.1.338) as Justice, Venus, and Diana, concurrently embodying a dreadful Siren, a Fury, and Revenge. As Aaron’s speech in Act 2, Scene 3 makes clear, both terrestrial “honour” and “virtue” are subordinate to Tamora’s powers: in this, Tamora is likened to both divine Justice and infernal Revenge, and, like Time, she is also the mistress of Fortune (2.1.2). It is Tamora, then, who is seemingly given the power to interpret and embody the concepts of both “justice” and “fortune” on a heavenly, earthly, and Plutonian plain. More importantly, Shakespeare’s ambiguous treatment of Tamora’s true metaphysical identity serves to underscore the anxiety that she embodies in terms of her “species,” power, and reproductive abilities.

Titus’ tragedy is his on-going failure to recognize Tamora as the kairotic embodiment of both Justice and Revenge, a blindness that will follow him throughout the play until, in his madness, Titus is finally able to “see” Tamora through her disguise (5.2.142–143). By petitioning the heavens for justice, Titus’ conviction that Astraea has “fled” the earth (4.3.5) is part of his inability to realize that Justice had been on earth all along (4.3.50) but that she wasn’t the benevolent incarnation of Astraea, Virgo, or Pallas (4.3.65), but her darker sister, the multi-hued harlot, Fortune as the lascivious “strumpet” (5.2.190) whose “favors” “live about her waist” (*Ham.2.2.221–222*). Titus’ blindness to Tamora as the incarnation of darker Justice forces her to perpetuate this embodiment by literally donning the shoddy costume of Revenge in “strange and sad habiliments” (5.2.1). It is only once Titus can unmask Tamora as Revenge that he, in turn, can adopt her mantle, replicate it, and embody Revenge dressed in his own ridiculous costume as a one-handed cook. The role of Revenge passes to Titus: he even imagines himself as the vengeful female Ovidian character of Progne (5.2.195). Only now can Titus understand and embrace the kairotic for in “o’erreach[ing] them

in their own designs” (5.2.143), Titus enacts revenge within the kairotic moment by slaughtering Tamora’s sons and regenerating their flesh into food, a macabre interpretation of “the earth” that “swallow[s] her own increase” (5.2.191). As with Kerckring’s Dame *Anatomica*, Titus “plays the cook” (5.2.204), finally embracing the shadow side of Justice as the cruel Mother Nature, the “unhallowed dam” that both generates and consumes “the flesh that she herself hath bred” (5.3.63).

SILENCING BY CONSUMPTION

As the Vegetable Madonna, Tamora’s kairotic proliferation “seeds” and “feeds” the natural seasonable cycle, so whilst there is violent death, there is still the chance of regeneration and rebirth. This is why it is particularly important to look at the survival of both “scions,” the offspring of the Andronici and Tamora, and consider their future. With the closing of the “house” (5.3.134) of the Andronici by the play’s conclusion, the question remains: what would a future look like for the surviving “stock” of Titus’ and Tamora’s botanical families? Young Lucius would be the last “slip” (5.1.9) of the Andronici patrilineal line; Aaron’s baby boy, *if* allowed to live, would be the surviving stock of both Tamora and Aaron, and, to use the plant analogy, a species “hybrid.” As Bacon argued that the scion was “stronger” than the stock it was grafted to,¹¹⁰ will the descendants of both families thrive or not? Because he is the surviving descendant of the Andronici, if young Lucius thrives and replicates the patterns hitherto established by Titus regarding “honour” and family virtues, Nature will become sterile like the tomb that is devoid of life and sensation (1.1.153–158), its only surviving female having been mutilated and murdered. If baby Aaron survives and goes on to generate his own hybrid stock, then the beauty, cruelty, and indifference of Mother Nature’s Mysteries will continue according to the biorhythms of the natural world, like a child nourished by berries, roots, and goat’s milk (4.2.180–183). But Tamora’s embodiment of Nature is equally cruel, “a wilderness of tigers” (3.1.53). Aaron highlights that his son is no less of a royal brother to Chiron and Demetrius as he was fed with the same uterine blood that they were (4.2.142–144). But the uterus as the site of nourishment becomes interchangeable with the stomach, the “fell devouring receptacle” (2.3.235), the gaping maw that functions as the fearful pit, for it is the place where blood is concocted into the matter that consumes food. In “eating the flesh that she herself hath bred” (5.3.62), Tamora is the incarnation of

“foul” Nature (4.1.59) that consumes Her own as the ultimate act of assimilation and regeneration. As Tamora’s sacred consort, Aaron’s fate is similarly connected to the natural cycles of assimilation and regeneration through the biorhythms of “swallowing” death (2.3.239), decay, and decomposition, for his own stomach is denied food (5.3.179–180), whilst his body is to be “fastened in the earth” (5.3.183) like a tree rooted in hell. But like the “bastard” gillyflower, Aaron’s son, the “base fruit of [her] lust” (5.1.43), is the strongest scion in the Baconian taxonomy whose descendants will be more resilient and dominant. Elucidated by Edmund in *King Lear* (1608), Nature is the “goddess” who stands up for “base” bastards: “Who, in the lusty stealth of nature, take / More composition and fierce quality” to create than “a wide tribe of fops” (*KL*.1.2.11–14). Tamora’s uterus remains the abject “swallowing womb” (2.3.239) of the vegetable earth, a bloody, violent prison from whence her offspring need to be freed in the struggle for independent survival (4.2.124–125). Like the earth-womb of Nature Herself, Tamora’s body can equally become the nurse that, in the “sweet shade” of the vale, sings her baby to sleep (2.3.28–29), or the “beastly creature” (2.3.182), the tiger’s dam, who starves her cubs with unnatural milk (2.3.142–145). The Vegetable Venus’ body attracts the gaze concurrently that it repulses it. Tamora is a frightening embodiment of poet Robert Herrick’s “vegetable Love,”¹¹¹ a primal erotic force whose uncontrolled growth cannot be checked. The creepers, vines, tendons, and ligaments of Tamora’s gravid body are invasive parasitical plants, but also serpentine convulsions: invasive as well as invaded, the eternally fertile proto-menopausal womb becomes the *locus* of all worldly sin.

Aaron fails in his quest to overthrow the Romans by operating as the instrument of Tamora’s sacred “wit” (2.1.10) because, with the birth of his son, his “treasure” (4.2.174), his entire motivating desire now becomes directed towards species propagation, to “keep safe” (4.2.110) his own “flesh and blood” (4.2.84). Aaron rates “coal black” as the “stronger hue” because two black parents only produce a black child (4.2.99–100): if a black father and a white mother produce an offspring, then Galenic doctrine would argue that the parent with the “strongest” seed would determine as to whether that child will be black like Aaron’s son, or “fair” like that of Muliteus’ (4.2.155).¹¹² Therefore, as “married” to the “stock” of Tamora, Aaron proves himself to be the more powerful “scion,” meaning that it will be his offspring who shall not only resemble him in part, but who will prove to be the dominant future species. In

fantasizing about taking over the mother's role in feeding and nurturing his son far from the influence of women (4.2.176–181), Aaron discovers that it is impossible to escape both the beauty and brutality of Nature's vegetable womb: Nature both feeds and consumes all the species that She bears. It is a lesson that Aaron learns when his own body is made to withstand these self-same aspects: as a "breeder" of these events (5.3.178), he is to be starved to death and fed to that same earth-womb that he fantasized his son might escape from (5.3.179–180). Like Aaron, Tamora's body will find itself decomposed and reintegrated into the very earth she represents, the continued birth–death–decay cycle of Nature as *aion*:

As for that ravenous tiger, Tamora,
No funeral rite, nor man in mourning weeds,
No mournful bell shall ring her burial;
But throw her forth to beasts and birds to prey.
Her life was beastly and devoid of pity,
And being dead, let birds on her take pity. (5.3.191–200)

The early modern conception of the human being as being intimately interconnected with the vegetal and animal reflects the fluidity and complexity of "Nature" as an ontological concept in this era. As such, the vegetal can elucidate upon the phenomenological experience of pregnancy and reproduction as "wondrous," producing offspring that could transcend the mere "human." Tamora's "vegetable womb" allows one to use plant taxonomies to account for her "invisible" proto-menopausal pregnancy and accelerated gestation period. By exploring notions of temporality and their effects upon the botanical growth cycle, as well as Time's relationship to corollary concepts of Justice and Revenge, Tamora is situated biologically within the liminal space existing outside of *chronos* and therefore makes her "timeless." Even today, the idea of an older woman giving birth over fifty, either naturally or with the help of reproductive technology, is viewed with extreme suspicion, ridicule, and repugnance.¹¹³ Like a time traveller, Tamora's body conquers *chronological* Roman time because she anticipates, almost presciently, a future where the "season" of menopause, outside of patriarchal linear and even biological time, is rendered irrelevant: "seeds" can be implanted into ageing wombs via IVF treatments, and uterine tissue can be "transplanted" into blood-rich body areas to delay menopause indefinitely.¹¹⁴ *Titus Andronicus* projects the underlying sociocultural anxiety of the ageing womb: if women could manipulate *chronos* to their own reproductive ends and

exercise ultimate control over their conception, women might have as many children as they liked outside of the constraints of their “natural season.” As it currently stands, the medical community cannot agree *how*, *when*, or *why* the ageing female enters menopause: the mysteries of this physiological process can only be poorly defined through the narrow limits of chronological time.¹¹⁵ The ambiguity of the “natural” onset of the proto-menopausal state, then, allows one the flexibility to forge a link between the imagined phenomenology of Tamora’s experience of late childbirth and marry it to early modern conceptions of a human body where the vegetal was experienced on a cellular, sensational, imaginative, humoral, and environmental level. Not only does Tamora’s body manipulate *what* she births, but also *when* that birth might transpire. That Tamora in her emblematic guises of Nature and Justice might be able to bend, arrest, or accelerate Time elucidates a very genuine early modern fear about the mysteries of the ageing woman’s body.

NOTES

1. Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), 183.
2. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, trans. W.H.D. Rouse, Loeb Classical Library, LCL 181 (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2014), 591–599.
3. Robert Graves, *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth*, ed. Grevel Lindop (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), 92.
4. Ovid qtd. in Ted Hughes, *Tales from Ovid* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), 56.
5. Sawday, 184.
6. Lucretius, LCL 181, 2–3.
7. Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconography: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 142; 144.
8. Hesiod, *Theogony and Works and Days*, trans. Dorothea Wender (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), 191–225 ff.
9. James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Religion and Magic* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 1.1.4. Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, vol. 1 (London: Penguin Books, 1979), 6.b–6.5, 37–38.
10. George Wither, *A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne*, 1635 ed., <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
11. Simona Cohen, *Transformations of Time and Temporality in Medieval and Renaissance Art* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 165.
12. Glenys Lloyd-Bowen, “Nemesis and Bellona,” *The Concept of the Goddess*, ed. Billington and Green (London: Routledge, 1996), 212; Cohen, 77.

13. Panofsky, *note*, 72.
14. Sandra Billington, “Fors Fortuna in Ancient Rome,” *The Concept of the Goddess*, ed. Sandra Billington and Miranda Green (London: Routledge, 1996), 135.
15. Cohen, 76.
16. Lloyd-Bowen, 122.
17. Isaiah 40:6. AV.
18. Lynn Botelho, “Old Women in Early Modern Europe: Age as an Analytical Category,” *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. M. Poska and K. McIver et al. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 297.
19. Horst Breuer, “Theories of Generation in Shakespeare,” *European Studies* 20, no. 80 (1990), 333.
20. Galen, *On the Natural Faculties*, trans. Arthur John Brock, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916), 1.VI.19.
21. Cf. Jean Fernel; Jane Sharp; Françoise Mauriceau.
22. Christian Hünemörder, “Aims and Intentions of Botanical and Zoological Classification in the Middle Ages and Renaissance,” *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences* 5, no. 1 (1983), 53.
23. The word “hue” was a synonym for “species” at the time that Shakespeare was writing. First usage was in AD 971, now obsolete. *Oxford English Dictionary*, <https://www.oed.com>.
24. Francis Bacon, *Natural History*, ed. James Spedding et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 475.
25. François Mauriceau, *The Diseases of Woman with Child* (1673), 22, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
26. Jacques Guillemeau, *Child-Birth or, the Happy Deliverie of Women*, 1612 ed., 5, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
27. James Macmath, *The Expert Mid-Wife*, 11, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
28. Mauriceau, 1693 ed., ch.3.
29. Anna Whitelock, *The Queen’s Bed: An Intimate History of Elizabeth’s Court* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013), 174.
30. Lauren Kassell, Michael Hawkins, Robert Ralley, John Young, Joanne Edge, Janet Yvonne Martin-Portugues, and Natalie Kaoukji (eds.), *The Casebooks of Simon Forman and Richard Napier, 1596–1634: A Digital Edition*, <https://casebooks.lib.cam.ac.uk/reading-the-casebooks/what-are-the-casebooks>, accessed 2 September 2023. See the case of Christian Digby, aged sixty, Case #36565.
31. Pierre Dionis, *A General Treatise of Midwifery* (London: 1719), 109, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
32. Mauriceau, 1673 ed., B2.
33. Dionis, 110.

34. Mauriceau, D3.
35. Ambroise Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, trans. Janis L. Pallister (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), ch.7, 32.
36. Jean Fernel, *On the Hidden Causes of Things*, 1548 ed., <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
37. Jane Sharp, *The Midwives Book (1671)* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1985), ch.13.
38. Giambattista della Porta, *Natural Magic*, preface, Boston Public Library, 1658 ed., <https://www.archive.org>.
39. William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus: The Oxford Shakespeare*, Oxford World Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), ch. 3, 199.
40. Paré, 38–39.
41. Mauriceau, ch. III.
42. Sir Hugh Platt and Arnold Boate, *The Jervel House of Art and Nature: Containing Divers Rare and Profitable Inventions, Together with Sundry New Experiments in the Art of Husbandry: With Divers Chymical Conclusions Concerning the Art of Distillation, and the Rare Practises and Uses Thereof. Faithfully and Familiarly Set Down, According to the Authours Own Experience* (London: Printed by Bernard Alsop, 1653), preface, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
43. Natural philosophers, particularly Paracelsus, believed that stones and minerals were living things containing mineral “spirits” or “souls.”
44. Jacob Ruëff, *The Expert Midwife, or an Excellent and Most Necessary Treatise of the Generation and Birth of Man*, 1637 ed., 475, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
45. William Hill, *The Infancie of the Soule*, 1605 ed., <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
46. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man: A New Translation and Commentary*, ed. Francesco Borghesi et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 27–29; 35.
47. Thomas Aquinas qtd. in Matthew Hall, “Dogma and Domination: Keeping Plants at a Distance,” *Plants as Persons: A Philosophical Botany* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2011), 42.
48. Andrea Cesalpino, *De Plantis Libris*, 1583 (Florentiae: Georgim Marsettum), Gallica Ebooks, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/>.
49. Francis Bacon, *Sylva Sylvarum, or, A Natural History in Ten Centuries: Whereunto Is Newly Added, The History Natural and Experimental of Life and Death, or the Prolongation of Life*, 45, <https://www.english-corpora.org>.
50. Jean Feerick, “Botanical Shakespeares: The Racial Logic of Plant Life in ‘Titus Andronicus’,” *South Central Review* 20, no. 1–2 (Spring/Summer 2009), 84.

51. Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature 1150–1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 56.
52. *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Revised Translation*, trans. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 822a, 26–27.
53. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 329; 27.
54. Jean Fernel, *Medicina: Pathologiae* (Paris: Wechel, 1554), Libri VII.
55. *Oxford English Dictionary on-line edition*, <https://www.oed.com>.
56. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A.D. Melville (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 1.452–547.
57. Giambattista della Porta, 1658 ed., *Magia naturalis*, 63, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
58. Bacon, *Sylva Sylvarum*, 74.
59. Allen J. Grieco, “The Social Politics of Pre-Linnaean Botanical Classification,” *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 4 (1991), 135; 141.
60. Empedocles, “De plantibus,” *The Poem of Empedocles: A Text and Translation with an Introduction*, trans. Brad Inwood (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), I.I.815a, 15.
61. Pseudo-Zoroaster, *Geponica*, 10.83.1–2, qtd. in Andrew Dalby, *Geponica: Farm Work: A Modern Translation of the Roman and Byzantine Farming Handbook* (Totnes: Prospect, 2011).
62. Empedocles, D36–D37.
63. Theophrastus, *De Causis Plantarum*, LCL 475, trans. Benedict Einarson and K.K. Link, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 144–145.
64. Graves, *The Greek Myths*, 108.
65. Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, trans. John Gwyn Griffiths (London: University of Wales Press, 1970), 35.
66. M. Claudio Paradin, *The English Emblem Tradition: Volume 2: P.S. (Paradin), P.S. (Simeoni), Willet, Combe*, ed. Peter Daly et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).
67. Alisa Hunt, “Elegiac Grafting in Pomona’s Orchard: Ovid, Metamorphoses 14. 623–771,” *Materiali e discussioni per l’analisi dei testi classici* 65 (2010), 48.
68. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XIV, 657–672.
69. Panofsky, pl. 50.
70. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, trans. H. Rackham, Bk. 15. LCL 370, xvi (London: Heineman, 1949), 105.
71. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XIV, 35–36.
72. Hunt, 48.

73. John Gerard, *The Herbal or General Historie of Plantes*, 1633 ed., 510, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
74. Andrew Marvell, “The Mower Against Gardens,” *Miscellaneous Poems by Andrew Marvell* (London: Printed for Robert Boulter etc., 1681), <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
75. A term employed by Della Porta.
76. Francis Bacon, *Natural History*, Century V, 485; 489; 488; 476.
77. Della Porta qtd. in Doina-Cristina Rusu, “Rethinking *Sylva Sylvarum*: Francis Bacon’s Use of Giambattista Della Porta’s *Magia Naturalis*,” *Perspectives on Science* 25, no. 1 (January–February 2017), 16.
78. Della Porta, *Magia Naturalis*, 311.
79. Theophrastus, *De Causis Plantarum*, trans. Benedict Einarson and K.K. Link, Loeb Classical Library, bk. III (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 17.
80. Graham Rees, “Francis Bacon’s Biological Ideas: A New Manuscript Source,” *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, ed. Brian Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 306.
81. In his 1534 edition of *Le Palais des Nobles Dames*, Jehan Du Pre recorded female gestation periods that were as short as a few months as well as those that lasted a reported twenty-two years.
82. Francis Bacon, *Sylva Sylvarum*, cent. IV, 78; 67.
83. Bacon, *Natural History*, 435; 518.
84. Francesca T. Royster, “White-Limed Walls: Whiteness and Gothic Extremism in Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (2000), 434–435.
85. George W. Cox, *Alien Species and Invasion* (London: Island Press, 2004), 6–12.
86. Ovid, XV., 229–262.
87. Scaliger qtd. in Paola Savoia, “Nature or Artifice?: Grafting in Early Modern Surgery and Agronomy,” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Science* 72, no. 1 (2016), 276–277.
88. Mattioli qtd. in Andreas Blank, “Julius Caesar Scaliger on Plant Generation and the Question of Species Constancy,” *Early Science and Medicine* 15, no. 3 (2010), 276–277.
89. Cohen, 76.
90. Aristotle, “DeCaelo,” *Great Books of the Western World*, trans. W.D. Ross, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins, Vol. 8 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), 1.279a.
91. Cohen, 17.
92. Giancomo Marramao, *Kairos: Towards an Ontology of Due Time* (London: The Davies Group Publishers, 2006), 9.
93. Michael Marder, “What Is Plant-Thinking?” *Klesis Review Philosophique* 25 (2012), 131.

94. Paul Reid-Bowen, *Goddess of Nature: Towards a Philosophical Theology* (London: Taylor and Francis Group, 2007), 139; 56.
95. John E. Smith, “Time and Qualitative Time,” *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory, and Praxis*, ed. Philip Sipiora and James S. Baumlin (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), 48.
96. Phillip Sipiora, “The Ancient Concept of Kairos,” *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory, and Praxis*, ed. Philip Sipiora and James S. Baumlin (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), 1; 5.
97. Michael Marder, “Saint Hildegard’s Vegetal Psycho-Physio-Theology,” *Religions* 9, no. 353 (2018), 3.
98. Reid-Bowen, 139.
99. Sipiora, 2; Eric Charles White, *Kaironomia: On the Will to Invent* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 13.
100. *OED*, 5.
101. Hesiod, *Works*, 58; 43; 42; 48; 39.
102. Laura M. Slatkin in Lorraine Daston, and Fernando Vidal, ed., *The Moral Authority of Nature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 28.
103. Charles H. Klein, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus: An Edition of the Fragments with Commentary* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), fr.94 D-K.
104. Hesiod, *Works*, 42.
105. Nicholas Udall, “Respublica,” *The Oxford Anthology of Tudor Drama*, ed. Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
106. Francis Bacon, *The Essays, Or, Councils, Civil and Moral, of Sir Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam, Viscount St. Alban with a Table of the Colours of Good and Evil, and a Discourse of the Wisdom of the Ancients: To This Edition is Added the Character of Queen Elizabeth, Never Before Printed in English*, London, Printed for George Sawbridge., 1696, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
107. Ovid, XIV, 678–679.
108. Hesiod, *Theogony*, 8.
109. Frederick Kiefer, *Shakespeare’s Visual Theatre: Staging the Personified Characters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 49.
110. Bacon, *Natural History*, 492.
111. “To His Coy Mistress” c. 1649–60.
112. Ruëff, 66.
113. See for instance, reader’s reactionary comments to Sonia Sodha’s article, “For women like me, postponing the menopause would be a blessing,” *The Guardian*, online edition, August 11, 2019.
114. *The Sun*, U.K. edition, August 6, 2019.
115. Wingert and Kantrowitz, 12.



CHAPTER 4

Volumnia and the Sacrificial Animal Womb

INTRODUCTION: THE DOG AND THE WOMAN AT THE DISSECTING TABLE

I'd like to start this chapter with a dog, the likeness of which can be found hidden within the engraved frontispiece of the 1543 edition of Andreas Vesalius' treatise on anatomy, *De humani corporis fabrica* (Fig. 4.1). Vesalius (1514–1564), the first physician of the early modern period to carry out extensive human dissection was fortunate enough to procure several rare female cadavers, one of whom is featured prominently on the self-same frontispiece of the *De fabrica*. Early anatomical illustrations provide the means to interrogate “the politics of intelligibility” that “inform conceptions of embodiment,”¹ but visual iconography also informs metaphorical modes of imagining the female body, the anxieties of which, as Katharine Park notes, shaped an era when women’s reproductive anatomy commonly became metaphorized as “secrets.”² Vesalius, then, is literally opening up women’s secrets to the watchful eyes of exclusively male physicians. To the right of the splayed woman’s body, a dog is visible. Pinioned by a male attendant, the dog’s jaws are open in a rictus of distress or rage. The dog’s terror adds a level of auditory chaos to the dissection theatre: the imagined anguish of its howls leads the viewer to question what such animal language might convey. As naturalist writer Charles Foster has recently opined, “Wittgenstein had written that if a lion were to talk, we should not be able to understand it. Wrong,

oh so wrong.”³ Although we might only guess at the dog’s meaning, we can associate the impenetrability of its non-human vocalizations—the inscrutability of its canine “mouth” if you will—with the similar mysteries suggested by the cadaver’s multiple “mouths” of face, womb, and vagina. The scholar interested in the post-anthropocentric approach that “displaces the notion of species hierarchy and of a single, common standard for “Man” as the measure of all things,”⁴ might find a commonality of verbal articulation and bodily disarticulation between the woman and dog. Thus man, woman, and dog are linked together in a minor dumb show of their own, staged within this larger theatre of life and death.

The woman in the illustration remains unknown: Katharine Park’s extensive research has only managed to find out that she was a prisoner who tried unsuccessfully to stave off her execution by claiming to be pregnant.⁵ The midwives who examined her on behalf of Padua’s *podestà* concluded that the woman wasn’t pregnant; Vesalius added that he was unable “to indicate how long she had gone without menstruating.” The caption in the *De fabrica* describes the prisoner as “a woman of very tall stature who had often given birth,” and “a woman of rare size and middle age.” Within this complex microcosm, the presence of the dog with the middle-aged woman places both entities outside of the usual boundaries of society and nature provoking various questions about the contrast between woman and beast—in particular, possible somatic and symbolic interpretations of her opened womb. Along with the ape on the left side of the illustration,⁶ the animals in the image, like their human charges, bear witness to this bloody revelation of woman’s inferiority. As the dog was the original source of all medical dissections, the image becomes a reminder that the woman will inherit the dog’s place. Surgeon William Harvey (1578–1657) discovered the blood’s circulatory system using open vivisection on a spaniel and a “mongrel cur” in 1636.⁷ In a curious parallel, Harvey described a woman’s womb as being “insatiable, ferocious, [and] animal-like,” and extended this parallel “between bitches in heat and hysterical women.”⁸ As part of the *loci* of the female womb, the dog is invasively projected into a masculine space of death, pain, and surveillance bordering on voyeurism. Is the dog forcibly being compelled to the dissection table? And, if so, what commonalities would the anatomists be looking for between the female womb and the dog’s interior? Ultimately, the Vesalius print asks us to consider how the dissected womb is negotiated relationally in terms of the visual metaphors



Fig. 4.1 Vesalius Frontispiece. Andreas Vesalius. *An anatomical dissection being carried out by Andreas Vesalius, attended by a large group of observers.* Frontispiece: *De humani corporis fabrica*. Basileae: Per Joannem Oporinum [colophon 155]. The dog in the dissection theatre (far right) bears witness to the opened womb of the dissected female cadaver (Courtesy of the Wellcome Collection, London)

of the butchered proto-menopausal woman and howling dog, an uneasy balance between pathology and nature alike.

This chapter will focus on how proto-menopause was experienced through the uterine afflictions known as “the wandering womb,” and “strangulation of the womb” or “fits of the Mother,” (as the condition came to be known by the early modern era) and their metaphorical connection to the bestial as revealed through the myriad animal images in Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus* (1609). The sociocultural anxieties generated by the wandering womb as one of the many transgressive organs of the ageing woman can be explored through a corollary lens of animal metaphorization. Hippocratic humoral theory dictated that the wandering womb and its resulting illnesses collectively known as “strangulation” (*hysterikē pnix*), were essentially caused by a state of fluid imbalance within the body proper.⁹ Innately connected with the suggestion that a woman’s humours became colder, drier, and more sluggish as she aged, the proto-menopausal womb was said to travel throughout the body searching out much-needed fluids in those organs that still retained moisture and heat.¹⁰ But the idea of “wandering” also elaborates upon the notion of a uterus that challenged ideas about a bounded and tethered organ, one that increasingly refused to *know its place* as a woman aged. The prophylactic measures for the wandering womb were not, as such, “cures”: the prescribed purges of blood and breast milk, bodily binding, and the application of fumigants to orifices were only ever proffered as a means to *control* the unalterable nature of the matrix. I argue that Shakespeare uses animal imagery to explore proto-menopause in such a way as to offer an alternative line of thinking to a purely pathological condition by thinking through the ageing womb with animals. My argument, in part, centres on the notion of humoral “sympathies” between animal and woman and the hereditary notion of blood as a transmitter and sign system that helped shape beliefs about animal and maternal instinct. By exploring the animal images connected with the ageing body of *Coriolanus’* Roman matron Volumnia, this metaphorization allows one to look at animal sympathies articulated in the female body and explore the question of how the “taming” of the proto-menopausal woman’s many “mouths” might be accomplished.

Erica Fudge concludes from her studies of beasts in early modern thought that natural philosophers were not necessarily interested in the status of animals per se, but that by recognizing the animal in God’s Great Chain of Being they were, in fact, “recognizing and understanding

their (ideal) selves.”¹¹ Citing Gail Kern Paster’s argument about the nature of the “animal,” Fudge asserts that it runs counter to hers because Paster places human and animal passions *in the body*, therefore, according to Paster, early modern writers were not anthropomorphizing the animal experience, but were approaching it from the position that man and animals enjoyed a “shared aspect of existence” (108) with “a descriptive vocabulary in which ethical, physical, and psychophysiological discourses intermix...qualities [that] were directly transferable from animal to human.”¹² Fudge’s approach allows us to understand how the early moderns used the concept of animality to explore their own condition as the Aristotelian “thinking animal”; Paster’s argument, so grounded in humoral medicalized thought, offers us the means to explore the relationships between humans and animals in terms of the fleshly vehicles they inhabited. My approach in this chapter acknowledges Fudge’s argument but is weighted more towards Paster’s exploration of the lived reality of the female body, the humoral connectedness she shared with the animal body. I aim to explore the proto-menopausal woman and her position within the cultural scheme of rational animal, but also how the materiality of her reproductive organs transcends symbolism and metaphors of animality to embody the fleshed “beast within.”¹³

The animal not only defined the understood nature of the womb itself—its movements, hungers, and raging passions—but it also defined the nature of the maternal as a kind of blood kinship whereby the offspring was, like the Aristotelian prototype of the human ideal, “mould [ed]” (5.3.23) from the dam’s matter. The womb’s connection to the bestial finds its ultimate expression in the relationship between human mother and child in *Coriolanus*. This animalistic blood kinship reveals, not only how Martius is inextricably linked to his mother Volumnia by animal instinct, but also how his body, through virtue of those ties, *becomes an extension of hers*. That the ageing womb must be “tamed” in its rages through the purging of excess fluids (*plethora*) allows one to consider how Martius’ body and its eventual violent and bloody rendering, can be conceived of as Volumnia’s *body-by-proxy*. Martius’ disarticulation serves as the needed phlebotomy of trapped proto-menopausal blood, and for the collective sociological and religious requirement of a sacrificial scapegoat. The anxiety caused by the proto-menopausal woman in *Coriolanus* demands a public bloodletting that resembles the *polis*’ desire for violent sacrificial murder; this serves to lessen the fears of the ageing woman’s other most pernicious organ—that

of her mouth. In this case, disarticulation of the mother's body-by-proxy becomes the literal and symbolic silencing of the woman's powers of articulation.

Volumnia's powerful facility with political and rhetorical is well-regarded by other characters in the play,¹⁴ but it is the vocal connection to the animal in *Coriolanus* that I find most fascinating: because animal "speech" exists outside of human utterance, its meaning and comprehension remains ambivalent. One of the most feared symptoms of the "fits of the Mother" was a kind of bestial raving that defied understanding.¹⁵ When blood flow was blocked by the proto-menopausal strangulation of the womb, pernicious spirits rose to escape from the mouth, often in the form of non-human locution.¹⁶ Thus Volumnia's facility with both the language of the human *polis* as well as her ability to "cluck" (5.3.174) with a virulent, wild "mad[ness]" (4.2.13), makes her a formidable enemy to the stability of the patriarchal body politic, a potency that expresses itself as the duplicity of the "bear'[s]" ability "to baa like a lamb" (2.1.10–11). Like the proto-menopausal womb that must be purged through phlebotomy, the final catharsis of social "toxins," expressed in *Coriolanus* in the form of a murderous collective "hunger," needs similar release through bloodletting. If, as I argue, Martius is an extension of Volumnia's body, then the need for an extreme form of bloodletting ties this medicalized need to the earlier socio-religious desire for blood sacrifice and scapegoating. The scapegoat was an animal imbued with the collective sins of a community and then driven out or violently killed as a form of expiation.¹⁷ In the Judeo-Christian tradition as well as the earlier classical one, the scapegoat could often assume a human form. Thus, the sociological and religious act of blood sacrifice has always underscored an innate connectivity between the human and the animal. The question remains: why would the *polis* need to ask for a blood sacrifice to silence Volumnia? This desire for a violence meted out against the flesh is rooted within the complex ambivalence that articulate and, conversely, wild and uncontrollable female speech held for early modern society. Unrestrained female speech was often punished by public shaming or silencing through the use of such torturous implements as the scold's bridle.¹⁸ The animal ravings of proto-menopausal women were feared for echoing the crazed speech of the witch.¹⁹ However, as articulate speech was held to be suspect in *both* females and males of this era, gendering its sociocultural power and isn't so clear-cut. Although the early moderns suspiciously received female

speech, there are also many recorded incidents chastising the unmoderated speech of the male.²⁰ It is due to this ambiguity that I do not want to go as far as to suggest that Volumnia must be sacrificed solely because of her facility for speech; indeed, she is often lauded for her rhetorical expertise. I do, however, want to account for Volumnia's *silencing* at the play's conclusion, an act that re-incorporates her back into the body politic but in a distinctly inanimate form, an imagined statue in a temple. It is my contention that once Martius is sacrificed like an animal scapegoat, the connection between the animal and the human is severed: the wandering womb with all its "mouths," expressed in *Coriolanus* through the relationship between animal and woman, is finally "tamed" through an abject and violent silencing.

"LIKE SOME ANIMAL WITHIN AN ANIMAL": THE WANDERING WOMB AND PLETHORA

In the Hippocratic medical texts, the womb of a proto-menopausal woman "wandered" like a wounded and wounding animal.²¹ In older women, the womb would "throw itself" on the moist liver or move to the head.²² In Plato's *Timaeus*, the womb conceptually ceases to be *like* an animal and *becomes* "a wild creature":

When remaining unfruitful long beyond its proper time, [the uterus] gets disconnected and angry, and wandering in every direction through the body, closes up the passages of the breath.²³

By the time physician Artaeus of Cappadocia was writing in the second century, the exact animal nature of the womb was already conceptually changing from a literal creature into a metaphoric one. Soranus (fl. AD second century) described the womb as *hokoion ti zoon en zoon*, usually translated as "like some animal housed inside an animal."²⁴ Plato's writings found themselves primarily exported to the Arab world via Galen of Pergamum (129–c.216), where doctors such as Ali ibn al Abbas al-Majusi (AD tenth century) rejected the metaphorical and readily accepted the womb as being "more or less an independent living being."²⁵ Leaving its appointed anatomical seat to wander the length and breadth of the female *corpus*, the womb eventually settled like a nesting viper next to the spleen, liver, heart or brain.²⁶ Like a poisonous animal the womb would "sting" or "bite," infecting the body proper with noxious emissions; like a beast,

though, it could be “frightened” back into its rightful lair before it might deliver its killing stroke to the brain.²⁷ Galen argued that the womb’s movement was really due to its straining against ligaments or “horns” that held it down. Helkiah Crooke (1576–1635) agreed that the womb was “a very creature” that “could more freely move, now upward and downward.” Crooke identified this bestial movement as a kind of “lust to be satisfied” and that the “barren womb [it] hath a kinde of Animall motion or lust” that was particularly tenacious.²⁸ Many prescriptive treatments for this pathology included the binding of a woman’s lower abdomen with cord ropes or yards of cloth, thus addressing the fear of the womb breaking away completely from its moorings and leaving the body altogether. As Edward Jorden (1569–1633) advised, one of the more effective treatments for the wandering womb was to “let the bodies [*sic*] bee kept upright, straight laced, and the belly & throat held downe with one’s hand...tie their legs hard with a garter for revulsion sake.”²⁹ “Binding” here is an expression of control as well as fear, a distinctly animalistic treatment of the suffering woman.

The 1563 text *Medicine Partenenti* noted the wandering womb occurred more frequently in older women around the cessation of their menses.³⁰ “Hysterio Passio,” or “the Mother,” had a complex pathological effect on ageing women: its most pernicious side-effect was garrulosity and a tendency to scold.³¹ When Galen came to comment upon Hippocrates’ *Aphorisms*, he used the term “suffocation of the womb” or *hysterikē pnix*.³² Galen argued that *hysterikē pnix* could ultimately be fatal. Still exhibiting itself through locution, symptoms of *pnix* could wildly vacillate between vocal raving and a complete loss of voice, aphonia.³³ If this history of the wandering womb is “also the history of linguistic embodiments, rhetorics, and emplotments,”³⁴ it follows that one of the many ancient “cures” for *pnix*’s unwelcomed loquacity was to use charms and incantations, thus driving female speech back to its rightful domain of silence. By constraining the voice, one simultaneously repressed the womb’s unwanted movements. Within a magical handbook dating from the third or fourth century, there is an incantation “*For the Ascent of the Womb*”:

I adjure you, womb of Ipsa... do not deviate, not to the right and not to the left side, and that you do not swell like a dog ...and strangle... nor bite into the heart, like a dog, but stop and remain in your proper places without chewing.³⁵

Not only are the dreadful qualities of the womb canine in nature, but the organ itself is apostrophized. In the case of the wandering womb, it is oral language that is both the symptom and cure, thus in this pathology we encounter the following dialectic: if you want to stop a womb from wandering, then you “tame” it; if you want to stop a mouth from talking, then you silence it.

Hippocratic doctrine held that the dangerous build-up of unshed blood that accompanied any cessation of menstruation (*amenorrhea*) would putrefy and become poison, like that of “the bite or sting of a poisonous creature.”³⁶ Jean Fernel (1497–1568) argued that the actual physical sensation of the “vapours” of trapped menses or female semen was, “strong enough to bear comparison with the venoms of spider, scorpion or other deadly beasts.”³⁷ When Edward Jorden conjectured as to why this “venomous matter” would “lurk” in the body of widows so long, he referred to this blood as being like the “poison” of “a mad dogge.”³⁸ For trapped blood and spirits in the ageing female, Galen recommended phlebotomy as the first recourse.³⁹ Arguing that evacuating blood from the legs promoted the flow of blood from the uterus, Galen also suggested scarifying the ankles and opening a vein in the heel.⁴⁰ Although purging through bloodletting wasn’t always medically recommended for the very young or the very old, for the proto-menopausal woman who could not release her “trapped” uterine blood and female semen through sexual intercourse, bloodletting became a viable option.⁴¹ Gail Kern Paster argues that phlebotomy was “menstruation’s cultural inversion,”⁴² so in an ageing body such as Volumnia’s, without apparent access to the “marriage comfort” of regular sex and with the complete cessation of menstruation, phlebotomy would become crucial for the maintenance of a homeostatic humoral body. Blood and how it might be voided became the crucial factor in controlling and regulating the latent animality in every proto-menopausal woman. As the singularly most important humour, blood became its own semiotic system that was connected, not just to bodily health, but also to the notions of heredity and familial lineage. Although the inheritance of blood passed through a patrilineal system was recognized for its value, when blood was passed through the female’s line, it could only assume a kind of partial worth.⁴³ This, I argue, causes Volumnia’s obsession with her son’s blood: she must establish the proof of its value as masculine “laudable” blood purged of its “excrementitious” female waste.⁴⁴ Her blood’s merit is especially important given the noticeable lack of any reference to Martius’

father in the play. The blood shared between mother and son becomes part of a larger pattern of bodily “sympathy,” a sign system of shared humoral subjectivity.

For Volumnia, blood is the “gilt” and “trophy” that best becomes a “man” as the ultimate in aesthetic elaboration (1.3.41). Martius’ blood is material “proof” of the worthiness of the blood Volumnia shed in birthing him (1.3.15). By contrast, Virgilia abhors the notion that blood is the price to pay for manly valour (1.3.35). Ridiculing her daughter-in-law’s “fool[ish]” ethos, Volumnia adds her own rhetorical “gilt” to the play’s central extended metaphor:

The breasts of Hecuba
 When she did suckle Hector looked not lovelier
 Than Hector’s forehead when it spit forth blood
 At Grecian sword, contemning. (1.3.41–4)

Thus, in *Coriolanus*, a metonymic syllogism is born: in Volumnia’s universe, the nurturing milky breast is synonymous with the sublime expenditure of blood through bodily wounding. This sentiment is ultimately expressed in Volumnia’s belief that her son “suck’st” his “valiancy” from her breasts, but not his unbecoming “pride” (3.2.131). It also means that Martius has been raised to associate the mother’s “sacrificial” giving of her breasts as an expression of her maternal love and adoration: “the most noble mother of the world” (5.3.49), who has a “charter to extol her blood” (1.9.16). Here, love and sacrifice are “proved” (1.3.17) within and without the body. *Coriolanus*, though, is equally full of images of the evacuation of blood.⁴⁵ Both sets of images—the retention and evacuation of fluids—come to underline the physiological challenges facing the ageing female Galenic body. As previously explored, the proto-menopausal body suffered from two almost contrary states of being: if desiccated, the womb “wandered” the body to find the fluid replete in neighbouring organs; congruently, the ageing body became boggy with poisonous trapped fluids that could no longer be voided through menstruation or breastfeeding. As the treatment for both proto-menopausal conditions involved phlebotomy, Volumnia’s body, gorged with retained fluids, must be purged via her son’s body according to their shared reciprocity of blood. As Catherine Belling notes, bloodletting was adopted as a medicalized trope in early modern literature that could “justify violent injurious wounding,” and when applied to the body

politic, represent the “maintenance of social and political health.”⁴⁶ Classical blood sacrifice, functioning to reestablish lost community with the gods after Prometheus’ betrayal of Zeus, was a distinctly male form of expiation as the Greek woman, or *gyné*, shed her blood for the *polis* through menstruation and childbirth.⁴⁷ Because the sacrificial shedding of adult female blood in public was considered taboo, it passed to the young male to earn his cultural worth by shedding blood in war as a warrior, or as the *polis*’ butcher of animals.⁴⁸ Within *Coriolanus*’ ancient Roman world, there is a distinctly cultural and religious dimension to Martius playing the role of Volumnia’s body-by-proxy.

The blood that Volumnia calls “gilt” (1.3.37) is the same laudable blood flowing throughout both mother and son’s bodies, causing flesh and organs to regenerate tissue, concocting breast milk and semen, healing bloody wounds, and mending scars worn as trophies. If “every *gash* was an enemy’s grave” (2.1.144, *italics mine*) garnered “to please his / mother” (1.1.32–3), then the crude linguistic connection between the female reproductive anatomy and its proximity to death cannot be made clearer. The “charter[ed]” agreement understood between Martius and his mother is that she has won the birthright to “extol” his “blood” (1.9.16) because, in essence, it is her own. This speaks to the symbiotic humoral connection that Volumnia and Martius share, but it also points to the primacy of fluids that Volumnia holds as being evidentiary signs of worth, honour, and nobility. These ties of blood, then, appear as an embodied semiotic; not just a sign system that elaborates upon kinship through blood ties, but also a sign system that draws attention to the unique humoral concerns of the proto-menopausal wandering womb. These embodied signs point to the “tender[ness]” (1.3.5) of flesh as well as the internalized circulation of humours. As much as *Coriolanus* is replete with bloody animal images of butchered bodies and limbs, “flayed” (1.6.25), “quarr[ied]” (1.1.193), and “quartered” (1.1.194), it is also a play where retained humours and effluents cause detrimental bodily pain and discomfort. Menenius taunts the Tribunes who, whilst hearing a lengthy court case, become “pinched with the colic,” and “roaring for a chamber pot,” need the “bloody flag” of a toilet cloth (2.1.72–7). Anal evacuation is, of course, suggestive of Martius’ honorific title as “Coriol-*anus*,” yet another “mouth” or orifice linking him to his mother’s humoral body.

After the battle of Corioli, Martius is so bedaubed in gore that he does “appear as he were flayed” (1.7.3), “a thing of blood” (2.2.107). The

image of Martius, even at the pinnacle of his earned “manhood” in battle, is still one of a newly born infant with its bloody caul such an obliterating and unreadable sign system, that even his own men fail to recognize or register him as human (1.7.23–5). His first battle, when he was “yet but tender bodied” (1.3.6), initiates Martius into manhood by his bloodied seven wounds (2.1.146). Martius has spent a long time preparing for the role of Volumnia’s body-by-proxy: as a young Amazon (2.2.93), he shed the menstrual blood of *menarche* in battle embodied as an adolescent girl well before he could become “man-entered” (2.2.101). Although his name clearly derives from the classical god of war, Mars, this incident also links Martius to the goddess Artemis or Diana whose role as the “releaser of all blood” in women oversaw the young girl’s transition from *menarche* to eventual proto-menopause.⁴⁹ Artemis was also connected with the idea of animal sacrifice claiming the she-bear, an important animal in *Coriolanus*, as her totem.⁵⁰ Volumnia is gleeful about her son’s additional scars won at Corioli as embodied tokens of filial love (2.1.143–151). Plutarch argued that the pain and blood loss that a woman endured in labour ensured the strength and resiliency of her motherly love, a similar maternal protectiveness that he identified in beasts as diverse as bitches and hens.⁵¹ The cathartic mysteries of a woman’s blood loss, not only found their medical and cultural expression in menstruation, phlebotomy, and breastfeeding, but also within the trauma of childbirth itself. As Laurent Joubert (1529–1583) argued, “one could not more aptly compare a woman who has just delivered than to a person who has been severely wounded.”⁵² Recalling the words of Euripedes’ Medea who would rather face battle three times over than give birth once,⁵³ the loss of blood in childbirth is likened to male wounding. The bleeding male victim of battlefield violence had been dutifully illustrated since the Middle Ages as a sort of field guide for trauma surgeons. These illustrations, known as *Wudemann* or “Wound Men,” featured a warrior’s body punctuated with arrows, javelins and swords, as well as being riddled with boils, sores, and buboes. One fifteenth-century German Wound Man features a body beset by various animals, including a scorpion, bee, dog, toad, and snake, who exacerbate his blood loss and physical agony.⁵⁴ The wounded soldier’s flowing blood and gore, together with his body’s somatic distress is analogous to the pain inflicted by biting, stinging and venomous beasts: the Wound Man warrior reads pain through the animal. The battlefield scarification and bloodletting of Martius for his mother becomes a form of male childbirth: pain is sympathetically shared between

mother and son, the material expression of her “bosom’s truth” (3.2.54). As the “honoured mould” (5.3.22) which “fram’d” (5.3.63) her son, Volumnia believes her nature is revealed through the humoral tendencies of her blood—blood that she has transmitted to her son through the trauma of birth as well as through maternal milk. Blood as an innate expression of “nature” is responsible for the wandering womb according to Edward Jorden: “The causes of this disease...are referred unto these two, blood, and nature.”⁵⁵ Blood, pain, and bodily sacrifice enters *Coriolanus* as a complex semiology that roots itself in the reproductive and post-reproductive female body, one that finds a common heritage in the somatic experience of all animals.

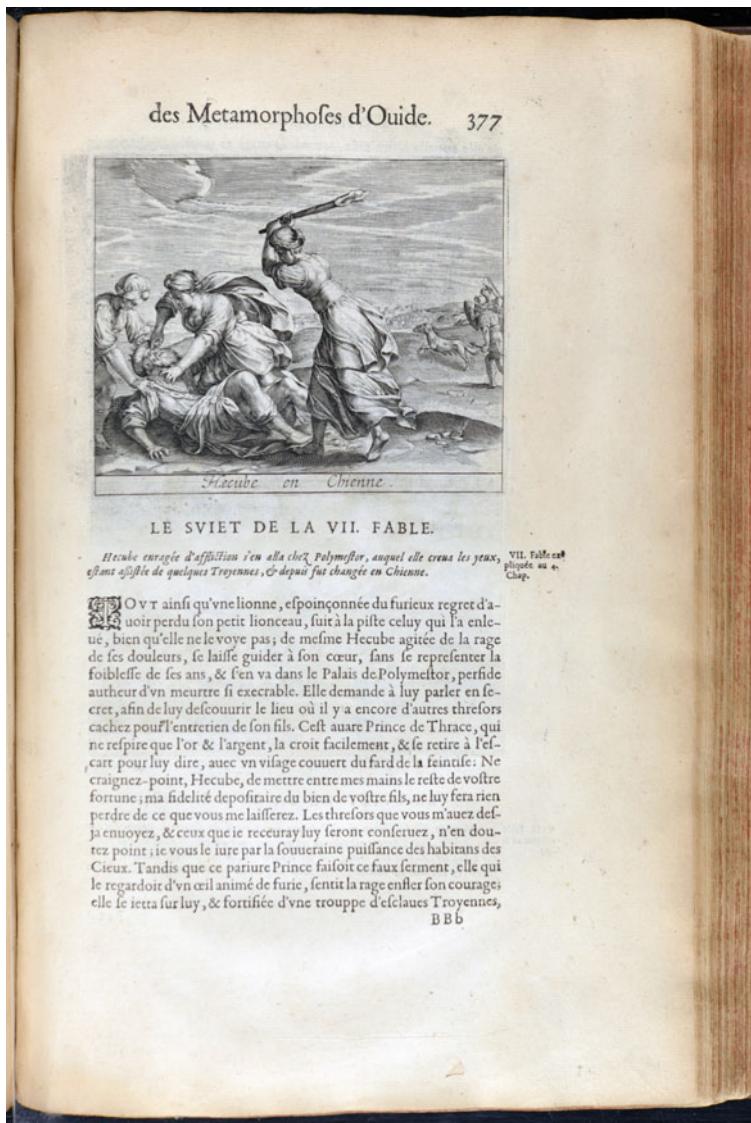
“SHE’S A VERY DOG TO THE COMMONALTY”: THE BITCH’S ANIMAL INSTINCT

In 1610, poet John Donne wrote that “Man is a lump, where all beasts kneaded be,”⁵⁶ words that seem to echo Volumnia’s reminder to her son Martius that she is the “trunk” and the “mould” that “fram’d” him (5.3.23). Although Volumnia only refers to herself directly as an animal once throughout the play—a “poor hen” (5.3.163)—the cultural and psychic importance placed upon Volumnia’s organs of regeneration, as well as those organs that regulate speech, argue for the exploration of a body that can claim direct kinship with that of her son Martius, a character who is frequently metaphorized as animal. The humoral womb, essentially a restless beast, is the place where the child is “kneaded,” where the “lump” is shaped by animal instinct. The animal traceries of instinct, irrationality, and Galenic notions of “animal spirits,”⁵⁷ embellish a medical, social, and cultural discourse about the behaviour and temperament of the proto-menopausal woman. In this sense, the classical debate about the womb being *like* an animal or *being* an animal becomes immaterial: the humoral changes seen and unseen in the proto-menopausal womb and the behaviours of the host have already been framed within the discourse of animal nature. As Erica Fudge notes, the status of animals and humans during this period was in flux: “animals are simultaneously other and self...[and] humans emerge...as beings who are simultaneously human and animal.”⁵⁸ And women, as “imperfect” males, straddled this liminal existence between human and beast with even more precariousness.

In *The Animal Estate* (1989), Harriet Ritvo acknowledges that animal-related discourse has “often functioned as an extended, if unacknowledged metonymy,” providing a “forum” for the “expression of opinions and worries imported from the human cultural arena.”⁵⁹ Shakespeare often employs metaphors and metonymies that generate interactive correspondence patterns of the type where animal behaviours are “mapped” onto his characters as a means “to reason about human behaviour.”⁶⁰ The physiological interconnectedness between Volumnia and her child, like a bitch with her puppy, can thus be explored through an animal lens as a series of intricate interconnected metaphors. In his research, Ian MacInnes writes about how animals serve as a metonymic vehicle “for expressing attitudes specific to a time and place,” for example, how English dogs have represented nation and gender in early modern England.⁶¹ It has been expressed that Shakespeare had a rather ambivalent attitude towards dogs⁶²; certainly such ambiguity seems to apply to the metaphorical status of dogs within *Coriolanus*. When the plebeians discuss Martius’ attitude towards their collective identity, they single him out as being “a very dog to the commonalty” (1.1.26), a term that distinguishes itself from Martius’ use of the word “cur” to describe them (3.3.144; 5.6.122). Volumnia’s much-feted mythological soul-sister Hecuba, she of the “lovel[y] breasts” and “o'er - teeming loins” (*Ham.*2.2.327), was transformed into a bitch howling in maternal agony on the war-ravaged plains of Troy (Fig. 4.2).⁶³ In his 1603 treatise *Epitome of the Theatre of the Worlde*, Abraham Ortelius (1527–1598) posited that the nation of England was to be celebrated for the production of two things: “its women,” and “a most excellent kind of mastiff dogges [sic] of a wonderful bigness and admirable fierceness and strength.”⁶⁴ Thus, the excellence of the “breeding” of women is made analogous to similar qualities in the mastiff, an idea perhaps mirrored by Rambures in *Henry V* (1600): “The island of England breeds very valiant creatures: their mastiffs are of unmatchable courage” (3.7.138–9). That Constable argues “men do sympathize with their mastiffs” (3.7.143), suggests that human beings shared with their canine charges a similar humoral constitution and temperament. Martius’ actions in battle and in subsequent conflicts wherein he “lurched all swords of the garland” (2.2.99) certainly align him with the mastiff, “following the fliers at the very heels” (1.5.23), where the slaughter of the enemy is treated “as if / “Twere perpetual spoil” (2.2.117–8). To emphasize both the noble and acrimonious nature of familial connectedness to the mastiff, Volumnia’s violent defence of her

son against the Tribunes sees them cast as “cats” (4.2.36). In begging her son to “dissemble with his nature” (3.2.64) when speaking to the plebeians, Volumnia desires Martius to tame his inner-mastiff with its “railing and angry speech,”⁶⁵ and appear more like a spaniel, to “flatter” the “mutable, rank-scented meinie” (3.1.69–70) by “spend[ing] a fawn upon ‘em” (3.2.69). It is the spaniel, a dog known for its intelligence but also its cringing and subservient nature, that became the metonymic embodiment of the early modern female herself.⁶⁶ The humoral changeability of the dog—at once vicious, the next moment fawning—mirrored the supposed temperamental fickleness and unpredictability of the proto-menopausal woman. The reciprocal nature of son and mother recalls the image of Martius “holding the Corioles” like a “greyhound in the leash” (1.6.43–44); as the “dog of war,” Martius is at once vicious canine killer as well as the fawning, obsequious spaniel “bound to’s mother” (5.3.170). By no means the only animal to feature in *Coriolanus*, nonetheless, the dog does seem to encapsulate notions of maternal relationships in the play, for the bitch was recognized and lauded for her instinctive natural drive to protect her offspring in the wake of any threat.⁶⁷

Given that the concept of “nature” was so diverse and multifaceted in the early modern era, what constitutes a “natural instinct” in both man and beast? For one of the most developed concepts of “Naturall instinct,” one might turn to Thomas Wright (c.1561–1623) and his 1604 treatise *The Passions of the Minde in Generall*. For Wright, instinct was a force of nature powerful and influential enough to engender certain “motions of the soule,” disturbances that he also termed “perturbations...or Passions.”⁶⁸ Instincts could violently disrupt the mind and body’s equilibrium: not only would these perturbations cause a “stirring in our minds,” but they also had the capacity to “alter the humours in our bodies.” There is a clear connection here between “instinct” and its capacity to create its own sort of language, an embodied semiotics speaking through the interpretive “instruments” of the body’s organs, a language so overwhelming that its dissonance and disharmony could throw humoral levels into disarray. In Wright’s etiology of humoral perturbation, humours metaphorically “flock” to the heart, and the heart itself adopts the role of mother once the “soule” has “birthed” them. Clearly bestial in nature, these “hatched” passions and “flock[ing]” humours collapse the so-called boundaries of human and non-human reason: “passions,” argues Wright, like “Circe’s potions,” change “men



LE SVIET DE LA VII. FABLE.

Hecube enragée d'affliction s'en alla chez Polymnestor, auquel elle creva les yeux, et fut changée en Chienne.

VII. Fable 7.
Plaçée au 4.
Chap.

Hecube ainsi qu'une lionne, épuisonnée du furieux regret d'avoir perdu son petit lioceau, fut à la piste celuy qui l'a enlevé, bien qu'elle ne le voye pas; de mesme Hecube agitée de la rage de ses douleurs, se laissa guider à son cœur, sans le representier la foibleſſe de ſes ans, & s'en va dans le Palais de Polymnestor, perfide auteur d'un meurtre si execrable. Elle demande à luy parler en ſecret, afin de luy decouvrir le lieu où il y a encore d'autres threfors cachez pour l'entretien de ſon fils. Ceſt auant Prince de Thrace, qui ne respire que l'or & l'argent, la croit facilement, & le retire à l'efcart pour luy dire, avec un vilage couvert du fard de la feintise: Ne craignez-point, Hecube, de mettre entre mes mains le refle de voftre fortune; ma fidélité depofitaire du bien de voftre fils, ne luy fera rien perdre de ce que vous me laifſerez. Les threfors que vous m'auez déjà enuoyez, & ceux que ie recueuray luy feront confeuez, n'en doutez point; ie vous le iure par la fouteraine puissance des habitans des Cieux. Tandis que ce parure Prince faifoit ce faux ſerment, elle qui le regardoit d'un oeil animé de furie, fentit la rage enfler ſon courage; elle le ietta ſur luy, & fortifiée d'une troupe d'esclaves Troyennes,

B B b

Fig. 4.2 Jean Matheus, *Hecuba en Chienne* (*Hecuba as a dog*). Hecuba tears out Polymnestor's eyes in a gesture of maternal rage. The presence of the dog foreshadows Hecuba's ultimate transformation into a howling bitch (*Credit* The Warburg Institute Library, London)

into beasts." Unlike Wright with his suspicions about both human and animal nurture, the earlier classical philosophers such as Plutarch had celebrated "the instinct of nature" that exhorted men to "learne (as it were) in the schoole of brute beasts, with what affection they should beget, nourish and bring up their children."⁶⁹ The animal's maternal instinct was believed to be no less powerful than the love a human mother bore for her child, for as Plutarch so elegantly noted, the animal mother developed a "naturall love and affection" whereby "her whole care is to provide ... this tender love and affection" towards her young, for the self-same love that human mothers bore towards their infants "appeareth no lesse in wilde beestes."⁷⁰ Although he rails with all his might against his instinctive desire to be continually "bound" to his mother's influence, Martius is completely unable to break away from Volumnia (5.3.170). This natural sympathy creates an inextricable animal "bond and privilege of nature" (5.3.26) between the two, but, more saliently, it generates a common body that allows the son's body to be "shared" with that of his mother's: blood and animal instinct prove to be inescapable and fatal passions in *Coriolanus*.

We find this cross-species humoral sympathy with its innate ties to the maternal within many medical cures of the early modern era. Here, it is evident that the homeopathic principle of "like curing like" is at play. A melancholic woman could be cured by having "a whelp cut asunder alive and laid upon the head"; for barren women, Edward Topsell (1572–1625) advised that they eat "whelp flesh" and that the hair of a black dog could cure the falling sickness.⁷¹ Dog dung mixed with turpentine would reduce inflammation in women's breasts. One option for bloodletting in treating plethora in older women was the use of oral chemical and plant-based compounds or "emmenagogues." John Freind (1675–1728) tested his emmenagogues by experimenting with various lethal chemical admixtures injected into dogs. In his *Emmenologia*, Freind claimed that he enjoyed much success with "restarting" the periods of older women, including an eighty-year-old, with the concoctions derived from canine experimentation.⁷² The qualities of breastmilk were also explored through an animal lens. According to Edward Topsell, the Greek medicine god Aesculapius protected all dogs as sacred entities "because he was nourished by their milk."⁷³ As milk itself could transfer the qualities of the wet nurse, "both in bodie, and mind," Helkiah Crooke noted "that a certaine childe was nourished with the milke of a Bitch: But he would rise in the night and houle with other dogges."⁷⁴ The memory of Volumnia's

choice to breastfeed Martius aligns her act, not only with the sympathetic humoral transfer of moral qualities (in this case, “valiantness”), but also aligns her body with that of the nurturing bitch or wolf, “the love they beare to their yong addeth spirits and courage unto them.”⁷⁵ Colostrum, the breast’s first milk, was known as “beestings” and it had to be drawn out of the mother’s breasts in a similar fashion to that of the extraction of a poisonous barb.⁷⁶ Valerie Fildes notes that one of the most effective ways of draining the colostrum was to apply newborn puppies to the lactating breast⁷⁷; similarly, Jacques Guillemeau’s (1550–1613) *Childbirth; Or, the Happy Delivery of Women* (1635) recommended applying “little pretty whelps” for the same purpose.⁷⁸ As breast milk was believed to be constituted from menstrual blood, it was a fluid believed to possess all the moral and intellectual qualities of the woman who supplied it, hence the amount of careful scrutiny given over to the selection of wet nurses during this era. Many upper-class women were immensely proud of the fact that they had chosen to breastfeed their own infants as an act of ultimate maternal dedication.⁷⁹ To those that maintained that breastfeeding was bestial, Guillemeau argued to the contrary: holding up the animal mother as being the epitome of maternal instinct, he wrote “there are no other Creatures, but give sucke to their young ones,” and would prefer to give up their own lives rather “than suffer their little ones to be carried away.”⁸⁰ In this sense, Martius and his mythological counterpart Hector play the role of plethoric puppies: their suckling instinct preserves the maternal womb by drawing off the poisons that would threaten to overwhelm *both* sympathetically aligned humoral systems. Hector/Martius’ body is imagined as “spit[ting] forth” (1.4.43) blood in a manner that mimics the lactating breast or the infant spitting up excess milk.

The tensions, though, between the mother’s “natural” instinct to protect her offspring and the counterforces of the “unnatural dam” (3.1.349) who could suddenly turn upon her child and devour it is, in fact, the entire dramatic action of *Coriolanus*: this is fear of the archetypal Devouring Mother who can so readily “turn” and “eat her own” (3.1.295). Both Menenius and Plutarch anthropomorphize the indicators of mental disturbance and disease in mankind as being the dread animal mother that would cannibalize her offspring:

But all of them like as those other passions and maladies of the mind before named, transport a man out of his owne nature ... for if a sow having farrowed a little pigge, devoure it ... or a bitch chance to teare in peeces a puppie or whelpe of her own litter, presently men are amazed at the sight thereof, and woonderfully affrighted...it is a propertie given to all living creatures, even by the instinct and institution of nature; To love, foster and cherrish the fruit of their owne bodies: so farre is it from them to destroy the same.⁸¹

The humoral pathologies that might make an animal mother be transported out of her loving, maternal nature, because these were shared with human mothers meant that a woman might easily become an unnatural monster, a potentiality that increased if the mother was older. These monstrous proto-menopausal mothers appear in Shakespeare as Tamora (cf. Chapter 3) and Lady Macbeth (cf. Chapter 5), women who would willingly kill their own offspring to promote their own social advancement. Thomas Wright argued that old women were “consecrated to covetousness,” and the only cure to mortify the “poysons” of their violent choleric passions was “to bridle the body” in the manner in which “wild beasts” were “tamed by ill usage.” Richard Allestree (1619–1681) noted that bloodletting could help pacify anger and “preserveth love from braine-sicke fantasies.”⁸² For Volumnia to control her natural instinct and violent passions once her beloved son has been exiled, she acknowledges that she must “unclog” (4.2.50) her heart of the “poysons” that threaten to overwhelm her and turn her wild. The Tribunes show an implicit understanding that the same humoral disposition that makes Martius so prone to anger or “choler” (2.3.191–194) is sympathetically bestial and can be pushed to its limits by “goad[ing] onward” (3.1.260) his “surly nature” that might be “galled” (2.3.191), thus provoking his “tiger-footed rage” (3.1.313).

Volumnia’s maternal powers are so sympathetically “bound” (5.3.160) to her son that the more that Martius is removed from his mother’s physical presence, the more he undergoes a curious transformation, an almost-devolution from beast to non-human “thing.” When Martius contemplates his banishment by the plebeian “common cry of curs” (3.3.121) who are “rats” (1.1.155) “hares” and “geese” (1.1.165–66)—“The beast/ With many heads” (4.1.1–2)—he continues his theme of being above the “littered” (3.1.283) *hoi polloi*, consoling Volumnia that his unlikely downfall could only happen if, like a beast, he would

be “caught/ With cautious baits and practice” (4.1.32–33). Shifting his self-perception from ensnared bear or lion and turning his back completely on humanity’s “herd” (3.2.35), when contemplating his isolation Martius imagines himself as a monster: “though I go alone, / Like to a lonely dragon that his fen/ Makes feared and talked of more than seen” (4.1.30–2). The image of the “fen” here is clearly uterine, a surrogate psychic and somatic home divorced from Volumnia’s matrix, but its physical and psychological distance from his mother, the maternal site of origin, makes it a fearful “lonely” place, a place to gestate into the reviled poisonous serpent (1.9.4) and viper (3.1.265; 298). Cominius notes that even within his new Volscian “family,” Martius leads the soldiers less like a man or beast and more “like a thing/ Made by some other deity than nature” (4.6.94–5). Forbidding all former names, all speech, Martius reverts to a foetal “kind of nothing” (5.1.12–13). To describe Martius’ radical transformation, Menenius employs several allusions to animal and insect metamorphoses:

There is differency between a grub and a butterfly, yet your butterfly was a grub. This Martius is grown from man to dragon. He has wings, he’s more than a creeping thing. (5.4.11–14)

Martius’ bloodlust and cruel indifference have transformed him into a terrifying entity beyond the bounds of nature, a “creeping thing.” But Martius’ apotheosis is complete only when he leaves the world of animate flesh altogether, becoming an engine, a “machine” that “hums like a battery” and “talks like a knell,” a “thing made for Alexander” (5.4.18–22). In the absence of the Mother Matrix, the former “man in blood” (4.5.216) has his humorous flesh and organs dissolve only to be replaced by the wires and cogs of the machine.

Whilst physical separation from Rome as the Motherland allows Martius to reject and “know not” his blood family (5.2.82), these former familial ties reassert themselves with a renewed vigour as soon as his mother returns into his physical proximity. Away from his mother in Antium, Martius had seemingly managed to forget her like an “eight-year-old-horse” (5.4.17) eventually forgets its dam, but back within her presence, Martius is instantly pulled back into an animal subservience, a whelp cowering before the “Olymp[ian]” enormity of its parent (5.3.31). Despite all his efforts, Martius is unable to fight against the animal instincts that naturally bind him to his mother. Seeing his “honoured

mould" (5.3.22) sink to her knees in front of him, Martius feels minimized like a worthless "molehill" (5.3.30). Volumnia's presence is still overpowering enough to shape Martius' imagination as he imagines "Great Nature" crying out to "Deny not" (5.3.33) his family's supplications for mercy. Although Martius begs his mother not to call him "unnatural" (5.3.85), he paradoxically voices his desire to become unnatural by denying his natural instincts and blood ties, stubbornly declaring that he will "never be a gosling to obey instinct, but stand / As if a man were author of himself / And knew no other kin" (5.3.33-7). But we know that this drive towards self-possession and individuation can never be achieved: in terms of thinking about the powers of animal instinct, there is no "world elsewhere" (3.3.159), for the offspring is always pulled back towards the maternal through virtue of shared blood. The whole dramatic tension in *Coriolanus* is the fantasy of man struggling to be free of his maternal bondage, the womb as the site of origin where "beasts...[that] first fell from the bodies of their Dams" inherited "the nature, which they could not change."⁸³

"THE LAMB THAT BAAS LIKE A BEAR": THE DANGER OF THE FEMALE MOUTH

As we have seen, phlebotomized acts of bloodletting and scarification were understood to control the "wandering womb" of the proto-menopausal woman. Stylistically, Shakespeare explores such medicalized thinking by his employment of complex metonymies in *Coriolanus* whereupon all female orifices that drain dangerous uterine fluxes become interchangeable "mouths." In such a metaphorical construct, the role of the mouth becomes of paramount importance: by extending this metaphor, the act of locution becomes another way of purging the animalistic womb akin to bloodletting. The proto-menopausal mouth in *Coriolanus* is the most threatening "mouth" of all. The ageing woman's orality in *Coriolanus*, not only builds upon the notion of the animal womb and its need for control, but also articulates a much larger social and cultural fear about the agency of the older woman. It is within this particular anxiety that, once he has created a formidable, articulate character, Shakespeare's creative choice is to "silence" such a powerful proto-menopausal matriarch through a violent embodied act of social blood-sacrifice. In creating an equation whereby the son's body can be substituted for the mother's, Martius' bloody murder in the manner of a

cornered beast, is the reciprocal stoppering of all Volumnia's "mouths." The killing of the son is really the eradication of the proto-menopausal mother. In *Coriolanus*, this silencing of female agency is again explored through the animal.

It is important to note that the issue of control becomes increasingly complex in a sociocultural analysis: its theatrical motivation as an expression of sociocultural anxiety about the ageing woman's place remains ambivalent. If one returns to the body as the source of material discontent, then the uncontrollability of the incontinent womb and mouth reveal themselves through the metaphorical language used to articulate how to control the older woman and her "mutinous part[s]" (1.1.13). Anxieties about the "nature" of a woman's loquacity were managed by isolating her "mutinous members" (1.1.142) for ridicule or sanction, or by likening women to beasts, a technique that implied that such natural tendencies to speak out of turn could be "broken" or "tamed" in the manner of an animal. In a play noted for such an emphasis on bodily parts,⁸⁴ this particular aspect of *Coriolanus* might also be extended to examine a uniquely female set of deflected metonymies: as the womb and breast stand for the woman, so too does the other major organ of concentrated social fear—the tongue. Just as the plebeians, those "mutinous members" (1.1.142), force their tongues into Martius' wounds to "speak for them" (2.3.7), I see a chain of relational metonymies that apply equally to Volumnia's body: womb *is* breast *is* mouth. Within this extended metaphor, control can be understood as the attempt "to tame" all "mouths." The "wandering womb," therefore, becomes a reciprocal metonymic device representing the woman's "unruly member [the tongue] full of deadly poison."⁸⁵ In 1615, Thomas Adams wrote that man had managed to subdue the tiger, wolf, lion, and serpent: "Yet all these savage, furious, malicious natures have been tamed, but the tongue can no man tame: it is an unruly evil."⁸⁶ Volumnia's ageing body is opened up to complex scrutiny whereby the "nature" and "instinct" of beasts—their "sovereignty of nature" (4.7.37)—and their capacity to be controlled, finds its expression located in various seats of female anatomy. The unruliness generated by Volumnia's "wandering womb" (as another "mouth") refuses to be moderated by cultural discourses of shame regarding the "weaker and leaky vessel"⁸⁷; instead, she revels in the experiential and physiological memories of her lactating breast and fruitful womb. Unable and unwilling to fully abject Martius' "bound" and "framed" (5.3.170; 5.3.68; 5.3.24) body from her own, it is interesting

that Volumnia strengthens this material connectivity to her son through the rhetorical manipulation of language, another manifestation of the power of an alternate “mouth.” Volumnia’s voice proves to be extremely powerful, her own verbal equivocation at speaking the “bastards and syllables of no allowance / To (your) bosom’s truth” (3.2.69–70) is notably adept. It may seem counter-intuitive to associate the power of the human mouth with animal locution, but *Coriolanus* does just that: there is an implicit warning about the human who purports to talk as a “lamb” only to “baa like a bear” (2.1.10), and an awareness of the futility of asking for pity from a man made to become a “wolf” (4.6.134). Just as the tamed beast threatens to revert to an innate nature that resists human domination, so the proto-menopausal womb is only ever temporarily restrained. The angry, cornered woman was dangerous because she could be pushed physically to react as “a she-bear robbed of her whelps [that] will tear in pieces [the hunter’s] forward hearts.”⁸⁸ It is in this locus of anxiety that we encounter early modern debates regarding the conception of animal instinct versus human reason,⁸⁹ and how these conditions mediate the status and relationship between predator and prey.

In extending the metonymic mouth, *Coriolanus* is filled with images of starvation as well as cannibalism, again connected to the play’s animal imagery. Associated with the she-wolf that saved Romulus and Remus, Volumnia becomes the Roman Wolf Mother, one “cannibally given” (4.5.191) and just as likely to devour as to nurture. As one Citizen remarks, “If the wars eat us not up, they will” (1.1.74). According to Livy’s account of the mythological founding of Rome, the herdsman Faustulus discovered the ubiquitous she-wolf licking the abandoned twin babies with her tongue concurrently offering her milky teats with great gentleness.⁹⁰ As this lupine incarnation, Volumnia becomes the same beast that can nurture with her milk or devour her infant charges with her tongue and teeth. But such terror of the Devouring Mother⁹¹ is best exemplified by Volumnia herself who, in a bizarre image of auto-cannibalism, rejects a meal at Menenius’ house after her son’s banishment by claiming “anger’s my meat: I sup upon myself, / And so shall starve with feeding” (4.2.54–5). The need for oral sustenance has turned into oral aggression: the animal mother has turned upon herself, and the mouth triumphs as the penultimate animal organ of aggression. It is in this sense that Volumnia embodies the conventional trope that reflects early modern “fantasies” and “nervousness” about the “apparent agency that is located in a body part.”⁹² The symptomology of this social

nervousness is now made manifest in the aggressive and formidable loquacity of Volumnia's mouth. One of the more striking symptoms of "suffocation of the Mother," the uterine pathology closely related to the "wandering womb," was its apparent maniacal assault upon the body of the sufferer. As Lesel Dawson notes, the hysterical woman sufferer was "typically violent and aggressive, exhibiting dramatic symptoms that call[ed] for physical restraint."⁹³ Robert Burton (1577–1640) noted that the sufferer would demonstrate an "increasing anger" raising her voice "not in argument, but in threat."⁹⁴ The character Martha in Richard Brome's (1590–1652?) play *The Antipodes* (1640), is a virgin who is slowly going insane from suffocation of the womb because her husband has still not consummated their union. "Full of passion," Martha exhibits her illness through "vehement laughter," "sudden silence," and in "loudest exclamations."⁹⁵ She describes her sexual frustrations as being vulpine: "It turns into a wolfe within the flesh, / Not to be fed with Chickens, and tame Pigeons."⁹⁶ The physiological violence of this so-called "uterine fury" manifested itself through a preternatural physical strength, its power partially expressed through the voice. By causing pressure on the diaphragm and throat, the "rising" womb changed the cadence and timbre of the vocal patterns of the sufferer suggesting the sudden onslaught of insanity, bestial oblivion, or demonic possession. In the infamous Elizabeth Jackson case (1602), Edward Jorden argued that the apparent bewitching of the fourteen-year-old Mary Glover by the elderly Jackson was not, as most claimed, demonic possession, but actually "suffocation of the Mother." Glover's symptoms frequently manifested themselves through her voice, "her neck and throat did swell extremely...depriving her of speech."⁹⁷ This was entirely congruent with Jorden's assertion that the disease "most commonly...takes them with choking in the throat."⁹⁸ The wandering womb and its sister pathologies rendered the female body as a vehicle, "a receptive conduit" for the voices of "gods, demons, or animals,"⁹⁹ thus linking the female voice to supernatural locution as well as the "language" of the beast.

Although "words" and "wounds" become metonymic synonyms for *Coriolanus'* many female "mouths," there is a marked distinction between Volumnia's speech and that of Martius'. Although, as I've argued, they share a common body, the qualities and characteristics of speech are divided between mother and son. As her only "brood"(5.3.163), Martius' inability in being able to use the "flatter[ing]" rhetoric of the "parasit[ical]" *polis* (1.10.43–5) contrasts with a "natural" language that

allows him to easily “holloa” the enemy like a “hare”(1.10.8), rouse the “fliers” (1.5.23) with the “thunder-like percussion of [his] sounds” (1.5.32), whilst encouraging the cowardly to “turn terror into sport” (2.2.103). Whilst Volumnia has mastered the political discourse of the *polis* and suffers no compunction about public oration, Martius’ speech of mixed “meal and bran” (3.1.383) is singularly devoid of flattery, obfuscation, and artistry (3.1.303). In this, Volumnia stands apart from her son: not only is Martius incapable of furnishing his “base tongue” with any “lie” that would disrepute his “noble heart” (3.2.102–3) by being “false to his nature” (3.2.15), but in rejecting the humoral and animal “instinct” that makes him “gosling” (5.3.35) to his passions, he fantasizes of a kind of unnatural male parthenogenesis whereby a man might become “author of himself” (5.3.36). All is well in the relationship between mother and son just so long as Martius “play[s]” the “part” (3.2.23; 128) that Volumnia requires of him; tensions are only exacerbated between the two when Martius rebels against the precepts of his “training.” When she coaches Martius into publicly flattering the senators and plebeians, he laments, “Would you have me / False to my nature? Rather say I play / The man I am” (3.2.15–17). But Volumnia “broke in” her son long ago and cleverly manipulates the situation by drawing a direct parallel between flattery and eloquence and the manly art of being a consummate tactician on the battlefield (3.2.49–51). In countering her son’s inherent fear that speech, with all its subtleties, is the province of the female or the parasite (1.9.50), Volumnia aligns the “bolted” (3.1.383) language of flattering rhetoric with the decidedly masculine valour of wartime subterfuge (3.2.53–66). Thus, we see an additional dualism enter the frame of reference for the mouth’s power: not only can it be split between “natural” and political, but its artistry and subterfuge can be socially coded as “male” or “female.” Volumnia has, in fact, mastered the “male” art of rhetorical persuasion—the “wolvish tongue” (2.3.110)—whereas it is clear that Martius associates its “dissembl[ing]” (3.2.74) qualities with the contemptible “female” speech of the virgin, nursemaid, harlot, eunuch and pimp (3.2.132–140). It is fascinating that Shakespeare chooses to align the mastery of rhetorical speech with the female and the more unaffected, animalistic speech with the male in *Coriolanus*; given the restraints imposed upon female speech in the early modern era, it appears almost ironic. After all, so much of the animalistic in the play has been associated with the female body. But it this unexpected reversal that succeeds at drawing the audience’s

attention to the dangers of the articulate older female. Whilst Martius “fle[es] from words” (2.2.72) like pursued quarry, Volumnia runs towards them, for “eloquence” is the desirable “action” of flattery (3.2.90). There is a splendid comical irony here that Volumnia claims that such “dissembl[ing]” is contrary to her “nature,” for we, like Martius, know this to be outrageously untrue (3.2.74–6). Volumnia’s facility with speech in all its gendered and socio-political forms makes her power something to be feared, an anxiety in *Coriolanus* that taps into general early modern fears about the unrestrained female mouth—especially when belonging to the older woman.

Richard Allestree pinned the threat of untempered and dangerous female speech and its origins on the “First Mother” who had willingly “enter[ed] parley with the tempter,” Eve’s tongue having “licked up the venom of the old serpent.”¹⁰⁰ Unsurprisingly, Allestree’s misogynistic plaint also employed the common trope of the “intemperate” female mouth needing to be bridled like a horse in order to avoid social and religious chaos.¹⁰¹ Social history has recorded how, for a great portion of the medieval and early modern period, this cautionary metaphor became literalized when the female tongue of the “scold” or “gossip” was forcibly silenced by an iron gadget designed to pinion the tongue known colloquially as the “scold’s bridle.”¹⁰² As a “double-edged sword,” the tongue ambiguously “possessed both the potential to build and protect society as well as the capacity to be decisive, damaging and dangerous.”¹⁰³ In the classical tradition, when the human is transformed into an animal for a transgressive act against the gods, the first quality to flee from the body is human speech, for it is suddenly translated into animal speech, and, therefore, cannot now be comprehended by human ears. This is best illustrated in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, especially in the stories of the transformative angst of Actaeon and Philomena. The hapless hunter Actaeon accidentally caught sight of the goddess Diana bathing with her nymphs in a secluded forest spring. The aggrieved goddess, scared that the hunter would brag about seeing her nakedness, turned Actaeon into a stag, whereupon his own hounds set upon him, tearing him to pieces. When Actaeon tried to call out to his dogs, “no words came,” and “words failed his will”:

Till the whole pack, united, sank their teeth
Into his flesh. He gave a wailing scream,
Not human, yet a sound no stag could voice,
And filled with anguished cries the mountainside

He knew so well.¹⁰⁴

One curious conception of the ancient and early modern tongue was its ability, like the proto-menopausal womb, to move with a disembodied, bestial will of its own, not subject to the governance and control of the body proper. On Ovid's story of Philomela and Tereus, in order that his sister-in-law Philomela might not speak of her violent rape at his hands, Tereus cuts out Philomela's tongue:

... he seized
 Her tongue with tongs and, with his brutal sword,
 Cut it away. The root jerked to and fro;
 The tongue lay on the dark soil muttering
 And wriggling, as the tale cut off a snake
 Wriggles, and, as it died, it tried to reach
 Its mistress' feet.¹⁰⁵

The grotesque image of the severed tongue wriggling like a snake and trying to reach its owner's feet like a fawning dog, not only imparts the organ with a will of its own, but in its literal disarticulation from the body proper, the tongue reverts into a pre-verbal animalistic entity. The tongue here is as Thomas Adams deemed it to be, an "unruly" and "wilde member" that, "like wilde beasts" was in danger of "break[ing] through the circular limits of the mouth."¹⁰⁶ Adams extended this animal metaphor by assuring his male readers that a woman's tongue could be controlled like "a little bitte guydeth a great horse ... to the Riders pleasure." It was because the tongue was so "unruly" that God had "hedged it in" by the "lips and teeth" because "a man will not trust a wilde horse in an open pasture." Adams was certain to note that of all the unruly tongues, a woman's was the worst as it was the "glibbest," and although any woman might call it "her Defensive weapon," in actual fact, she really means "offensive," for "a fire brand in a frantick hand doth lesse mischief."

In *Coriolanus*, contrary to Adams' sentiment that a woman's tongue was more dangerous than a "fire brand," Volumnia's tongue is the one responsible for halting the Volscian destruction that will set the "city...afire" (5.3.192). This is where the true artistry of Volumnia's rhetorical excellence is revealed: lengthy monologues that are focused entirely on her relationship with her child (5.3.103–134; 142–193).

Volumnia moves through every rhetorical tactic available to convince Martius not to sack Rome: logic, emotional appeal, spiritual and familial shaming, bitter accusation and psychological guilt, as well as extreme emotional blackmail in the form of a threatened suicide. Still, Martius remains silent. There is much scholarly conjecture as to whether in this dramatic moment Martius realizes his own death is certain (“*oh mother, mother, what have you done?*”), or whether he believes that peace between the Romans and the Volscians is a viable option after all. A seemingly defeated Volumnia rises with the intention of leaving but not before finally demanding that her son speak: “Yet give us our dispatch” (5.3.191): again, though, Martius remains silent. Dwelling on her son’s silence, Volumnia ends her exhaustive attempts by uttering her final lines of the play: “I am hushed awhile until our city be afire, / And then I’ll speak a little” (5.3.191–3). It is only then, once the audience is left believing that this exchange is concluded, that Martius grabs her hand. The ensuing pause, one which seems to last forever, is so intimate and unreadable that it becomes almost animalistic, for without discourse, meaning and intention must be intuited from the nuances of body language and stage presence only. This stillness takes on a heightened form of almost ritual, for it transcends simple human communication; in that ritualized moment, all civil discourse, all human words fail. Dramatically, this moment is also a physical transference, a *gestus*: now that the direct threat of Volumnia’s proto-menopausal mouth has been finally stilled, mother is now passing along the ultimate concluding act of plethoric purging to her son. So intimately are mother and son combined, it is as though in this moment we witness a double-death: “Death, that dark spirit” (2.1.148) seems to hover over the entire scene. With the realization that she has saved Rome at the cost of her child’s life, Volumnia undergoes a premature psychic and emotional death, a severance in mind, body, and tongue. Her only physical option here might be to howl like a wounded animal for Shakespeare affords her no additional lines of speech. Volumnia’s voluminous presence has been stilled: emptied of words and embodied gestures, she has become a mere shell, a husk, waiting for her beloved man-child to be butchered and ripped apart like a beast. In the stilling of her mouth, Volumnia’s worst fears about her other “mouth”—her womb—are realized: “Thou shalt no sooner / March to assault thy country than to tread – / Trust to’ t, thou shalt not – on thy mother’s womb / That brought thee to this world” (5.3.131–4). If her “moulded” warrior is to

be the agent of Death, the dread “harvest man” (1.3.33), then Volumnia’s terror lies in the fact that it is her son who must rip apart the place where he was moulded in a reciprocal act of annihilation.

It is telling that Aufidius directly places Martius’ “betrayal” of the Volscians squarely at the feet of Volumnia and her ability to sway her son through words. Although he admits that he was “moved withal” (5.3.194), Aufidius is still disgusted by what he sees as the alignment between Volumnia’s speech-making and the typically feminine art of betrayal, dissembling, and emotional blackmail:

At a few drops of women’s rheum, which are
As cheap as lies, he sold the blood and labour
Of our great Action. Therefore shall he die.... (5.6.45–6)

For Aufidius the agency of a woman who is allowed to speak and exercise such influence over a fellow warrior is a case for much masculine anxiety: he can only seem to explain away its effectiveness as an imagined form of infantile emotional blackmail (5.6.93–102). To admit to the brilliant rhetorical wiles of a woman clearly versed in political and martial strategy is to open up a world whereby women may threaten the status quo of the balance of power. It is little wonder that the final insult that Aufidius can levy against his beloved Coriolanus is “Boy of tears” (5.6.104). In *Coriolanus*’ penultimate scene, Martius’ language changes when he is branded a “traitor” (5.6.97) by Aufidius. He begs for pardon from his fellow lords, acknowledging that “‘tis the first time that ever / I was forced to scold” (5.6.121). Even though Martius claims he fought the Volscians “like an eagle in a dovecote” (5.6.130), the juxtaposition of the verb “scold” together with the accompanying images of Martius giving up Rome for certain “drops of salt” (5.6.106), “whin[ing] and roar[ing]” at “his nurse’s tears” (5.6.110–11) and bound “to his wife and mother” (5.6.107), connect his speech to that of both the animal and the feminine. Though Martius may rate Aufidius as a “false hound” and a “cur” (5.6.128; 5.6.122), it is left up to the Volscian herd to stand in for Actaeon’s hounds: “Tear him to pieces!” (5.6.138). In the ensuing bloodlust, the Volscians, those who once recognized Martius as “their god” (4.6.109), no longer seem to recognize their leader as they set upon him with almost non-verbal, animalistic ejaculations of rage: “Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill him!” (5.6.149).

BLOOD-SPORTS AND BEAR-BAITING: PURGING THE ANIMAL WOMB

This notion of the shedding of sacrificial blood in order to protect the social state sets up the final scene of *Coriolanus* when Martius, as the pseudo-womb, is “trod[den] upon” and torn apart: “You’ll rejoice / That he is thus cut off” (5.6.160–1). Blood, then, as one of the more powerful humoral markers responsible for articulating the condition of the womb, also elaborates upon a strong sympathetic bond between the mother and child, the human and the animal. The suffocation of the womb is indicative of a violence where the ageing woman’s body turns against itself and makes it ripe for the focus of the concentrated anxieties of the society-at-large. Once old age biologically renders the female body reproductively defunct, the ageing woman becomes “the disease that must be cut away” (5.1.351) from the community before her “infection, being of catching nature, / Spread[s] further” (3.1.369–70). Pain, bloodletting, hunting, and bodily wounding culminate in the sacrificial act that will eventually drive out the nourishing aspect of the maternal breast: “There is no more mercy in him than there is milk in a male tiger” (5.4.28). Thus phlebotomy can also be viewed as a macrocosmic act of communal expiation or “collective transference”¹⁰⁷ where, as the pseudo-animal—the scapegoat—the old woman’s blood can be “dropped...for [her] country” (3.1.357). In the animal metaphorization of *Coriolanus*, the price for female dominance embodied within the “mouths” of breast, womb, and voice, is spilled blood. As an extension of Volumnia’s own *corpus*, the aspect that is more youthful, wild, and uncontrollable, and hence more tractable for social sacrifice, is the body of her son. Peace for Rome would allow her grandchild to live on as her maternal bloodline but the cost of her “whin[ing] and roar[ing]” (5.6.111) is the ultimate silencing of a mouth that is not heard to speak again for the remainder of the play. Blood sacrifice, then, as the extreme expression of phlebotomy, is the ultimate form of taming and bridling the proto-menopausal woman and all her “mouths.”

Docility, obedience, and silence were the idealized condition for the garrulous ageing woman to assume. If her hysterical mouth has been “tamed” by silencing, then the only therapeutic means to thoroughly eliminate the threat of Volumnia’s proto-menopausal body is to fully purge its bloody plethora. Like her fears of her personified “dear nurse” Rome (5.3.111) being torn apart in battle, Volumnia expresses fear of her

own annihilation using the transitive verb “to tread” (5.3.125). Volumnia’s “womb” is indeed not directly trodden upon, but, instead, through the mechanism of her son as her body-by-proxy, it is Martius’ body that is eventually trodden upon by Aufidius to the horror of his own men (5.6.155). The repeated references to “treading” in *Coriolanus* are distinctly animalistic—an image of either the taming of a brute beast or of a beast itself trampling the weak under its hoofs. Thus eviscerated and drained of blood, the final image of Volumnia’s body is one that is mysteriously envisioned as a lifeless and inanimate stone statue in a temple dedicated to her as the “patroness, the life of Rome” (5.4.208; 5.5.1).¹⁰⁸ Martius’ intended journey home is framed by his prescient knowledge that such a truce will prove “most mortal to him” (5.3.190). His final confrontation with the Volscs will see Martius try to regain the animal nobility of the “eagle” (5.6.115) and the strength of the staked bear, a declaration of standing above and apart from the “herd” that will eviscerate him.

Andreas Höfele writes that bear-baiting “constitutes the key metaphor and scenic pattern” of *Coriolanus*, arguing that the metaphor of Martius as bear shows him to be a “singly unfit animal” when pitted against the body politic of the state.¹⁰⁹ In Höfele’s argument, this exclusion from the state leads to a final bear-baiting scene where Martius must be “dispose[d] of” as “a hero who has become untenable.” Whilst I agree that this analogy of Martius as a hunted and baited animal is an effective way of exploring the concept of alienation from the body politic, I am more interested in how Martius’ wounded and bloody body, by its humoral sympathetic connection to that of Volumnia’s, extends the metaphorization of animality that defines the nature of the body politic and what Höfele terms “the law of the mother” through Volumnia’s body itself. In other words, the bear-baiting analogy invites Volumnia’s animal womb into a new discourse of violence and sacrifice. I want to turn to the sacrificial aspect of *Coriolanus* in terms of the metonymic substitute of the mouth-as-womb, an argument that hinges upon my assertion that Martius’ humoral body stands as a substitute-by-proxy for that of Volumnia’s. As already established, the crisis regarding how to control women’s “unruly members,” that is, her womb and mouth, is frequently expressed in the early modern period with the same language used to describe the processes of “taming” animals. Beasts were not just subject to coercive methods designed to break their spirits but were also featured in public displays of blood sports, perhaps harkening back to a pagan time of ritual

blood sacrifice. The figure of the bear is certainly instrumental in linking Volumnia's body with her son's. Not only did Edward Topsell laud the mother bear as being the most fearsome and protective of all the animal mothers, but a tradition harkening back to Pliny argued that the bear cub was born shapeless and had to be licked into the mould of the bear by its mother's tongue.¹¹⁰ In *King Henry VI, Part 3* (1591), Richard, Duke of Gloucester describes his physical deformities as likening himself to "an unlick'd bear-whelp / That carries no impression like the dam" (3.2.180–1). Ovid also reported that a newly born cub is "but a lump, hardly alive" until its mother "licks and forms her little bear."¹¹¹ The bear dam's tongue, then, is as much an organ of regeneration as its womb. The bear was also the sacred animal associated with the goddess Artemis who was responsible for "releasing" the blood in all women's bodies, including times when their wombs were said to be strangulated. As *Artemis Brauronian*, many bears and other wild beasts were sacrificed to her in her aspect as "Lady of the Beasts" and the Crone goddess of childbirth, Eileithyia.¹¹² One of *Artemis Eileithyia*'s epithets was "Amnias," named after the "amnion" or foetal sac, but "amnion" could also mean "lamb" or the "sacrificial bowl" that the animal blood from sacrifice was poured into. Thus Hippocratic gynaecology is intimately linked to religious understandings of the unique quality of the female body. In Ovid's myth of Callisto, the pregnant votress of Artemis' retinue was transformed into a bear: "She was a bear but she kept her woman's heart."¹¹³ As the quasi-religious figure of the bear dam, Volumnia's strangulated womb with its trapped fluids stand to be released in an appropriate sacrificial forum, a reminder that Hippocrates described menstrual blood "like the flow from a sacrificed animal."¹¹⁴ The vision that Volumnia had of Martius "treading" upon Aufidius and driving him out like a "bear" (1.3.29) has become horribly reversed. Martius' murder within a "spectacle" likened to a bear-baiting involves a collective psychosis whereby the metonymic sign of Volumnia's womanhood is literally and figuratively dis-articulated. The bear stands equally as a complex animal figure of social blood sport, communal scapegoating, as well as maternal power and instinct.

In the twentieth century, the scholar most connected to the anthropological, sociological, and literary analysis of the scapegoat was René Girard (1923–2015). Girard, primarily basing his analyses of sacrificial violence within classical mythology, also applied his theories to the work of Shakespeare, finding in both a commonality or "mechanism" at work that functioned to prevent a crisis "from engulfing a community."¹¹⁵ This

“mechanism” is actually a member of the community who is “singled out to take the blame for and the brunt of the hostilities that constitute that crisis.”¹¹⁶ Girard devoted an entire text to his particular theory of the community member singled out for collective violence in his 1986 work *The Scapegoat*:

At the supreme moment of the crisis, the very moment when reciprocal violence is transformed into unanimous violence, the two faces of violence seem juxtaposed, the extremes meet. The surrogate victim serves as a catalyst in this metamorphosis.¹¹⁷

The surrogate victim, therefore, becomes “the unrecognized incarnation of the community’s own violence.”¹¹⁸ That such collective violence against the scapegoated victim is essentially “unrecognized” serves, I believe, to underscore the ferocity and animal-like instinctiveness of the way in which the victim is singled out without apparent logic or consideration. Violence against the old woman, born of the collective sociological anxiety that unconsciously arises once her maternal efficacy is diminished by proto-menopause, is expressed as a *violence turned against her own body*. Like the witch divested of any spiritual or biological traits of humanity, the elderly woman becomes an “animal” and is thus ripe to stand in as the communal scapegoat. As an extension of her “animal” body, Martius becomes the accessible sacrificial victim, even though the *polis*’ violence is unconsciously directed towards Volumnia as the proto-menopausal woman whose presence disturbs the patriarchal balance of power.

In the final analysis, the manner in which Volumnia’s animal womb can ultimately be tamed by the social organism owes much of its thinking to the notion of blood sacrifice as demanded by the social order. In this sense, an individual body, or even organ, can be made to become a bounded microcosmic organism that concentrates the fears and anxieties of the larger social aggregate. Lesel Dawson has drawn a direct correlation between the blood drained in phlebotomy and the idea of blood as a marker of “morality”: “the corrupt blood being released reveals an individual’s degeneracy and purges the body politic of bad blood.”¹¹⁹ Thus the sacrifice of Martius as his mother’s plethoric body-by-proxy is a spectacle of public sacrifice: Martius as the scapegoat (or “scapebear”) is the instrument through which the Roman *polis* cathartically cleanses its collective aggression. The anthropologist Mary Douglas (1921–2007)

argued that because the body was the “most intimate and certain of boundaries,” it became “an ideal source of symbols for other complex structures,” indeed, the entire social structure itself was “reproduced in small” on it.¹²⁰ Bryan S. Turner’s work argues that society is an organism that is bounded by an outer “membrane,” within which are “clusters” that embody the greater organism’s values, beliefs, and mores and protect it from attack against hostile forces. These forces were perceived as being supernatural and demonic in pre-modern societies, disease in modern ones. To protect itself, the organism would respond by initiating defensive actions concentrated in the outer membranes, actions that would include sacrificial rituals.¹²¹ What is interesting is that both Douglas and Turner conceive of the social aggregate and the forces that regulate its “health” as being organic in nature. The individual body registers any threat to the social aggregate by literally embodying its trauma. As a living organism, the body is easily imprinted by social forces that, as Michel Foucault notes, “invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs.”¹²² Just as *Coriolanus*’ most turbulent scenes replicate the bloody sport of bear-baiting, so, too, does the final image of the play speak to the terrible forces of the unwanted or aged beast driven from the “hungry” (2.1.8) “many-headed multitude” (2.3.15) as a blood sacrifice. The scapegoat, the vulnerable creature chosen for sacrifice, can just as easily be a man as an animal in communal purgation.¹²³ The quality of Volumnia’s womb and mouth as a threat to the social aggregate is organic in nature because both medically and quasi-religiously, it is defined by blood. Such threat can be traced back in classical culture to the physical nature of the first woman Pandora: she who released all the evils upon mankind was created with a “bitches” mind” and a ravenous, insatiable *gâster*, or womb.¹²⁴ As Martius becomes interchangeable for the body of the proto-menopausal woman, so, too, does he become a substitute for the sacrificed beast. For Martius, “Thus cut off” (5.6.151), as he had instinctively predicted, his mother has become “most mortal to him” (5.3.201).

Like the bounded body of Douglas and Turner’s argument, Volumnia’s wandering womb can easily transgress and permeate these boundaries and as such, serves as a challenge to the established rules and regulation of the larger society, indeed, the very “health” of the body politic. Banished from Rome by the “littered” (3.1.283) “beastly plebeians” (2.1.86), the “hydra”-headed (3.1.113) social order drives out Martius like a sacrificial beast marked for ritual consumption by the State as a

parent “cannibally given” (4.5.191). This is a potent reminder of the fact that bloodletting and eating calibrate the humoral body “in relation to the environment in which he or she lived.”¹²⁵ The crisis of oral aggression in *Coriolanus* finds itself embodied in the flow, blockages, stagnation, and purging of proto-menopausal blood, a reminder that Hippocrates compared dangerous bloody discharge to “the juice of roasting meat.”¹²⁶ The image of cannibalism, starvation and purging, circle back to the bestial: in the final analysis, Volumnia embodies the dam that devours her own, the unnatural animal mother who stuffs her mouth with the “meat” (4.2.63) of her own flesh-and-blood. With the betrayal of the State for whom her son, and therefore, herself, has shed blood (4.2.25–36), Volumnia’s anger is extreme: she calls down curses upon the people, and “bait[s]” (4.2.54) the Tribunes, the treacherous “cats” (4.2.43) devoid of “foxship” (4.2.24), with a frightening physical aggression (4.2.22). The Tribunes retreat from Volumnia in terror claiming, “she’s mad” (4.2.10). Already Volumnia is being perceived as a creature beyond the realms of social decorum, the hysterical woman of the wandering womb whose instability erupts from:

Suffocation in the throate, croaking of Frogges, hising of Snakes, crowing of Cockes, Barking of Dogges, garring of Crowes, frenzies, convulsions, hickcockes, laughing, singing, weeping, crying & c.¹²⁷

Even Menenius begs the matron to silence her mouth, “Peace, peace, be not so loud” (4.2.15). Earlier in the scene, perhaps preparing for her future existence as a lifeless icon, Volumnia made the choice to silence the organ of her own expressive anger by assuming the stony disdain of the goddess Juno: “Leave this faint puling and lament as I do, / In anger, Juno-like” (4.2.55–6). But if “anger” is her “meat” (4.2.63), then the physiological blockages that have provoked the pathology of her wandering womb also jam her throat. Once Volumnia’s blood has been expiated through that of her son’s, she is silenced by the social order that starves her “rats” (1.1.155; 1.1.257) and “dogs” (1.1.202) and consumes her own children. The *polis*’ final triumph is implied by the violent butchery involved in the silencing of all Volumnia’s “mouths”: it has force-fed the ageing woman, breaking, taming, and sacrificing her proto-menopausal body on the altar of oblivion.

NOTES

1. Valerie Traub et al., *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 44.
2. Katharine Park, *Secrets of Women: Gender, Generation, and the Origins of Human Dissection* (New York: Zone Books, 2010), 36.
3. Charles Foster, *Being a Beast* (London: Profile Books, 2016), 7.
4. Rosi Braidotti, “Mothers, Monsters, and Machines,” *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*, ed. Katie Conboy et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 67.
5. Park, 211.
6. Jonathan Sawday believes Vesalius’ ape may “represent the futility of mortal endeavour.” *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1996), Note, 284.
7. Ian MacInnes, “Mastiffs and Spaniels: Gender and Nation in the English Dog,” *Textual Practice* 17, no. 1 (Nov. 2003), 38.
8. G.S. Rousseau, “‘A Strange Pathology’: Nerves and the Hysteria Diagnosis in Early Modern Europe,” *Nervous Acts: Essays on Literature, Culture and Sensibility* (London: Palgrave Books, 2004), 132.
9. Hippocrates, *Diseases of Women: Major Works*, trans. W.H.S. Jones (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1962). See 1.1 (L8.10–14), 1.2 (L8.14–22), and 1.7 in which the sufferers are identified as older women.
10. Cf. Chapter 4.
11. Erica Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning: Animals, Rationality, and Humanity in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 109.
12. Gail Kern Paster qtd. in Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning*, 108.
13. Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Harold Tarrant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 90 c.
14. See (5.4.53–6; 5.5.1–6).
15. Edward Jorden, *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother*, 1603 ed., ch. 4, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
16. Aretaeus of Cappadocia, *Aretaeus: Consisting of Eight Books, On the Causes, Symptoms and Cure of Acute and Chronic Diseases*, trans. W. Richardson, J. Walter, and John Moffat (London: printed at the Logographic Press, by J. Walter, for W. Richardson, 1785), 2.11., 2, 3, 4; Soranus, *Soranus’ Gynecology*, trans. Owsei Temkin, Johns Hopkins Paperbacks edition (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 3.26.
17. Terry Eagleton, *Radical Sacrifice* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2018).
18. Lynda Boose, “Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman’s Unruly Member,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (1991): 179–213.
19. Jorden, 40–1.

20. Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin, *The Unruly Tongue in Early Modern England: Three Treatises* (Vancouver: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2012), <http://www.proquest.com>.
21. Hippocrates, *Diseases of Women*, 1.2.
22. Hippocrates, *Diseases of Women*, 2.123.; 8.266.
23. Plato, *Timaeus*, 97, LCL: 250–251.
24. Soranus, *Soranus' Gynecology*, bk.1.8.; Helen King's *Hippocrates' Woman: Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1998) is an excellent source to read about the classical debates surrounding the exact nature of the womb.
25. Al-Majusi, qtd. in Helen King, “Once Upon a text: Hysteria from Hippocrates to Freud,” *Hysteria beyond Freud*, ed. Sander Gilman et al. (Berkley: University of California Press, 1993), 52.
26. Nancy H. Demand, *Birth, Death and Motherhood in Classical Greece* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 55.
27. Hippocrates, *Diseases of Women*, 2, 137. “Frightening” techniques used to compel the uterus to move up or down involved holding a red-hot poker to the vagina, or making the woman inhale noxious fumigants through the nose or mouth.
28. Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, 1615 ed., <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
29. Jorden, 28.
30. Giovanni Marinello, *Medicine Partenenti Alle Infermita della Donne*, 1563 ed. (Marlborough, Wiltshire: Adam Matthew Digital, 2019).
31. Ambroise Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, trans. Janis L. Pallister (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).
32. Galen, *De loc. affect.*, 6.5, 8.415 K.; see also Helen King for a more nuanced debate regarding Galen’s choice of terminology, *Hippocrates’ Woman*, 206.
33. Aretaeus 2.11.2, 3, 4; Soranus, 3.26.
34. G.S. Rousseau, 93.
35. Christopher A. Faroane, “New Light on Ancient Greek Exorcisms of the Wandering Womb,” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 144 (2003): 189–197.
36. Galen, *Galen on the Affected Parts: Translation from the Greek Text with Explanatory Notes*, trans. Rudolph E. Siegel (Basel: S. Karger, 1976), 6.5, 8.421–24 K.
37. Jean Fernel, *On the Hidden Causes of Things: Forms, Souls, and Occult Diseases in Renaissance Medicine*, ed. John Forrester, and John Henry (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 637.
38. Jorden, 25.
39. Peter Brain, trans., *Galen on Bloodletting: A Study of the Origins, Development and Validity of his Opinion, with a Translation of the Three Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), KXI 201.

40. Ibid., K305.
41. Michael Stolberg, “A Woman Down to her Bones. The Anatomy of Sexual Difference in Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries,” *Isis* 94, no. 2 (June 2003), 305.
42. Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 83; 66.
43. Patricia Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge Books, 2004), 113–139.
44. Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, 1615 ed., <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
45. See the following scenes: (5.6.138); (1.6.81–2); (1.8.11–12); (1.9.102); (2.1.138); (3.1.94).
46. Catherine Belling, “Infectious Rape, Therapeutic Revenge: Bloodletting and the Health of Rome’s Body,” *Disease, Diagnosis, and Cure on the Early Modern Stage*, ed. Stephanie Moss et al. (London: Routledge, 2004), 113; 115.
47. Helen King, *Hippocrates’ Woman: Reading the female body in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1998), 84. When Prometheus tricked Zeus into picking the inferior bag of sacrificial offerings, Zeus’ revenge was to create the first woman, Pandora, as a means to bring misery to man. See, for example, Hesiod, *Theogony and Works and Days*, trans. M. L. West (London: Oxford World Classics, 1988), *Theo.*, 19–21.
48. King, 84.
49. Ibid., 84–5.
50. Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths, Vol. 1* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1957), 86.
51. Plutarch, *Lives: Volume 4*, trans. Aubrey Stewart and George Long, 2013, <http://www.gutenberg.org>. Plutarch, *Lives: Volume 4*, trans. Aubrey Stewart and George Long, 2013, 30, <http://www.gutenberg.org>; Plutarch, *Plutarch’s Morals: Ethical Essays*, trans. A.R. Shilleto (London: George Bell and Sons, 1888), 24.
52. Laurent Joubert, *Popular Errors, Erreurs populaires au fait de la médecine et régime de santé*, 186, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
53. Euripedes, *Cyclops, Alcestis, and Medea*, ed., and trans. David Kovac, Loeb Classical Library 12 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), LCL12, 306–7.
54. For a full colour illustration of this particular Wound Man, see Jack Hartnell’s, *Medieval Bodies: Life, Death and Art in the Middle Ages* (London: Profile Books Ltd., 2018), 177.
55. Jorden, 25.
56. John Donne, “To Edward Herbert, at Juliers,” *Vol. 1: The Text of the Poems with Appendixes*, ed. Herbert J.C. Grierson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

57. Cf. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholie*, ed. Thomas C. Faulkner et al. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994); Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*.
58. Fudge, 60.
59. Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 21.
60. Aneider Iza Erriti, “Resemblance Operations and Conceptual Complexity in Animal Metaphors,” *Revista de Lingusitica y Lenguas Aplicadas* (2012), 175, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4995/rlyla>.
61. Ian MacInnes, “Mastiffs and Spaniels: Gender and Nation in the English Dog,” *Textual Practice* 17, no. 1 (November 2003), 21–40.
62. Tom MacFaul, *Shakespeare and the Natural World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 103.
63. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A.D. Melville (London: Penguin Books, 2008), Bk. XIII, 481–575.
64. MacInnes, 23.
65. Edward Topsell, *The History of Four-Footed Beasts*, 1607 ed., <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
66. MacInnes, 36.
67. Cf. Topsell.
68. Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the minde in general. Corrected, enlarged, and with sundry new discourses augmented*, 1604 ed., 64–65; 33; 35; 59, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
69. Plutarch, *The moral philosophie*, trans. Philemon Holland, 1603 ed., 113, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
70. Plutarch, *The Moral Philosophie*, 113, 30.
71. cf. Topsell.
72. John Freind, *Emmenologia*, trans. Thomas Dale (London: T. Cox, 1729), 69, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
73. Ibid.
74. Crooke, 140.
75. Ibid., 273.
76. Valerie Fildes, *Breasts, Bottles, and Babies: A History of Infant Breast-feeding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1986), 84–5.
77. Ibid., 18.
78. Jacques Guillemeau, *Child-Birth or, The Happy Delivery of Women*, 1635 ed., <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
79. See, for instance, Elizabeth Clinton, the Countess of Lincoln’s treatise, *The Countesse of Lincolnes nurserie*, 1622, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>, Clinton celebrates those women who have forsown their “monstrous unnaturalnesse” (11) by choosing to breastfeed their infants holding up the aged Biblical matriarch Sarah as “our worthy Pattern” because she breastfed “when shee was very old (5).” This can be contrasted with John Stephen’s assertion that women of “fivescore and

- upwards" who "be past childebearing" yet still "gives sucke" were obviously witches, *Essayes and Characters, Ironicall and Instructive*, 1615 ed., Character XX, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
80. Guillemeau, 141.
 81. Plutarch, *The Philosophie*, 10.
 82. Richard Allestree, *Almanac*, 1623 ed., 92, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
 83. Walter Raleigh, *The Historie of the World, in Five Books*, 27, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
 84. Zvi Jagendorf, "Coriolanus: Body Politic and Private Parts," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (Winter 1990), 457.
 85. Thomas Adams, *The Taming of the Tongue*, 1615 ed., 83, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
 86. Ibid., 89.
 87. Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*, 24.
 88. Cf. Edward Topsell, *The History of Four-Footed Beasts*.
 89. Cf. Chapter 5.
 90. Titus Livy, *History of the Romans: Books I-III*, trans. John Henry Freese et al., 1904 ed., Bk.1.1, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/10828>.
 91. Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 130.
 92. Carla Mazzio, "Sins of the Tongue in Early Modern England," *Modern Language Studies* 28, no. 3–4 (Autumn 1998), 104.
 93. Lesel Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 62.
 94. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Thomas C. Faulkner et al., 1632 ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 194.
 95. Richard Brome, *The Antipodes*, ed. David Scott Kastan, and Richard Proudfoot (London: Nick Herne, 2000), Act 1, Scene 2.
 96. Ibid., Act 1, Scene 3.
 97. Dawson, 2008, 64.
 98. Jorden, *A Briefe Discourse*, cap. 2. 5.
 99. Elizabeth D. Harvey, *Ventriloquized Voices: Feminist Theory and English Renaissance Texts* (London: Routledge Books, 1992), 66.
 100. Richard Allestree, *The Government of the Tongue by the Author of the Whole Duty of Man*, 1615 ed., 7; 8, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
 101. Ibid., 10; 150.
 102. Boose, 197.
 103. Elizabeth Horodowich, "Introduction: Speech and Oral Culture in Early Modern Europe and Beyond," *Journal of Early Modern History* 16, no. 4–5 (2012), 301.
 104. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III., 198–235; III., 236–240.

105. Ibid., VI., 533–566.
106. Adams, *The Taming of the Tongue*, 83; 87.
107. Eagleton, 148.
108. Peggy Munoz Simonds compares Volumnia to the great Triple-Headed Goddess in “*Coriolanus* and the Myth of Juno and Mars,” *Mosaic* 18, vol. 2 (Spring 1985), 33–50.
109. Andreas Höfele, *Stage, Stake, and Scaffold: Humans and Animals in Shakespeare’s Theatre*, 1; 2;16:15;136, <http://www.oxfordscholarship.com>.
110. Pliny, *Natural History*, trans. W.H.S. Jones (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 8: 54.
111. Ovid, 363.
112. Graves, 86; 85.
113. Ovid, 38.
114. Hippocrates, *Diseases of Women*, 1.41, L8.98.
115. Andrew O’Shea, *René Girard and Charles Taylor on the Crisis of Modernity* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012), 65.
116. Ibid.
117. René Girard, *The Scapegoat*, trans. Y. Freccero (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), 86.
118. O’Shea, 76.
119. Lesel Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3.
120. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966), 142.
121. Brian S. Turner, *The Body in Society: Explorations in Social Theory* (London: Boris Blackwell Publishing, 1984), 212.
122. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 25.
123. Tadd Ruetenik, “Sacrifice and Flesh Eating in Judeo-Christian Tradition,” *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture* 22 (Spring 2015), 141.
124. Hesiod, *Theogony and Work and Days*, 39; King, 25.
125. Eve Keller, “that Sublimest Juyce in our Body”: Bloodletting and Ideas of the Individual in Early Modern England,” *Philological Quarterly* 86, no. 1 (2007), 100.
126. Hippocrates, *Diseases of Women* 2. 115, L8. 248.
127. Jorden, *A Briefe Discourse*, 1603.



CHAPTER 5

Lady Macbeth and the Envious Womb

INTRODUCTION: “FIT FOOD FOR SPITE”

The allegorical image is startling. A middle-aged Crone strides across a blasted landscape, gnawing ravenously on a hunk of human flesh. The Hag’s hair, Gorgon-like, is comprised of writhing snakes, whilst in her right hand, she clutches an angry viper. The Crone’s chiton hangs loosely from her emaciated frame revealing two withered and denuded breasts. She is wreathed in poisonous black smoke that pours from a uterine-shaped furnace in the background, perhaps a visual allusion to the woman’s own heating womb (Fig. 5.1). This terrifying figure is *Envy*, or *Invidia* as she was most often known in the early modern era. Artist Jacques De Gheyn II’s (1564–1629) allegorized figure of *Invidia* offers us one of the best ways to understand the incredible totalizing effect of *Envy* upon the proto-menopausal body: every physical detail from fingernails to breasts are conceived of in terms of the terrible influence that this embodied Hag exerted over her own body and those of others. In Jacques Callot’s (1592–1635) *Invidia* (Fig. 5.2), the Hag’s frame is emaciated, the slats of her ribcage emphasized by her hanging dugs, a detail that is echoed by the skinny dog that accompanies her. *Invidia* still clutches a snake but gnaws upon her own fingers, a tiny black imp tugs upon her snaky locks. Cesaire Ripa’s (1560–1622) *Envy* is altogether more sedate, but she still displays the grotesque common features of *Invidia*: her breasts hang low but one hand rests on a rounded stomach that could

be swollen with proto-menopausal bloat or false pregnancy. Ripa's *Envy* clutches a womb-like purse in her right hand. The reptiles are gone but now a wolf accompanies *Envy*, like the "sentinel" that Macbeth claims "stalks" with "withered murder" (2.2.53–4). Surely the most disturbing image of *Invidia* comes from a 1306 fresco in the Arena Chapel in Padua by the artist Giotto (d.1337). Capturing the Biblical sin of envy, Giotto's *Invidia* is a middle-aged woman held stationary in a ring of fire, not only indicative of her damnation, but also a reference to her heating humoral body. In her right hand, she clutches a money-bag, but it is *Invidia*'s deformed face that draws the viewer's attention: *Invidia*'s side profile reveals an enormous bestial ear, and her eyes are sewn shut, their sockets being attacked by a monstrous serpent that issues from the screaming rictus of her own mouth. Giotto's image is resonant with the etymological root of the Latin word of *Invidia*, or *invidere*, meaning "to look maliciously upon."¹ In Dante's (1265–1321) *Purgatorio* (c.1308–21), the envious have their eyelids pierced and sewn up by a hot wire.² These iconographical images of *Invidia* contain all the emblematic ingredients necessary for understanding *Envy*'s power: ravenous, insatiable, and all-consuming. *Invidia* journeys through a nightmarish landscape seeking to feed on the flesh and vital fluids of her victims. If *Invidia* cannot feed upon the organs of others, then, as in De Ghayn's image, she feeds upon herself in a macabre act of self-cannibalization. That is why *Invidia* is at once bloated and withered: as soon as she is full, her body becomes immediately starved. It is such iconography that points to the fears that the "passion" of envy functioned as a kind of perverse parasitic force that posed as much danger to the sufferer's body as to their soul.

Envy lurks at the bloody heart of the *Macbeth* (1606) story. Although not explicitly identified, perhaps subsumed by such passions as "vaulting ambition" (1.7.27) and "fear," nonetheless, envy is a unique expression of the particular humoral changes and threats afforded by female physiology; hence the language of envy in *Macbeth* frequently circles back to reproductive imagery. The focus of this chapter is to look at the passionate force of *Envy*, or *Invidia*, as a means to consider the somatic experience of Lady Macbeth as she moves through the proto-menopausal event. Thomas Wright (c.1561–1623) termed these psychosomatic impulses "inordinate passions."³ The conception of "passions" in the early modern era was extremely complex: today we might understand the early modern passions as somewhat congruent to feelings or emotions, but also, in our post-Freudian world, to physiological drives, desires, and impulses.⁴ Lady



Fig. 5.1 After Jacques De Gheyn II, *Invidia* from *Virtues and Vices*. Print made by Zacharias Dolendo. Envy depicted as a menopausal Hag (Credit: The British Museum)



Fig. 5.2 Jacques Callot's *Invidia* from *The Seven Capital Sins*, 1620. Forever starving, Envy consumes her own organs (Credit: The Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco)

Macbeth is unique in the tragic canon because Shakespeare presents us with an early modern body in the throes of a particular pathology that mimics many aspects of contemporary menopause: changes to the quantity and consistency of menstrual flow; irrational thought and behaviours; and manic depression (“melancholia”). The anxieties associated with the female body suffused with the “inordinate passion” of *Invidia* coalesce in

Lady Macbeth's remarkable soliloquy in Act 1, Scene 5, where she willingly and consciously "calls down" the evil spirits that fructify the "seeds" of envy already latent within her body and mind. These "germaines" (4.1.60) of disease would generate myriad pathologies, pathologies associated with both Galenism and Paracelsian doctrine.⁵ This invocation, then, born from *Individia*'s pathology means that Lady Macbeth's actual biological age is irrelevant: the changes she wills upon her body are coterminous with proto-menopause in the older woman. This singular act of appeal to the spirits, unnerving in its dramatic intensity, is the inciting incident that sends shockwaves reverberating through Macbeth, Lady Macbeth's "partner in greatness" (1.5.10), as well as transforming the macrocosmic body politic of Scotland. The metonymized body of "mother" Scotland (4.3.168), clearly identified as a barren womb yielding nothing but death, leads Ross to remark, "It cannot / Be called our mother, but our grave" (4.3.167–8). Reinforcing *Macbeth*'s obsession with patrilineal bloodlines, the source of male anxiety in the play is "rooted" (5.3.40) squarely in the maternal matrix. These inordinate passions transform into pathology, metastasising Lady Macbeth's "mind" into "diseased" matter (5.3.39), piercing the heart of the "sickly" land itself (5.2.28; 5.4.50) and, like a pestilence, it infects Macbeth also. Pathologically, Lady Macbeth's phenomenological experience of *Individia* would have dire implications for her body and mind as well as other bodies in her physical proximity. Culturally, not only does Lady Macbeth's body tap into the deep sociocultural terror of the witch, but more precisely, the belief that bodily fluids are "fungible commodities"⁶ that could be traded by the malevolent Anti-Mother for demonic powers. In *Macbeth*, we encounter the proto-menopausal event at its most evil, because ultimately it is an event that is initiated through a personal choice to reject the aspect of the Nurturing Mother, to embrace the demonic malevolence of *Individia* instead.

The fruitful, reproductive womb in *Macbeth* is contrasted with the barren and blighted matrix. Envy of the fecund womb is initially revealed in *Macbeth* through lack of children—especially sons. Macduff even intimates that Macbeth slaughtered his entire family spurred on by an envy of the prodigious Macduff brood: "He has no children" (4.3.15). Doomed to wear a "fruitless crown" (3.1.60) and wield a "barren" sceptre (3.1.61) whilst Banquo is prophesized to be the "root and father of many kings" (1.3.5–6), Macbeth's murderous plotting is a strong expression of male envy. But masculine envy in *Macbeth* is only the

pale imitation of a powerful feminine influence or “contagion” that finds its seed (1.3.58; 4.1.73) within the body of Lady Macbeth. It is the “singular state of man[hood]” (1.3.141) that is thrown into relief in *Macbeth*, the supposition is that all “men children” (1.7.74) owe their existence as “wayward son[s]” (3.5.11) to the mysteries of the womb. This debt in *Macbeth*, therefore, always returns to the female body as the locus of every dramatic action. Each disastrous eruption in nature and the state is born of the ageing female bodies in *Macbeth*, a malevolence leading to inevitable psychic and physical dissolution. Lady Macbeth’s summoning of the somatic processes that will initiate proto-menopause begin a chain reaction whereby her body becomes the source of the infectious disease of *Invidia*: in this sense, *Invidia* becomes both a kind of psychosocial embodied fear of the ageing female, as well as an actual physiological event serving to define the passions of the changing female body. But, like the desire for “seeling night” (3.2.49) to mask all overt corrupt and degenerate actions, Lady Macbeth’s “rank” disease “infects unseen” (*Ham.* 3.4.150–1), spreading contagion in more ambiguous ways. The catalogue of pathological changes called down by Lady Macbeth is completely commensurate with the early moderns’ belief about how proto-menopause signalled a natural drying, thickening, and slight warming of the body, a process that made Jacob Ruëff (1505–1558) conclude that an old woman’s body became that of an old man’s.⁷ Ambroise Paré (1510–1590) similarly argued that ageing caused “women to degenerate into men.”⁸ The paradox here, then, is that according to the understood theory of humoral change, it would be “natural” for all old women to become old men. But if such a process was entirely natural, then this supposition is problematic from a variety of standpoints: if the ageing female body became “male,” why was it still such an object of abject scorn and derision, made even more socially marginal due to its inability to reproduce, as well as its believed connection to the diabolical? Such unanswered contradictions create, I believe, an inordinate amount of anxiety within *Macbeth* as to *what to do* with Lady Macbeth’s body after her transformation, part of a much larger pattern of anxiety regarding the proto-menopausal females of the great Shakespearean tragedies.

As a distinctly pernicious female condition, *Invidia* generated toxins and poisonous gases that could escape the bounds of the female body to cause death and destruction to those in physical proximity.⁹ In its most extreme form, such noxious emissions could also alter the environment itself.¹⁰ It is little wonder, therefore, that the pathology of *Invidia*, so

aligned with the ageing female, was often inextricably bound with the malefic power of the witch. The ageing female's affinity with diabolical forces was underscored by the belief that humoral fluids became commodities to trade in exchange for supernatural power. Once Lady Macbeth makes the conscious decision to share her "illness" with her husband, Macbeth is clearly shown to handle his diseased humours differently than his wife. Still subject to the same "perturbations of the minde"¹¹ that wrack Lady Macbeth, Macbeth triumphantly overcomes his initial fears and makes the conscious choice to "wade" forward "stepped so deep" in "blood" (3.4.137–9) with such mercenary single-mindedness that he can "almost forget the taste of fears" (5.5.9). The key here, though, is that it is the physical presence of both Lady Macbeth and the Witches that functions as a kind of insidious influence upon Macbeth, altering the humoral constitution of his mind and body. In a sense, Macbeth becomes so diseased himself that he usurps the role of *Invidia* from Lady Macbeth, perpetuating the taint of the maternal body and spreading its contagion even more widely within the kingdom of Scotland. Clinging to the belief that he shall never be conquered unless, by one "not of woman born" (4.1.94), Macbeth plunges into a defeated and ignoble infamy where his once-lauded valour collapses into mere butchery (5.7.99). Lady Macbeth's fate is to inhabit a *corpus* wracked by envious toxins resulting in madness, somnambulism, and suicidal annihilation.

THE PROTO-MENOPAUSAL FEMALE: ENVY, MADNESS, AND OTHER PASSIONS

By 1601, the trend towards Galenism was weakening somewhat as the iatrocchemical theories of Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus of Hohenheim, commonly known as Paracelsus (1493–1541), took hold in medicalized thinking, particularly in terms of the body and illness.¹² Certainly, Shakespeare himself was familiar with the debate between Galenic and Paracelsian systems. In Paracelsian logic, not only was the cosmos inherently female but also many of the phases of the alchemist's "Great Work" (*magnum opus*) were articulated using distinctly uterocentric analogy. It is in this embodied alignment that Paracelsus seems to single out the female as being the "womb container" of the "seminal seeds" that cause both bodily and spiritual disease. Paracelsian medical theory was not incommensurate with Galenic theory at the time of Shakespeare's career; indeed, there seems to have been a blending of the two,

especially when a patient displayed symptoms of humoral changes to the internal caloric economy. The marked difference, though, between the Galenic and Paracelsian approach to the ailing body was the latter's fundamental belief that disease—especially its spiritual dimension—was discord sown *without* the body, as opposed to the Hippocratic and Galenic schools that sought to redress the imbalance of humours *within* the body. Paracelsian doctrine argued that the “seeds” of disease existed within the natural and supernatural world, and could be willingly taken into the body, thus causing various illnesses whose pathology was mental as well as physical, and whose “cure” lay in the alchemical manipulation of spiritually endowed chemical compounds. Paracelsian treatment, therefore, was highly individuated and focused on addressing the patient’s unique physiological and psychosocial condition.

As highly individual as Paracelsian medicine was, however, it also had implications for the environment outside of the sick body. Paracelsus wrote extensively of the interconnectedness of the “microcosm” of man’s body being inextricably bound to the health of the “macrocosm.” Women, Paracelsus argued, had more creative force in their imaginations which left them prone to attacks from devils: demons found an easy entrance into the female body because it contained a preponderance of animal nature.¹³ The changes in an individual’s body created ripples that radiated across nature and supernature. Indeed, as the “seeds” of disease took literal and figurative “root” in the body, Paracelsian health had especially strong ramifications for a man and woman’s bloodline—the “fruit” of their offspring. The quintessential humoral transformation in *Macbeth* is Lady Macbeth’s soliloquy where she articulates the desire for “unsex[ing]” (1.5.40). This invocation to the supernatural “murd’ring ministers” (1.5.47) is Lady Macbeth’s willingness to give herself over completely to demonic powers with the full knowledge that she risks her body, mind, and soul in the process. In taking in these “seeds” of disease from forces without her body, the play is also introducing Paracelsian notions of infection to complement Galenic humoral theory. Because these “seeds” had their origins in female desire, and act as an open invitation to evil spirits, Lady Macbeth’s body has already established the ideal conditions for spiritual invasion.¹⁴ These infectious desires were known as “Prosartemata” and they attacked the rational soul: “they act like a parasitical demon which attaches itself to man.”¹⁵ Lady Macbeth’s immediate response to the opportunities of the usurpation of power offered by Macbeth’s letter indicate that she has been envious of political prestige for

some time; rather than a rash and spontaneous response, it seems Lady Macbeth has hitherto been contemplating a demonic deal and all it would entail. Her invocation, then, is the culminating event of somatic processes begun long before this moment; her body has already been infected with the seeds of envy, so her soliloquy is a self-consciously complete surrender to its powers:

Come, you spirits
 That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
 And fill me from the crown to the toe, top-full
 Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood,
 Stop up th'access and passage to remorse,
 That no compunctions visitings of nature
 Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
 Th'effect and it. Come to my breasts
 And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,
 Wherever, in your sightless substances,
 You wait on nature's mischief... (1.5.39–49)

Rather than Lady Macbeth's desired "unsex[ing]" rendering her body into that of an androgyne or masculinized female,¹⁶ these desired physical changes are very much female in nature. Lady Macbeth desires certain "passages" (1.5.43) to be "stop[ered] up" (1.5.43); her nervous system to be "fill[ed]" with "direst cruelty" (1.5.42); the "visitings of nature" (1.5.44) halted with the same biological processes that will "thick[en]" her "blood" (1.5.42); her maternal milk to be transformed from "laudable" blood into humoral "gall" (1.5.47). Lady Macbeth's wilful stoppering up of her bodily fluids would result in a build-up of dangerous menstrual fluids without the benefit of any sort of plethoric release: in Paracelsian terms, this signals that Lady Macbeth's body has already been inseminated by the diabolical seeds of disease entering her body and soul. The act of "unsex[ing]" (1.5.40), therefore, forms a phenomenological nexus where humoral and Paracelsian doctrine meets the physiological changes wrought by the "passions."

Because it would alter Lady Macbeth's entire physiological constitution, the embodied transformations resulting from demonic invocation place the humoral female body at its aetiological centre. The somatic experience of the early modern reproductive body and its central importance to Lady Macbeth's invocation was initially identified by the twentieth-century critics Jenijoy La Belle (1980) and Alice Fox (1979). La

Belle specifically identified Lady Macbeth's changing physiology as being singly commensurate with *amenorrhea*, the sudden absence of menstruation. According to La Belle, Lady Macbeth's desire for *amenorrhea* is a wilful plea to the spirits to eliminate, not only the "psychological aspects of femininity" but also the biological ones.¹⁷ Such "biological unsexing," argued La Belle, would foreshadow the "mental defeminisation" necessary to block the pity and remorse needed to murder Duncan. La Belle, whilst not explicitly aligning this *amenorrhea* to menopause, is, however, one of the first scholars to explore the implications of this metaphorical blockage "of periodic flow" through an early modern biological and psychological lens.¹⁸ Similarly exploring the importance of the biotic female body, Alice Fox's analysis explored how *Macbeth* is replete with the obstetrical language of miscarriage and barrenness. In the new millennium, Joanna Levin argued that Lady Macbeth's biological changes share the same symptomatology of the demonically-possessed woman, symptoms that mimic "hysteria," and that ultimately, such hysteria "recapitulated rather than neutralised the threat of female derangement, sexual openness, and noxious mothering."¹⁹ Although "hysteria" is not an early modern illness, Levin argues that the aetiology of it can be found in the uterine ailment of "the Mother" (*hysterica passio*), a misdiagnosis based on decades of confusing "hysteria" with "*hysterica*," brilliantly explained by Kaara L. Peterson.²⁰ Certainly, I concur that this "invocation" of pathologies links the body of Lady Macbeth to that of the Witches, but by exploring the connections of these humoral pathologies specifically to the psychosomatic and spiritual force of *Invidia*, which *was* an early modern physiological passion, I argue that *Invidia* is the aetiological source of Lady Macbeth's sickness. If I do bring *Invidia* into the exploration of proto-menopause, then like Levin, it arises from the acknowledgement that the pathology of *Invidia* mimics several contemporary disease nosologies, for instance, postnatal psychosis.²¹ "Menopause" has also recently entered these scholarly arguments. Although I believe these analyses are correct to trace their disease aetiology to Lady Macbeth's reproductive body (post-partum, menstrual or post-reproductive), they often fail to accurately account for the early modern medical record, for instance, taking as their arguments' basis that "menopause" existed as a holistic condition, or incorrectly conflating a contemporary understanding that "post-menopausal women do not menstruate or lactate," with an early modern belief that argued to the contrary.²² Hilda Ma argues that Lady Macbeth is calling down a "premature menopause"

in order to reject her femininity as a means to become manly in her actions.²³ Whilst Ma's use of the presentist term "premature menopause" is a historically problematic, I do agree that Lady Macbeth's speech is a summoning of processes that will serve as the catalyst for complete physiological change. My argument rests, not on the somatic processes needed for the eradication of feminine responses, but on Lady Macbeth's recognition that her humoral body will be transformed into *something* entirely different: this all-encompassing physiological and spiritual transformation, informed by the sociocultural fear of the witch's body and its powers, marks Lady Macbeth as proto-menopausal according to how I have defined it, outside of purely contemporary understandings. As Karin Sellberg argues, Lady Macbeth's appeal to the spirits indicates a desire, not to reject femininity, but to transform into an "altogether unnatural and inhuman being" where the body's "natural processes" are troubled.²⁴ These processes of altering the body's humoral constitution through a wilful embrace of the passion of *Invidia* and thus germinating the "seeds" of spiritual and bodily disease, completes the project of aligning Lady Macbeth's body to the unnaturalness of both the diabolical body and the ageing proto-menopausal *corpus*.

THOMAS WRIGHT AND EARLY MODERN NOTIONS OF THE PSYCHOSOMATIC

To understand *Invidia*'s frightful hold on the ageing female body, one must recognise the early modern belief that feelings or "passions," such as envy, could literally transform the entire *corpus* itself. Thomas Wright's (1561–1623) influential treatise *The Passions of the minde in general* (1604) is a prime example of one such work that emphasised the extent to which it was understood that the "Passions engender Humors, and humors breed Passions."²⁵ Wright's assertion that "the Passions of the mind alter the humours of the body" was based upon the notion that the health of the heart was dependent upon homeostatic "moderate" passions that regulated the humours. In turn, a "joyful and quiet heart" could "reviveth all the parts of the body," but a "sad spirit" would damage the heart and "dryeth the bones." "Inordinate passions" such as envy and melancholy presented a problematic pathology for the proto-menopausal body: both increased and exacerbated desiccation in an already drying body. Other "moderate" spirits, such as "Pleasure and Delight," seemed to serve the same function as menstruation in that "they help marvellously

the digestion of blood...helping to expel the superfluidities." Any passion experienced in abundance was particularly damaging to a body that could not counteract the increased flow of humours: "[the heart] becometh too hote and inflamed, and consequently engendereth much cholericke and burned blood." In Wrightsian terms, inordinate passions were highly detrimental to both the body and soul in question because psychosomatically, they contained the "four properties" of "blindness of understanding, perversion of will, alteration of humours; and by them, maladies and diseases, and troublesomeness or disquiet of the soule." Because of the body's intimate connection to the mind, soul, and passions, Wright argued that any deliberate, wilful change to the body's regulated health regime might adversely affect all faculties. Wright recognised that any man or woman had the power, though, to wilfully control their own mind—especially if the mind was exerting a detrimental influence upon the entire self—thus "over-rul[ing] the body, and so caus[ing] the alteration of Passions." This is pertinent as it suggests that at some point in the progression of her "illness," Lady Macbeth could have spiritually rejected her pact with the evil spirits, thus arresting the unfolding of an all-consuming pathology. But the fact that Lady Macbeth has violated the natural order of things by calling for an acceleration of proto-menopause opens her up to *Invidia*'s most diabolical forces. *Invidia* literally transforms Lady Macbeth's body: drying and heating its interior and struggling to secure a plethoric release of toxins, her *corpus* becomes its own kind of alembic (1.7.68), generating a kind of malefic chemistry "bubbl[ing]" (1.3.79; 4.1.11) or percolating throughout the earthly and spiritual plane. *Invidia* at once blocked the bodily passages needed for healthy purgation; concurrently, it inflicted a spiritual malignancy upon the immediate environment. As Plutarch argued, "Envy, ensconced by nature in the mind more than any other passion also fills the body with evil."²⁶ In *A Treatise of Melancholie* (1586), Timothie Bright (1551?–1615) described *Invidia*'s force as "the beginning of hell in this life, and a passion not to be excused."²⁷ Thus Lady Macbeth's "stop[ered]" (1.5.43) lacteal and menstrual waste generates a humoral and physiological turmoil that becomes its own unique embodiment of "pour[ing] the milk of concord into Hell" (1.5.16). Saturated with *Invidia*, Lady Macbeth's womb mimics the cauldron, a plethoric reservoir wherein excrementitious toxins cannot be purged but fester and serve to pollute "both worlds" (3.2.18), as well as Macbeth's body. Lady Macbeth's invitation for her husband to commit murder is to "pour [my] spirits in thine

ear, / And chastise with the valour of [my] tongue" (1.5.25–6), thus articulating how the allegorical *Invidia* was believed to spread her poison through her eyes and breath. Edmund Spenser's *Envie* spoke "bitter words" from a sharpened tongue where "fresh poyon steepe[d]" that pierced and wounded the listener.²⁸ Lady Macbeth's transfer of sickness, therefore, will replicate *Invidia*'s understood transmission of malignancy.

Given the supposition that the symptoms of proto-menopause indicated the altered humoral constitution of a woman's entire organ function, particularly that of the reproductive organs, brain, and stomach, it remains to question whether the obverse is true: how did these fluctuating humours, coupled with the passions that had their seat of origin in these organs, function to change the physiology of the body itself? In other words, how interconnected were the humours with the mind's faculties—particularly rational thought and imagination—in early modern doctrine? Certainly, *Macbeth* references the apparent conflict between the body's biology and rational intention to a strong degree. Lady Macbeth hopes that her "darest cruelty" (1.5.33) will not be "shake[en]" by "fell purpose" (1.5.45). She is equally fearful that there is a schism between Macbeth's "desire" and his ability to galvanise his body into the "act and valor" of Duncan's murder (1.7.40–1). Lady Macbeth mocks Macbeth's "manliness" by arguing that her husband's reluctance to act generates its own humoral form of feminine greensickness:

Was the hope drunk
 Wherein you dressed yourself? Hath it slept since?
 And wakes it now, to look so green and pale
 At what it did so freely? (1.7.35–8)

What Macbeth had "durst" enacted when "he were a man" (1.7.48) is compromised when his body is besieged with a cowardice that alters his complexion (3.2.30; 3.4.116) and "white[ns]" his heart (2.2.64). His impotency makes him "infirm of purpose" (2.2.52). Here one can see Thomas Wright's assertion that the "Passions have certain effects in our faces," being "the rind and leaves" that display "the nature and goodness of bothe the roote and the kore."²⁹ But Macbeth's unmanly fear is also contextual: it is in the presence of proto-menopausal women that this anxiety is most keenly felt. *Macbeth's* Weird Sisters and Lady Macbeth function as a kind of foil for Macbeth, magnifying the contrast between perceived manly, rational action, and the diabolical, irrational, and envious passions of the ageing female. Macbeth's unmanly fears and lack of action are perceived through the metaphor of male sexual potency.

This effeminization of Macbeth, exacerbated by his physical proximity to Lady Macbeth, partakes of the cultural fear of the witch's malefic influence upon the sexual prowess of the male. Jacob Sprenger and Heinrich Kramer argued in the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1487) that a witch could "unmake" (1.7.54) the sexual potency of the male in several ways. Firstly, the witch could "plant hatred or jealousy in anyone" and then bewitch the male "so that a man cannot perform the genital act with a woman."³⁰ Secondly, the Devil could physically close the seminal ducts to "prevent the flow of the vital essence to the member," therefore changing the very humoral constitution of the male body. And thirdly, through an act of "glamour" or "a Prestige," the man could be made to "see" that his member was invisible: "sight and touch are deluded." Macbeth's vision of the "blood bolted" Banquo at the feast is ridiculed by Lady Macbeth as a vision of false "flaws and starts" that are the "sham[ful]" ranting of old women (3.4.61–6): "What, quite unmanned in folly?" (3.4.74). Macbeth's "fit" (3.4.55) and "strange infirmity" (3.4.89) is another chance for Lady Macbeth to ridicule her husband's effeminate and green-sickly "passion" (3.4.56): "Are you a man?" (3.4.57). Macbeth finishes his tirade by playing upon the distinctly feminine metaphor of the "no-thing" (*pudenda*) with an additional negation, "and nothing is / But what is not" (1.3.142–3). The Weird Sisters' overwhelming power is such that the humours they enkindle—"they made themselves air" (1.5.4)—defy corporeal definition and articulation: their "do[ing]" (1.3.10) is a "deed without a name" (4.1.64). Macbeth's feared absence of manhood creates its own physiological void, a castration whose "function" is "smothered" by an imagined "fantastical" nightmare of phallic lack. Macbeth must eventually overcome these emasculating passions by willing "each corporal agent" to be "ben[t] up" to undertake such a "terrible feat" (1.7.80–1). In the male body, physical action functions as a kind of suppressing force to the humoral phantasies of the mind, the "heat-pressed brain" (2.1.40). Macbeth expresses this quite succinctly when he recognises that, "Strange things I have in head, that will to hand, / Which must be acted, ere they must be scanned" (3.4.140–1). Such precipitous action, however, was not necessarily virtuous if it sprang from a disordered imagination: "the imagination...of some ill thing" could easily "corrupt the judgement, seduce the will" causing an "inducement to vice" (8). Thus the connections between embodied passions and force of will are heavily gendered in *Macbeth*: failure to act upon desire "unsexes" the male, whilst it renders the female into the

Hag of nightmare who, in order to stymy any “infirm[ity] of purpose” (2.2.52), is willing to dash out the brains of her own infant (1.7.54-8). Lady Macbeth’s affirmation of the “illness” of her mind (1.5.19) capable of spurring her into action excites Macbeth into believing that this would physiologically change his wife’s “mettle” (1.7.75) so that she might “bring forth men children only” (1.7.76-7), thus underscoring the Galenic and Paracelsian belief that emotions and desires were responsible for shaping the nature and gender of the unborn child.³¹ To be “unmanned,” Macbeth worries, would “protest [him] / The baby of a girl” (3.4.106-7) until he might be a “man again” (3.4.110).

“BLOODY INSTRUCTION”: How INVIDIA WORKED

At its core, *Invidia* was understood to be a potent force of feminine evil. Robert Burton (1577-1640) argued that the inordinate, diabolical fury of women was caused by the “malady” envy.³² The purported connection between envy and evil was probably what lead Burton to conclude that, “This natural infirmity is most eminent in old women...or such as are witches.” Maintaining that these humoral maladies originated in the womb itself,³³ Burton cites at least two other instances of certain uterine pathologies such as “suppression of [their] monthlies,” and “fits of the mother,”³⁴ responsible for creating humoral change in the older woman, especially in the generation of excess black bile or “melancholy.” In particular, melancholy opened the woman’s mind to become a “seat” for “inferior spirits” which could make them “portend future things”: “Then they shew those things which belong to the earthquakes, great mortality, famine, slaughter and the like.”³⁵ “Shake[n]” and “afflict[ed]” by “terrible dreams” (3.2.19-20), sleep, the “season of all nature” (3.4.142) and “balm of hurt minds” (2.2.37) deserts “the dignity of the whole body” (5.1.53) of Lady Macbeth, leaving nothing in its absence but an “infected mind[s]” (5.1.70). Bright advised those individuals susceptible to changes in their humours that they eschew environments where “aire [that was] thicke and grosse ...fenny, marrish, misty and lowe habitation...likewise if it be dim and dark.”³⁶ As Sprenger and Kramer argued, witches, with their “natural madness” and “sins of pride, envy, and wrath,” could “bring diseases and stir up tempests” from their bodies.³⁷ The Witches’ “fog and filthy air” (1.1.12) condensed from the “blasted heath” (1.3.77) cements their identity as “instruments of darkness” (1.3.126), but their noxious dwelling place, so perfect for the generation and agitation of poisonous

humours, exists in parallel to Lady Macbeth's desire to summon "thick night" that might "pall [her] in the dunnest smoke of Hell" (1.5.49–50). Lady Macbeth's blocked passages, then, breed internal poisons, the "blacke vapors" and "dark fumes"³⁸ of Bright's melancholic disease, as well as serving to exert macrocosmic disorder and chaos.

Thomas Wright's central thesis asserted that not only could the passions affect the humoral constitution of an individual's body and *vice versa*, but that such an infected body could also exert material influence upon the body and soul of another. Wright's argument of material influence is primarily based upon the supposition that the "Passions of the Soul" revealed themselves through an individual's extreme "phantasie" or imagination.³⁹ Such fantasies "cannot only change their own body but can also transcend so as to work upon another body." The "inflammation" of such a strong imagination would "send[s] forth health or sickness, not only in its proper body, but also in other bodies." Wright advised, therefore, that the company of "evil and mischievous men," be "shunned" to avoid being infected by their "noxious rages" which would "infect[s] them that are never near with a hurtfull Contagion." But Wright also singled out women as being most adept and malign in this ability, particularly witches: "So also the desire of Witches to hurt, doth bewitch men most perniciously with steadfast looks." Women with the power of "certain Magicall Arts" could combine these looks with the natural strength of their imagination and dreams, to bind men to their diabolical will. Agricola von Nettesheim (1486?–1535) similarly argued that women "by certain strong imaginations, dreams, and suggestions" could not only "change their own body, but can also transcend so, as to work upon another body," such was the "desire of Witches to hurt."⁴⁰ This fear is realised in *Macbeth* by the spiteful Weird Sister who can haunt the dreams of the Sailor, imbibing his humours by "drain[ing] him dry as hay" (1.3.18). The belief of the ageing woman's ability to poison both the body and mind of numerous victims via the manipulation of their humours gained powerful purchase in early modern thought.

Invidia was the physiological force or "passion" that connected the body of the ageing woman so closely to that of understood embodied *malefica*. Both as a spiritual vice and a physiological spirit, envy found the body and soul of the ageing woman the most apt to welcome it. Giambattista della Porta (1535–1615) argued that envy's power to fascinate was "very dangerous" and "found most often in old women," a line of reasoning he applied to his conclusion that more women became witches

than men “according to their complexion.”⁴¹ For poet John Milton (1608–1674), envy was Satan’s own deadly sin.⁴² Edmund Spenser’s (1552–1599) *Envie* was made to “eat her own gall” and when “she wanteth other thing to eat, / She feeds on her owne maw unnaturall, / And of her own foule entrayles makes her meat,” a “monsters monstorous dyeat.”⁴³ In *Othello* (1603), *Envie* is portrayed as “the green-eyed monster” that “mocks the flesh it feeds upon” (3.3.171–3). Basil of Caesarea (AD 330–379) warned, “the envious consumes himself, pining away through grief.”⁴⁴ For the ancient Greeks, *Envie*, or “*phthonous*,” caused emaciation in both the envier and the envied as a “sickness of the soul” that would “seize” and consume just like “rust eat[ing] iron.”⁴⁵ Basil of Caesarea’s homily *On Envy* (c. AD 364) perpetuated this metaphor of wasting, consumption, and rotting by noting: “For just as rust is to iron, so envy exhausts the soul...[it] eats up the intestines slowly.”⁴⁶ Della Porta likened *Envie*’s “flaming eyes” to a “sword” that would set victims’ “entrails on fire, and make them waste into a leanness”: this “infection” was so deadly because it “easily fed” on “thin” humours and generated a “vehement heat.”⁴⁷ Paracelsus argued that “jealous, hateful, and perfidious women” had the “martial or Saturnine” power to gaze upon wounds with their poisonous looks and contaminate them ever further.⁴⁸ Paul Hammond points out that, to the early moderns, “envy” had numerous connotations: it could mean the feelings generated when gazing upon the admirable personality traits of another individual, or equally, it suggested the coveting of others’ material goods.⁴⁹ These connotations link the inordinate passion of envy directly to the understood motivations of the witch; the old crone who spitefully turned milk, sickened children or, like one of the Weird Sisters, “kill[ed] swine” (1.3.2) and other livestock for malicious sport. In identifying avarice and envy, Thomas Wright argued that women were greatly possessed by such passions,⁵⁰ and that old women, because of the “weakenesse of their bodies” were particularly prone. At its most basic level, because the proto-menopausal woman’s fluids could not be released through the healthy purgation of menses, they thickened, pooled, and stagnated. Blood that could not be transformed into various “concoctions” created a plethora of “very viscous, clammy and gross” blood that Nicholas Gyer (fl. 1590’s) explained facilitated the generation of “gross and undigested fumes” adversely affecting the nerves and reasoning abilities of middle-aged women.⁵¹ Additionally, many early modern scholars argued that as an ageing woman’s natural heat cooled, her body suddenly felt compelled

to reheat itself through unnatural means, usually desire for unbridled sexual intercourse, a condition known as *furor uterinus*.⁵² Edward Jorden (1569–1633) argued that *furor uterinus* was particularly pernicious in spinsters and widows who “want[ed] the benefit of marriage,” the familiar euphemism for women who craved sex.⁵³ John Taylor’s (1580–1653) satirical poem “A Juniper Lecture” (1652) ridiculed this common trope of the old widow who sought to fill her cold and greedy womb through intercourse with young men: “A Widow that is rich; and wondrous old, Woo her...If she be cold a young man’s flame will toast her.”⁵⁴ The same can be said for an older woman’s desiccating humours: heat and moistening fluids needed to be replenished from external sources—most usually the bodies of others.⁵⁵

The fear of the almost vampiric nature of the ageing woman was a powerful articulation of the physiological nature of *Invidia* as both a spiritual and embodied force of evil. A proto-menopausal body flush with the forces of *Invidia* was compelled to “feed” upon the bodies of others, especially children.⁵⁶ it is little wonder, therefore, that the envious woman’s body found commonly embodied sisterhood with the witch. In the ancient classical sense, *invidere* meant to maliciously crave something of beauty that one *looked upon*, the idea being that envy would actually “shoot forth” as “poisonous” eye beams levelled against the envied object.⁵⁷ As the object was frequently understood to be a child or youthful person of beauty, the envier’s gaze had the ability to drain that object’s vital fluids leading to sickness and eventual death of the desired object. Reginald Scot pointed out that proto-menopausal conditions were likely to trigger this phenomenon:

Old women, in whom the ordinary course of nature faileth in the office of purging their natural monthly humors...by means of grosse vapours proceeding out of their eyes ... infeebleth the [the victim’s] body and maketh him sick.⁵⁸

Older women were believed to envy youthful bodies above all. The connection between the spiritual force of *Envy* and its physiological influence over children was particularly strong: the Greeks and Romans had many amulets and charms to protect their offspring as they were the primary focus of envious forces.⁵⁹ Plutarch even warned about the need for Greek mothers to keep their children away from the eyes of their own fathers, lest that parent unwittingly destroy their offspring through

an envious gaze.⁶⁰ The idea of *Invidia*'s predatory hunt for victims is emphasized in the iconography by her companion animals such as wolves and dogs, whilst accompanying vipers and imps underpin her diabolical aspect. Equally, though, a person already suffering from *Envy*'s powers could make them a magnet, a prime target for demonic attack. Doctor Levinus Lemnius (1505–1568) asserted that those who suffered from envy could be tempted easily into acts of “wantonesse,” “horrible lusts,” “deceipt, treason, sorrow, heaviness, [and] desperation” by the “devil’s minions.”⁶¹ Agrippa Von Nettesheim attributed the binding power of fascination to “the spirit of the Witch,” a destructive force which could “wound the heart,” “infect [his] spirit” and “stir up a most vehement burning in [my] marrow.”⁶² Basil of Caesarea argued that the Devil wreaked havoc within Creation itself through “the most insidious of all evils...Envy.”⁶³ Basil exhorted his followers not to aid demons in their destructive aims by giving into envy, for these entities could “make use of the evil eye for the service of their own will.” In referencing Puritan clergyman Increase Mather’s (1639–1723) *Angelographia* (1696), Stuart Clark notes that although bound by the laws of nature, devils could easily disturb bodily humours and vital spirits, as well as affect human senses and emotions.⁶⁴ This supernatural provocation, then, could create its own vicious cycle: envy could be engendered by diabolical forces causing humoral upheaval, thus opening up the body to even more sustained demonic attacks once *Invidia* held the body and spirit in thrall.

Ovid’s description of *Envy* in his precautionary tale of the princess Aglauros in *Metamorphoses* illustrates how *Invidia* was able to infiltrate the host’s body, as well as how its forces could, in turn, be redirected by the sufferer against future victims. Ovid’s *Envy* is stunted and withered, feeding upon vipers to ingest their fluid poisons. The image suggests that this food source would replenish *Invidia*’s bosom with fluid bile, in turn, the bile would then percolate within *Envy*’s body, broiling and emitting venom through her eyes and mouth. Sent by Zeus to contract *Invidia*’s services, the goddess Athena finds *Envy* in “a filthy slimy shack” with “stagnant air,” her environs without sunlight and filled with frost (Fig. 5.3). *Envy*’s dwelling place is commensurate with Timothie Bright’s assertion that the humours that generated envy were greatly increased if its victims found homes within natural environments commensurate with the cold and moist nature of the fluid itself.⁶⁵ Lady Macbeth similarly calls for “the dunkest smoke of Hell” as a fitting backdrop for her devilish

activities (1.5.50). Ovid's *Envry* is discovered gnawing on viper's flesh, "fit food for spite":

Her cheeks are sallow, her whole body shrunk,
 Her eyes askew and squinting; black decay
 Befouls her teeth, her bosom's green with bile,
 And venom coats her tongue.⁶⁶

On Athena's bidding, *Envry* flies to Aglauros' room and fills the doomed princess with her dread power:

...On the girl's breast
 She laid her withering hand and filled her heart
 With thorny briars and breathed a baleful blight
 Deep down into her bones and spread a steam
 Of poison, black as pitch, inside her lungs.

Ovid's *Envry* strikes her victim by filling the heart with a thorn-like piercing pain that is then heated and breathed like "steam" into Aglauros' lungs and bones. *Invidia*'s bodily orifices syncopate their attack in a chain of linked metonymies: eyes, ears and the mouth serve to generate poison and transmit its potency into the porches of the victim's body. *Envry*'s body is wasted and withered because her own fluids are being heated and converted into the fuel necessary to inflict pestilence and pain upon others. Thus the image of heating and violent thrusting-forth is endemic to classical and early modern understandings of how *Invidia* worked. This penetrative aspect is the means whereby Lady Macbeth imagines "pour[ing]" her "spirits" (1.5.25) into Macbeth's ear to transfer her "illness" to him (1.5.19). Plutarch argued that the power of the eye to take in or inflict illness was "penetrating and swift" due to the fact that the "pneuma," or eye emanations, gave off "a flame-like brilliance, radiating a wondrous power."⁶⁷ Alexander of Aphrodisias (c. AD 198–21) described the horrifying effect of envious emanations upon the afflicted as follows: "it changes soul and nature into an insalubrious mixture, decomposing the bodily fluids, and leads the bodies of these persons to illness."⁶⁸ In this sense, the old woman riddled with envious forces could be understood to transmit her poison like that of a Gorgon or Basilisk through her direct gaze.⁶⁹ The medical illustration of the "First Vision" of Johann Remmelin's triptych *Catoptrum microcosmicum* (1619) features a pregnant torso in which the entire pudenda is covered by a shield decorated

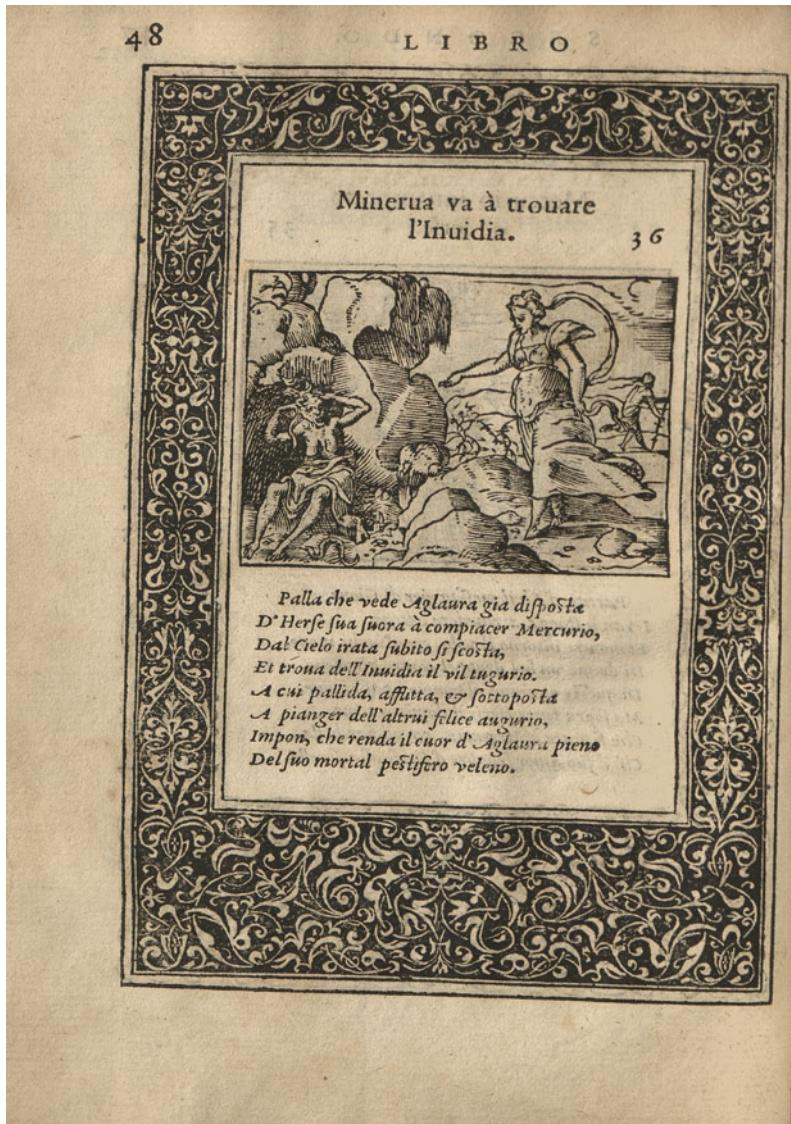


Fig. 5.3 *Minerua va à Trouare L'Inuidia* (*Minerva and Envy*), Italian. This engraving captures the moment as told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* when Athena was sent to *Inuidia*'s cave, "a filthy slimy shack" with "stagnant air," sunless and filled with frost (Credit: The Warburg Institute Library, London)

with an image of Medusa. Rosemary Moore wonders if this Medusa emblem functions as an apotropaic shield, “guarding against the licentious gazes of both the beholder and the beheld.”⁷⁰ The Medusa head is surrounded by several Latin words, but it is relevant that the word *Invidia* appears in the exact spot that the womb would occupy. I agree with Moore that this gorgoneion functions apotropaically, but because it is denominated as *envy*, it is a seal to repel any noxious fumes that might harm the fetus via a metonymic sympathy of orifices—mouth and vulva. The implied threat to the infant are the eyes of a proto-menopausal woman who might enviously petrify the foetus in the manner of Gertrude, or, as with Lady Macbeth, infect the fluid microcosm of the womb making it a toxic environment, hostile to life.

The frightening and threatening image of Medusa seems to be perpetuated in *Macbeth* by Lady Macbeth’s frequent actions of enviously “looking upon” certain subjects, all who eventually succumb to an unnatural death. Lady Macbeth is steered away from Duncan’s slaughter when she gazes directly at a face that “resembled” her “father as he slept” (2.2.13–4): the sight of Duncan’s dead body will create a “new Gorgon” by “destroy[ing] the sight” of the horrified onlookers (2.3.74–5). As the Anti-Mother riddled with the variety of envy that Plutarch argued some parents felt towards their own offspring, Lady Macbeth recalls her own baby suckling at her breast and how she could, in response to Macbeth’s cowardice, conceivably “dash the brains out” “while it was smiling in [my] face” (1.7.56). The withered nature of *Env*y that Ovid and Spenser poetically wrote of is visually foregrounded by the focus on *Invidia*’s denuded breasts and emaciated rib cage. *Env*y has now subsumed the entire body, rendering it ravenous as well as abhorrent, an abject Anti-Mother who seeks to devour her own offspring. It is in this specific idea of consumption that I find commonality between the images of *Invidia* and those of the feasting witches at their Sabbat as portrayed in a drawing by Jacques De Gheyn II (Fig. 5.4). Here, the abject foodstuff, the vital and fluid-rich bodies of envied children, appear in actual material terms. This is the nightmare realization of the logic underpinning the fear of the proto-menopausal woman and her search for heat and fluid: why drain these fluids from the bodies of others by imbibing humours when one can literally consume those fluids at their most immediate source—the actual bodies of infants? This, I feel, is *Macbeth*’s most life. extreme fear of the proto-menopausal body, the envious Hag driven to infanticide and cannibalism: it is manifest in the horses that devour each other (2.4.17),



Fig. 5.4 De Gheyn's Witches. Jacques de Gheyn II, *Witches' Sabbath*, the Hague. The ultimate fear of the proto-menopausal diabolical body: ingesting children to replenish drying uterine fluids (Credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art)

the “birth strangled babe (4.1.30), as well as the sow that eats her nine farrow (4.1.78-9). The Weird Sisters’ cauldron symbolically becomes the poisonous proto-menopausal womb, teeming with the parts of animals, infants, and humans ready to be consumed in a “hell’s broth” (4.1.19) of sustenance. *Invidia*’s perversion of the maternal life force resulted in, as Basil of Caesarea (AD 330–379) argued, “the corruption of life and the brutal defilement of nature.”⁷¹ *Invidia*’s iconographical and literary depiction, its identity as both a physiological and spiritual force, together with *Invidia*’s means of bodily transmission, pave the way for our understanding of how the humours and passions constituted a complex nexus through which to understand the volatility of the proto-menopausal body.

MELANCHOLY: INVIDIA’S HUMORAL SISTER

The study of *Envy*, then, cannot be extricated from the interconnectedness of the humours and the passions within the proto-menopausal body; such reciprocity asks that *Invidia*’s humoral “sister”—melancholy—be

considered to account for its gendered similarities and differences to *Invidia*. Melancholy was understood to be one of the body's four humours phenomenologically circulating as the fluid "black bile." Ruled by the planet Saturn and originating within the spleen, an excess of melancholy could afflict the sufferer with bursts of creative insight but also with what today we might recognise as chronic depression. In many respects, *Invidia* was a corollary condition to the "inordinate passion" of melancholia but with one major difference: *Invidia* was predominantly a *female* complaint whilst melancholia could be experienced, with variation, by both sexes. In moderation, male melancholia was often lauded as a noble passion.⁷² Masculine melancholia could also be regulated, controlled, and bested by the passion of "reason," the faculty of which, it was believed, women were singularly devoid. The early modern humoral economy offered no theoretical means by which Lady Macbeth's body—a body overwhelmed by the forces of *Invidia*—could manage the chaotic physiological changes associated with proto-menopause.

In his poem "L'Allegro" (1645), John Milton (1608–1674) allegorized "loathèd" *Melancholy* as dwelling in a "Stygian cave," sharing a "cell" where "brooding darknes spreads his jealous wings."⁷³ Milton's allegory emphasizes an understood connection between *Melancholy* as a spiritual state and *Envy* as the force that surrounded and shadowed it. Indeed, Robert Burton argued that envy and melancholy were virtually indistinguishable from one another: "[jealousy] this pernicious infirmity...it is most part a symptom and cause of melancholy."⁷⁴ In the *Flos medicina* of the thirteenth century, melancholics were "envious" and "greedy" with "mind(s) not given to sleep."⁷⁵

Melancholic spirit could overpower the body proper, engendering an increase in both desiccation and the failure of natural heat leading to death: "Melancholy, the which humour being cold and dry, drieth the whole body; and maketh it wither away."⁷⁶ The drying effects of melancholy, so similar to those of female ageing, were exacerbated by the fact that such spirits would "ascend into the imagination" causing feelings of "disgrace, fears, affrightments, ill surcease and such like." For Bright, this humoral disturbance "raiseth the greatest tempest of perturbations and most of all destroyeth the braine with all his faculties."⁷⁷ Melancholy was particularly life-threatening to the elderly:

These perturbations of the mind...they trouble wonderfully the soule, corrupting the judgement, and seducing (for the most part) to vice,

and commonly withdrawing from virtue, and therefore some call them Maladies, or sores of the soule.

Shakespeare's character of the Doctor employs this same expression to address Lady Macbeth's somnambulism: "a great perturbation in nature" (5.1.9). Even Macbeth identifies Lady Macbeth's ailment as being consistent with the disease of infectious melancholy:

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weights upon the heart? (5.3.39–44).

Clear in his layman's prognosis, when Macbeth demands that the Doctor cure his wife's "diseased mind," the Doctor admits that such severe melancholy is far beyond his medical art (5.1.56): Lady Macbeth's "thick-coming fancies" (5.3.36) need "the divine" more than "the physician" (5.1.72). Bright underscored the relationship between melancholy and envy by arguing, "melancholy persons amongst these passions and perturbations of the mind, are most obnoxious to it [envy]."⁷⁸ Burton conceptualized the interconnectedness of "envy and malice" generated from melancholy: "Envy so gnaws many men's hearts, that they become altogether melancholy. And therefore belike Solomon calls it 'the rotting of the bones'." Like envy then, melancholy posed a viable threat to bodily and spiritual harmony and integrity; in fact, envy was born out of melancholy, causing sufferers to be "given to fearfull and terrible dreams: in affection sad, and ful of feare...envious and jealous." The fearfulness of nightmares that "shake" the body (3.2.20–1) and preclude "nature's chief nourisher" and "balm" (2.2.37–8) to help ameliorate "murder[ed] sleep" (2.2.36), resonates throughout *Macbeth* as symptomatic of a humoral disease such as melancholy that has infected both the body and soul of husband and wife.

Like *Invidia*, melancholy in its most extreme manifestation was a demonic force, what Burton called the "habit" or "chronic melancholy": "a continuant disease, a settled humour...grown to a habit it will hardly be removed."⁷⁹ It was this chronic melancholy that was a particular enemy to reason. Burton argued that when habitual melancholy had become so severe that its inundation transformed it to pathology, its violent force

would make men “crucify their own souls.” It was in this chronic stage of melancholy that the potential for women to be subsumed by the humour’s harmful pathological effects manifested, whilst the male might “display creativity and inspiration as part of the “eminence” it seem[ed] to encode in men.”⁸⁰

Melancholy’s gendered nature meant that it was a humour that could essentially never be successfully regulated or controlled by the female body, as it was antithetical to her physiology.⁸¹ In other words, the aetiological origins of melancholia-as-disease in its most extreme manifestation appeared to affect men and women differently. As Linda C. Hults has noted, “melancholy is a gendered concept, allowing elite males to assert their productive mastery of bodily humours (and indeed of) the body itself and the material world through the faculty of reason.”⁸² The key passion capable of prophylactic remedy to cure melancholy in its chronic form is that of reason. Bright, for example, identifies the preventative power of reason to cancel out melancholy’s pernicious influence as belonging to a body that is distinctly male. In Shakespeare’s seminal play about jealousy, *Othello* (1603), Iago reminds Roderigo that, “We have reason to cool our raging motions, our carnal stings, our unbitted lusts” (1.3.329–31).⁸³

If such “inordinate passions” as melancholy and envy infected the female body and soul, could the *corpus* ever be “cured”? Might Lady Macbeth fend off the invasive forces of *Invidia* in her body with help from either the Physician or the Priest, as her Doctor suggests? (5.1.72). Thomas Wright admitted that all men were vulnerable to the “Passions that blind their judgement and reason”⁸⁴ but that “reason and discourse” functioned in such a way as “to repress and resist” any passion that might appear as an “unreasonable and beastly motion.” In Wrightian physiology, therefore, the body’s humoral health and the “complexion” of one’s temperament could be changed and spiritually ameliorated by the wilful employment of certain faculties—the predominant one being reason. But wielding reason to overcome melancholy’s insidious influence was a problematic proposition if the sufferer was a female and, therefore, deficit in such abilities.⁸⁵ Agreeing with Wright, Robert Burton confirmed that reason could be wielded as a defensive measure to arrest envy’s multi-faceted attacks upon body and spirit, and that the only way to combat envy was to employ “philosophical and Divine precepts...[to] counterpoise those irregular motions of envy” and then “to pacify ourselves with reason.”⁸⁶ Wright maintained most men had the ability to “repress and

resist" any "unreasonable and beastly motions of sensuall appetite."⁸⁷ But Wright admitted that this ability to wield reason was made more challenging in those whose bodies circulated immoderate humours such as if "the heart be very hote, colde, moyst, tender, cholericke"; in particular, Wright identified this deficiency in women "that be of a hote complexion," or those women "when they be with childe." Such "vehement Passions" would alter the female body so much that it could "keepe neither sence, order, nor measure" causing a woman to either miscarry or "greatly prejudice the tender infant lying in the womb." The connection between *Invidia* and reproductive health, then, offers a new way of perhaps explaining Lady Macbeth's lost infant or infants to which she "had given suck" (1.7.54). By extension, not only could envy cause a woman to miscarry but it could also continually build up in women who were envious of others' fertility: "barrenness...be a main cause of jealousy."⁸⁸ Burton argued that this kind of jealousy, "*Envy's Observer*," was a "feral malady, in more ancient maides, widows, and barren women" that arose specifically from the "vicious vapours" that came from trapped menses, "that fulginous exhalation of corrupt seed, troubling the brain, heart, and minde." Bright elaborated upon the theme of corrupted and blocked menstrual blood by adding, "reason it selfe [is] impared by these corporall alterations." The insatiability of the "hungry" womb, stoked by *Invidia* and resistant to reason, was echoed by Basil of Caesarea who used the bizarre metaphor that *Envy* was like a viper consuming a placenta, destroying the soul as a woman might be "consum[ed] ... in travail."⁸⁹ Here again is the belief that *Invidia* could not only tamper with the reproductive process—life itself—but that it could be the motivating factor in destroying the lives of others. *Invidia* was considered such a pernicious force that it was ultimately fatal to the envier herself. *Invidia* corrupted reason, stimulated an overactive imagination, engendered delusion, superstitious terror, and psychosis as "prodigious effects." These effects included "Feare and Sorrow" as well as "Fear of Devils, death, that they shall be so sick of some such and such disease ready to tremble at every object." It is in these cases that reason itself, as well as the imaginative faculty, became incurably corrupted: "[Their] corrupt phantasie makes them see and heare that which is neither heard nor seen." When such melancholic disease entered the blood, brains and "whole temperature" then it "cannot be removed" and those persons "must not be left unto themselves." Burton admitted that the usual consequence for such disordered reasoning was suicide. As a pathology

inextricably linked to other inordinate passions such as melancholy, the climax of *Invidia*'s disease was self-slaughter. Lady Macbeth, the "fiend-like Queen" (5.7.99), fulfils this prognosis by committing suicide "by self and violent means" (5.7.100).

REASON AS PROPHYLAXIS

From *Macbeth*'s onset, reason has already been destabilized by the Witches' own pronouncements that the rational ways of the world have been inverted: "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (1.1.11). The Weird Sisters' verbal equivocation, this "palter[ing]" "in a double sense" (5.7.50), is quintessentially the inversion of reason "over-ruled"⁹⁰: it is the ultimate foreshadowing of Macbeth's demise. Macbeth becomes a man so deeply sunk by humoral forces that have "cow[ed] the better part" of his "man[hood]" (5.7.48), that he lulls himself into a false sense of security, irrationally believing that he is invulnerable to destruction unless he encounters a man "not of woman born" (4.1.94). Reason is rendered suspect by Banquo's subsequent musings as to whether he and Macbeth have "eaten on the insane root / That takes the reason prisoner" (1.3.84–5). The allusion to the psychotropic effects on reason's faculty by such drugs as mandrake root are later echoed by the employment of alcohol as a means to subdue rational sense, thus allowing for the killing of Duncan as well as the dramatic means to drug the possets of the "surfeited" grooms (2.2.5). Despite reasoning power being antithetical to the humoral disposition of womanhood, Lady Macbeth is certainly not inured to the powers of reason at the start of the play. Interestingly, she employs the same metaphor used by the French philosopher André Du Laurens (1558–1609) in his debate about reality and delusion and how the mind distinguishes between the two. Du Laurens wrote that the mind "having beheld a painted Lion...perceiveth that it is not a thing to be feared, and at the same time, joining itself unto reason, doth confirm and make bold."⁹¹ Like Du Laurens, Lady Macbeth argues that reason is developed and tempered by experience: "'tis the eye of childhood / That fears a painted devil" (2.2.54–5); it is the child and the delusional individual who cannot distinguish between the reality and irrational "painting" of fear (3.4.61). Burton, though, was more reluctant to believe in the omnipotent power of reason when one was "affright[ed] with perpetual terrors, envy, suspicion, fear."

Reason was naturally vulnerable to bodily sensation; like a child, the “perturbations and passions” that overwhelmed the imagination in cases of terror and fright, could easily flood reason’s moderating influence, causing the “soul” to be “turn[ed] and affright[ed] out of the hinges of health.” This loss of reason is exemplified by the Macbeths’ “affliction of these terrible dreams / That shakes [us] nightly” (3.2.18–19) but reach their pinnacle in Lady Macbeth’s somnambulism, the “infected mind” that baffles all observers. The primary encounter with the Witches has Macbeth confront his own imaginative fears, passions, and perturbations that “unfix his hair” (1.3.36) and make his “heart knock” (1.3.37) “against the use of nature” (1.3.38). His “single state of man” (1.3.41), an intrinsically complete and “function[ing]” (1.3.41) body is at once “smothered in surmise” (1.3.42) because of his “fantastical” (1.3.40) imagination. In his first soliloquy, Macbeth decides that he still “ha[s] judgement here” (1.7.8), and, because of this faculty, the murder plan will “proceed no further” (1.7.32), but it is Lady Macbeth’s mocking of his “unman[ing] in folly” (3.4.74) that brings him repeatedly back to further his deadly “purpose” (2.2.52). This confrontation between the senses and reason is elaborated by Macbeth’s vision of the “dagger of the mind” (2.1.39), a “false creation” that emanates from “the heat-oppressed brain” (2.1.40), a sure signal of the physiological build-up of humoral fluxes within his body. But although he ruminates upon fabulous images of a “dead” natural world, where “witchcraft celebrates” (2.1.52), ultimately Macbeth can delineate the parameters of fantasy and reality: “There’s no such thing” (2.1.48). In chastising her husband for his initial fears, Lady Macbeth first identifies these delusionary fears as being indicative of thinking “brain-sickly of things” (2.2.46), perhaps an allusion to her earlier judgment that Macbeth’s ambition might never fully be realized because he lacks the “illness should attend it” (1.5.19). It is Lady Macbeth who explains Macbeth’s vision of Banquo’s ghost as being analogous to the “air-drawn dagger” (3.4.62), and therefore an “impostor[s] to true fear” (3.4.64). Such apparent immunity to fear, though, dissipates. As Lady Macbeth’s humoral imbalances grow ever stronger, it is *she* who is the character that eventually emerges as being wracked by the fears that both *Invidia* and melancholy were said to generate.

After her invocation of evil spirits, Lady Macbeth’s humours become more blocked and toxic. When she starts to fear blood as being the visual semiotic sign of “filthy witness” (2.2.46), Lady Macbeth’s own reason and imagination begins to disintegrate completely. As Lady Macbeth’s

diseased mind descends into somnambulism and madness, a complete divorce from body, spirit, and reason eventually signalled by suicide, Macbeth steps forward to become victim of his own kind of humoral sickness, the variant kind of melancholy that Bright argued was “benumbed” and “dazeled with the extremitie of passion.”⁹² While blood suddenly repels Lady Macbeth, her husband switches places to become a kind of surrogate humoral body: the “secretest man of blood” (3.4.129), a man possessed of “furie,” and “devilish” (4.3.117). This transference of humoral contagion is articulated in *Macbeth* through the adoption of many lacteal metaphors. Macbeth promises to go forward arguing that “The firstlings of [my] heart / Will be the firstlings of my hand” (4.1.162–3), thus overriding any reasonable or moral misgivings about atrocious deeds. As the “firstlings” could refer to the firstborn of sheep or cattle,⁹³ this emphasizes the ritualistic notion of the first child or beast nursed in its mother’s milk as being most fit for sacrifice.⁹⁴ Macbeth’s lacteal metaphor is fascinating: given that the first milk was believed by midwives to be poisonous to infants,⁹⁵ Macbeth’s own laudable “milk” has curdled into a sort of trapped male menses where the soldier who once delighted in “bath[ing] in reeking wounds” (1.2.39) is now so saturated with blood that no “physick” might cure his own body proper (5.3.39–55) or aid in the healing of the land itself, the “sickly weal” (5.2.29). With the murder of so many innocents, Macbeth’s own “milk of human kindness” (1.5.16) is “poured into Hell” (4.3.97). This is a clear case where the passions have tainted and transformed Macbeth’s body in such a way as to mirror the same changes wrought within the proto-menopausal body of his wife. In a frightening reversal, Macbeth becomes the diseased humoral body that sucks the fluids from others like a parasitical tick, “in blood stepped so far” (3.4.137–8), with “hangman’s hands” (2.2.28), inured to both passion, reason, and “perturbations of the minde”:

I have almost forgot the taste of fears:
 The time has been, my senses would have cooled
 To hear a night-shriek, and my fell of hair
 Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir
 As life were in’t. I have supped full with horrors,
 Direless familiar to my slaughterous thoughts
 Cannot once start me (5.5.9–15).

Like the organ-eating Weird Sisters, Macbeth now “sup[s]” upon the maternal body of Scotland herself: “It weeps, it bleeds, and each new day a gash / Is added to her wounds” (4.3.40-1).

Consistent with humoral doctrine, it is the presence of Lady Macbeth’s body as well as those of the Witches that “transmit” their poisons to Macbeth through a proximity born of “fascination.”⁹⁶ Once the sickness is passed to Macbeth, though, he physically withdraws from Lady Macbeth, also withholding his plans, deeds, and psychological motivations so that she might “be innocent of the knowledge” (3.2.49). It is at this point of severance from his partner that his words are completely evocative of Lady Macbeth’s catalytic speech when she called down the forces of *Invidia* upon herself:

– Come seeling night,
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day,
And with thy bloody and invisible hand
Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond
Which keeps me pale (3.2.49–53).

His wife’s use of fascination had once rendered Macbeth “pale” and “green” (1.7.37) like a melancholic girl but now Macbeth’s desire is to rip apart his “bloody” connection to Banquo as if Banquo were a “pitiful” infant torn from its mother’s womb. As the action in *Macbeth* progresses, it is Macbeth himself who swaps places with Lady Macbeth as the Devouring Mother of nightmare, the “rarer monster” (5.7.55). Macbeth’s murderous and irrational rages build to an epic climax as he assumes the roles of “devil” (4.3.117; 5.5.24–5) and “fiend” (5.7.99). It is not accidental that Macbeth chooses to keep his wife out of his plans (3.2.48–9), for this deliberate act of secrecy marks the onset of Lady Macbeth’s ever-diminishing external influence and even physical presence within the play.

The fears that once plagued Macbeth as “scorpions of the mind” (3.2.39), his “sorriest fancies” (3.1.10), are subsumed by Macbeth’s particular manifestation of melancholy. Although melancholy’s symptomatology was complex, it presented itself differently depending on the sufferer: whilst one sufferer could be comprehensively overwhelmed by fear and terror leading to total physiological paralysis and breakdown, another patient could develop a complete immunity to fear. As these “perturbations of spirit” increase in Lady Macbeth’s body

signalling a completely organic and systemic breakdown, other symptoms of *Invidia*'s powers are revealed, namely the belief that *Invidia*'s malignancy functioned through symbolic and literal acts of "consumption." Such consumption articulates how the forces of *Invidia* poisoned and dried the proto-menopausal womb, thus necessitating the body's need for fluid sustenance. As food is innately connected to the cultural place of the Nurturing Mother,⁹⁷ some of the most feared actions of the witch—the dread Anti-Mother—was her proclivity to either steal food, wilfully contaminate comestibles, or to exchange her own bodily fluids as food in exchange for demonic powers.

ABJECT CONSUMPTION: THE PROTO-MENOPAUSAL FEMALE AND DIABOLICAL FOODSTUFFS

In a woodcut from Francesco Maria Guazzo's 1608 treatise of the *Compendium Maleficarum*, two female witches are shown basting a spitted baby over a fire whilst their two sister witches endeavour to lower another infant into a smoking cauldron. In Jacques de Gheyn II's drawing (Fig. 5.4), four female witches gather around a cauldron; one witch in the background carries a loaded platter, a veritable smorgasbord of infant body parts. The plate-carrying witch is depicted as elderly; her heavy, pendulous breasts sagging over the decapitated infants' heads. The angle of nipple to mouth highlights the engraving's spirit of perverse anti-nurture: the breasts which might have once offered sustenance to the living child now function to emphasise how the child's head will feed the witch's mouth, and, in turn, her desiccating womb. The proto-menopausal witch's blighted organ of regeneration finds new expression in the terrifying re-imagining of her oral cavity. It does not take much to conceive of the nightmare of the "dashed" "brains" of Lady Macbeth's "toothless" (1.7.58) infant becoming the abject food-stuff of the witch. The mouth's connection to the womb and breast is indicative of a metonymic chain that places consumption, nurturance, and sustenance at the heart of the ageing humoral female in *Macbeth*. The proto-menopausal body flooded with the desires of *Invidia* is, I argue, coterminous with the body of the witch. As *Invidia* ravages the proto-menopausal body, its physical properties are also present within the Witches' cauldron. Within the cauldron's uterine and breast-shaped interior, ingredients are boiled and baked, thickened into slab, percolated

with poisons, and cooled with human and animal blood. In fact, the cauldron mimics *Invidia*'s effects upon the body's entire excretory system of hunger, consumption, and elimination. This cycle seems to be endless, for the "hell broth" (4.1.19) always seems to be bubbling whenever the Witches appear. Like *Invidia*, the cauldron "feeds" on children and other human and animal body parts, particularly the organs of speech and sight, blighting them with toxins. But the cauldron's contents also suggest a terrible inversion of domestic cookery where, instead of wholesome sustenance, the Anti-Mother prepares food that is abject and diabolical. Lady Macbeth's fearful sadistic fantasy of smashing open her own infant's skull speaks to the early modern fears of mothers, midwives and other maternal caregivers using their position to procure infants, even their own, as vital ingredients for their "hell's broth."⁹⁸ Baby fat could be used to concoct a variety of ointments, some of which were reputed to give the witch the power of flight. It is interesting, therefore, that Shakespeare chooses to allegorize "pity" as a "naked new-born babe" trying desperately to survive with his brethren of heavenly "cherubim," impotently "striding" the aerial wake of the witches' "blast" (1.7.21–3). The Weird Sisters' concoction creates aerial phantasms of bloody babes and children, a horrible parody of midwives delivering infants through the birth canal now through the cauldron. Even the illusions of the disembodied head (4.1.81–3) speak to the commonly accepted fear of the witch-midwife dispatching her newly delivered charges with a large pin through their fontanelles.⁹⁹

Early modern artistic and sociocultural depictions of the archetypal witch entirely mirrored those women who would have been identified as being "old" within a community: the "old, lame, blear-eyed, pale, fowle" woman "shewing melancholy in her face."¹⁰⁰ *Invidia*, of course, was also said to be a strong motivating factor in witches' malefic intent. The witch envied what she could not have: youth, physical beauty, children, food and drink, livestock, and the essential vital fluids associated with sexual intercourse.¹⁰¹ The physiological logic here is that as her own fluids thickened, dried, and heated, the witch needed the juicy sap of milk, fat, blood, and semen to satiate an almost vampiric need to replenish her ever-withering body. These fluids were not only used to re-heat and mollify the desiccating body, but superfluous fluids were also needed to "feed" diabolical familiars.¹⁰² Unlike the "midnight hags" with their "wild attire" (1.3.40) and their menopausal hairy chins (1.3.46), Lady Macbeth's diabolism is concealed within the "dignity" (5.1.53) of a "fair

and noble” body (1.6.26). Her will to power features a *modus operandi* of utilising deceptive surfaces to achieve her ambitious ends: like Satan in the Edenic garden, her attractive superficies conceal the “serpent” “beneath the flower” (1.5.64–5). Betrayed by one of his most trusted thanes, Duncan’s regretful assertion that “There’s no art/ To find the mind’s construction in the face” (1.4.12–13) is a rejection of Paracelsus’ belief that moral and spiritual qualities would, indeed, be shown in physiognomy, a doctrine known as *signatures*.¹⁰³ But the hidden nature of Lady Macbeth’s malevolence is far more dangerous and more in keeping with the early modern anxiety surrounding the semiology of hidden “devil’s marks” on the witch’s body, marks that usually took the form of “teats” hiding in “secret places.”¹⁰⁴ Lady Macbeth similarly offers her own milk to evil spirits in payment for supernatural powers, the milk also becoming a foodstuff transformed into bitter humoral “gall” (1.5.47). Like Hecate’s minion in *Macbeth* who relates feeding her own familiar with “a sip of blood” (3.5.48), Lady Macbeth’s offering of her own precious fluids connects her to the historical witch who fed her familiars with blood. But the proto-menopausal woman could also be accused of malefic evil even if her breasts were *empty* of milk. In 1662, Dorothy Durant accused her neighbour Amy Duny of witchcraft because, when asked to babysit her infant, Dorothy charged Amy not to “suckle her child.”¹⁰⁵ However, upon her return, Durant found that Duny “had given suck” to her baby. When the judge asked why an old woman with no milk might have attempted breastfeeding, Duny answered “that it was customary with old women that if they did look after a suckling child, and nothing would please it but the breast, they did use it to please the child” (86). Patriarchal fears might have been stoked further because, as women reported that the act of suckling was “tender” (1.7.55), this led to the disquieting realization that breastfeeding was a sexually-pleasurable act for all women who put a baby to their breast.¹⁰⁶ It was the breast itself, whether full or empty of milk, that became such a charged symbol of a woman’s sexuality, her incomparable power over life and death.

The witch’s exchange of bodily fluids in return for supernatural powers established a new form of economics where malevolent drink and food-stuffs became the stock-in-trade of the invidious female. In this way, when Lady Macbeth exhorts the “ministers” to “take” her “milk for gall” (1.5.47), one might frame this injunction in the sense of “(mis)take” her milk as already *being* gall, for, as established, *Invidia* had the power to change humoral fluids into toxins. When Lady Macbeth tells us that “she

has given suck" (1.7.54), we do not know if her breasts still contain milk even in the wake of her infant's suspected death. In early modern parish living, lactating women would often serve to wet-nurse infants whose mothers could not physically produce milk or who chose to eschew breastfeeding altogether for various cultural or personal reasons.¹⁰⁷ Often this was an occupation that many women pursued long after their own childbearing had ceased.¹⁰⁸ Whilst culturally improbable that a woman of Lady Macbeth's class might have served as a wetnurse,¹⁰⁹ the notion of having lactating breasts without an actual child to nourish, taps into the early modern anxiety that milk-bound women, regardless of their biological age, could offer their milk to surrogate "babies" taking the form of demonic familiars. A familiar was a personal demonic servant, usually taking on the form of an animal, that was gifted to a woman upon swearing a pact with the Devil.¹¹⁰ Once the novitiate witch had orally recited her diabolical pact, her familiar might seal the covenant by sucking at her breast or pseudo-breast, her witch's "teat."¹¹¹ In *Macbeth*, the familiar identified as First Spirit comes to "fetch his dues, /A kiss, a coll, a sip of blood" (3.5.47-8). In the 1582 trial of Ursula Kemp, her eight-year-old son testified that his mother had a total of four familiars and at night they came to his mother to "suck blood of her upon her arms and other places of her body."¹¹² Conversely, there was the fear that the hands of a proto-menopausal witch could also dry up milk in the lactating mother: "I have seen them, who with onely laying their hands upon a nurses breastes, haue drawne forth all the milke, and dried them up."¹¹³ Whether full or empty, the old woman's breast became a powerful symbol and visual motif "expressing the evil of witchcraft and envy rolled into one."¹¹⁴

The lactating woman who sold her services as wetnurse was fundamental in establishing the exchange of humoral fluids as a viable commodity. Such vital fluids, though, also represented power and social agency, tangible systems of exchange.¹¹⁵ It is perhaps for this reason that Gail Kern Paster has written so extensively of milk and blood as being what she terms "fungible commodities."¹¹⁶ In her epic study of European witchcraft *Witch Craze* (2004),¹¹⁷ Lyndal Roper argues that the exchange of household supplies and small amounts of food were frequently cited in witchcraft trials as evidentiary of the envious and diabolical nature of the elderly woman who was seen to transgress cultural and social boundaries when she cursed those who would not give of their cache.¹¹⁸ It was credible to believe, therefore, that the older woman might envy others who

had easy access to such comestibles. The moral degeneration and physiological degeneration of the Macbeths is partially signalled in the play by the symbols of the “poisoned chalice” (1.7.11), food shortages (4.1.34), and interrupted feasts. As an expression of invidious urges, witches in Germany were often known as “milk thieves”¹¹⁹ because they coveted both cow’s and infant’s milk. Witches were frequently accused of enviously harming livestock and blighting crops; the one Weird Sister boasts that she has been away “killing swine” (1.3.2). Children and infants were at particular risk from envious attacks from witches, not only because they were objects of pride and desire, but also because their flesh, fat, and blood could be consumed to extend a witch’s life and powers. Martin del Rio (1558–1608) argued that witches would use the children’s flesh as a hideous foodstuff as well as providing them with the fat needed for magic ointments.¹²⁰ Food and drink, therefore, played a prominent role in the community as they represented wealth, kinship, neighbourly obligation, as well as serving as the vector through which the envious witch might work her malefic magic.

As Dianne Purkiss has argued, the whole purview of magic was to deal with “borders, markers, distinctions, insides and outsides, the limits of bodies...exchanges of objects through bodies and across thresholds.”¹²¹ This code of social exchange, how goods and services might cross thresholds, was the bedrock of hospitality that was rendered entirely suspect by the old woman: her body tested the limits of all that might invade or breach social or liminal boundaries. Whether feared for her “natural” predisposition to diabolic behaviour or resented as a non-contributing member of the community, the old woman was often cast out and deprived of all the benefits of hospitable kindness. In *Macbeth*, the begging of chestnuts from a sailor’s wife, an act born of envious desire but also hunger, is the only time that the epithet of “witch” is levelled against one of the Weird Sisters (1.3.7). In revenge, the Weird Sister seeks recompense in the form of the sailor’s vital fluids to the point of deadly desiccation: “I’ll drain him dry as hay” (1.3.14). There is undoubtedly a sexual undercurrent here to “drain[ing]” the sailor’s vital essence, one that plays into cultural fears of nocturnal visitations from witches and demons in the form of the dread succubus.¹²² But the Weird Sister’s assertion here is interesting: her microcosmic powers over the sailor’s “bark” and her ability to drain his vital spirit are likened to the macrocosmic powers of the “tempest” itself (1.3.26). There seems to be an implicit recognition here that the witch’s diabolical powers may control

the very weather.¹²³ Because of the marked frequency of crop failures, such “weather-magic” was feared throughout Europe at this time. The witch’s body was adept at extending itself beyond the boundaries of the body proper to control the entire macrocosm, “both the worlds” (3.2.18), as a means of serving the microcosmic desires of her own jealousies, resentments and need for sustenance. The demonic potency of the proto-menopausal body is reflected in the topsy-turvy inversion of *Macbeth*’s natural world, the “earth” that is “feverish and doth shake” (2.3.61–2) with its celestial darkness (2.1.5–6; 2.4.7–9), flesh-devouring horses (2.4.14–17), and unusually violent wind (2.3.1–2). The scenes around the cauldron represent the most hyperbolic considerations of managing humoral changes through consumption in *Macbeth*. This was the potency of *Invidia*—not only did it enter the body of the proto-menopausal woman spreading poison and evil, but its pernicious need for “feeding” encapsulated complex systems surrounding early modern anxieties about the ageing woman and her diabolical connection to foodstuffs as commodity.

Drowning in melancholic bile and fluxes of retained excrementitious menses, Lady Macbeth moves ever closer to the suicidal end that Burton warned of.¹²⁴ To a proto-menopausal body inundated by the physiological chaos of warming humours and the percolating poisons of *Invidia*, what might be the effects of drinking alcohol? The Porter makes it clear that there has been much “carousing” at Macbeth’s castle to welcome the arrival of King Duncan (2.3.22). For the Porter, the power of drink functions clearly as a psychosocial and physiological “provocat[or]” (2.3.23) of three drives: “nose-painting, sleep and urine” (2.3.25). Physically, alcohol “provokes the desire, but takes away the performance,” making a man sexually “stand to, and not stand to” (2.3.32). The Porter concludes, therefore, that for a man’s physiology, drink is an “equivocator with lechery,” “mak[ing] him” and “mar[ring] him” (2.3.30). But whilst the Porter specifically addresses the effect of alcohol through a gendered male lens, Lady Macbeth seems to establish a clear distinction between how alcohol has affected Duncan’s guards, the “spongy officers” (1.7.72), and herself: “That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold” (2.2.1). Lady Macbeth suggests that her pre-murderous drinking spree has given her powers that register above the ordinary: alcohol “makes” her, whilst it “mars” the “swinish” guards (1.7.68). But according to humoral theory, would this, in fact, be the case? Both Aristotle and later, Helkiah Crooke (1576–1648), had likened wine’s effect upon the body to that of the

overproduction of the same humoral black bile that caused a melancholy disposition; “melancholy juyce” was “like unto the lees of Wine.”¹²⁵

The Porter is correct in arguing that alcohol is the great “equivocator” (2.3.29), for any attempt to pinpoint the exact measure of melancholic black bile that might distinguish between the man of outstanding character, and his lowlier counterpart riddled with disease and ripe for insanity as described by Philip Barrough (fl. 1590) in *De Melancholia* (1596), is almost impossible to establish. Thomas Wright employed the metaphor that likened the drinking of wine to a man’s desire to engage in carnal acts with women, causing him to “leave Religion” and “carrieth [him] to the divell.”¹²⁶ Alcohol consumption, according to Bright, would then make melancholic excrement swell and “groweth in obstruction,” and cause an overall “unnaturall boyling of heate.”¹²⁷ The key here, though, is *volatility*: although melancholy tended towards the calorically cool, alcohol added heat and thus the entire humoral balance of a body would be thrown into total chaos.¹²⁸ Burton argued that even though melancholy was “colder,” once any passion “was thoroughly-kindled,” it would “retayneth the heate longer,” and so would “not easily [be] brought againe into the former temper.”¹²⁹ Given their humoral volatility, one might presume that both Macbeth and his Lady purposefully drink heavily in order to suppress their “reason” so that they might slaughter the saintly Duncan. Whatever “bold[ness]” (2.2.1) Lady Macbeth would have been experiencing with her drinking is temporary: according to humoral thinking, the melancholic generation of black bile as well as the heated fumes that would be rising to her brain, would be symptomatic of a body in crisis.¹³⁰ The volatility of the humorally heating proto-menopausal body would be exacerbated by the drinking of alcohol. Such thermal dynamics would exert an egregious deadly influence on a body already wracked by *Invidia*, a body thrown into ever-increasing circles of imbalance and disease. Reason’s potential to temper, moderate, and ultimately “save” such a body from the damaging fluxes of *Invidia*’s “heating” and “wasting” are non-existent in the proto-menopausal female. As Timothy Bright warned, blocked melancholic excrement would “oppresse and trouble the quiet seate of the minde, that all organicall actions thereof are mixed with melancholic madnesse, and reason turned into a vaine feare.”¹³¹ “Reason” has become so “drenched” and “swinish” that, in the alchemical limbeck of Lady Macbeth’s body, it has become nothing but a noxious fume (1.7.66–9), a form of melancholic madness that, according

to Levinus Lemnius, would lead a patient “to a lamentable, shamefull end.”¹³²

SILENCING THROUGH SELF-CANNIBALIZATION

Lady Macbeth’s sleepwalking not only further drains her body of those vital humours that are already in rapid decline, but this psychosis of an “infected mind” (5.1.70) has “shut” up her “sense[s]” (5.1.24), making her act out “performances” (5.1.12) of illusionary visions. This humoral chaos and disordered reasoning climaxing in a “great perturbation of nature” (5.1.9) sees Lady Macbeth’s return to the very blood she wished to see “stoppered up” with her initial demonic invocation. Her thoughts return to the surprise she felt at the sheer volume of blood that Duncan’s body contained (5.1.38), a shock that resonated so strongly with her because, like her own drying humours, the King’s aged body *should* have been similarly depleted. The “filthy witness” (2.2.46) now haunts her fantasies because it cannot be “wash[ed]” (5.1.59) from her imagination, a fearful phantasm of the humoral, reproductive body she had hoped to cast off. One returns one to the emaciated allegory of *Invidia* stalking through the darkness, a figure made repellent by her wish to feed upon other bodies yet sometimes driven to the desperate consumption of her own internal organs and fluids. In effect, because as a female she is denied the physiological ability to manage her own envious passions with reason, Lady Macbeth’s political power diminishes in accordance with the deterioration of her physical self, whilst Macbeth’s presence aggrandizes. Assuming a flawed but heroic grandeur, Macbeth’s ascension comes at a cost to the once-symbiotic relationship he held with his “dearest chuck” (3.2.48). Claiming ultimately to have overpowered the potency of his own imagination, Macbeth maintains complete control of his body, a body that “bear-like” and “tied...to a stake” (5.7.1-2) will “fight the course” and “try the last” (5.7.62). Macbeth’s end is signalled only when the literal organ of his reason—his head—is severed from a once-powerful and indominable body that had been “lapped in proof” (1.2.52) like “Bellona’s bridegroom” (1.2.52). Lady Macbeth’s end is heralded only by the “cry of women” (5.5.8), an ignoble off-stage death of a now almost-invisible presence. As the figure of *Invidia*, then, Lady Macbeth has withered into nothingness: her very bodily integrity has been destroyed through an abject act of auto-consumption.

As much as Janet Adelman argues that *Macbeth* is a fantasy about males reproducing without females,¹³³ with its manifold images of caesarean birth and bloody cleaving, it is also a play that rips open the female reproductive body—especially the womb—to full scrutiny. The fantasy here then is not so much how the male might regenerate without the female but how the proto-menopausal womb might be handled in such a way as to contain, constrain, and eradicate its terrible potency. The proto-menopausal body, with its festering menses and poisonous, heating humours, presented a dire threat to the bodies of others. Similarly, the ageing female body proper, invaded by the forces of *Invidia*, had the power to influence both the macrocosm and microcosm with a malevolence akin to that wielded by her diabolical sisters. This image is particularly reinforced through *Invidia*'s connectivity, like that of the witch, to all forms of consumption. Inured to the passions of reason or the advantages of other kingly virtues, a proto-menopausal body defied moderation and control. Lady Macbeth's body was already fearful, abhorrent, and damned the minute that it achieved proto-menopausal status through her invocation to evil spirits to “unsex” her (1.5.40). Shakespeare, in effect, *doesn't know what to do* with such a body except to have it succumb to horror, madness, and to ignobly kill it off. Certainly, this physical and mental descent into delirium and death is congruent with *Invidia*'s humoral pathology, but dramatically, Lady Macbeth's end is a notable anti-climax. It is significant that Lady Macbeth's death happens off-stage: unseen and unmourned, she has become the embodiment of shame. Suddenly *Macbeth*'s awareness of the phenomenological shifts from the female to the male body: to the heroic Macduff “untimely ripped” (5.7.46) from the womb, and the fearful severed Gorgoneion head of Macbeth, the “rarer monster[s]” (5.7.55). *Macbeth*'s conclusion sees the total erasure of the female body. Lady Macbeth's presence vanishes with those of the Witches, their individual identities seemingly mingling. No longer even seen as female or, indeed, even human, Lady Macbeth becomes the “fiend-like” monster of a nightmare (5.7.99) whose demise is signalled only by a “cry” of voices (5.5.8). Like the figure of Echo whose own body was self-consumed until only the remnants of speech remained, Lady Macbeth's body is similarly “consumed” by a play that nullifies her invidious presence, ultimately rendering her into something “signifying nothing” (5.5.28).

NOTES

1. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3a.1a., <https://www.oed.com>.
2. Dante Alighieri, *Dante's Purgatorio: The Vision of Purgatory from The Divine Comedy*, trans. Rev. H.F. Cary, XIII (Minneapolis: First Avenue Editions, 2015), 70–2.
3. Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Minde in General. Corrected, Enlarged, and with Sundry New Discourses Augmented*, 1604 ed., 64, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
4. See Gail Kern Paster's thesis that "passions" were inseparable from any physiological experience for the early moderns. Emotions or "passions" were humorally embodied as liquid forces of nature that exerted real material affect as opposed to mere metaphorical understandings. See *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
5. Although they are frequently referred to as rival schools of medical thought, Galenism and Paracelsanism enjoyed a coexistence during the years 1560–1617. See Lynette Hunter, "Cankers in *Romeo and Juliet*," *Disease, Diagnosis, and Care on the Early Modern Stage*, ed. Stephanie Moss (London: Routledge, 2004), 171–185.
6. The term is Gail Kern Paster's. See *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).
7. Jakob Ruëff, *The Expert Midwife, Or An Excellent and Most Necessary Treatise of the generation and Birth of Man*, 1637 ed., (London: E. Griffin for S. Burton), ch.1, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
8. Ambroise Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, trans. Janis L. Pallister (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), ch.7, 32.
9. Agrrippa Von Nettersheim, *Three books of occult philosophy, translated out of the Latin into the English tongue by J.F.*, 1651 ed., ch. L, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
10. Jacob Sprenger and Henry Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum*, trans. Montague Summers (North Charleston: Createspace, 2016), 146.
11. This is a term employed by Robert Burton. cf. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholie*, ed. Thomas C. Faulkner et al. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).
12. Walter Pagel, *Paracelsus: An Introduction to Philosophical Medicine in the Era of the Renaissance* (Basel: S. Karger, 1958), 52.
13. Ibid., 122.
14. Paracelsus, "The Book Concerning the Tincture of the Philosophers," *Four Works of Paracelsus: The R.A. M's Library of Alchemy, Vol. 6* (Virginia: R.A.M.s Publishing Company), 150.
15. Pagel, 209.

16. See, for instance, Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), and Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (London: Harvard University Press, 1990).
17. Jenijoy La Belle, "A Strange infirmity": Lady Macbeth's Amenorrhea," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 31(1980), 381, 382.
18. Hilda H. Ma argues that Lady Macbeth becomes "the site of England's unease over the figure of post-menopausal women who exhibit nurturing power" functioning as a critique of Elizabeth's political motherhood. Thus, Lady Macbeth wishes to become "prematurely post-menopausal" and "obtain the masculine virility that characterizes witches" (147). Marlena Tronicke argues that Lady Macbeth wishes "to sterilize herself: of her ability to give birth" and "her feminine qualities such as remorse and conscience." Christine Couche, in arguing that Lady Macbeth is suffering from postnatal psychosis, argues that her appeal to the spirits is a symptom for it "reveals a manic sense of being all-powerful." See Marlena Tronicke, *Shakespeare's Suicides: Dead Bodies that Matter* (London: Routledge, 2017), ch. 7., and Christine Couche, "A Mind Diseased: Reading Lady Macbeth's Madness," *Word and Self Estranged in English Texts, 1550–1660*, ed. Phillipa Kelly et al. (London: Routledge, 2010), 141.
19. Joanna Levin, "Lady Macbeth and the Daemonologie of Hysteria," *ELH* 69, no.1 (2002), 24.
20. Kaara L. Peterson, "Hysterica Passio: Early Modern Medicine, King Lear and Editorial Practice," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2006), 1–22.
21. Couche, "A Mind Diseased: Reading Lady Macbeth's Madness."
22. Hilda H. Ma, "The Medicalization of 'Midnight Hags': Perverting Post-Menopausal and Political Motherhood in Macbeth," *Staging the Superstitions of Early Modern Europe*, ed. Verena Theile and Andrew D. McCarthy (London: Routledge, 2013), 155.
23. Ibid., Ma
24. Karin Sellman, "'Bloody Business': Passions and Regulation of Sanguinity in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *King Lear*," *Fluid Bodies and Bodily Fluids in Premodern Europe*, ed. Anne M. Scott and Michael David Barbezat (Amsterdam: AUP, 2020), 113–129.
25. The next sequence of quotes can be found in Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the minde*, on pages 64; 60; and 33.
26. Plutarch, *Moralia: Table Talk*, trans. P. A. Clement and H. B. Hoffleit, Loeb Classic Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 681E.
27. Timothie Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholie Containing the Causes Thereof, & Reasons of the Strange Effects it Worketh in our Minds and Bodies: With the Physicke Cure, and Spirituall Consolation for such as*

- Hau Thereto Adioyned an Afflicted Conscience. ... by T. Bright Doctor of Physicke London, By Thomas Vautrollier, dwelling in the Black-Friers, 1586 ed., ch., 2, 6, : 1612 ed., memb. III., subsect. VII., <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.*
28. Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. Thomas P. Roche Jr., V., XII., (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1978), 42.
29. Wright, 30.
30. Sprenger and Kramer, 75; 151.
31. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of this phenomena.
32. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Thomas C. Faulkner et al. 1632 ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 9, 5: 269; 2, 5: 275.
33. Bright, subsect. V., 101.
34. Burton, 1, 2: 268.
35. Wright, 135.
36. Bright, 30.
37. Sprenger and Kramer, 53; 145; 146; 147; 142.
38. Bright, 125; 128.
39. The sequence from Wright is as follows: 145; 146; 147; 146; 142.
40. Agrippa Von Nettersheim, *Three books of occult philosophy, translated out of the Latin into the English tongue by J.F.*, 1651 ed., ch. LXV.,146, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>
41. Gianbattista della Porta, *Natural Magic*, pub. Samuel Speed London,1658 ed., Boston Public Library, ch. I, McManus-Young Collection, Library of Congress.
42. Elizabeth Ladenson, “Invidia’s Snake,” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 3/4 (2006), 67.
43. Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. Thomas P. Roche Jr., V., XII (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1978), 31.
44. Vasiliki Limberis, “The Eyes Infected by Evil: Basil of Caesarea’s Homily, “On Envy,”” *The Harvard Theological Review* 84, no. 2 (April 1991): 164.
45. Esther Eidinow, *Envy, Poison, and Death: Women on Trial in Classical Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 74.
46. Limberis, 64.
47. Della Porta, ch. 1.
48. Pagel, 148.
49. Paul Hammond, *Milton’s Complex Words: Essays on the Conceptual Structure of Paradise Lost* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 87.
50. Wright, 40.
51. Nicholas Gyer, *The English Phlebotomy*, 1592 ed., 10–11, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
52. Ian Maclean, “Medicine, Anatomy, Physiology,” *Feminism and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 41.

53. Edward Jorden, *A Brief Discourse of a Disease Called Suffocation of the Mother*, 1603 ed., 19–20, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
54. John Taylor, *A Juniper Lecture*, 1652 ed., 192, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
55. Gail Kern Paster, “The Unbearable Coldness of Female Being: Women’s Imperfections and the Humoral Economy,” *English Literary Renaissance* 28, no. 3 (1998), 432.
56. Sprenger and Kramer, ch.2.,133.
57. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Problemata physica*, 2.53, qtd. in John H. Elliot, *Beware the Evil Eye: The Evil Eye in the Bible and the Ancient World, Greece and Rome* (Vol. 2) (London: The Lutterworth Press, 2016), 113; 53, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>
58. Reginald Scot, *Scot’s Discovery of vrwitchcraft Proving the Common Opinions of Witches Contracting with Divels, Spirits, or Familiars London, Printed by R.C. and are to be sold by Giles Calvert ..*, bk.16., ch. IX., ed.1584, 350, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
59. John Elliot, *Beware the Evil Eye*, 52.
60. Plutarch, *Moralia: Table Talk*, 682 A-B.
61. Lemnius, 23.
62. Nettesheim, ch. L.
63. Saint Basil, *Ascertical Works. The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1962), 463.
64. Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Witches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 163.
65. Bright, 1586 ed., ch., 2, 6, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
66. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A.D. Melville (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 778–811.
67. Plutarch, *Moralia*, 681D; 680 F-681 A.
68. Elliot, 114.
69. See Chapter 2 for a full discussion.
70. Rosemary Moore, “Monsters and the Maternal Imagination: The ‘First Vision’ from Johann Remmelin’s 1619 *Catoptrum microcosmicum* Triptych,” *Exceptional Bodies in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Maja Bondestam (Amsterdam: AUP, 2020), 60.
71. Basil qtd. in Limberis, 166.
72. Juliana Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Symbolics of Loss in Renaissance Literature* (London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 4; 14; 105.
73. John Milton, *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, ed. Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 1–6.
74. Robert Burton, bk. II., sect. III., mem. III.
75. Pseudo-Soranus, qtd. in Jacques Jouanna, “At the Roots of Melancholy: Is Greek Medicine Melancholic?,” *Greek Medicine from Hippocrates to Galen*, ed. Philip van der Eijk (London: Brill, 2012), 252; 256.

76. Thomas Wright, 63; 65.
77. Bright, 107.
78. Bright, 196; 299; 124.
79. The next sequence of quotes from Burton is as follows: mem. II., subsect. V., 167; pt. I., sect. III., 466; pt. I., sect. II., 298; mem. III., subsect. IX., 311; mem. VI., subsect., I, 123.
80. Schiesari, 145.
81. Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 50.
82. Linda C. Hults, *The Witch as Muse: Art, Gender, and Power in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2005), 35.
83. William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. Kenneth Muir (London: Penguin Books, 2005).
84. Wright, 49; 139; 17.
85. cf. Wright, *The passions*, 3; Aristotle “*Historia animalium* IX,” *The Complete Works of Aristotle, revised Oxford translation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 143.
86. Burton, mem. I.I, subsect. XI., 191.
87. Wright, 49; 74; 75.
88. The next sequence of quotes are from Burton: pt. I., sect. I., 200; pt. I., sect. III., 476; pt. I., sect. III., subsect. IV., 476.
89. Basil of Caesaria qtd. in Vasiliki Limberis, “The Eyes Infected by Evil: Basil of Caesarea’s Homily, ‘On Envy’,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 84, no.2 (April 1991), 164.
90. Burton, mem. II., subsect. V., 167.
91. André Du Laurens, *A discourse of the preservation...*, trans. Richard Surphlet, 1599 ed., chap. 4, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
92. Bright, 131.
93. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2, <https://www.oed.com>.
94. Exodus 23: 19, *King James Version*, <https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org>.
95. Valerie Fildes, *Breasts, Bottles, and Babies: A History of Infant Breastfeeding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1986), 84–5.
96. See Chapter 2 for a full discussion of “fascination” and the menopausal woman.
97. Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1995), 8.
98. Nicolas Rémy, *Demonolatry*, 1595 ed., ed. Marianne Rodker (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970), Book 2, Ch. 3, 209–12.
99. Roper, 10.
100. Reginald Scot, ch. III., 5.

101. Willis, 47.
102. Ibid., 15; 55.
103. Walter Pagel, *Paracelsus: An Introduction to Philosophical Medicine in the Era of the Renaissance* (Basel: S. Karger, 1958).
104. John Bell qtd. in Montague Summers, *A Popular History of Witchcraft* (New York: Dover Publications, 1937), 68.
105. *A Tryle of Witches*, 1662 qtd. in *The Penguin Book of Witches*, ed. Katherine Howe (London: Penguin Books, 2014), 86.
106. cf. Laurent Joubert's (1529–1582) *Popular Errors*, 234.
107. Some of these reasons offered included: a woman's desire to remain physically independent of her baby; the belief that breastfeeding was ageing to a young woman who cared about remaining pretty; breast-milk soiled the clothes and made them smell; a husband's jealousy of the infant's "ownership" of his wife's breasts; the belief that it made her feel "bestial." See, for instance, Elizabeth Clinton, Countess of Lincoln's *The Countesse of Lincolnes nurserie*, 1622 ed., 12, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>
108. Fildes, 153.
109. Ibid., 143.
110. Such animal familiars included dogs, cats, toads, rats, fowls, and hares. See Summers, 43.
111. Ibid., 46.
112. Tracy Borman, *Witches: James I and the English Witch-Hunts* (London: Vintage Books, 2013), 148.
113. Lambert Daneau, *A Dialogue of Witches*, trans. Thomas Twyne, 1575 ed., <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>
114. Lyndal Roper, *The Witch in the Western Imagination* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 19.
115. Roper, *The Witch*, 204.
116. cf. Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*
117. Lyndal Roper, *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).
118. Roper, *Witch Craze*, 4.
119. Roper, *The Witch*, 5.
120. Roper, *Witch Craze*, 9.
121. Dianne Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and 20th Century Representations* (London: Routledge, 1996), 120.
122. Sprenger and Kramer, Question IV., 55.
123. Wolfgang Behringer, "Weather, Hunger, and Fear: Origins of the European Witch Hunts in Climate, Society and Mentality," *German history (Online)* 13, no. 1 (1995), 71, 83.
124. Burton, II., 2, 6, 2: 106.

125. Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, 1615 ed., 138, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
126. Wright, 54.
127. Bright, mem. V., subsect. IV., 437.
128. Bright, 31.
129. Burton, 229.
130. Bright, 131.
131. Bright, ch. I, 2.
132. Lemnius qtd. in David F. Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare in the English Renaissance* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992), 201.
133. Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: fantasies of maternal origins in Shakespeare's plays, Hamlet to the Tempest* (New York: Routledge, 1992).



CHAPTER 6

Menopausal Cleopatra and the Hybrid Cyborg Womb

INTRODUCTION: “DREAMS OF A NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH”

In his later tragedy *Antony and Cleopatra* (1608),¹ Shakespeare creates the potential for reconceptualizing the ageing female body with his character of Cleopatra. In conjunction with Cleopatra’s body, the uterine pathologies and, therefore, the embodied sociocultural anxieties explored in this chapter, are fears and anxieties about the sexually promiscuous woman—particularly when such proclivity is manifested by a powerful and precocious female ruler. Shakespeare’s Cleopatra is a uniquely constructed character who challenges the boundaries of what her ageing body can *do* within the play, pushing back against such patriarchal tensions. Shakespeare’s project is not about trying to “redeem” Cleopatra from these sociocultural anxieties, but creatively she stands as a kind of experimental character for playing with themes of power and control housed within a radically reconfigured body—a body informed by systems of emergent scientific thought. Although one can still see humoral conceptions of the uterus and its medicalized pathologies, the body that houses that organ is transforming into a new corporeal materialism. Cleopatra occupies a kind of transitional period, one that looks backwards to Galenic medicine but one that also anticipates the coming of René Descartes (1596–1650). I do not wish to imply a kind of historical prescience or metaphysical prognostication by Shakespeare, but merely intend to highlight that in *Antony*

and Cleopatra, he is already utilizing the language of the machine as a powerful entry-point into new conceptions of the ageing woman's body. Shakespeare's familiarity with the Galenic body, and perhaps his awareness of the changing discourse surrounding new discoveries in the natural sciences, affords him a creative freedom to speculate how an entirely new female body composed of organic and inorganic matter might function: how might such a novel body challenge the notion of ageing, sexuality, political power, gender relations, and political power?

With Cleopatra, Shakespeare creates a pre-Mechanical, what I am terming "proto-Cartesian" female, momentarily embodied with hopeful promise. The bodily potential here is a transcendence of age with "no winter in' t" (5.2.88), with dreams of a proto-menopausal body that might use nascent Mechanical Theory to "remake" itself, especially in terms of sexual, reproductive health. It is in this liminal space that Cleopatra becomes a proto-Cartesian cyborg, a marriage of flesh and machine in a fantastical body where the "stuff" "of Nature" to "vie strange forms with fancy" (5.298–299) might at last be realized. As a hybrid of Galenic flesh and early pre-Cartesian machine, Cleopatra is conceptualized as the proto-Cartesian "Cyborg Mother," the site of maternal origin where gender, ageing, and sexuality unite in glorious "bounty" (5.2.87) within her body. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, we can see nascent Mechanical Theory creep into the conceptualization of the female body through the metaphorization of Cleopatra's body itself and its theoretical application to the play's various uses of the mechanical "tools" used to augment the female body, both in terms of its sexual health and agency. Proto-Cartesian use of the mechanical, then, is not detrimental to the ageing body but liberating and full of inventive possibilities to manufacture "a wonderful/piece of work" (1.2.153–154). Although Shakespeare was not necessarily consciously aware of the full Cartesian body to come, he was, nonetheless, ideally placed in history to conceptualize a radically new female body, a body comprised of different matter, driven according to its own needs and desires.

This "dream of a new heaven and earth" for the ageing female, however, is brief. Shakespeare's Cleopatra is given an entire act in which to prepare for the complete dissolution of this experimental body. However aware Shakespeare may have been during his lifetime about changes in medicine, anatomy, and physics, he couldn't have known just how radically the human body was to be reimagined with the death of Galenism and the rise of the Cartesian subject. Cleopatra's unique death,

then, is not self-consciously predictive, she is not the stuff of speculative science fiction. Her fate may be entirely coincidental as a marker of what was to come for the proto-menopausal woman, but its accuracy is eerie, nonetheless. Once “menopause” was recognized as a syndrome and documented as a nosological medical condition with a common aetiology in the annals of medicine towards the early eighteenth century, the uterus continued to be cast, even magnified, along pathological lines. As humoralism faded and new sciences entered the field of medicine and anatomy, one cannot claim that the status of the ageing woman and her sociocultural experience of ageing changed in any significant regard, but what did change was the perception of the inner workings of her body. The eventual full incorporation of Cartesian Mechanical Theory may have changed the ideological conception of the human body but it did not improve upon it for the proto-menopausal woman: instead of a singular organ influencing the entire body, the entire biotic system itself was imagined as a mechanism in decline, “malfunctioning” and “breaking down.”² In our own mechanized age, Cartesian conceptualization has ushered in a universal perception of the menopausal body as a “faulty” machine, obsolete, broken down, and sexless, “the disused factory, the failed business, the idle machine.”³

FROM AUTOMATON TO CYBORG

Turn to any page of Giovanni Fontana’s (c.1390–1454) *Liber instrumentorum bellicorum* and one encounters a wealth of illustrated mechanical marvels. Most of Fontana’s designs are for prototypes of automata—mechanized creatures with forms and movement mimicking that of nature’s originals. One of Fontana’s more remarkable illustrations is of a female automaton whose eyes, mouth, and ears shoot forth flames illuminating the devilish horns that she sports upon her head. Adding to this sense of otherworldliness, this automaton is adorned with wings like a bat, and her lower dimensions reveal a dragon’s tail, with clawed, reptilian feet poking out from under her dress (Fig. 6.1). This “*strega infuocata*” or “flaming witch” is fastened to rails on a moveable track. A smaller inset on the witch’s blueprint reveals what is hidden under her black robe: affixed to where her genitalia would be is a tool resembling a weapon, a gun or a port for shooting off fireworks or other incendiary devices. Whether the rail is to account for dynamic recoil upon weapon discharge or if it exists to facilitate re-loading, the witch is an automaton suggesting

perpetual motion, a propulsive dance of death and spectacle all housed in a diabolical female body. With its grotesque mechanical façade, Fontana states quite clearly that the witch's purpose is "to frighten the beholder."⁴ Jonathan Sawday asserts that the early modern manufacture of automata is "an expression of male anxiety or fear of the feminine," resulting from an atavistic and deeply rooted fear that "woman" may be "an unnatural human form, which can only ape the primary creation of the ideal, natural, human form."⁵ Would such anxiety be heightened if the engineer clothed such animatronic simulacra of the female with living human flesh?

The automaton had been both an imaginary and mechanistic being that had its origins as far back as the ancient Talos and Golem myths. In the early days of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the development of automata, as well as the engineering of fountains, imitation birds, and talking heads, was found to be suspect by many European thinkers. Suspicion of the automaton arose from cultural and religious discomfort that occult magic would have been employed to animate the assemblage. As E.R. Truitt has noted, the creation of automata rested on an esoteric knowledge that lay beyond the reach of the mere artisan, placing it in the hands of philosophers and necromancers who animated their creations using "astral science, enchantment, augury, or even necromancy."⁶ As the proto-Cartesian cyborg, Cleopatra is often described in such occult terms as a witch (4.2.37), gypsy (1.1.10), and enchanting fairy (4.9.12) who utilizes "witchcraft" and "charms of love" (2.1.22; 2.1.20) to achieve her desires. History's first automaton was credited to Hans Bullman of Nuremberg (d.1535), and then developed by Bullman's contemporary, Gianello Torriano of Cremona (c.1515–1585).⁷ The automaton's humanoid figure was initially propelled by the application of pneumatics and hydraulics,⁸ a material articulation of the early engineer's overwhelming preoccupation with mimicking human movement. Descartes even constructed an automaton to resemble his illegitimate daughter Francine.⁹ Early automatons in literature and natural science were created for a variety of purposes: to protect cities and people; to solve complex problems of calculation; and to provide entertainment.¹⁰ The automaton, in contrast to the modern cyborg, was conceptualized as an obsequious, fawning slave, servile in temperament and function and bound to social rules set by its Master. Created to serve man, self-individuation was always antithetical to the automaton's conception.¹¹ The word "robot" in both Russian and Czech is a derivation of the word "slave," a creature of servitude and drudgery.¹² Functioning only in accord with the laws of physics,



Fig. 6.1 Giovanni Fontana's "Flaming Witch" from *Bellicorum instrumentorum cum figuris*. BSD cod. Icon. 242, fol. 63v (Credit Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München)

the automaton is purely a machine, a simulacrum of the human being but with “nothing” of life within it (5.2.239). Once Cleopatra is stripped of her biological flesh and sexuality, she becomes the lifeless Roman automaton, the Cartesian “puppet” (5.2.209), a deficient, obsolescent, and intractable “thing.”

Fontana’s automaton had been conceived of and engineered in one form or another since classical times, but it is to the contemporary myth of the cyborg that I turn in order to make meaning of Cleopatra’s hybridity between machine and female flesh (matter) and how fluid ontologies of woman and machine might become a radical force for the social, sexual, political, and cultural freedom of the ageing female. In our own post-Cartesian world, the application of scientific advancements to enhance the body’s capabilities has continued to dominate our consciousness. In recent years, posthumanism and transhumanism have emerged as important critical fields for corporeal and material feminist thought.¹³ For postmodern and posthuman considerations of this cross-species incarnation, Donna Haraway’s (b.1944–) conception of the cyborg is particularly useful as a means to consider just how much early modern dreams of new and novel embodiments have followed us into the twenty-first century. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to trace those technological progressions of posthuman thought involving such varied disciplines as robotics, prosthetics, neuroscience, nanotechnology, and biogenetics, but the trend towards the “displacement” of dualistic ontological categories such as “nature and culture, organic and inorganic, flesh and metal, born and manufactured” continues: “human enhancement” always “at the core of these debates.”¹⁴ Haraway’s cyborg theory is certainly not without its share of criticism, the most pertinent one being that the cyborg theory neglects matter—flesh in its conceptualization “which is as biological as it is technological, both fleshy and wired.”¹⁵ But the critical importance of Haraway’s cyborg concept cannot be overstated.¹⁶ Haraway’s 1985 tract “A manifesto for cyborgs: Science, technology, and socialist feminism in the 1980s,” has since become a seminal work in the field of speculative posthuman materialism. Haraway’s “cyborg manifesto” is a creative exploration of the state of the female body at the indices of warfare, capitalism, technology, and feminism in the late twentieth century.¹⁷ As a creature of “social reality” as well as a “creature of fiction,” Haraway’s chimerical cyborg straddles the boundaries between materialism and fantasy offering the possibility of “restructuring” any “historical transformation.” Haraway’s cyborg body, with its marriage between flesh

and mechanical parts, self-replicates, self-regenerates, and refutes age and gender, consolidating ideologies and systems of power, remaining open to exploiting them for its own purposes. Unlike Haraway's cyborg who eventually loses her gender and subjectivity completely, Shakespeare's cyborg Cleopatra—poised as she is between the Galenic body and the Cartesian machine—never intends to lose her sex, sexuality, nor her ability to reproduce (replicate). Neither is Cleopatra-as-cyborg's flesh divested of the effects that ageing has upon a biotic system; although her "salad days" (1.5.73) are behind her, Cleopatra, the "blown rose" (3.13.39), embraces her wrinkles and greying hair and so uses mechanized "tools" only to ameliorate—not deny or negate—the changes to her menopausal body. Cleopatra is feared, not for her engineered cyborg body *per se*, but because she has taken control of her own body and is able to augment and retool it according to her own fleshly desires. It is Cleopatra's flesh in all its messy sexuality and voluptuousness that Caesar seeks to destroy because he can neither understand it nor control it. A fearful incarnation to the Romans, Cleopatra furnishes her mechanistic frame with a powerful flesh-and-blood sexuality in vital contrast to the "statue" (3.3.21) of "cold" Octavia (2.6.126).

In tandem with this kind of speculative body composed of flesh and machine is the acknowledgement that certain proto-menopausal uterine complaints had traditionally been dealt with via mechanical means. The uterine pathologies that would have accompanied proto-menopause, "precipitation" and "strangulation of the womb," are indicative of the sociocultural fears of an uncontrollable and uncontrolled organ literally slipping out of its confines, an embodiment of the woman who does not know her place; the other was a reinforcement of the suspicion that every woman was sexually incontinent, particularly in old age. "Precipitation of the womb," a debilitating condition experienced mostly by older women who had endured multiple pregnancies, was remedied by a device known as a "pessary." The pessary was inserted vaginally to put the womb back into place after it had prolapsed. Sometimes the prolapsed womb slipped completely out of the woman's body. The other uterine pathology, "strangulation of the womb," was a serious, sometimes, fatal condition in "widows, virgins, and nuns," caused by the blockage and stagnation of retained menses. The remedy for this complaint was for a woman to experience sexual orgasm, if not through a male partner, then with therapeutic masturbation aided by a phallic-shaped device commonly known as "dildo." Although the use and manufacture of these prophylactic

mechanical devices originated in the classical world, the continued usage and development of the dildo and pessary throughout the early modern period and beyond suggests that medical science was already considering how the ageing female body might be treated with mechanical innovation in addition to plant-based and chemical nostrums, purges and bloodletting. What marks these particular uterine pathologies as unique, is that their remedies are connected to simple tools that a woman herself could use, potentially without the presence of any male. This masculinist anxiety of the female taking charge of her own body is represented in the play by the Romans as the arbiters of Mechanical Theory's desire to measure, quantify, and constrain the unruly and unbound female body. This Roman desire for masculinist control of the female body is not only evident from *Antony and Cleopatra*'s mechanical language, but also becomes the project of territorial conquest, for to possess Egypt is to possess Cleopatra, the "lass unparalleled" (5.2.316). Thus, I draw a distinction between the "automaton" as a product of the Roman imagination and the "cyborg" as embodied by Cleopatra as a synecdochical extension of her land. The cyborg's strength is its adaptability and ambiguity, living only for pleasure. By contrast, the fleshless, sexless automaton is devoid of vitality and *jouissance*¹⁸ and cleaves only to a strict doctrine of physical and mathematical laws, and intractable mechanical principles, "the masculinist dream of reproduction."¹⁹ The genius of Cleopatra-as-Cyborg is that she fashions her own identity within the empyrean as well as within the mundane—she at once embodies both the prodigious goddess Isis as well as a panting gypsy hopping through the streets. She offers an insight into the secret world of the woman's boudoir where an intimate knowledge of both uterine prolapse and the need for clitoral orgasm could be achieved through simple, yet effective, mechanical means, the feminine mechanics of the private, the intimate, and the discreet. It's no wonder that Caesar and his men are obsessed with knowing what goes on in Cleopatra's private chambers. Cleopatra's cybernetic potential is to combine the pleasures of the flesh, however "waned" that flesh might be (2.1.21), with prosthetic "tools" by which she might collapse the phallically-inscribed binaries of gender, power, and sexual well-being.

MECHANICAL THEORY, MECHANICAL METAPHOR

Antony and Cleopatra's remarkable employment of mechanical language draws from the emergent science of Mechanical Theory—specifically the physics of mass, weight, and measurement as it defines the workings, bounded limitations, and potential of the human body. The New Science (as Mechanical Theory was also known) was concerned with the business of anatomy and dissection, as well as the mathematical principles of measurement, the physics of movement, and the importance of inductive reasoning and observation.²⁰ Within this discipline, one encounters how the female body and its inner workings begin being described and quantified using the metaphorical language of the mechanical instrument, a genesis that was to be fully realized within the Cartesian worldview. In terms of metaphor, the Cartesian conception of the elderly body likened it to a broken machine. The Mechanical Theory of the early modern period located its origins in the Atomist school of Leucippus of Miletus (fl. 400 BC) and Democritus of Abdera (c. 460 BC),²¹ culminating in the work of Francis Bacon (1561–1626), William Harvey (1578 – 1657), and, most importantly, René Descartes (1596–1650). *Antony and Cleopatra* was written in a year when tensions were still apparent between the fluid humoralism of Aristotle and Galen and the iatrochemistry of Paracelsus (1493–1541) on the one hand, and new and novel systems where the body and the cosmos became regarded as mechanized components of an increasingly inert microcosm. Coalescing with the work of René Descartes, spirit and matter, mind, and body occupied separate and distinct dichotomies of existence,²² where the body functioned as a regulated clock or machine:

Indeed, I am not mistaken; the human body is a clock, but immense and constructed with such ingenuity and skill that if a wheel whose function is to mark the seconds comes to a halt, that of the minutes turns and continues its course.²³

The Cartesian mechanical system with its new ontology of the human body demanded a new semiotics of metaphorical language to describe the body becoming analogous to a machine: “The body of a man ... is a kind of mechanism composed of and outfitted with bones, nerves, muscles, veins, blood and skin.”²⁴ Even though they wrote before Descartes, one can see this pre-Cartesian ontological quest for meaning within the work

of Andreas Vesalius (1514–1564), François Rousset (1533–1590), and William Gilbert (1544–1603). William Harvey (1578–1657) and Francis Bacon's work studying the body's physiology is notable in that both men employed the language of structural mechanics to explain the body's operations: moving away from the humoral fluidity of the Galenic *corpus*, they reconceived the body as a complex system of pumps, valves, hydraulics, and pulleys. Cartesian philosophy's penultimate argument posited that if the body wasn't "functioning" properly, it was due to a "breakdown" within a system of engineered perfection designed by God as the "Master Engineer." In 1628, William Harvey compared the beating heart and the circulation of blood "to what occurs in machines, in which, since one wheel moves another, all seems to move together."²⁵ The symbiosis between Antony and Cleopatra's bodies is frequently expressed in terms of the physics of attraction and repulsion. In his *Anatomia Comparata*, Francis Bacon criticized the failure of the anatomical discourse of his day for neglecting to inquire fully about the "diversities of the parts" of anatomy, "[not] the secrencies of the passages, and the seats or nestling of the humours,"²⁶ metaphors that sound remarkably uterocentric. In thinking of the human body as "nothing but a machine or statue made of earth,"²⁷ Descartes could only theorize that the body's humoral spirits of former Aristotelian models were pushed around by the heart, blood and arteries into the brain "of our machine" "like the bellows of an organ," and that these movements were "as naturall as the movements of a clock or other automaton." The place of the female reproductive body within this homogenous system, however, was problematic; a fact that even Descartes himself recognized and articulated.²⁸ In 1646, Descartes confessed, "The formation of all the parts of the human body...is something so difficult that I dare not undertake [to explain it] yet."²⁹ This ambiguity, a "gap" if you will, in Cartesian physiology meant that the female body, which failed to demonstrate uniform mechanistic behaviours, became the locus of Cartesian anxiety. This thinking led the female body with its failure to follow normalized patterns of mechanized function, to be considered the acme of "dysfunction," where any deviation from the male prototype was now imagined as a systemic fault.

The physiology of the female body metaphorically transitioned from where the "disease" of the humoral body was replaced with the notion of a "thing" that needed to be "fixed." The new Cartesian duality of mind and body allowed for the overwhelming of a Galenic womb with all its fluid mysteries and unique complexities. Instead, the womb could now

be conceptualized through purely mechanistic terms where it became an organ that resembled an inert structure; a room, cell, or portico housed within a regulated macro-structure. This demystification of the uterus allowed the organ to be isolated, analysed, and dissected as simply as a cog, lever, or system of pulleys within a greater bodily machine. Any attempt by the “faulty” womb to escape its boundaries—both physically and physiologically—meant that such a rupture of the “natural” order had to be remedied by surgical means.

“TO SET A BOURN”: RECKONING THE IMMEASURABLE WOMB

Before Descartes, the name most associated with significant departures from Aristotelian theory in the advancement of learning and science was Francis Bacon. It was Bacon, along with the likes of Copernicus (1473–1543), Kepler (1571–1630), Galileo (1564–1642), and Newton (1643–1727), whose findings made the concept of an Aristotelian cosmos “untenable,” thus paving the way for the advent of Cartesian Mechanical Philosophy.³⁰ In the mechanical universe, experimentation with newly invented scientific tools and instruments became an essential undertaking in order to explore this changing vision of the material nature of the cosmos. This novel reimagining of Nature contributed to the wealth of scientific instruments that had been invented by the conclusion of the seventeenth century: the microscope by Antoni van Leeuwenhoek (1632–1723); the telescope; the thermometer; the barometer; and the air pump amongst others. The nature of Baconian physics was such that it demanded acute scientific observation; the careful gathering of empirical data based upon accurate means of measurement. This same drive to measure and quantify the female body via mechanical means is present right from the start of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Cleopatra demands to know whether Antony’s love for her can be measured or “reckoned” (1.1.15); concurrently there are sustained fears of bodies that might “o’erflow the measure” (1.1.2). The “full Caesar” is a man “knowing all measures” (3.13.5), his own father Julius having similarly been driven to muse “of taking kingdoms in” (3.13.84). This notion of spatial dimension, borders, and physical control is reflective of the play’s obsession with being able to measure and quantify the material aspects of Cleopatra’s body as one that, not only generates immeasurable “lust” (1.1.10; 2.1.22; 3.6.61), but also personifies the land of Egypt itself (3.2.58).

To measure and scientifically “know” the material dimensions and qualities of the ageing female body is to control it: the dramatic tension in the play comes about because Cleopatra’s body is entirely unknowable, resistant to all known Roman epistemologies. Because her body vacillates between the boundaries of flesh and machine, transcending taxonomical distinctions as a marvel of nature, Cleopatra’s body is as unique as the crocodile: “it is shaped, sir, like itself” (2.7.410). As the incarnated “strange serpent” (2.7.24), Cleopatra moves with her own cybernetic self-propelling movement: “and moves with/Its own organs.” (2.7.42–43). Cleopatra’s cybernetic body is, to use Jonathan Sawday’s term, a “radically reconstituted body,”³¹ thwarting the Roman impetus to measure, constrain, and control such a body.

The cybernetic body is a body without limitations: with its potential for augmentation and material transformation, the proto-Cartesian body can grow to assume any proportions in physical space. Mythological cyborgs transcended the known limits of physical dimension, expanding to fill the world with gigantic proportions such as Talos, the bronze giant forged by the god Hephaestus, whose massive size allowed it to traverse an entire island thrice daily. Although forged out of metal, Talos’ nervous system was designed to be human, for its veins circulated a blood substitute—ichor.³² There is no female equivalent of Talos in classical mythology, yet Cleopatra alludes to the physically impressive dimensions of the gigantic cyborg when she recalls Antony’s grandeur and puissance. Biomechanically integrated with the Cyborg Mother, Antony becomes a veritable Colossus of Rhodes, so massive in stature that his legs can “bestride[e] the ocean” (5.2.83), his face reaching into the “heavens” (5.2.80), “realms and islands” falling like “plates dropped from his pocket” (5.2.83–93). This hyperbole underscores a form that defies the limits of known matter, a pre-Cartesian machine occupying material space in a whole new way.³³ Cleopatra’s embodied powers to “stand up peerless” (1.1.42) “past the size of dreaming” (5.2.97) is the inherent threat that the female reproductive body posed to the Cartesian worldview, which, as it prevailed, became increasingly concerned with how the female body might be mechanically controlled and manipulated, especially by male physicians.³⁴ Cleopatra’s body refuses to submit to those who would control and dictate her “being” and “becoming” (1.4.96).

Synecdochically identified as Egypt itself, Cleopatra’s “high pyramides” (5.2.61) conflate her body with that of a measuring device that is uniquely Egyptian, thus presenting the Romans with a puzzling challenge to their

ontological precepts. The historical Cleopatra's family, the Ptolemies, perfected geometry, the:

science of measuring both land and water, the use of weights...by the which all manner of engines...do depend...with the which, things of great weight, are very easily drawn and hoisted up.³⁵

As Carla Mazzio has stated, Cleopatra's mode of measurement and engineering and its connection to her land and family provides "a striking contrast to the limits of Roman "measure."³⁶ Egypt's measuring devices are essentially "foreign," demarcated as fluidly organic, sexually responsive, female in nature, and hence mysteriously unquantifiable:

... they take the flow o' th' Nile
 By certain scales i' th' pyramid. They know
 By th' height, the lowness, or the mean, if dearth
 Or foison follow. The higher Nilus swells,
 The more it promises; as it ebbs, the seedsman
 Upon the slime and ooze scatters his grain,
 And shortly comes to harvest. (2.7.17–23)

The "slime" and "ooze" of the Nile, measured by its "swell[ing]" tide-mark upon mathematical scales etched upon the pyramid, is symbolic of Cleopatra's womb: uterine fluid excesses denote when it is time for the "seedsman" to "scatter" his seminal fluid so that she might "come[s] to harvest" (2.7.23). This is reminiscent of Agrippa's earlier statement that the young Cleopatra was "ploughed" by Caesar and "cropped" (2.2.238) his offspring. Cleopatra's body becomes a mechanical device to measure her own, and, therefore, her land's fertility. Charmian's assertion that chastity or fecundity can be "read" in the body's machinery, in this case the secretions of an oily palm (1.2.51), finds common expression with the physics of the "o'erflowing Nilus" whose readings "presageth famine" (1.2.49) as well as with the Cartesian body's "pipes," "valves," "devices," and "springs" that regulate the body's other physiological processes "like the fountain-keeper who must be stationed at the tanks to which the fountain's pipes return."³⁷ Thus the hybridity of Cleopatra's humoral and mechanical body is persistently underscored in *Antony and Cleopatra* by a metaphorization that yokes sexual activity to pre-Cartesian physics. The mechanical metaphors describing the Cartesian body formed an easy coexistence with the early modern terminology of sexuality. The

terms used to describe both male and female genitalia, as well as sexual intercourse itself had always been notably mechanical: “tool,” “case,” “cut,” “yard,” and “prick.”³⁸ These pre-Cartesian metaphors of the body-as-machine helped to shape, influence, and change received wisdom about the female body’s sexual responsiveness and reproductive capabilities. Perhaps the most striking example of this metaphorization is the melding of Cleopatra’s body with her barge at Cydnus. Cleopatra’s golden barge is a feast for the senses: the sails release the olfactory delights of perfume, the “tissue, cloth of gold” is a tactile delight where “fancy outwork[s] nature,” and the silver oars “beat” the water to the “tune of flutes” in an aural ecstasy (2.2.198–224). But beyond the sensual spectacle, there lies a definite mechanical image. The fans, bellows, oars, flutes, and sails are aerial instruments that represent the hidden ventricles, arteries, ducts, and alveoli of the female body. Cleopatra is pictured supine and inert, surrounded by mythological attendants, especially Mermaids, Cupids, and Nereides (2.2.213–214) who would not look out of place on the kind of animatronic “nefs,” table utensils shaped like ships, created by Hans Schlottheim (1545–1625). The harmonious rhythm of the oars is matched by the beat of “divers-coloured fans” (2.2.213) whose billowing “wind” reminds one that Antony’s body had previously been metonymized as serving the same function to “become the bellows and the fan/To cool a gypsy’s lust” (1.1.10). That same air, being suffused with “strange invisible” perfume (2.2.222) and currents from the fans, together with “swell[ing]” “silken tackle” (2.2.219), oscillates and builds with its own kind of entropic force, “cast[ing]” out the city’s people and leaving Antony “whistling to th’ air” (2.2.223–228). With its metaphors of “swelling,” “beating,” “stroking,” “heating,” “glowing,” and “playing,” the diction here is decidedly sexual, climaxing in the statement that “what they undid did” (2.2.212). The sexualized Galenic states of orgasmic “coming” and humoral “becoming” in the play are married to corollary metaphors of rising and falling, extension and retraction, pumping, flowing, and transmuting. The catachresis of mechanical and sexual metaphors serves to explore the humoral female body as it enjoys its last throes of sexual *jouissance* prior to the coming of the full Cartesian body. Descartes’ body, divorced from organic differentiation, mimics the human: “I suppose the body to be nothing but a statue or machine made of earth, which God forms with the explicit intention of making it as much as possible like us.”³⁹ The Cartesian “nothing,” divested of sexual identity, a genderless “statue” or “machine,” is Octavia’s body

of “holy, cold, /and still conversation” (2.6.126–127) that “creeps” (3.3.18) without “life” (2.6.20), and is more “a statue than a breather” (3.3.21). Cleopatra embraces her ageing Galenic body for as long as possible, stubbornly remaining the organic sex-machine, rooted to the earth and still dreaming of “palat[ing]” the “dung” (5.2.7).

“IN THE LAP OF EGYPT”: MASTURBATION, STRANGULATION, AND PRECIPITATION OF THE WOMB

As Katherine Hayles has argued, the body is “the original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate.” The cyborg can utilize technologies and biotechnologies as “tools to recraft...bodies,” a crucial concern to all women who seek to control their physiological and physical destinies.⁴⁰ The proto-Cartesian cyborg loves her tools for these mechanistic implements allow her to extend bodily limitations without external invasion of the body proper. This applies to Roman invasion of Cleopatra’s land and body, but also the invasiveness of gynaecological violence meted out to the menopausal body in both the pre- and post-Cartesian eras. Though Antony mocks the decline in his lover’s ageing body, derisively noting that she was a “fragment” already when he met her (3.13.117), as well as now being a thing “blasted” (3.13.105), such taunts are ineffectual against Cleopatra as the Cyborg Mother for she readily accepts the inevitable waning of her flesh. Cleopatra’s somatic and sexualized experiences are those to be enjoyed by her ageing body: she embraces the “pinch” of a lover’s kiss (5.2.295–296), the “amorous pinches of Phoebus” upon a “black[ened]” body “wrinkled deep in time” (1.5.28–29). Cleopatra’s ageing body exists in a permanent state of “being” and “becoming”—but also “coming” in the sense of sexual orgasm, a slang expression that dates back to the early sixteenth century.⁴¹ Under the aegis of Galenic medicine, it was understood that ageing took a particularly harsh toll on the female body: as this study has shown, the equivalent menopausal state was primarily revealed as a series of pathologies. The final uterocentric pathologies of note connect the Galenic humoral body to those remedies requiring female orgasm. What makes these remedial cures unique is that they required the employment of mechanical tools to be effective: these pathologies were uterine prolapse or “precipitation of the womb,” and “strangulation of the womb” caused by the dangerous plethora of female “sperm.” Retained sperm and menses could only be purged through orgasm, so if intercourse with a male was not available, then women were

advised to practice therapeutic masturbation with the help of a midwife utilizing her fingers or a tool mimicking the phallus—a dildo.

For the proto-menopausal woman of the early modern era who was likely to have given birth multiple times over the course of her reproductive years, one of the most excruciating medical conditions she could suffer was uterine prolapse, or “precipitation of the Mother” as it was known.⁴² Uterine prolapse occurred in older women, a condition marked by the actual slippage of the womb into the vaginal cavity or even outside of the vulva itself. As the ligaments that surrounded the uterus weakened through childbirth or the ageing process, the result was that the uterus could drop into the cervical canal and, in some extreme cases, slip out of the vagina itself. In this sense, unlike the so-called “wandering womb,” uterine prolapse indicated a complete boundary slippage, the unruly organ escaping the confines of the body proper. The prolapsed womb is the literal embodiment of a proto-menopausal woman “o'er-flow[ing] the measure” (1.1.2). This slippage required that the errant organ be put back into its place, surgically excised, or bolstered via mechanical means. As a pathological condition uterine prolapse became one of the first medical complaints in gynecological history that might be treated via mechanical means: it was remedied with the use of a pessary, the earliest prosthetic device in recorded history. Taking its name from the Greek word “pessos,” meaning the “oval stone” of the kind used in games, pessaries were devices inserted into the vagina to manoeuvre the uterus into its rightful position and secure it. François Rousset (c.1535–c.1590) observed that a prolapsed womb resembled a “large wine gourd” hanging between the legs.⁴³ Pessaries were described as far back as the Ebers papyrus (1550 BC), and in the Kahun papyrus (c.1835 BC) they are used for “a woman [with] the falling of the womb.”⁴⁴ The famous obstetrician of Byzantium, Aetius of Amida (AD sixth century), argued in his *Tetrabiblos* that the causes of uterine prolapse were varied but it was a condition most experienced by women in old age.⁴⁵ Hippocrates described how a pessary resembling a tampon of astringent-soaked wool, or even half of a pomegranate soaked in wine, could be vaginally inserted.⁴⁶ Whilst the pessaries of the Egyptians, the Hippocratics, and Soranus consisted of mainly natural substances, Celsus (fl. 25 BC) wrote of pessaries engineered through mechanical means, forged from bronze, cone-shaped, complete with a circular plate from which a band could be attached and then tied around the body to keep it in situ (Fig. 6.2).⁴⁷ The surgeon Ambroise Paré (1510–1590) devised pessaries made of brass

and waxed cork; he attached waxed thread to facilitate easy removal.⁴⁸ Anointed with honey and laurel oil, some pessaries could be left in the womb in order to ease the removal of a stillborn fetus: “for even if there were a dead child in the womb, it would bring it out.”⁴⁹ When Shakespeare’s Cleopatra calls down a terrible curse to “smite” any future babies *in utero* (3.13.162–163), she summons up the mythos connected to her historical counterpart Cleopatra VII who, according to a Jewish tradition, conducted her own gynaecological research into embryology by dissecting her pregnant slaves.⁵⁰ The historical Cleopatra is also credited, through works such as the *Pessaria Cleopatrae*, the *Gynaecia Cleopatra*, and the *Kosmētikon of Cleopatra*, with the development and usage of the pessary for both herself and her sister Arsinoë.⁵¹ Her association with the pessary might simply be an interesting socio-historical coincidence, but it does indicate that in the early modern period, the name “Cleopatra” was still associated with surgical and prosthetic innovation. For François Rousset, the pessary was clearly an instrument of mechanical engineering as described in *The hysterotomotokie or Caesarian birth* (1581):

No treatment is as effective as the insertion of a pessary ...which is to prevent the house from coming out through the door...some might want to call it a valve, in analogy to that part of water pumps: one supports the uterus within the body, just as the other lifts water in the pump.⁵²

In this analogy, Rousset employs both domestic and aquatic engineering metaphors to describe the female body as both “house” and “door,” as well as the pessary acting as a “valve” within the “water pump” of the body proper. Rousset subsequently admitted that all he learned about pessary usage was based on research he conducted over many years interviewing women, yet, initially, he had blithely dismissed the ingenuity of this female invention: if “chance” had not stumbled upon it as a solution to this common female ailment, then surely a male physician, such as himself, must have been responsible for the pessary’s design. This is clearly a misogynistic assumption on Rousset’s part: he even wrote that numerous women confessed to him that they had “experimented” with pessary design and usage throughout the ages, hitherto keeping it secret from men.

Even within Shakespeare’s era, the classical belief persisted that for women to enjoy good “health,” female orgasm was crucial. “Health” in this context refers not just to successful conception, but also the

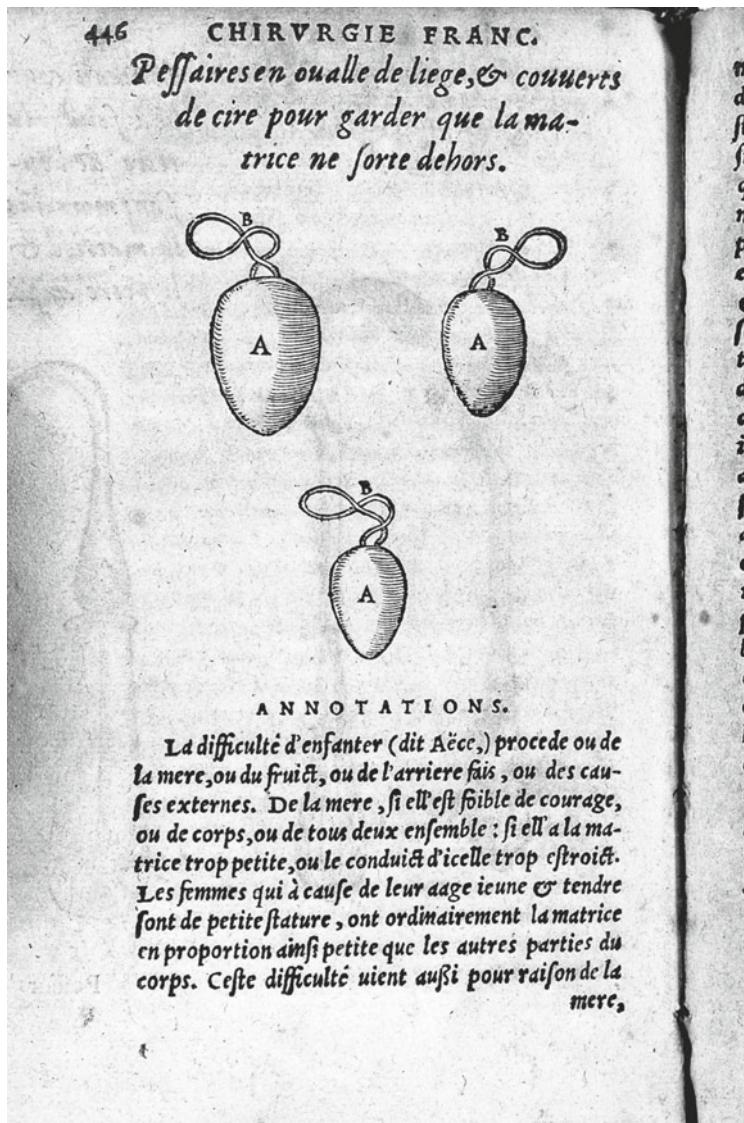


Fig. 6.2 Jacques Dalechamps (1513–1588), Pessaries from *Chirurgie françoise*. Lyons: G. Rouille, 1569. Courtesy of the Wellcome Collection, London

ability to purge the body of pent-up poisonous female “sperm,” the major contributing factor to the womb’s debilitating movement. If penetrative sex with a male wasn’t an option, women were expected to masturbate themselves or be masturbated to orgasm by another. Therapeutic masturbation or sexual intercourse were prescribed for both uterine prolapse, and for the uterine displacement known as “strangulation of the womb.” As uterine complaints, the aetiological differences between “suffocation” (*pnix*) and “strangulation” (*ankhō*) of the womb are often hard to gauge from early modern medical treatises.⁵³ Whilst *pnix* resulted in the complaint that came to be known as the “wandering womb,” *ankhō*-related words became understood, as Greek writings made their way through the Latin West and Arab world, as “strangulation.”⁵⁴ The subtle differences between the two pathologies comes down to cause and effect: in both, the womb was understood to create painful symptoms by “moving,” but the driving force between such movement was explained differently, even though the symptomology was near identical. The strangulated womb, according to natural philosophers such as Aetius of Amida (c. sixth cent.) and Paul of Aegina (c. seventh cent.), “moved” because the female body’s ventricles, veins, and organs were stifled by the womb’s retention of menses or female sperm. Noted midwife and author Jane Sharp (fl. 1650) wrote that even women who had no recourse to regular intercourse had to try to release this superfluous “spirit”; if not, it would prove detrimental to their very lives.⁵⁵ Symptoms of uterine strangulation ranged from physical weakness, frequent fainting, a moribund appearance, to suicidal impulses.⁵⁶ Galen identified the most vulnerable women as “widows, those who previously menstruated regularly, had been pregnant, were eager to have intercourse but were now deprived of this.”⁵⁷ Both Aetius and Paul of Aegina insisted that the condition affected the “ lascivious” and “those who use drugs to prevent conception.”⁵⁸ Cleopatra’s wistful command for mandragora (1.5.3), a multipurpose herb that could act as a soporific, cure for infertility, an emmenagogue, an abortifacient, and a stimulant “to provoke lechery,”⁵⁹ would be understood by some in Shakespeare’s audience to be amenable to Cleopatra’s lustful desires. The vigorous sex necessary to stay the symptoms of strangulation is a reminder that Antony is Cleopatra’s “great medicine” (1.5.36). It’s probable that given sociocultural and religious prohibitions for females to engage in extra-marital sex, masturbation was the most viable option for older women without spouses. Physicians left detailed instructions on how to conduct therapeutic masturbation via manual stimulation with fingers,

hands, or, more relevant to this chapter, unidentified “objects.” In his *On the Affected Places*, Galen relates how a midwife told him of a widow in middle age who, because she was suffering from retained seed, suffered painfully from her womb being “drawn up.”⁶⁰ The midwife advised the widow to make use of the “customary remedies” which caused the sensations of “pain and pleasure” and thus “much thick seed was expelled.”⁶¹ As a prophylactic measure, manual masturbation by a midwife remained the standard medical practice throughout the medieval period far into the early modern era.⁶²

Years before Descartes was attempting to align his theory with the ambiguities of the female *corpus* and its reproductive powers,⁶³ the female body was to become radically re-constituted with the discovery of a “new” organ—the clitoris. Standard illustrations of the female anatomy copied from Vesalius’ seminal work *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (1543) demonstrated a simplified awareness of the original Vesalian text by depicting the vagina as the inverse of the penis; this anatomical model was long-lived. The most pressing challenge of this model was that it failed to allow for any organ that did not correspond with the inverse symmetry of the male genitalia; hence, for a large portion of the sixteenth century, the clitoris was “invisible” to anatomists. Galen’s argument of the inverse symmetry of the female body could not logically sustain itself with evidence of the clitoris for there was no corresponding organ in the male anatomy. The “discovery” of the clitoris, an accomplishment claimed by both rival surgeons Realdo Columbo (1516–c.1559) in his *De re anatomica Venise* (1559), and Gabrieli Fallopius (1523–1562) in his *Observationes anatomicae* (1550) is, of course, a fallacy. Early Greek, Persia, and Arabic writers had long since identified it in their treatises.⁶⁴ In the Middle Ages, Guy de Chauliac (1300–1368) wrote about the womb having a “prive poynte [tentigo].” Charles Estienne (1504–1564) had described this “shameful member” in 1545, and Pietro d’Abano (c.1250–1316) had documented an “orifice near the pubis” which, when “rubbed,” would “bring [women] to orgasm.”⁶⁵ Realdo Columbo called the clitoris “the seat of woman’s delight.”⁶⁶ Columbo and Fallopius’ rivalry in claiming the clitoris as new anatomical territory, was an investment Elizabeth D. Harvey, argues, that became of paramount importance for as a pleasurable orgasm was needed for conception, then the clitoris “was held to be indispensable to reproduction.”⁶⁷ As English physician Helkiah Croke (1576–1648) stated in his *Microcosmographia* (1615):

[The clitoris] both stirs up lust that gives delight in copulation, for without this, the fair sex neither desire nuptial embraces nor have pleasure in them, nor conceive by them.⁶⁸

Johnson's 1634 translation of Ambroise Paré advised:

handling her secret parts...[so] that she may take fire...for so at length the wombe will strive and waxe fervent with a desire of casting forth its own seed.⁶⁹

By the time Jane Sharp's *The Midwives Book* was published in 1671, the known connection between clitoral stimulation, pleasure, and conception was common knowledge in both the vernacular and academic annals of medicine:

The Clitoris... makes women lustfull, and take delight in Copulation, and were it not for this they would have no desire nor delight, nor would they ever conceive.⁷⁰

The arrival of the clitoris presented new means to stimulate a woman to successfully orgasm without relying solely on vaginal intercourse. Michele Savonarola (1385–1468) elaborated upon this notion that whilst some women applied “lubricated fingers” to themselves, other women enjoyed therapeutic masturbation in the presence of one another: “There are some women who contrive to have intercourse with each other with an instrument similar to the male organ and they derive pleasure and benefit from this.”⁷¹ Writing in 1610, François Ranchin (1560–1641) alluded to the Galenic anecdote of the midwife masturbating a menopausal woman to orgasm and added the following detail:

From this grew the practice that most [women] use instruments skilfully hollowed out and similar in form to the male penis in order to provoke voluntary pollution and guard against hysterical symptoms.⁷²

When physicians talked of the possibility of releasing female seed through mechanical manipulation of the clitoris utilizing “instruments,” one might logically deduce that such an instrument was a prosthetic phallus or dildo. In material terms, though, the dildo, like the uterine pessary, was a functional mechanical *tool*. Dildos, *olibbos*, or *godemichés*, have circulated since ancient times.⁷³ The dildo's first recorded usage comes

to us via illustrations of women using them on red-figure vases from Greece in the early fifth century BC.⁷⁴ These phallic-shaped tools were designed to arouse sexual response but are most associated with use by females, either to pleasure themselves or to pleasure other women. Dildos were engineered from several different materials: wood, marble, leather, and even hollow glass designed to hold warm liquids.⁷⁵ In *The Winter's Tale* (1611), dildos are amongst the trinkets that the travelling salesman Autolycus provides for housewives (4.4.190–198). For the ageing woman, the dildo was a tool of singular therapeutic value and importance for stimulating orgasm. As a cybernetic prosthesis, the early modern dildo, freed from its later identity as the heteronormative Freudian phallus, becomes a tool whose functionality in healing, strengthening, and rejuvenating the menopausal body is based primarily on gynocentric sexual pleasure. The dildo prosthetic would be feared by the Romans, not only for its perceived usurpation of male domination in intercourse but also because the female orgasm, like the cyborg body of Cleopatra that experiences it, cannot be quantifiably “measured.” As Jeanne M. Hamming has argued, we still need a “post modern dildo,” one that would “confront the history of the phallus” as “the masculine order...a universal of power” and remake it as “a post gender, non-phallic signifier... as a prosthetic.”⁷⁶

The dildo was the provenance of the woman. The absence of the male from this sexual arena is clear: only female midwives could instrumentally deliver the orgasm. Apart from the physician Antonio Guaineri's (d.1440) claim that he personally “directed midwives,” there is scant evidence that the male physician himself would have been present during such treatment.⁷⁷ Even scholar Helen King reminds us that in Galen's meeting with the widow—the seminal historical account of therapeutic masturbation—the only thing Galen “met” with was the anecdotal story and not with the patient herself.⁷⁸ It appears, then, that therapeutic masturbation for the proto-menopausal woman transpired without the spectatorship of the male, a secrecy that contributed enormously to male anxiety about the dildo outside of its more obvious aspects of female usurpation of the phallus. Only men who had been allowed inside a harem or a brothel for “Egyptian bacchanals” (2.7.103) may ever have seen a dildo in use. There is an almost pornographic fascination that Caesar and his men have with finding out the salacious details of what transpires inside the inner sanctum of Cleopatra's court where, at “supper” (2.2.227), the rare invited male guest grows “fat with feasting” (2.6.66) and Antony

“is not more manlike/Than Cleopatra, nor the queen of Ptolemy/More womanly than he” (1.4.5–7). Roman fears are exacerbated by a phallocentric, heteronormative belief that any Eastern sexual practices emasculate the power of the phallus, an anxiety echoed in the rumour that Egypt’s war is managed by Cleopatra’s eunuchs and Ladies (3.7.12–14), and in the soldiers’ collective suspicions that they have been transformed into “women’s men” (3.7.70). Valerie Traub argues that the existence of dildos in the early modern period didn’t *per se* generate anxiety for the patriarchy, but that the cause for fear was when these tools were used as a substitute phallus, thus allowing a woman to usurp the sexual prerogative of the male.⁷⁹ Indeed, as an embodiment of the “tool” itself, both Antony and Cleopatra’s combined cybernetic body can function to give *both* phallic and clitoral pleasure beyond the sexual limitations of an ageing flesh-and-blood body: “when old robes are worn out, / there are members to make new” (1.2.163). Therapeutic masturbation necessary for ameliorating uterine complaints common to the ageing woman, female-to-female touch in order to generate orgasm, the use of “instruments” (dildos), and the exclusion of male physicians would all form to generate the social and cultural material out of which embodied female pleasure would remain highly suspect.

The interplay between pre-Cartesian mechanical philosophy and how it served to metonymize the body in a new epistemology cannot be extricated, however, from the cultural forces that still determined female pleasure to be predicated on the power and potency of the phallus. As all erotic “pleasure” in *Antony and Cleopatra* is centred “in the East” (2.4.38) in “the beds” (2.6.51), or, more pointedly in the “lap of Egypt’s widow” (2.1.37), then it is the metonymic “sword” that functions as the primary instrument of penetrative pleasure. But the binary between the penis and vagina—male “sword” and female “case” (1.2.165)—is fraught: as she is also the phallic “serpent of old Nile” (1.5.25) and often appears to be indistinguishable from Antony (1.2.77–78; 1.4.5–6), Cleopatra’s “lap” is once *penetrating* and well as *penetrated*. Cleopatra’s cybernetic body, quite apart from being a passive receptacle of male pleasure (as the men in the play would have her), is capable of Cartesian extension to penetrate the bodies of others by appropriating the “sword” of male sexual prerogative, by wielding a phallic dildo.

THE PERPETUAL SEX MACHINE: ISIS AND HER MECHANICAL PHALLUS ANTONY

The bawdy word play, punning, and double-entendre, always circle back in *Antony and Cleopatra* to female orgasm and to the pudenda. Such anxieties about the status of the clitoris compliment the already unstable ontology of the entire female reproductive system as a “no thing” or “nothing” as the pudenda had been traditionally named.⁸⁰ The defining qualities of Cleopatra’s sexual “be/comings” (1.3.97) are almost obsessively focused upon her “nothing”; her particular form of dissolution is inextricably bound with the “dying” of female orgasm. Witness Enobarbus’ summation:

Under a compelling occasion let women die. It were pity to cast them away for nothing, though between them and a great cause they should be-esteemed nothing. Cleopatra, catching but the least noise of this, dies instantly; I have seen her die twenty times upon far poorer moment. I do think there is mettle in death, which commits some loving act upon her, she hath such a celerity in dying. (1.2.137–144)

In a play where the Romans are obsessed with dividing, measuring, and subduing the land into discreet quantifiable units, Cleopatra’s orgasmic body with all its “gap[s]” (1.5.5; 2.2.228), resists the phallocentric ontology of the invader. The union of pre-Cartesian mechanical and erotic metaphors in *Antony and Cleopatra* seeks to define and elaborate upon the metonymic “nothing” of the Galenic pudenda: it is only once the “nothing” becomes a “thing” that it can become subject to mechanical laws. As mentioned, prior to the “discovery” of the clitoris,⁸¹ the Galenic tradition purported that the female reproductive organs were simply the inverse of the penis and testicles; the “nothing,” then, had been understood as the inverse of the “thing” (penis). As anatomy now had to contend with this addition of a “new” thing—the clitoris—the Galenic tautology fell apart, for this organ could no longer “become/The opposite of itself” (1.2.125–126). The essential nature of the clitoris its tautological “gaps” embodies the Cartesian notion that if “nature abhors a vacuum,”⁸² any void needed to be plugged via mechanical means to make the super-structure materially complete.⁸³ With the psychosomatic conception of the body-as-machine, the filling

of such gaps now held implications for how such a deficient, malfunctioning body might be retooled or recalibrated. The seminal moment in *Antony and Cleopatra* that opens up possibilities to consider Cleopatra's body through the physics of this pre-Cartesian epistemology comes with Enobarbus' anecdotal memory of when Cleopatra first met Antony at Cydnus:

...From the barge
 A strange invisible perfume hits the sense
 Of the adjacent wharfs. The city cast
 Her people out upon her; and Antony,
 Enthroned i' th' marketplace, did sit alone,
 Whistling to th' air; which, but for vacancy,
 Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too,
 And made a gap in nature. (2.2.221–228)

Enobarbus' comment that even the "air" had deserted the marketplace with the excited crowds to "gaze on Cleopatra too" and thus "made a gap in nature" (2.2.227–228) is fascinating. That the very "air" could be sucked out of a place seems to imply that, in the language of physics, a vacuum was created by the air's absence; on the other hand, it might imply that it is Cleopatra's physical presence elsewhere in space that generates this "gap" surrounding Antony's resting body. Because this absence, this space of the "no thing," is an embodied aspect of Cleopatra, Antony, as a mechanical tool of proto-Cartesian extension, fills those "gaps" by coupling with the Cyborg Mother to make her complete, for she "become[s]" everything and is "blessed when she is riggish" (2.2.246–247).

Even though much of the dramatic action is focused on Cleopatra's various "becomings" (1.3.97), Antony similarly strives to "be himself" (1.1.45) whilst increasingly presenting an unstable persona who "is not Antony" (1.1.57). Antony's masculine identity, struggling as it does with these various states of ontological dissolution, is contingent upon the display of proper masculine "properties" (1.1.58), symbolized in *Antony and Cleopatra* by bellicose phallic power or its inverse state of impotence, concretized in his "sword." When Cleopatra later tells Mardian that she can "take no pleasure/In aught a eunuch has" (1.5.9–10), it seems to establish phallocentrism as the true force for female sexual desire in *Antony and Cleopatra*, but there is a deeper complexity here

at work. Certainly, the play contains many bawdy jokes about the unsatisfactory nature of a “short” penis in the heterosexual act of love: Antony is mocked by Philo for “com[ing] too short of that great property” (1.1.58); Cleopatra jokes with her eunuch that even if a good “will (penis)” is shown, it might “come too short” (2.5.7–9). But this superficial mocking of phallic impotency, rather than comfortably falling under the aegis of heteronormative male standards of what constitutes masculinity and effeminacy, opens up tautological gaps whereby female sexual pleasure in *Antony and Cleopatra* comes, not from the dominance or even the undermining of the phallus, but by the *sharing* of that tool. Antony’s body functions as another prosthetic tool, an extension of Cleopatra’s proto-Cartesian body, “a mutual pair...in which I bind” (1.1.37–38), and again: “My heart was to thy rudder tied by th’ strings” (3.2.57). The sharing of the phallus initially generates a mutual sexual delight, a transcendent *jouissance* between the lovers.

If Antony serves as the Roman phallic power of *Antony and Cleopatra*, “The triple pillar of the world,” (1.1.12), then one has to consider how his fellow Romans judge Antony’s so-called transformation, for it is clear that the Romans perceive a detrimental change to his masculine potency once he conjoins with Cleopatra’s body. Before the lovers’ first triumphant entrance, Demetrius and Philo inform the audience that Antony functions as a mere plaything for Cleopatra’s sexual fancies. It is understood that Cleopatra has usurped the strength of Antony’s “sword” and has “transformed” his body into a “fool”/ tool designed only as a woman’s sex toy (1.1.12–13). Antony is hyperbolically reported to be so filled with “lust” (1.1.1–10; 2.1.38) that where once his very “captain’s heart” had, in the heat of the battlefield, “burst / The buckles on his breast” (1.1.7–8), his “dotage” for the “tawny front[ed]” queen (1.1.6) now “o’erflows the measure” (1.1.2) of his body. For the Romans, Antony’s phallic sword is the metonymic extension of the male “propert[ied]” body (1.1.58), the sharing of which would signify a dishonourable emasculation. The Romans would be horrified to know that as part of their ludic and erotic play, Cleopatra has literally appropriated his sword, Philippian (2.5.22). This is the tyranny of “Roman thought” (1.2.82): Antony is pulled between the polarities of embodying Mars, bearer of the bellicose Roman phallus, and lustng to merge with Cleopatra’s cyborg body. When his identity is not fixed, Antony dissolves, dislimns, and discandys. As a man “transformed” (1.1.12), and “not Antony” (1.2.59), the aspersion cast by Antony’s fellow Romans is that,

as a tool engineered to cool or heat Cleopatra's lust, Antony is shamefully operating as the "unseminared" (1.5.11) eunuchs do. With the stage direction "*Enter Antony, Cleopatra... Eunuchs fan[ning her]*," an additional aspect of sexual vigour, gender fluidity, and emasculation becomes a part of that mechanical dimension, a fact that often causes confusion between both Romans and Egyptians as to who is who when Antony and Cleopatra enter a scene (1.2.78–79). In Roman perception, Antony has been neutered by the role he plays for Cleopatra, a "strumpet's fool" (1.1.13). Such masculine failures are interpreted through mechanical imagery: Antony has become "the bellows and the fan/To cool a gypsy's lust" (1.1.9–10), a proto-Cartesian metonymy of the body, "our machine," with "heart and arteries...as being like the bellows of an organ which pushes air into wind-chests."⁸⁴ As a "bellows" would function as a tool to generate heat, a "fan" functions in a reverse manner to cool. Shakespeare's mixed metaphor is repeated in the image of the fans used by the boy-Cupids on Cleopatra's barge: "With divers-coloured fans, whose wind did seem/To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool, /And what they undid did" (2.2.210–212). As part of the *jouissance* of Cleopatra's "becomings" (1.3.97), these sets of opposing physical states (heating/cooling, doing/undoing, flowing/overflowing) function to underscore, not only the instability of matter, but also how Cleopatra's presence acts as a catalyst for change: contrary states of being can concurrently exist within her body for in her "everything becomes" (1.1.49) and she "makes hungry where/Most she satisfies" (2.2.245). As her prosthetic "tool," Antony's body as a pseudo-dildo replicates the female therapeutic orgasm in the same mechanical manner associated with the physics of the bellows and fan: first Cleopatra's body would be heated in sexual arousal until the release of seed, and then would cool to a homeostatic temperature post-orgasm. Cleopatra's physicality "fills spaces much greater than all those we have imagined,"⁸⁵ a hyperbolic embodiment of a sexualized body that can encompass "Eternity" (1.3.35–36). As a cybernetic "thing," Cleopatra's body encompasses flesh and machine, phallus and clitoris, crocodile and cyborg. This is the true species hybridity of the cyborg which "appears in myth precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed."⁸⁶ These boundary transgressions can trace their origins to the proto-menopausal Galenic flesh capable of breeding unnatural monsters. Miscegenation inevitably leads back to the cyborg: the hybrid woman imagined as a self-contained vessel

generating children, reptiles, or serpents beyond menopause. The ultimate in cyborg replication would be the artificial womb existing outside of the female body proper, a vessel that could independently engender “a race of heaven” (1.3.38).

“A CISTERNS FOR SCALED SNAKES”: THE SELF-REPLICATING WOMB

According to Haraway, medicine is full of cyborgs, “couplings between organism and machine,” where technological advancements dream of a radical reworking of sexual reproduction for “cyborg replication is uncoupled from organic reproduction.” The cyborg is capable of populating worlds that are simultaneously “ambiguously natural and crafted.” Cleopatra-as-cyborg can retool the phallus for her own needs and desires—a phallus stripped of Roman masculinist dreams of conquest and patrilineal reproduction. Thus, Cleopatra’s desire for a “new heaven and earth” (1.1.17) and the conception of a new “race of heaven” (1.3.37) can remain both a fantasy and a reality, a Cyborg Mother’s dream beyond the harsh material, reproductive, and biomedical limitations of proto-menopausal flesh.

It was in his *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, the mediaeval scholar Macrobius (ca. AD 354–430) personified Nature as the female figure of *Natura artifex*. Like his predecessor Hugh St Victor (AD 1096–1141), Macrobius’ *Natura artifex* appears as a coiner, minting human beings using techniques similar to making money: “Once the seed has been deposited in the mint where man is coined [the uterus], *Natura artifex* first begins to work her skill upon it.”⁸⁷ The image of Nature-as-Engineer appears in an early medieval illustration that depicts *Natura artifex* at a forge gleefully hammering out replicate babies that pile at her feet.⁸⁸ The proto-Cartesian womb anticipates a futuristic cybernetic world where infants might be mass-manufactured in vast quantities, a nightmarish assembly line of prototypical forms made famous by the mind of Aldous Huxley (1894–1963) in his novel that alludes to Shakespeare, *Brave New World* (1932).⁸⁹

For Paracelsus (1493–1541), the womb was the prototypical form for all earthly and spiritual life, “Thus life in the world is like life in the matrix ... For the matrix is the Little World and has in it all kinds of heaven and earth.”⁹⁰ He compared the uterus to a “house” that contained “all forms” of existence. The mother’s influence upon her gestating fetus was

likened to a potter shaping clay, “who creates and forms out of it what he wants and what he pleases.” So powerful was a woman’s imagination, she could “spontaneously generate” life in her womb without the aid of semen, as menstrual fluid alone could engender, through the process of “putrefaction,” all kinds of creatures.⁹¹ This process of putrefaction, according to Paracelsian expert Walter Pagel (1898–1983), was believed responsible for the transmutation of all things, their shape, colour, form, and properties.⁹² The middle-aged womb was especially adept at self-generating monsters through putrefaction such as the Basilisk.⁹³ The mother was the Master Engineer, creating and replicating life in her womb at will, but also shaping its form and purpose according to her imagination. In one of his more outlandish theories, Paracelsus maintained that the female womb could be bypassed altogether: a miniature human, or “homunculus,” could be grown from man’s sperm in any artificial uterus:

Let a man’s semen putrefy in a sealed vessel for forty days at the highest possible temperature – until some movement can be seen. It will then resemble a human shape, but be transparent and without a “body.” It now needs feeding daily with ... human blood, for forty weeks, after which it will develop into a real human child with all its limbs, only smaller.⁹⁴

The growth medium for such a “little man” was earth or dung, a belief that aligns the womb’s microclimate with the play’s references to “dung[y]” soil (5.2.7). Like proto-menopausal menses, soil was matter also believed to spontaneously generate manifold creatures: “Your serpent of Egypt is bred now of your mud / by the operation of your sun; so is your crocodile” (2.7.26–27).⁹⁵ Cleopatra’s womb is both mechanistically and metaphorically transformed into the Paracelsian sealed vessel of “a cistern for scaled snakes” (2.5.94–95). As the “serpent of Old Nile” (1.5.25), Cyborg Cleopatra embodies spontaneous generation in a completely novel way: the potential for “peopling” (2.1.78) a new race can be engendered from fly-blown “abhorrent” flesh (5.2.60), “slime and ooze” (2.7.22), and mechanical matter forged from “fire and air” (5.2.289).

Familiarity with Plutarch’s *De Iside et Osiride* would mean that Shakespeare would connect the body of Cleopatra in her incarnation as Isis, together with spontaneous generation:

Just as they view the Nile as the efflux of Osiris, they hold the earth to be the body of Isis, and they do not mean the whole earth, but as much as the Nile goes over, fructifying it and uniting with it.”⁹⁶

Plutarch notes that Isis “rejoices” when she is “pregnant” with “effluxues and likenesses” and “teems with procreations.” She is also called “the place and receptacle of creation,” linking her with the “Nurse” of Plato’s *Timaeus*.⁹⁷ As Isis, the hybrid cyborg Cleopatra is the Aristotelian “mother matter” of all reproduction, the spiritual and biological force of all creation, self-contained and physically animated by an almost Cartesian motion: “For they [the Egyptians] often give Isis the name Athena, which has some such meaning as this: *I came from myself*, which indicates self-impelled movement.” The Isis mythos also explores female sexuality and reproductive power specifically through the phallic tool. According to Plutarch, when her husband Osiris was torn apart, Isis gathered the severed members and reconstructed them but was unable to find Osiris’ phallus. Isis engineered her own phallic prosthesis and kept it under her complete control. The goddess no longer needed the fleshy organ of her husband’s regenerative potency: by manufacturing her own phallus, the “Queen of Heaven” had grafted male power onto her own body proper, a true preoccupation of the cyborg’s desire to both augment and extend the body’s possibilities. Isis’ prosthetic phallic “tool,” used by the female body to restore male potency and generativity, is concurrent with how Cleopatra as the Cyborg Mother absorbs Antony’s power into her own being. By forming a closed circuitry between her body and that of Antony’s, Cleopatra, like her patron Isis, augments, strengthens, and transforms the power and potentiality of her own being.

The fantasy of male parthenogenesis, especially using earth as a growth or shaping medium, dates back to Jewish legends of the Golem.⁹⁸ It is interesting how surrogate wombs are envisioned in medical history: cisterns, flasks, alembics, or, in the case of the Trotula writings of the thirteenth century, upturned bottles.⁹⁹ The cyborg is potentially able to mass-manufacture foetuses “born” from either a uterus resembling that of the biological female, or from any engineered vessel. Notions of spontaneous generation transition seamlessly into the conceptual proto-Cartesian self-replicating cyborg. In her dealings with the Soothsayer, the mage who can “read” fortunes in “nature’s infinite book of secrecy” (1.2.10–11), Charmian hopes that she might “have a child at fifty, to whom Herod/Of Jewry may do homage” (1.2.29–30). This is an

interesting twist on the Marian womb of the Immaculate Conception: this imagined womb might replicate the miraculous, but also transcend biological age. In cyborg replication, the cessation of reproduction that would accompany proto-menopause and old age would be immaterial—much like current reproductive technology where a perimenopausal woman can freeze her eggs for future implantation into a surrogate womb. Charmian's assertion that chastity or fecundity can be "read" in the body's machinery, in this case the secretions of an oily palm (1.2.51), thus finds common expression with the physics of the "o'erflowing Nilus" whose readings "presageth famine" (1.2.49) as well as with the Cartesian body's "pipes," "valves," "devices," and "springs" that regulate the body's other physiological processes "like the fountain-keeper who must be stationed at the tanks to which the fountain's pipes return."¹⁰⁰ Charmian subsequently asks the Soothsayer to put a number on the "boys and wenches" (1.2.37) that her womb might potentially bear. The mage's response is predictably cryptic: "If every one of your wishes had a womb, /And fertile every wish, a million" (1.2.38–39). The Soothsayer's esoteric prognostications, though perhaps mocking Charmian's desire, suggest that Nature's "secre[t]" (1.2.10) reproductive powers might be entirely capable of producing offspring numbering into the millions. The exchange between the Soothsayer and Cleopatra's handmaids becomes eerily prescient of the possibilities of a reproductive technology that, taken to its extreme, might manufacture an assembly line of cloned infants, a cybernetic *Natura artifex*. Such reproductive technology would be anathema to Roman thought, destroying the belief in patrilineal "purity" of stock.¹⁰¹ Caesar is repulsed by Antony's desire to make "an unlawful" race (3.6.7) of children with a foreign woman who displays her children born of multiple fathers (including his own), so shamelessly in public (3.6.3–11). The Cyborg Mother, who has no need of the Aristotelian male as the provider of form or seed, using her Cartesian "will," might shape her hybrid offspring according to desire, at any age: "Cyborg replication is uncoupled from organic reproduction," and cyborg "sex" is not about reproduction.¹⁰²

SILENCING THE PROTO-MENOPAUSAL DREAM: DESCARTES KILLS THE CYBORG

The failure at the Battle of Actium is marked as the ultimate humiliation for Cleopatra and Antony's shared *jouissance*; it is here that the breakdown of the malfunctioning Cyborg Mother begins. Shakespeare's experiment with creating a proto-Cartesian entity that might celebrate the ageing female body, where body and machine might "melt" together (1.1.33), begins to fail and falter. What is interesting about this failure, however, is that Cleopatra is as much at fault for the dissolution of the visionary Cyborg Mother as Antony is. Antony's failure to commit fully to becoming the phallic extension of the Mother is because he cannot reject Roman masculinity. His former connection to Cleopatra is ultimately tarnished by masculine shame: "See how I convey my shame out of thine eyes" (3.2.52). Canidius laments that "Had our general/Been what he knew himself, it had gone well" (3.10.26–27), and similarly Scarus blames Cleopatra's "magic" (3.10.19) for Antony's disastrous decision to flee the battle, an act of "shame" and "violat[tion]" to "experience, manhood. honour" (3.10.22–24). Antony's men view his actions as "ignorance," having been "kissed away" (3.1.7) by an effeminacy that has turned upon itself in an act of auto-violation that "wound[s]" (3.10.36) and "sickens" (3.10.17). Ironically, it is Cleopatra's turn to the Roman world that presages her own demise. Cleopatra's cybernetic Egyptian body is not built for war: its power rested in its indifference to the political world of men—save in what physical pleasure might be derived from games of statesmanship. Ambassadors and Caesars exist only to be seduced, whipped, or lulled into an intoxicated stupor. Shakespeare has shown us all along that when proto-menopausal women such as Volumnia and Tamora deal with politics, it ends badly for them (and their men). Recognizing that, at one time, his "heart" had been completely "annexed" to Cleopatra's body (4.14.17), Antony suddenly views Cleopatra's political machinations and ambitions as a divisive act of betrayal that severs his body from hers: "she has robbed me of my sword" (4.14.23). In anticipation of the Roman conquest of Egypt, Cleopatra realizes that she has failed: the once-powerful cyborg body and the mysteries of the female "nothing" have been rendered impotent:

The crown o' th' earth doth melt. My lord!
 O, withered is the garland of the war;
 The soldier's pole is fallen. Young boys and girls
 Are level now with men. The odds is gone,
 And there is nothing left remarkable
 Beneath the visiting moon. (4.15.64–69)

The mechanical breakdown of the bodily integrity of the Cyborg Mother is ushered in by similar disruptions in the laws of physics as time itself undergoes a strange suspension. The cessation of life as the ending of chronological time had been foretold by his soldiers' assertion that "the star is fall'n" (4.14.107) and the "time is at his period" (4.14.108). As the advent of Caesar's triumph draws apace, Antony metaphorically describes his oncoming doom: "the long day's task is done/And we must sleep" (4.14.35–36). This apocalyptic image of the ultimate fallibility of the physical laws of time and space becomes an embodied experience within the *petit mort* of female orgasm: not only is her "lamp ... spent" (4.15.85) and "the bright day is done" on this "declining day" (5.2.232; 44), but Cleopatra "rush[es] into the secret house of death" (4.15.82) with multiple verbal ejaculations of "com[ing]"¹⁰³ and "dy[ing]" that match those of Antony's.

In his own form of sexualized "dying," Antony brings to a climax the end to a body already beginning to mechanically fail and materially disembody: "now thy captain is/Even such a body: here I am Antony, / Yet cannot hold this visible shape." (4.14.13–14). His dissolving body, "As water is in water" (4.14.11) becomes, like the "indistinct" air, a "sign[s]" of "black vesper's pageants" (4.14.6–7). Enobarbus, now deeming his master to be "leaky" like a woman (3.13.65), scoffs to hear of the folly of Antony's challenge to Caesar: "When valour preys on reason, /It eats the sword it fights with" (3.13.199–200). The bellicose phallic tool can never really be re-appropriated by Antony in service to the Cyborg Mother, its final usage as the weapon that "once/Quartered the world" (4.14.57–58) can only herald the "penetrative shame" (4.14.75) of a tragicomic suicide. After his believed loss of Cleopatra, Antony "condemn[s]" himself for his "lack" (4.14.59), his own "case" (4.14.59) failing to replace their shared phallus, his flesh becoming "mangled" (4.2.28): "Come then, —for a wound I must be cured. /Draw that thy honest sword" (4.14.77–78). As he tells Eros that "The rack dislimns" (4.14.10), one can also hear it as "the rack dis-limbs," a disturbing image that suggests a

body on a torture device, mechanically dismembered as a cruel inversion of Antony's opening wish that "There's not a minute of our lives should stretch/Without some pleasure now" (1.1.48–49). Antony's fatal "stroke" (4.14.91), the "break[ing] of so great a thing" (5.1.14–15), signals the moment when the shared phallus falls off completely from the Cyborg Mother. This disengagement is captured through mechanical metaphors: "breaking," "cracking," "failing," "falling," and "dislimning." The castoff Antony is now re-configured as the lifeless automaton, a "man of steel" (4.4.33): "I am full of lead" (3.11.72). In the imagined nightmare of Caesar's eventual conquest of her land and body, Cleopatra clearly sees a terrible inversion of her own power: "mechanic slaves" (5.2.210) with the tools of their craft, erect a stage, where she and her women will be "uplift[ed]...to the view" (5.2.212): "Rather make/My country's high pyramides my gibbet/And hang me up in chains" (5.2.55–62). The mixed metaphors of so many "heavy sight[s]" (4.15.42), draws attention to the fact that the mechanics of hanging are public displays of ownership, conquest, and physical pain, and, when specifically applied to the female body, shame. This image forms a counterview to a triumphant Caesar who will "hang" his "scutcheons" and "signs of conquest" in any "place" that will please him (5.2. 135–136). *Antony and Cleopatra*'s mechanical metaphors serve to underscore just how radical a proto-Cartesian vision of the proto-menopausal female *could* be, but by the play's conclusion, the anxieties generated by the cyborg's shared mechanical phallus as an extension of the unknowable, unmeasurable, and ageless female body are too much to bear:

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
 Her infinite variety. Other women cloy
 The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry
 Where most she satisfies. (2.3. 245–248)

The Roman quest to measure Cleopatra's body, culminates in the complete destruction of her "wonderful" cybernetic body and all connected to it—including Antony. As Caesar tells Cleopatra, "the injuries you did us," are "written in our flesh" (5.2.119–120). To heal those wounds, Roman medicine will herald the return to patriarchal stability, thus ushering in the eventual Cartesian "time of universal peace" (4.6.5) where the body, as Dalia Judovitz defines it, "no longer references

the reality of the lived body as an embodied entity but rather the certitude of a mathematical system that schematises the body...an artificial, mechanical one.”¹⁰⁴ In this new world, the “paltry” Caesar can never dream of “palat[ing]” the fecund, female “dung” of the Galenic past (5.2.7). The Cyborg Mother’s transgressions will see her body forcibly transformed back into the cold, mechanistic Roman automaton, stripped of flesh and the mysteries of womanhood. Cleopatra, like Gertrude before her, is the anti-Hermione of *The Winter’s Tale*.¹⁰⁵ Hermione is the statue revealed to be a woman—a reverse transformation of Gertrude and Cleopatra. Hermione’s menopausal body is rewarded with vitalism because of proven sexual fidelity and (presumed) sexual abstinence. Paulina, also, the “mankind witch” (2.3.67), is the proto-menopausal widow recompensed with a new husband, but not before her garrulous tongue has been silenced by threat (5.3.135–146). Now satiated with regular sexual intercourse, presumably Paulina and Hermione’s other synecdochical “mouths”—their proto-menopausal wombs—would be naturally “fed” and silenced. Preparing us for her ultimate fleshly apotheosis, Hermione first appears as the pre-Cartesian automaton to Antigonus in a nightmarish form, a figure Freud would have recognized as an “uncanny” robot¹⁰⁶:

...To me comes a creature,
Sometimes her head on one side, some another;
I never saw a vessel of like sorrow,
So fill’d and so becoming: she...thrice bowed before me,
And, gasping to begin some speech, her eyes
Became two spouts.... (3.3.19–26)¹⁰⁷

Eventually reverse-engineered by artifice and art back into a flesh-and-blood woman, Hermione’s “wrinkled” (5.3.29) statue commanded to “be stone no more” (5.3.99), leads Leontes to wish that such a magically engineered “marvel” (5.3.100) might become as “lawful as eating” (5.3.111)—again, a reference to the satiated hungry womb rewarded by patriarchal subservience. A return to the patriarchal world restores patrilinear bloodlines through the promise of Perdita’s future offspring. There is no such reward for Cleopatra: knowing that she is fated to become Caesar’s automaton, Cleopatra decides to end her life on her own terms. This suicidal act, though, in “the high Roman fashion” (4.15.91), is only committed out of necessity, for Cleopatra cannot abide to carry on living

knowing that Caesar intends to display her body as a “puppet” in “th’ posture of a whore” (5.2.55; 221). When the “pole is fall’ n” (4.16.67), the sexual game of *jouissance* is over: the flesh can no longer offer the same possibilities it once did for the ageing female.

Shakespeare mourns the death of his Cleopatra more than any other of his ageing female creations. Not only is her suicide on full display but Cleopatra is given the entire last act in which to stage manage it. In the wake of a Roman triumph, Cleopatra casts off all vestiges of the gendered body, one subject to physical pain, digestion, and excretion, together with the menstrual cycles of the “terrene moon” (3.13.154; 4.15.69; 5.2.241), in order to become elemental spirit *sans* matter: “I am fire and air; my other elements/I give to baser life” (5.2.289–290). Becoming “fire and air” is not a triumphant ascension beyond death: it is Cleopatra’s recognition that her earthly body is about to become stripped of the dungy “earth” of flesh and the bodily tidal fluids of humorous “water.” Cleopatra realizes that, upon death, her body will only assume the mechanical shape of “woman,” a product of the “fire” of the furnace and forge, the “air” of pneumatic instrumentation.

The final death scene replicates the erotic play of Cleopatra’s bedroom, for the text clearly states that she dies, not on a throne as in traditional theatrical stagings, but in a “bed” (5.2.354).¹⁰⁸ In waiting for the worm’s “joy[ful]” (5.2.278) kiss to activate its deadly poison, Cleopatra bestows the “last warmth” of her own lips upon Charmian and Iras. In adjusting Cleopatra’s skewed crown after her mistress’ death, Charmian considers her final act of love as being a prelude to the “immortal longings” (5.2.280) of eternal *jouissance*: “I’ll mend it, and then play” (5.2.317). When the guard asks Charmian, “Is this well done?” (5.2.323), she affirms, “it is well done” (5.2.324): “playing” and “doing” constitute a sexualized reminder of the *petit mort* of female orgasm, a “perfom[ance]” (5.2.329) that the Romans comprehend as a “dreaded act” (5.2.329). The same flesh that was once “pinch[ed] black” by Phoebus’ amorous attentions (1.5.28), and “wrinkled deep in time,” (1.5.29) now waits for complete mechanical transformation of matter. In her final moments, Cleopatra casts off the erotic, biological, and physiological embodiment that had made her “a lass unparalleled” (5.2.314) to embrace the future sterile, sexless, and ageless Cartesian body of the obdurate automaton:

My resolution’s placed, and I have nothing

Of woman in me. Now from head to foot
 I am marble constant; now the fleeting moon
 No planet of mine. (5.2.239–242)

The Cartesian body, replete with its absolute split between “body” and “mind,” was to herald the death of the Galenic, humoral flesh that had, for centuries, constituted woman. Shakespeare was historically well-placed to bear witness to these nascent changes and perhaps be influenced by them enough to inform his powerful creation of Cleopatra: what is true is that his final tableau of Cleopatra’s lifeless cadaver, posed like a resting automaton, anticipates the complete mechanization and medicalization of the female body of the post-Cartesian future. By the end of the seventeenth century, Cartesian mechanics had come to rule Nature herself, dictating reproduction through metaphors of the machine. Robert Boyle (1627–1691) went so far as to suggest that Nature regenerated like an indifferent robot, each new form having been already manufactured within the greater Mother Machine like nesting Russian dolls:

The frame of the world [is]... a Great Pregnant Automaton, like a Woman with Twins in her Womb, or a Ship furnish’d with pumps... [and]is such an Engine as comprises, or consists of, several lesser engines.”¹⁰⁹

In our own mechanized age, Cartesian conceptualization has ushered in a universal perception of the menopausal body as a faulty and obsolete machine. Although the early modern womb’s pathologies were originally diagnosed via Aristo-Galenic aetiology, the coming of the Cartesian body did not ameliorate perceptions of the menopausal body in subsequent centuries. Instead, Cartesian ontology considered not just the uterus as problematic, but transformed the entire female into a dysfunctional *corpus* needing to be remedially fixed through standardized medical means. The Cartesian legacy as written upon the female body has witnessed the uterus become subject to the “marble constant” (5.2.241) coldness of the surgeon’s knife, the onslaught of the operations of dissection, hysterectomy, clinical abortion, *in vitro* implantation, sterilization, and routine caesarian section. The “longings” (5.2.281) that every woman of the twenty-first-century harbours about her own body mirror the potentialities embodied by the cyborg: the desire to take complete control of her own body, her sexuality, her reproductive health at every life stage. Like Cleopatra, the cyborg body never stops fantasizing about the possibilities

of new worlds of technology and bioengineering “past the size of dreaming” (5.2.98). The Cyborg Mother is freed from those “Roman” pre- and post-Cartesian psychoses, those “stakes in the border war” of the body where “the territories of production, reproduction, and imagination”¹¹⁰ have justified and facilitated Western science, ethics, and bio-politics. In the world of proto-Cartesian possibilities, the fantastical era captured by Shakespeare’s imagination at a particular moment in the history of the female body, the fertility, flow, mysteries, and ambiguities that once defined the Galenic body might have been reimagined, recalibrated and retooled. The cyborg body is not inviolate: it is a body that still experiences the ageing that comes with being an animate bio-organism. But, as a body, it is one that could be upgraded with new tools and prosthetics used *for* and not *against* the body proper. The cybernetic body might be augmented, healed, and fortified to meet the challenges of menopausal ageing, not to conquer nature, but to embrace its fallibilities in the spirit of *jouissance* that should accompany menopause and ageing.

NOTES

1. William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, The Oxford Shakespeare, Oxford World Classics, ed. Michael Neill (London: Oxford University Press, 1994).
2. It is only in recent history that the menopause has been reclassified as a positive, “natural” occurrence and not an illness or a sign of decrepitude. See Emily Martin.
3. Emily Martin, “Medical Metaphors of Women’s Bodies: Menstruation and Menopause,” *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*, ed. Katie Conboy et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 43.
4. Hannah Baader and Ittai Weinryb, “On Efficacy and Historical Interpretation,” *Representations* 133 (Winter 2016), 15.
5. Jonathan Sawday, *Engines of the Imagination: Renaissance Culture and the Rise of the Machine* (London: Routledge, 2007), 205.
6. E.R. Truitt, *Medieval Robots: Mechanism, Magic, Nature, and Art* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 48.
7. Silvio A. Bedini, “The Role of Automata in the History of Technology,” *Technology and Culture* 5, no. 4 (Winter 1964), 51.
8. Ibid., 24.
9. Gaukroger, 60.

10. Kevin LaGrandeur, *Androids and Intelligent Networks in Early Modern Literature and Culture: Artificial Slaves* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 2–3.
11. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999), 277–278.
12. Rayna Jones, “Archaic Man Meets a Marvellous Automaton: Posthumanism, Social Robots, Archetypes,” *Analytical Psychology* 62, no. 3 (2017), 340.
13. Important critical post-humanist scholars of recent years who consider an “embodied and embedded subjectivity” (Braidotti, 49) in biotechnologically mediated bodies include: Rosi Braidotti, Karen Barad, Elizabeth Groz, Lorraine Daston, Luciana Parisi, Peter-Paul Verbeek, N. Katherine Hayles.
14. Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003) 3; 89.
15. Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Nature: Science, Environment and the Material Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 7.
16. Margaret Grebowicz and Helen Merrick, *Beyond the Cyborg: Adventures with Donna Haraway* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).
17. Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1991), 84; 84; 85; 152; 3.
18. I borrow the term *jouissance* from the psychoanalytic tradition of Jacques Lacan (1901–1981) but base my own definition more squarely in the definition offered by Luce Irigaray (1930–). *Jouissance* is the sexual and feminine joy that comes from “the space of the other,” a shared and equally liberating sexuality where a woman does not have to sacrifice herself to the power of the *phallus*: “It could be described as the moment of knowing oneself...at the same time knowing being an “I” especially because of the presence of others who share this space” (191). See Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).
19. Haraway, 152.
20. Stephen Gaukroger, *The Collapse of Mechanism and the Rise of Stability: Science and the Shaping of Melancholy, 1680–1760*, 60, www.oxfordscholarship.com.
21. Stephen F. Mason, *A History of the Sciences* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 32.
22. Jacques Bos, “The Rise and Decline of Character,” *History of the Human Sciences* 22, no. 3 (2009), 39.
23. *Traité de l'Homme* qtd. in Fritjof Capra, “The New Physics as a Model for a New Medicine,” *Social Biological Structure* 1 (1978), 72.
24. René Descartes, *Meditations*, trans. A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999), 96–97.

25. William Harvey qtd. in Adriana Cavarero, *Stately Bodies: Literature, Philosophy, and the Question of Gender*, trans. Robert de Lucca and Deanna Shemek (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 168.
26. Francis Bacon, *Francis Bacon, The Major Works: The Advancement of Learning*, ed. Brian Vickers (London: Penguin Books, 2008) bk. 2, 211.
27. René Descartes, *The World and the Treatise on Man*, trans. John Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), AT XI, 120; 104; 108.
28. Justin E.H. Smith, ed., *The Problem of Animal Generation in Early Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
29. Vincent Aucante, "Descartes' Experimental Method and the Generation of Animals," *The Problem of Animal Generation in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Justin E.H. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 66.
30. Edward Grant, *A History of Natural Philosophy: From the Ancient World to the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 283.
31. Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1996), 29.
32. See Apollonius' depiction of Talos in his *Argonautica*.
33. René Descartes, *The World and the Treatise on Man*, trans. John Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), ch.4, 86.
34. Allison Muri, *The Enlightenment Cyborg: A History of Communications and Control in the Human Machine, 1660–1830* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 221–225.
35. Richard Benese, *The Boke of Measuryng Land*, ed. Thomas Paynell (London: Thomas Coldwell, c.1565), sig. A4r-v.
36. Carla Mazzio, "Circling the Square: Geometry, Masculinity, and the Norm of Antony and Cleopatra," *Staged Normality in Shakespeare's England*, ed. R. Loughnane and E. Semple (London: Palgrave, 2019), 52.
37. Descartes, *Meditations*, XI: 130–132; 101.
38. Valerie Traub, *Thinking Sex with the Early Moderns* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 207.
39. René Descartes, *Meditations*, trans. A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999), 1: 99.
40. Haraway, 102.
41. The *OED* records the first unambiguous use in 1604.
42. Keith T. Downing, "Uterine Prolapse: From Antiquity to Today," *Obstetrics and Gynecology International*, 2012, 11.
43. François Rousset, *The Hysterotomotokie or Caesarian Birth*, trans. Ronald M. Cyr, 1581 ed. (London: RCOG Press, 2010), 79.
44. Downing, 11.

45. Dimitrios P. Lazarus et al., “Surgical Disease of the Womb According to Aetius of Amida (6th Century A.D.),” *World Journal of Surgery* 33 (2009), 1310.
46. Sheetle M. Shah et al., “The History and Evolution of Pessaries for Pelvic Organ Prolapse,” *International Urogynecologist Journal* 17 (2006), 171.
47. Celsus qtd. in Shah et al., 171.
48. Downing, 2.
49. John M. Riddle, *Contraception and Abortion from the Ancient World to the Renaissance* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), 137.
50. Rebecca Flemming, “Women, Writing and Medicine in the Classical World,” *The Classical Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (May 2007), note 269.
51. Ibid., 276.
52. Rousset, *pt. 4*, 94–96.
53. Helen King traces the nuanced distinctions between these similar complaints and their respective medical names back to their Greek origins and notes that Hippocrates was very careful to distinguish between the symptoms and causes of uterine *pñix* from those of *ankhô*. See Chapter 4 of *Hippocrates’ Woman: Reading the female body in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1998).
54. King, 80.
55. Sharp, Jane. *The Midwives Book* (1671) (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1985), 324.
56. See, for example, Jean Fernel’s description in *On the Hidden Causes of Things: Forms, Souls, and Occult Diseases in Renaissance Medicine* (Leiden, NL: BRILL, 2004).
57. Galen, 6.5; K8.41.7, qtd. in King 232, *Hippocrates’ Woman*.
58. King, 236, *Hippocrates’ Woman*.
59. Jennifer Evans, “Gentle Purges Corrected with Hot Spices, Whether They Work Or Not, Do Vehemently Provoke Venery’: Menstrual Provocation and Procreation in Early Modern England,” *Social History of Medicine* 25, no. 1 (February 2012), 2–19.
60. Galen, *On the Affected Parts. Translation from the Greek*, trans. R.E. Siegel (Basel: Karger, 1976), bk.VI, ch. V.
61. Galen, qtd. in Helen King, “Galen and the widow: towards a history of therapeutic masturbation in ancient gynaecology,” *Journal on Gender Studies in Antiquity* 1 (2011), 218.
62. It was advocated, for instance, by Constantine the African (c.1020–1087), the medieval Trotula manuscript, Arnald of Villanova (1240–1311), and John of Gaddesden (1280–1361). Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, trans. Matthew Adamson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 174.
63. Aucante, 66.

64. Mark D. Stringer and Ines Becker, "Colombo and the Clitoris," *European Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Reproductive Biology* 151 (2010), 132.
65. Stringer et al., 132.
66. Valerie Traub, "The Psychomorphology of the Clitoris," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 2, no. 1–2 (1995), 91.
67. Elizabeth D. Harvey, "Anatomies of Rapture: Clitoral Politics/Medical Blazons," *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society* 27, no. 2 (2001), 321.
68. Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrocosmographia*, 1615 ed., 238, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>
69. Traub, "The Psychomorphology," 889.
70. Sharp, 44.
71. Michele Savonarola, *Practica medicinae: sive de egritudinibus*, 1497 ed., <http://digitale-sammlungen.de>.
72. François Ranchin qtd. in King, "Galen and the widow," 236.
73. Jacqueline Murray, "Twice Marginal and Twice Invisible: Lesbians in the Middle Ages," *A Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*, ed. Vern L. Bullough and James A. Brundage (London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1996), 199.
74. John Younger, ed., *Sex in the Ancient World from A to Z* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2006), 58.
75. Mels Van Driel, *With the Hand: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 65.
76. Jeanne E. Hamming, "Dildonics, Dykes and the Detachable Masculine," *The European Journal of Women's Studies* 8, no. 3 (2001), 330–331.
77. Katharine Park, *Secrets of Women: Gender, Generation, and the Origins of Human Dissection* (New York: Zone Books, 2010), 101.
78. King, "Galen and the widow," 222.
79. Valerie Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 44; 194.
80. William C. Carroll, "The Virgin Not: Language and Sexuality in Shakespeare," *Shakespeare Survey* 46 (1993), 110.
81. Gabrieles Fallopius, *Observationes anatomicae ad Petrum Mannum*, 1562 ed., <https://www.proquest.com/eebo>.
82. Descartes, *The World*, ch.4, 130–132.
83. Louise Noble, "A Mythography of Water: Hydraulic Engineering and the Imagination," Howard Marchitello and Evelyn Tribble, eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of Early Modern Literature and Science* (London: Palgrave Macmillan Limited, 2017), 43.
84. Descartes, *The World*, AT. XI. 119; 104.
85. Ibid., VI, 90.
86. Haraway, 2010, 86; 83.
87. qtd. in Truitt, 45.

88. Jean de Meun, *La Roman de la rose*, c. 1519.
89. In Huxley's new world order, all babies were "decanted" in glass "wombs."
90. Jolande Jacobi, ed., *Paracelsus: Selected Writings*, trans. Norbert Guterman (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), 99; 106.
91. The spontaneous generation of creatures as well as the generation of the Basilisk from menstrual blood is explored in Chapters 2 and 3.
92. Walter Pagel, 117.
93. Cf. Chapter 2.
94. *De Natura Rerum*, Lib. I., qtd.in Pagel, 117.
95. See also (1.2.191–193).
96. Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, trans. John Gwyn Griffiths (London: University of Wales Press, 1970), Bk. 38 177; Bk.18 145; Bk. 53 204; Bk. 56 209; Bk. 62 217.
97. Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Harold Tarrant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 49 A.
98. For a history of the Golem see Elizabeth Roberts Baer, *Golem Redux: From Prague to Post-Holocaust Fiction* (Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2012).
99. Trotula, *Medieval Woman's Guide to Health: The First English Gynecological Handbook*, trans. Beryl Rowland (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1981).
100. Descartes, *Meditations*, XI: 130–132; 101.
101. Cf. Chapter 3.
102. Haraway, 150; 86.
103. See the following lines: (4.15.38–39; 4.15.91; 5.2.286) and (4.15.20; 4.15.44; 4.15.57; 5.2.70; 5.2.286).
104. Dalia Judovitz, *Body in Theory: Histories of Cultural Materialism* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 88; 89.
105. As this book focuses on menopausal women in Shakespeare's great tragedies, my treatment of Hermione here is intentionally cursory.
106. In his seminal treatise on "The Uncanny" ("Das Unheimliche"), Sigmund Freud identified the appearance and motions of the automaton as being psychically disturbing. The "Uncanny" (1919), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, tr., ed., rev. James Strachey (London, 1971), XV.
107. William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, ed. J.H.P. Pafford, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Routledge, 1988).
108. Apart from the order given by Caesar to "take up her bed," Plutarch reported that Cleopatra was found "stark dead, laid upon a bed of gold," Sir Thomas North, trans., Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (1579), qtd. in The Oxford Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, 359.

109. Robert Boyle, “A Free Enquiry into the Vulgarly Receiv’d Notion of Nature (1685),” *The Works of Robert Boyle. Electronic Edition*. Vol. 10, ed. M. Hunter and E. Davis (Charlottesville, Va.: Interlex Corp., 2003), 469–470.
110. Haraway, 150.



CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

THE HAG'S ENDURING LEGACY: THE MENOPAUSAL WOMAN TODAY

It is apt that Cleopatra dies mid-sentence, torn between worlds and existences as the “lass unparalleled” (5.2.316), the older woman who, in death, will be immortalized as a colossus or the mythological goddess Isis. For, of course, Cleopatra’s transition into death, the literal moment of her ultimate “becoming” (1.3.96), is an essential paradox: to “stay” (5.2.314) in the world would mean ageing, yes, but also recognizing a lost youth, the end of an era, with “salad days” (1.5.74) already a distant memory. To “rush into” death (5.1.85), however, is again a suspension of the life force, an act of immortalization where the celebrated lovers never get old, forever “clip[ped]” (5.2.358) in each other’s arms as when they first met at Cydnus (5.2.229). *Menopause* is aptly named for it also is a suspension of time, a brief biological moment in the life of a female, a liminal sociocultural borderland. As contemporary descendants of Cleopatra, we do not share her certainties of “becoming,” for menopause’s arrival only bestows an ignorance of what comes next: where do we “fit”? What is our power and position (or lack thereof)? What is our use beyond babies, domestic care and reproductive sexuality? Shakespeare was grappling with many of these same concerns when he created the charismatic ageing characters of Gertrude, Volumnia, Tamora, Lady

Macbeth, and Cleopatra. “Proto-menopause,” as I have termed Shakespeare’s creative endeavour, is evidenced by the many latent anxieties that begin as pathologized uterocentric expressions that ripple outwards from the plays themselves to encompass larger sociocultural concerns about the place of the ageing woman within early modern culture. Shakespeare’s embodied proto-menopausal anxieties are articulated, explored, and reinforced through various literary stylings and theatrical techniques, embracing allusions to the older woman derived from the world of art, folklore, mythology, medicine, and classical and Renaissance doctrinal texts. Unfortunately, for much of Shakespeare’s lifetime and beyond, there is a great dearth of information from the historical record about the older woman, especially notable is the absence of her own voice regarding this important life stage.

The relative “invisibility” of the early modern proto-menopausal woman is one that has myriad implications for today’s twenty-first-century woman. Much as the concerns taken to anoint, modify with diet and bed rest, purge with clysters and bloodletting, perfume with odiferous smoke, apply pessaries and leeches, bind and “frighten” the ageing body with hot irons have disappeared, so, too, has the care and attention taken to ensure reproductive and mental health in the contemporary menopausal woman. If the older woman in the United Kingdom today hails from a socially and economically deprived region, for the first time in living memory her life expectancy has fallen to below that of her male peers—a reduction of as much as twenty years when compared to that of her wealthier sisters.¹ In leaving behind the mysteries of its historical Galenic and Hippocratic identity, the uterus, as with the rest of the biosocial female body, has become subject to the Cartesian worldview, where the bodily machine still remains prototypically “male” and the womb a mere component part. In fact, as Emily Martin points out, all the metaphors associated with menopause in modern medical texts conceptualize the body as a machine that has “broken down,” “worn out,” or is “obsolete.”² As such, not only does the menopausal womb suffer in Western conception as a defunct and worn-out mechanism, but it is also part of a larger commercialized medical system which continues to underfund research into pregnancy, breast cancer, uterine cancer, endometriosis, and many other female health concerns. The Galenic body, therefore, shouldn’t be mocked; although strange and alien to contemporary medical thought, nonetheless, it once concerned itself with the unique mysteries of female anatomy whereas today medical studies continue to be predicated on the

needs of the universal male body.³ More esoteric aspects of Galenic and Paracelsian praxis, however, can still find their historical tracings in treatment options for the contemporary menopausal woman. Women are still encouraged to consume plants such as yam, evening primrose, and black cohosh as homeopathic treatments, wear so-called “menopause magnets” in their underwear, and are treated with a variety of synthetic hormones, many derived from horses’ urine.⁴ Cancerous tumours and cysts as well as excessive uterine bleeding were recognized by the early moderns and subject to intensive treatment. Today, the decision to treat menopausal growths regardless of their severity usually involves a complete hysterectomy followed by a chemically induced menopause.⁵ A hysterectomy is a far more dangerous, risky and debilitating operation than mastectomy even though the former surgical procedure is viewed much more as a “routine” operation than the latter.⁶ A “faulty” menopausal uterus is simply cut out and tossed away with cold, clinical indifference: all of the attendant mysteries, concerns, and debates that surrounded the early modern womb have vanished, and contemporary medical literature confirms that each menopausal body remains a psychosocial body “[that]has been largely ignored by research.”⁷

If I end this study on a presentist note then it is only to reiterate just to what extent Shakespeare was willing to engage with the ageing female body over four hundred years ago, and how much that same body, though shaped by vastly different sociocultural, medical, and historical forces, still evokes an attitude of disgust, anxiety, suspicion, cruelty, indifference, sarcasm, and derision.⁸ For Shakespeare’s contemporaries, the anxiety generated by the older woman’s body functioned as a means to question the power and usefulness of a post-reproductive body, always tapping into atavistic fears of a disordered body in flux whose biotic, humoral processes made it akin to the monstrous, the demonic, the unpredictable. These concerns were exacerbated by the notion that the older womb was naturally pathological, and often the source of disease, contagion, and miscegenation.

Shakespeare’s project to explore the ageing woman’s lot is a doughty one if the complexities of her theatrical character are a reflection of that creative endeavour. Shakespeare’s older females cannot be reduced to mere archetypal representations of Crone, Hag, or Lusty Widow: to be aware of these archetypes and using them to inform the creative process is not the same as replication or simple unmediated transference onto the stage. What is remarkable is Shakespeare’s willingness to

engage with a creative process that, because it is informed by such a rich knowledge of how the body was shaped by diverse sociocultural forces, results in characters who, whilst they acknowledge the archetypes of the ageing woman, manage to transcend them. Such depth of thought ensures that Shakespeare's older female characters are complex, multi-faceted creations whose conceptual "bodies"—based on biotic bodies with their material composition of humoral fluids, internal microclimates, rational spirits, "ecologies of passions,"⁹ vegetable and animal matter, soil and stone, mechanical prostheses, seeds of disease, and sexually-appetitive organs—remain memorable even within an external climate of fear and suspicion. Although Shakespeare tries these ageing female characters within the tragic arena, offering them only the eventualities of violent death or premature silencing, one cannot assume that this represents a subconscious wish-fulfilment or transpires to facilitate an ordered, focused dramatic resolution for the tragic male protagonist; nor has it to do with disempowerment, punishment, or, by contrast, a subversive desire to grant agency and individuation. If the composite character is modelled on the ambiguities and anxieties embodied by the proto-menopausal woman in early modern society at large, then logic dictates that there can be no straightforward tragic resolution for this imagined body, rather it results in a series of non-resolutions to what is essentially an unresolvable dilemma: the proto-menopausal body and what to do with it.

For early modern scholars of the body, Shakespeare's great proto-menopausal women afford us the chance to confront how much ongoing contemporary medical, social, and cultural ambiguities about the ageing woman's phenomenological experience of menopause are not uniquely apportioned to our particular time and place. Such a confrontation with the historical and literary record might elucidate our commonalities rather than our differences across the ages, thus precluding any and all attempts at silencing today's menopausal "unruly woman."

NOTES

1. September 29, 2022. *The Guardian*.
2. Emily Martin, *The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 43.
3. Anna Moore, "Why Does Medicine Treat Women Like Men?" *The Guardian*, May 24, 2020.
4. Melissa K. Melby and Michelle Lampl, "Menopause, A Biocultural Perspective," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 40 (2011), 54. As most H.R.T.

medications are manufactured from pregnant mare's urine, there is a strange parallel here with Antony drinking "horse's stale" after his battle at Modena (*A and C*,1.4.62).

5. *Ibid.*
6. Germaine Greer, *The Change: Women, Aging, and the Menopause* (London: Bloomsbury Books, 2018), 56.
7. *Ibid.* Melby et al., 63.
8. Since I began this research over ten years ago, it is true that social attitudes towards menopause are slowly changing, not the least of which is the sudden interest in engaging with menopause in the media and business world.
9. The term is Gail Kern Paster's, see *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

INDEX

A

- abortifacient, 261
Abulcasis (AD 936–1013), 69
accelerated, 117, 121, 131, 133, 145
Achilles, 83
Actaeon, 178, 181
Adelman, Janet, 69, 100, 102, 107, 234, 241
adenomyosis. *See* blood
Aetius of Amida (AD 6th cent.), 258, 261, 283
ageing, 25–28, 69, 71, 72, 74–76, 78, 82, 85, 88, 89, 91, 101, 248, 251, 254, 257, 258, 265, 274, 278, 280, 287, 288
 early modern definitions of, 25–28
agriculture, 109, 113
aion, 134, 136, 145
alcohol, 222, 231, 232
Alexander of Aphrodisias (circa. AD 198–211), 98, 214
allegory, 109, 110. *See also*
 Anatomica, Father Time, Fortune, Mother Nature, Nature, Revenge, Strife, Time
ambition, 196, 223
amenorrhea, 17, 28, 29, 31, 50, 58, 61. *See also* blood
amour férinus, 110
Anatomica, 109
Anatomia, 113
Anglicus, Gilbertus (1180–1250), 79
animal, 116, 121–123, 131, 153, 154, 156–159, 163–166, 169–175, 177–183, 185, 187
animatronic, 246, 256
ankhō, 261, 283. *See also*
 strangulation of the womb
Antony, 252, 254, 257, 261, 264, 266–268, 272–276, 282
Antony and Cleopatra, 243, 251, 253, 255, 265–267, 269, 276, 285
Apollodorus (2nd century BC), 94
Apollodorus (fl.2 BC), 113
Aquinas, Thomas (AD 1225–1274), 80, 121
Aristotelian, 157, 253, 273

- Aristotle, 149, 150
 Aristotle (384–322 BC), 19, 115, 128, 135
 Arnald of Villanova, 283
 Artemis, 164, 184
 Astraea, 115, 141, 142
 Atomist school, 251
 autofascination, 98
 automatons, 246. *See also* pre-Cartesian automaton, Roman automaton
- B**
 baby(ies), 217, 227, 259, 270. *See also* children
 Bacon, Francis (1561–1626), 117, 251, 252
 Bakhtin, Mikhail (1895–1975), 123
 barge, 256, 267, 269
 Barnes, Barnabe (AD 1569?–1609), 84
 Basilisk, 76, 77, 80, 82, 83, 86, 90, 91, 94, 214
 Basil of Caesarea (AD 330–379)
On Envy, 211
 bastard, 127, 129, 133, 141, 144
 bear, 154, 158, 161, 164, 172, 173, 175, 183, 186
 becoming, 254, 256, 257, 274, 275, 277. *See also* coming
 bellows, 252, 256, 269
 Bertruccio, Niccoló (d.1347), 78
 bewitched, 81
 Bidloo, Godefridi, 113
 biotic, 249
 blood, 11, 14, 18, 20, 43, 49, 57, 71, 72, 74, 80, 81, 84, 86, 88, 94, 95, 99, 154, 156–158, 161–163, 169, 170, 172, 173, 181–183, 185, 187, 201, 203, 206, 208, 211, 221, 223, 227, 229, 233
 plethora, 206
 bloodletting, 157, 158, 161, 164, 169, 171, 173, 182, 187
 body, 49, 67–69, 71–73, 75, 76, 78–80, 82, 84, 86–88, 90–92, 95, 96, 98, 99, 101, 246, 248, 252, 255, 256, 258, 259, 261, 262, 264–268, 271, 274–276, 278, 279
 body-by-proxy, 157, 163, 164, 183, 185
 body politic, 158, 183, 185, 186
 botanical, 117, 121, 122, 124–128, 132, 135, 141, 143, 145
 boundary, 254, 258, 269
 breastfeeding, 162, 164, 170, 228. *See also* milk
 breath, 76, 77
 Bright, Timothie (1551?–1615), 206, 209, 210, 213, 218–221, 224, 232, 236–239, 241
A Treatise of Melancholie (1586), 206
 Bullman, Hans of Nuremberg (d.1535), 246
 Burton, Robert (1577–1640), 74, 103, 105, 176, 209, 218–222, 231, 232, 235, 237–241
- C**
 Caesar, 249, 250, 253, 255, 264, 273, 275–277
 Callisto, 184
 Callot, Jacques (1592–1635), 195
 cannibalism, 175, 187
auto-cannibalism, 175
 cannibalization, 196
 Carter, Sarah, 88, 105
 Cartesian, 244, 251, 254–257, 265, 267, 272, 276, 278, 279, 288
catharsis, 14, 48
 cauldron, 206, 217, 226, 231
 Celsus, 258, 283

- Ceres, 109, 135
- Cesaire Ripa's *Iconologia* (1603), 110
- Cesalpino, Andrea (1519–1603), 122
- Chatry, Columba, 67–69, 83
- children, 113, 115, 117, 118, 120, 122, 127, 129, 131, 133, 137, 138, 143, 144, 146, 212, 270, 273
- chronos*, 117, 134–136, 145
- chthonic deities, 113. *See also* Fury(ies)
- Clark, Stuart, 213
- classical, 288
- Cleopatra, 4, 15, 48, 243, 246, 248, 252, 255, 257, 259, 261, 264, 266–268, 270, 271, 273–277, 279, 282, 285, 287, 288
- clitoris, 262, 263, 266, 269, 284
- Cockatrice, 76, 77, 80, 81, 83, 90, 94, 103
- Columbo, Realdo (1516–1559?), 262
- Columella (AD 4–70), 127
- coming, 243, 256, 257, 259
- conception, 116–118, 120, 122, 124, 128, 135, 145
- Constantine the African (c.1020–1087), 283
- consumption, 231
- Coriolanus* (1609), 38, 50
- Crooke, Helkiah (1576–1648), 169, 189–191, 262, 284
- cyborg, 248, 257, 264, 268, 270, 272, 276, 279. *See also* Cyborg Mother, cybernetic, proto-Cartesian cyborg
- Cyborg Mother, 244, 254, 257, 267, 272–275, 277, 280
- D**
- d'Abano, Pietro (c.1250–1316), 262
- Dante (1265–1321), 196
- Purgatorio*, 196
- d'Arezzo, Restoro (dates unknown, thirteenth century), 126
- Dawson, Lesel, 176, 185, 192, 193
- death, 110, 123, 126, 134, 135, 137, 143, 145, 148
- De Caelo*, 135, 150
- De fabrica*, 153, 154. *See also* De humani corporis fabrica
- de Gordon, Bernard, 78, 104
- De humanis corporis fabrica, 153
- De Iside et Osiride*, 271, 285
- della Mirandola, Pico (1463–1494), 121
- della Porta, Giambattista (AD 1535–1615), 81, 119
- del Rio, Martin (1558–1608), 230
- Democritus of Abdera (c. 420 B.C.), 251
- depression, 16, 17, 38, 39, 63
- Descartes, René (1596–1650), 251
- desiccating, 71, 84
- devil and demons, 208, 213
- familiars, 227
- succubus, 230. *See also* imps
- Devil, the, 208, 213, 228
- Devouring Mother, 76, 94, 170, 175
- diabolical forces, 213
- Diana, 115, 142, 164, 178
- dildo, 263, 265, 269
- Dionis, Pierre (1643–1718), 118
- Dionysus, 126
- disease, 71, 75, 79, 81, 93
- dog, 85, 87, 95, 166, 169, 178, 187
- mastiff, 166
- Donne, John (AD 1572–1631), 84, 104
- Dorothy Durant (1622), case of, 228
- Douglas, Mary (1921–2007), 185
- drying, 71, 72, 80, 89. *See also* dessicating
- dung, 271, 277

E

- early modern, 288, 289
 Elizabeth I, 118
 Elizabeth Tudor (1533–1603), 36
 emmenagogue, 33, 62, 169, 261
 Empedocles (c.490 BC–430), 121
 Empusae, 84
 environment, the. *See* macrocosm
Envy, 195, 196, 199, 201, 206, 211–214, 217–219, 221, 237, 239. *See also* *Invidia; Passions*
 Estienne, Charles (1504–1564), 262
Euripides' Hecuba, 87
 Evil Eye, 83, 101, 107
 eyes, 76–82, 84, 86–88, 90, 94, 97–99, 101

F

- Fallopian, Gabrielis (1523–1562), 262, 284
 false conceptions, 119
 fans, 256, 269
 fascination, 77, 80–82, 98, 213, 225, 239
 Father Time, 113
 Feerick, Jean, 122, 148
 female anatomy, 288
 Fernel, Jean (1497–1558), 119, 161
 fertility, 255, 280
 fetus, 259
 Ficino, Marsilio (1433–1499), 110
 fits of the Mother, 71
 flaming witch, 245
 flesh, 69, 71–73, 75, 90, 93, 95, 99, 101, 246, 248, 254, 269, 271, 275–278
 fluids, 74, 76, 80, 81, 93, 99, 156, 157, 162, 163, 184
 Fontana, Giovanni, 245, 246
 foodstuffs, 213, 214, 226, 227, 229, 230

Forman, Simon (1552–1611), 75, 118

- Fortune, 113, 128, 133, 135, 141, 142. *See also* allegory
 Foster, Charles, 153, 188
 Freind, John (1675–1728), 169
 Fudge, Erica, 156, 157
 Fury(ies), 90, 113, 115, 139, 141, 142

Furor Uterinus, 71

G

- Galen, 71, 116, 159–161, 189. *See also* Galenic
 Galenic, 25, 48, 60, 72, 89, 288. *See also* Galen
 Galen of Pergamum (AD 129–c. 216), 22, 159
 gaps, 252, 266–268
 Garencières, Theophilus (AD 1610–1680), 67
 gas, poisonous, 200
 generate, 265, 271
 generation, 272, 285
 Gerard, John (1545–1612), 129
 Gertrude, 4, 25, 27, 32, 37, 48, 49, 287
 gestation, 122, 131, 136, 145
 Gheyn II, Jacques De (1564–1629), 195
 Gilbert, William (1544–1603), 252
 Giotto (?–1337), 196
 Girard, René (1923 – 2015), 184
 Golem, 246, 272
Gorboduc (1561), 85
 Gorgon, 76, 83, 86, 94, 95, 214
 Graeae, the, 94
 grafting, 124, 127, 128, 131
 greedy womb, 77
 Guaineri, Antonio (d.1440), 264
 Guillemeau, Jacques (1550?–1613), 118, 170

- Guy de Chauliac (1300–1368), 262
- Gyer, Nicholas (fl. 1590's), 211
- gynecological, 258. *See also* gynecology
- H**
- Hag, 80
- Hamlet*, 21, 25, 27, 37, 44, 48, 69, 71–76, 82, 83, 85, 89–93, 95, 96, 98–101
- Haraway, Donna J., 248, 270, 281, 284–286
- Harvey, Elizabeth D., 262, 284
- Harvey, William (1578–1657), 154, 251, 252
- Hayles, Katherine, 257, 281
- health, 244, 259, 279
- heat, 68, 72, 74, 76, 81, 89, 94, 99
- heating, 88, 89
- Hecuba, 82, 83, 85, 87–89, 94, 105, 162, 166
- Henry V* (1600), 166
- Heraclitus (circa 500 BC), 139
- heredity, 161
- Hermione, 277, 285
- Hesiod (fl. 700BC), 113
- Heywood, Jasper, 85, 105
- Hippocrates, 10, 19, 20, 54, 59, 60, 115, 120, 160, 184, 187–189, 193, 258, 283. *See also* Hippocratic
- Hippocratic, 74, 80, 89, 156, 159, 161, 184, 288
- homunculus, 271
- horticulture, 117
- hot flashes, 16, 34, 58
- hot flash or hot flush, 89. *See also* vasodilation
- Hults, Linda C., 220
- humoral, 1, 5–7, 11, 14, 15, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 30, 31, 36, 42, 43, 50, 55, 68, 69, 71, 73, 80, 83, 84, 88, 91, 93, 98, 99, 252. *See also* humoral theory
- humoral theory, 5, 19, 22, 23, 25, 42, 43. *See also* humours
- humours, 6, 15, 20, 22, 23, 25, 28, 50, 54, 72, 73, 76, 79, 82, 90
- hybrid, 117, 123, 244, 269, 273
- hypomenorrhea. *See* blood
- hysterectomy, 289
- hysterikē pnyx*, 160
- I**
- Iliad*, 83, 104, 137
- illness, 201, 206, 209, 214, 223
- instinct, 156, 157, 165, 167, 170, 171, 173, 174, 177, 184
- invasion, 257. *See also* invasiveness
- invasiveness, 257
- Invidia*, 195, 204
- psychosomatic forces of, 204
- spiritual force of, 204. *See also* Envy
- Isis, 250, 266, 271
- J**
- John of Gaddesden (1280–1361), 283
- Jorden, Edward (1569–1633), 75, 160, 161, 165, 176, 188, 212
- jouissance*, 250, 256, 269, 274, 278, 280
- Judovitz, Dalia, 276, 285
- Julius Caesar Scaliger (1484–1558), 134
- K**
- kairos*, 134, 136, 138
- Kerckring, Theodor (1640–1693), 109
- Kern Paster, Gail, 15, 22, 42, 57, 64, 157, 229
- Kiefer, Frederick, 142, 151

- King, Helen, 264, 283
 King Henry VI, Part 3 (1591), 184
King Lear (1608), 141, 144
- L**
 Lady Macbeth, 4, 38, 48, 50, 55, 65, 236, 274, 288
 Lamia, 84
 land, 253, 255, 257, 266, 276
 Laoutaris, Chris, 75, 103
 Laurens, André Du (1558–1609), 222
 Lemnius, Levinus (AD 1505–1568), 72, 213
 Leucippus of Miletus (c. 44 B.C.), 251
 Levin, Joanna, 204
 Linnaeus, Carl (1707–1778), 116
 literary devices, 288
lithopaedia, 68
lithopedia, 68, 76, 101–103. *See also* stone baby
 Lucretius (fl. 1st cent. BC), 109
- M**
Macbeth (1606), 38, 50, 95
 machine, 248, 251, 252, 254, 256, 266, 269, 270, 274
 MacInnes, Ian, 166, 188, 191
 Macmath, James (1648–1696), 93
 Macmath, James (1648–1698), 118
 Macrobius (ca. AD 354–430), 270
 macrocosm, 199, 210, 230
 macrocosmic, 73, 75, 78. *See also* macrocosm
 Magnus, Albertus (c. 1193/1206–1280), 75, 125
 Magnus de Montanor, Guido (fl. AD 1400), 79
 male body, 200
 malefica, 201
 mandragora, 261
- Marder, Michael, 135
 Martial (AD 40–AD 104), 88
 Martin, Emily, 90, 106
 Marvell, Andrew (1621–1678), 129
 Mary Tudor (1516–1558), 34
 Master Engineer, 252
 mastiff, 166
 masturbate, 261. *See also* masturbation, therapeutic masturbation
 masturbation, 261
 matrix, 68, 69. *See also* womb
 Mattioli, Pier Andrea (1501–1578), 134
 Mauriceau, François (1637–1709), 118
 measure, 250, 253, 255, 268, 276
 measurement, 251
 mechanical. *See* Mechanical Theory
 Mechanical Theory, 244, 250, 251
 medical, 288
 medicine, 243, 261, 263, 270. *See also* medical
 Medusa, 76, 83, 90, 94, 96, 98, 101, 106
 melancholia, 17, 38
 Melancholy, 217–226
 menopausal, 69, 71, 72, 74, 76, 78–80, 82, 85, 86, 90, 93, 94, 99, 101, 116, 117, 119, 123, 124, 136, 146, 244, 245, 249, 257, 258, 263, 264, 274, 276, 277, 279, 280, 285
 menopause, 1, 2, 4, 5, 8–10, 13, 14, 16–19, 21, 23, 25, 27–31, 33, 38, 39, 41, 42, 45, 46, 50–52, 55–58, 61, 63, 64, 74, 115, 116, 118, 136, 145, 198, 200, 204, 206, 207, 218, 270, 280, 287, 290, 291
 climacteric, 1, 14, 18, 29, 42, 56, 58. *See also* menopausal

- menorrhagia*, 17, 50
 menses, 74, 76, 88, 93
 menstrual, 76, 80, 81, 93–95, 100.
See also menses, menstruation
 menstrual bleeding, 3, 33. *See also* blood
 menstrual blood, 21. *See also* blood
 menstruation, 2, 3, 10, 19, 20, 27, 33, 41, 53, 81, 161–164
 menstrual, 164, 170, 184. *See also* blood
Metamorphoses, 68, 95, 104, 105, 107, 134, 149
 metaphor, 162, 173, 174, 178, 179, 183, 251, 255, 256, 259, 266, 276
 M. Hamming, Jeanne, 264
 microcosmic, 75, 100
 midwife, 258, 262, 263
 milk, 203, 206, 211, 224, 227, 229
 Milton, John (1608–1674), 211
L'Allegro (1645), 218
 mirror, 79, 83, 85, 86, 90–93, 98, 99
 misogyny, 73
 moist, 68, 69, 73, 74, 80
 molar pregnancy(ies), 93, 119. *See also* false conceptions, Mole
 Mole(s), 35, 119
 monsters, 120, 123
 More, John (d.1592), 91
 Mother Nature, 110, 128, 143
 mouth, 154, 158, 161, 163, 173–180, 182, 183, 186, 187, 189
 mythological allusions, 82, 83
- N**
Natural History (1622), 131
Natural History (c. AD 77), 128
 Nature, 73, 80, 86, 110, 113, 115, 116, 119, 120, 123, 124, 126, 128, 132, 133, 136, 138, 141, 143, 145, 149–151
 nefs, 256
 Nemesis, 113, 141
 Nettesheim, Agrippa von (1486?–1535), 210
 Niccoló Bertruccio, 104
 Nile, 255, 265, 271, 272
 Niobe, 68, 82, 83, 86, 88, 89, 94
- O**
 Octavia, 249
 ocular, 76, 79, 94, 98
 oestrogen, 89
 Oliver, John (1601–1661), 100
 ontology, 251, 255, 266
Oration on the Dignity of Man (1486), 121
 orgasm, 257, 259, 263–266, 269, 275
 Osiris, 272
Othello (1603), 211
 Ovid, 124, 127, 128, 133, 141, 146, 149–151, 178, 179, 184, 191–193, 213
Metamorphoses, 213
 Ovid (43 BC–AD 17), 68, 110
 Ovidian, 84, 90, 105. *See also* Ovid
- P**
 Pagel, Walter, 271, 285
 Pandora, 138
 Paracelsian, 201–203, 209
 Paracelsus (AD 1493–1541), 26, 78, 201, 202, 211, 228, 235, 240, 251, 270. *See also* Paracelsian
 Paré, Ambroise (1510?–1590), 119, 200, 258
 Park, Katharine, 153, 154, 188
 parthenogenesis, 119, 272. *See also* spontaneous generation
 Passions, 74, 77, 88

- ambition, 196
 evil, 206
 fear, 196
 imagination, 208, 210
Inordinate passions, 205
 madness, 201, 209, 224, 232, 234
 reason, 218–224, 229, 232–234
 pathology, 2, 5, 7, 8, 20, 22, 23, 26, 32, 35, 48, 59, 156, 160, 161, 176, 187, 261
 patriarchal, 276, 277
 Paul of Aegina (c. seventh cent.), 261
 Perseus, 86, 94, 96
 pessary, 258, 259, 263
 pestilence
 contagion, 201
 disease, 200
 Petrarch (1304–1374), 128
 petrification, 68, 76, 83, 97
 petrified, 67, 68, 69, 80, 82, 83, 87, 100. *See also* petrification
 phallic, 95
 phallically, 250. *See also* phallus
 phallus, 258, 263–265, 268, 270, 272, 275, 276
 Philomela, 179
 Philomena, 178
 Philosopher’s Stone, 79
 phlebotomy, 157, 158, 161, 162, 164, 182, 185
 physical, 250, 267, 274–276, 278
 physics, 246, 251–253, 255, 267, 269, 273, 275
 physiology, 73, 99
 plant, 116, 117, 121, 122, 124–126, 128, 129, 131–133, 137, 141, 143, 145. *See also* plant life, botanical, botany
 Plato, 10, 54, 159, 188, 189, 272, 285
 Platt, Hugh (1552–1608), 120
 playing, 256, 278
- plethora*, 21
 plethora, 257
 Pliny, 77, 95, 104, 106
 Pliny the Elder (AD 23–79), 128
 Plutarch, 98, 164, 169, 170, 190–192, 212, 271, 285
pnyx, 261, 283
 poison, 73, 76, 77, 81, 88, 95, 99, 101
 Porta, Giambattista della (1535–1615), 210
 posthuman, 248, 281
 posthumanism. *See* posthuman
 post-menopausal, 68
 pre-Cartesian automaton, 277
 pregnant, 113, 118, 137, 259, 261, 272
 prosthetic, 250, 258, 263, 268, 269, 272
 proto-Cartesian, 244, 246, 257, 268, 272, 274, 276, 280
 proto-Cartesian cyborg, 244, 246, 249, 269
 proto-menopausal, 49, 67, 71–74, 76, 78, 80, 82, 94, 95, 97, 100, 102, 116, 117, 123, 145, 156–159, 161–163, 165, 167, 171, 173, 179, 180, 182, 186, 187, 195, 196, 200, 205, 207, 211, 212, 216, 217, 224, 226, 228, 229, 231, 232, 234, 288, 290. *See also* proto-menopause
 proto-menopause, 115, 118, 144
 proto-menopause, 28–32, 95, 98, 156, 164, 185, 199, 200, 204, 249, 273
 proto-menopausal, 157
 Pseudo-Hyginus 2^(nd) century BC), 94
 Pseudo-Paracelsus, 78, 95, 106
 pseudo-Zoroaster (b.18–10 BC), 126
 pyramid, 255

Q

Quillet, Claude (1602–1661), 72
quintessence, 79

R

Rabelais and His World (1965), 123
race, 120, 124, 128, 141
rage of the womb, 71. *See also Furor Uterinus*
Ranchin, François (1560–1641), 263
rebirth, 110, 143
Renaissance, 288
reproduction, 250, 262, 270, 272, 273, 280
reproductive, 252, 258, 262, 266, 270, 272, 273, 279, 287
reproductive cycle, 115, 137
Revenge, 110, 113, 115, 128, 133, 139, 141, 142, 145
Richard III (1593), 9, 78
Ripa, Cesaire (1560–1622), 195
robot, 246, 277
Roman automaton, 277
Romans, 264, 266, 268, 278
Roper, Lyndal, 229
Rothenberg, Alan B., 95, 106
Rous, Francis (AD 1579–1659), 88
Rousset, François (1533–1590), 252, 282
Royster, Francesca T., 132, 150
Ruëff, Jacob (1500–1558), 200
Ruëff, Jakob (1500–1558), 121

S

sacrifice, 158, 162, 164, 173, 182, 183, 185
sacrificial, 157, 162, 182–186, 190
Savonarola, Michele (1385–1468), 263, 284
Sawday, Jonathan, 109, 146, 246, 280, 282

scapegoat, 157–159, 182, 184, 185
Schlottheim, Hans (1545–1625), 256
Scot, Reginald (1538–1599), 81
season, 129, 131, 136, 138, 145
seasonability, 141
seasonable, 138, 139, 143. *See also* season, seasonability
seed, 110, 115, 119, 121, 124, 129, 131, 144
self-replicating, 272
semen, 74, 80, 94
serpent, 254, 265, 271
sex drive, 49, 71, 73, 82, 89, 91, 100
sexual activity, 74, 76
sexual intercourse, 71, 73, 74, 76, 81, 256, 261, 277
sexuality, 72–74, 102
sexual potency, 207
sexual reproduction, 270
Shakespeare, William, 287, 290
Sharp, Jane (AD 1641–1671), 74, 89, 94, 103, 105, 106, 119, 147, 148, 261
signatures, 228
silencing, 158, 174, 182, 187
sociocultural, 288
species, 115–117, 120, 122, 124, 126–128, 131–133, 137, 142–144, 147
species mutability, 133
speech, 158–160, 165, 167, 172, 176, 178, 180, 181
sperm, 71, 74, 77, 257, 261, 271
spiritual force, 204
spontaneous generation, 81, 119, 271, 285
Sprenger, Jacob and Kramer, Heinrich
Malleus Maleficarum (1487), 208
starvation, 196
statue, 249, 252, 256, 277. *See also* automaton

St. Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), 136
 stock, 110, 117, 118, 123–125, 127–129, 131, 132, 143, 144
 stone, 67, 68, 72, 74, 77, 79, 80, 82, 83, 90, 94, 96, 99, 102
 stone baby, 68
 strangulation of the womb, 156, 257, 261. *See also* hysterikêpnix “*strega infuocata*”. *See also* flaming witch
 Strife, 139. *See also* allegory
 Strozzi, Bernardo (c. 1581–1644), 91
 suffocation, 261. *See also* suffocation of the womb, *pnix*
 sword, 265, 267, 268, 274, 275
Sylva Sylvarum (1670), 122
 sympathetic, 75, 100. *See also* sympathies
 sympathies, 75, 156
 symptomatology, 1, 7–9, 16, 17, 26, 27, 31, 61

T

Talos, 246, 254, 282
 Tamora, 4, 38, 48, 287
 Taylor, John (1580–1653), 212
 A Juniper Lecture (1652), 212
 technology, 248, 273, 280
 temporality, 113, 134, 136, 145
The Comedy of Errors (1594), 127
 the Golem, 285
The Herball, or General Historie of Plantes (1597), 129
 the mind, perturbations of, 201
Theogony, 113, 146, 151
 Theophrastus (371–285 BC), 126
 therapeutic masturbation, 258, 263, 265, 283. *See also* masturbation
The Tempest (1611), 35
The Winter's Tale (1611), 129, 264
The Witch of Edmonton (1621), 11

Time, 110, 113, 116, 124, 128, 132, 133, 136, 137, 139, 141, 145, 150, 151
Titus Andronicus, 38, 110, 113, 116, 120, 122, 124, 127, 134, 135, 145, 148, 150
 tongue, 88, 174, 175, 177–179, 184, 192
 tool, 245, 249, 256, 263, 267, 268, 272, 275
 Topsell, Edward (1572–1625), 77, 169
 Torriano, Gianello of Cremona (c.1515–1585), 246
 Traub, Valerie, 282, 284
 trees, 123, 125, 126, 128, 132, 136
 Trotula, 272, 283, 285
 Troy, 85, 166
 Truitt, E.R., 246, 280

U

Ursula Kemp (1582), trial of, 229
 uterine health, 288
 uterine prolapse, 250, 258, 261. *See also* “precipitation of the womb”
 uterine strangulation, 71. *See also* “fits of the Mother”
 uterus, 2, 5, 9, 10, 19, 22, 31, 36, 47, 52, 74, 75, 86, 253, 258, 259, 270, 272, 288. *See also* matrix, womb

V

Valerie Traub, 265
Vanitas, 91, 106
 van Leeuwenhook, Antoni (1632–1723), 253
 vapours, 76, 78, 80–82, 100
 Varro (116–27 BC), 128
 Vasodilation, 90

vegetable, 110, 117, 118, 121–123, 127, 136, 144, 145
 Vegetable Madonna, 109, 124, 143
 vegetal dynasties, 110
 vengeance, 110, 113, 127
 Venus, 110, 115, 138, 139, 141
Venus Genetrix, 110
Venus Vulgaris, 110
 Vesalius, Andreas (1514–1564), 25, 153, 154, 252
 vine, 126, 131
 Volumnia, 4, 38, 48, 50, 274, 287

W

wandering womb, 156, 159–161, 174, 176, 187, 258. *See also* womb
 Wanley, Nathaniel (AD 1634–1680), 68
 war, 248, 265, 274, 275, 280
 weapon, 245. *See also* sword
 wet-nurses, 229
 Wheel of Fortune, 110, 128
 widow, 49, 71, 74, 261
 witch, 81. *See also* bewitched

Wither, George (1558–1667), 113
 womb, 1, 3, 4, 7–10, 14, 20, 22, 31, 35, 36, 43, 44, 48, 50, 52, 54, 57, 59, 67–69, 71–76, 78, 80–83, 91, 93, 94, 96, 98–101, 107, 154, 156–163, 165, 170, 173, 176, 179, 180, 182, 183, 185–187, 189, 252, 255, 258, 262, 270–272, 277. *See also* uterus
 barren, 199
 diseased, 199
 fertile, 199
furor uterinus, 212
 heating womb, 195
 Hysterio Passio, 160
 reproductive, 199
 uterine pathologies, 209
Work and Days (circa. 700 BC), 136
 Wright, Thomas (1561–1623), 50, 89, 167, 191, 196, 205–207, 210, 211, 220, 221, 232, 235–237, 239, 241
The Passions of the minde in general (1604), 205
 Wudenmann, 164