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Familiar Creatures: Witchcraft, Female Bodies, and Early Modern Animals

CHRISTOPHER CLARY

“Kiss me, my Tommy...let’s tickle” (4.1.160) ¹

This project began with the desire to do something different with a familiar cultural and textual figure and to resist what has become a perhaps too familiar recent critical maneuver. Specially, I speak here first of animal familiars: creatures created, summoned, bought, or received by witches, often in exchange with Satan or his representative. A witch’s familiar might occupy any of a number of categories. He or she might be a devil in animal form, a spirit in animal form, an actual animal that does the bidding of the witch, or the witch herself in the shape of an animal.² Predictably, critics have viewed animal familiars through the lenses of early modern discussions of witchcraft, in particular during the Jacobean debates over the existence or non-existence of English witches; historical examinations of early modern persecution of isolated and/or independent women—women who are often the targets of prosecution for witchcraft; rural and domestic female economies, the intersection of early modern magic, cooking, and medicine; and bestiality and the history of sexuality.

While these efforts are important and relevant, the animal familiar seems particularly suited to recent discussions surrounding early modern notions of the categories of “animal” and “human,” in particular because a witch’s familiar is so insistently liminal. They not only exist on the edges of communities and religious practice (or the imagined corruption and inversion of those practices), but the familiar sits astride borders of human and animal agency, speech, cognition, physical mutability, salvation or damnation, and (for named familiars) identity. This almost fundamental categorical blurring might incline us to read the animal familiar as yet another potent example of the ways that early modern animals disrupt the division between animal and human, thus undermining the category of the human and revealing/enacting the witch’s own moral and religious corruption. I am wary, however, of what has become a familiar line of contemporary interpretation that sees in instances of early modern animal/human hybridity an early modern anxiety about the permeability of the categories of “human” and “animal” and the unconscious and inevitable acknowledgement of mankind’s own constructed exceptionalness.

Specifically, I am thinking of moments like Erica Fudge, Ruth Gilbert, and Susan Wiseman’s response to the question posed at the beginning of *At the Borders of the Human*: “What is, what was, the human?”³ They answer, “At stake

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in this question is what the history of the human can mean at a moment when, arguably, the active status of the category 'human' has lapsed under analysis from philosophy and the history of science."⁴ To this acknowledgement of the recent shakiness of the human/animal distinction, we might add Bruce Boehrer's compelling reading of bestiality and Bottom's blended nocturnal state, in which he asserts that "*A Midsummer Night's Dream* is about bestiality because the social arrangements it promotes take bestiality as their *raison d'être*: they assume that human nature is in constant danger of corruption from the bestial and/or female other, and that it must therefore be continuously and rigorously policed."⁵ Laurie Shannon observes that even when scholars explore the slippery boundary between human and animal, the language used in these utterances often seems to reaffirm the same distinctions: "our continued invocations of 'the human/animal divide'—not to mention the normalizations of 'the human' and 'the animal' themselves—perpetuate an absolute sense of 'the' difference (even when we are arguing that the alleged boundary is 'blurred')."⁶ And yet, she asserts that the uncertainty of difference between humans and animals (or the similarities between them), would have been familiar to early modern people, and "[e]arly modern writing shows a substantial capacity to imagine and accommodate animal viewpoints as critical ones."⁷

To be clear, I list the above examples not because they are flawed or poorly reasoned; quite the opposite. As prominent figures of early modern animal studies, Fudge, Gilbert, Wiseman, Boehrer, and Shannon have generated some of the most compelling arguments regarding the slipperiness of the categories of human and animal in the Renaissance and today (as well as unpacking the ahistorical assumptions that undergird and complicate this binary for contemporary scholars). And yet, the success of these positions has potentially led to a scenario in which the study of early modern animals cannot help but reproduce these same conclusions, where the blurring of "animal" and "human" becomes an inevitable and inescapable scholarly cul-de-sac. While there is tremendous merit in work that explores the contested space of the categories of "human" and "animal," I worry that we as critics find it too easy to plug this conclusion into diverse scenes of animal/human combination. While I do not aim to reestablish the boundaries of these categories or advocate for an anachronistic scholarly position that assumes an absolute human/animal difference, I do want to push us to continually aim beyond this reading rather than seeing it as a final, interpretive goalpost. So, my investigation, focused primarily around staged presentations of feline and canine familiars in three Jacobean and Caroline witchcraft plays, aims to explore other potential interpretative avenues for reading the early modern experience of animals that serve witches. In William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (c. 1606, pub. 1623); Thomas Middleton's *The Witch* (c. 1613, pub. 1778); and William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, and John Ford's *The Witch of Edmonton* (c. 1621, pub. 1658), I argue that the relationship between animals, animal familiars, and witches provides a particularly resonant locus for early modern anxieties about female autonomy and desire, the body's vulnerability, and a wide variety of threatening human-animal relationships.

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I begin with the most canonical and least “familiar” witchcraft play, at least in the sense that its depiction of witchcraft relies the least on the interaction of witches and (living) animals. *Macbeth* begins in isolation with its unnamed witches declaring their intention to meet again. It thus begins with an ending, and an ending that obliquely makes reference to the witch/familiar relationship. Upon concluding their conversation, the First Witch announces, “I come, Grimalkin” to which the Second responds, “Paddock calls” (1.1.8,9).⁸ How are we to read these statements and the relationships to which they seem to refer? Are the witches calling on their familiars to attend them? Are the witches impatient with their beastly companions? Are the familiars simply making animal noises or “calls,” or are the witches responding to a summons by the familiars. Who commands here, and who is commanded?

When the witches next appear prior to their first meeting with Macbeth, they again mark their arrival and their magical activities in relation to animals: “Where hast thou been, sister?”; “Killing swine” (1.3.1,2). This account appears to be evidence of the Second Witch’s malevolent torment of a pig farmer, since it is followed by the First’s account of punishing a sailor’s wife for refusing to share her chestnuts. However, it is in the witches’ final encounter with Macbeth when the text directly engages animals. Specifically, the witches gather together in their cauldron the “poisoned entrails” of a “[t]oad that under cold stone / [d]ays and nights has thirty-one / [s]weltering venom got,” “[f]illet of a fenny snake,” “[e]ye of newt and toe of frog,” “[w]ool of bat and tongue of dog,” “adder’s fork and blind worm’s sting,” “[l]izard’s leg and owlet’s wing,” “[s]cale of dragon, tooth of wolf,” “[w]itches’ mummy,” “maw and gulf / [o]f the ravined salt-sea shark,” “[r]oot of hemlock digged in the dark,” “[l]iver of a blaspheming Jew,” “[g]all of goat, and slips of yew / [s]livered in the moon’s eclipse,” “[n]ose of Turk, and Tartar’s lips,” “Finger of birth-strangled babe / [d]itch-delivered by a drab,” “tiger’s chauron,” “baboon’s blood,” “blood of a bat,” “leopard’s bane,” “juice of a toad, the oil of an adder,” and “three ounces of a red-haired wench” (4.1.5, 6-8, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, 23-4, 25, 26, 27-8, 29, 30-1, 33, 37, 51, 53, 55, 58).⁹ In its grotesque and disordered diversity, this assortment of dissected or drained body parts and fluids makes little distinction between human and animal. And, while none of these objects are directly linked by the witches to animal familiars (it would be a curious practice to sacrifice a familiar in an enchantment), we see here many of the animals that typically serve as familiars (toad, frog, bat, and dog). In the contents of their cauldron, we observe the confusion of human and animal. I see this not necessarily, or not only, as the categorical confusion of man and beast that current scholarship often identifies, but as linked to a general sense of confusion that surrounds Macbeth’s witches throughout the play and, by preventing an assured interpretive frame, robs its viewers of a kind of authority.

When Macbeth and Banquo first encounter the witches, Banquo amazedly inquires, “what are these[?]” (1.3.37). He goes on to describe in detail the peculiarities of the witches, noting how they seem poised on the boundaries of characterization—they “look not like the inhabitants o’th’ earth / And yet are on’t”; “You should be women, / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret /

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"That you are so" (1.3.39-40, 42-45). Here, the experience of encountering the witches precipitates a sense of wonder that provokes analysis and "forbid[s]" interpretation. Banquo later equates the experience of interacting with the witches as akin to madness. He asks, "Were such things here as we do speak about, / Or have we eaten of the insane root / That takes the reason prisoner?" (1.3.81-3). For Banquo, this experience of wonder is one that seems to arrest rational thought while prompting creative, associative play. Later, in a letter to his wife, Macbeth explicitly employs Banquo's term wonder to describe his encounter with the witches, noting

When I burned in desire to question them further, they made themselves air, into which they vanished. Whiles I stood rapt in the *wonder* of it, came missives from the king, who all-hailed me 'Thane of Cawdor;' by which title, before, these weird sisters saluted me, and referred me to the coming on of time, with 'Hail, king that shalt be!' (1.5.3-8, emphasis added)

Again, the wonder of the witches enraptures Macbeth, rendering him incapable of response. He is only pulled from this state of arrest when news of his new identity as Thane of Cawdor arrives.

These patterns—the uncertain invocation of animal familiars, the combination of human and animal bodies, and the paralyzing effects of female power for male characters—converge in Lady Macbeth's rhetorical/bodily self-dissection on the eve of Duncan's murder. Considering his immanent death, she observes,

The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. 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 the access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
The effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature's mischief. Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunkest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
To cry 'Hold, hold!' (1.5.37-52)

Here, Lady Macbeth seems to acquire the language of witches and perhaps even familiars as she imagines herself unmade in gendered terms and also the sexual

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partner of imagined “spirits.” The raven that announces Duncan’s last entrance seems to mirror the earlier animal familiars present at the play’s onset. As a woman commanding sprits to “unsex” her, Lady Macbeth requests the unmaking of her female self and also the aggressively hyperbolic penetration of her body by those same spirits. In this, she is “fill[ed] . . . from crown to toe,” “thick[ened], and “stop[ped] up.” The arresting image of her “milk [taken] for gall” evacuates her maternally signifying breasts and also recalls the practice of familiar spirits nursing at the breasts (and bloody limbs) of witches. She makes herself terrifyingly available to imagined familiars and redeploys their powers to exaggerate and explode her own sexualized body and selfhood.

These same anxious explorations of female self-possession and bodily permeability reappear in Middleton’s *The Witch*, a play with which *Macbeth* is closely linked.¹⁰ Like the other plays we’re considering, *The Witch* presents the assistance of witches as a sought-after remedy for denied desires. Almachildes, “a fantastical gentleman,” first recommends the witches, noting that “They say they have charms and tricks to make / A wench fall backwards and lead a man herself / To a country-house some mile out of town / Like a fire-drake. There be such whoreson kind girls / And such bawdy witches, and I’ll try conclusions” (“The Persons,” 1.1.91-95).¹¹ Shortly thereafter, he gleefully banters with the newly arrived Hecate about how he should address her (1.2.152-3). Hecate, guessing the reason for his visit, offers “love-charms” to Almachildes (1.2.202). Above, Almachildes’ notion of what witches provide is both explicitly erotic and, despite the fact that he aims to take possession of Amoretta’s absent desire for him, purports to reorient female desire as active rather than passive. The charm will make a woman “lead a man herself / To a country-house some mile out of town.” In Almachildes’ fantasy of power over female desire, it is in fact the woman who leads him, and she importantly does so outside of the geographic and social boundaries of normative heterosexual female desire.

Hecate’s familiars occupy a similar space of reoriented female desire, positioned outside of traditional gender/power norms. Her principle familiar Malkin, a cat or occasionally “hell-cat,” serves Hecate both as a tool of witchcraft and a potential sexual partner. When her son Firestone asks to “ramble abroad tonight” and thus not sleep with Hecate, she asks “And who shall lie with me then?” to which he replies “The cat for one night, mother. ‘Tis but a night—Make shift with him for once” (1.2.93-4, 96, 97-8). Her response makes the night spent with Malkin, and also those spent with her son, explicitly sexual (and plural) as she observes, “You had rather hunt after strange women still / Than lie with your own mothers” (1.2.100-1). *The Witch* further links witchcraft’s use of familiars to a witch’s sexual (or at least sexualized) relationship with animal familiars when it presents the practice of feeding or nursing the familiar with the blood of the witch—a practice alluded to above in my discussion of *Macbeth*. Stadlin, another of the play’s witches, notes, “There was a bat hung at my lips three times / As we came through the woods and drank her fill” (3.3.6-7). To which Hecate responds, “The very screech-owl lights upon your shoulder / And woos you like a pigeon.” (3.3.10-11 emphasis added). Later, Malkin himself sings,

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“There’s one comes down to fetch his dues; / A kiss, a coll, a sip of blood”
(3.3.49-50).¹² Hecate hereafter replies,

Malkin, my sweet spirit...
O, what a dainty pleasure ‘tis
To ride in the air
When the moon shines fair.
And sing and dance and toy and kiss[,] (3.3.62-7)

Progressively, each of these moments opens the witch’s body up to the familiar. The relationship between female witch and animal familiar exposes both the witch’s bodily accessibility and presents the theatrical viewer with an unsettling image of female mobility (Hecate asks, “Ay, is’t not, wenches, [a good night] / To take a journey of five thousand mile?”) and female desire radically outside the realm of patriarchal supervision (3.3.3). Within this new space, the animal familiar stands as both the replacement for a male sexual partner and, perhaps, a preferred figure for whom to “sing and dance and toy and kiss.” Clearly, the play does not present this arrangement as a positivistic proto-feminist rejection of male authority; rather it works to explore the anxious tenuousness of that authority through the witch and familiar’s external play.

Unlike Shakespeare and Middleton’s fully-formed witches, *The Witch of Edmonton* stages a “transform[ation]” of the “known true STORY” of the trial and execution of Elizabeth Sawyer (d. 19 April 1621), a witch fashioned over the course of the play (*The Witch of Edmonton* t.p.).¹³ Sawyer’s witchcraft is accomplished through her familiar, a dog named Tom, and most of her acts of witchcraft consist of local attacks on neighbors and farm animals. The play comes to examine the bodily operation of witchcraft and its connection to other social practices only once Sawyer begins to consider witchcraft and after she is called before the justice of the peace to defend herself, and then it does so through a critique of class difference cut through with a deconstruction of the presumed material markers of witchcraft. She argues,

Why should the envious world
Throw all their scandalous malice upon me?
‘Cause I am poor, deformed and ignorant,
And like a bow buckled and bent together
By some more strong in mischiefs than myself,
Must I for that be made a common sink
For all the filth and rubbish of men’s tongues
To fall into? Some call me witch,
And, being ignorant of myself, they go
About to teach me how to be one, urging
That my bad tongue, by their bad usage made so,
Forspeaks their cattle, doth bewitch their corn,
Themselves, their servants and their babes at nurse. (2.1.1-13)

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Here, witchcraft is not yet a magical or demonic practice, but rather the result of “men’s tongues”—a linguistic and social consequence. Importantly, to a far greater degree than in *Macbeth* and *The Witch*, the bodies of men are also compromised in acts of witchcraft. Sawyer describes how she becomes the space of male bodily disappearance: “I . . . [am] made a common sink / For all the filth and rubbish of men’s tongues / To fall into.” In this image, she might figure as a sewer of libelous speech, but this “sink” attracts, absorbs, and consumes male “tongues.”

Later, before the justice, Sawyer argues that “[m]en in gay clothes, whose backs are laden with titles and honours, are within far more crooked than I am, and if I be a witch, more witch-like” (4.1.87-89). She continues, this time in blank verse:

A witch! Who is not?
Hold not that universal name in scorn then.
What are your painted things in princes’ courts,
Upon whose eyelids lust sits, blowing fires
To burn men’s souls in sensual hot desires[?] (4.1.103-7)

Sawyer’s criticism is insistently material. She focuses on the lusts provoked by costumed and painted nobles (and, by association, the costumed actors who present them), and casts their political and moral machinations in the very terms with which she is accused. In doing so, she simultaneously reveals and undoes the curious seductiveness of clothing’s witchcraft. She demonstrates how noblemen’s dress is effective and bewitching, and thus the source of their presumed authority, while at the same time revealing its power to command as an elaborate and morally corrupt performance.

It is these sorts of malicious accusations that ironically drive Sawyer towards actual witchcraft, a practice that for her begins as both a business transaction and (again) as a consequence of unregulated speech. Fed up, she asks, “What spells, what charms or invocations / May the thing called Familiar be purchased?” noting that “I have heard old beldams / Talk of familiars in the shape of mice, / Rats, ferrets, weasels, and I wot not what, / That have appeared and sucked, some say, their blood” (2.1.35-6,102-5). Considering the apparent trap of her circumstances, she declares that “’Tis all one / To be a witch as to be counted one,” and this utterance causes Tom to appear (2.1.118-9). Like Hecate, Sawyer’s relationship with her familiar is physically and erotically manifested. He declares that his bond with her is “of soul and body,” and Tom “fawns and leaps upon” Sawyer (2.1.133-4, 2.1.236 s.d.).

Unlike Hecate, however, the sexualized element of Sawyer’s witch/familiar union is contagious. After setting Tom upon Young Banks as a means of revenging herself on his father, Young Banks engages Tom in aggressively sexual wordplay. Upon hearing that the canine familiar is named “Tom,” Banks asserts, “’Tis well, and she may call me Ass, so there’s an whole one between us, Tom-Ass. She said I should follow you, indeed. . . . You shall be mine *ingle*. I love you, but I pray you let’s have no more of these dunking

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devices” (3.1.115-120, emphasis added). This characterization, Tom as both the leading end of Banks’s following “Ass” (thus comprising a “whole[/hole] one”) and simultaneously his “ingle,”¹⁴ works to transfer the erotic elements of the witch/familiar relationship onto the witch’s male victims.¹⁵ Following this encounter, Banks repeatedly refers to Tom as his “ingle” or the affectionate, diminutive version “Ningle,” at one point asserting, “You shall not starve, Ningle Tom, believe that. If you love fish, I’ll help you to maids and soles. I’m acquainted with a fishmonger” (3.1.131-3). Banks here has leapt over his previous erotic association with Tom and now serves as essentially a pimp (“fishmonger”) to Tom’s imagined desire for maids, fish, and soles/souls.

Lastly, when Sawyer is ultimately dragged before the justice, she is repeatedly charged with crimes that persistently rebound back upon her accusers. One local citizen asserts that his wife was caught “thrashing in my barn together” with “a servingman in our town of Edmonton,” and “examining my polecat why she did so, she swore in her conscience she was bewitched” (4.1.6, 5-6, 7-8). Another asserts that without the execution of Sawyer, “all our wives will do nothing else but dance about other country maypoles.” (4.1.10-11). Another declares that thanks to Sawyer, “Our cattle fall, our wives fall, our daughters fall and maidservants fall; and we ourselves shall not be able to stand if this beast be suffered to graze amongst us” (4.1.12-4). This last declaration neatly draws together Sawyer’s connection to animals and the patriarchal infrastructure that she apparently endangers—here she is a “beast” “graz[ing] amongst” the community—and emphasizes the sexualized threat that she poses to male authority—polecat[s], cattle, wives, daughters and female servants will fall into sexual license even at the moment that they’re effectively grouped together in one common category.¹⁶ Finally, and most anxiously for the speakers, this threat further infects the virility of the local male population as they find themselves overcome by impotent powerlessness: “we ourselves shall not be able to stand.”

Despite their apparent sexual collapse, however, the townsmen also accuse Sawyer of provoking other acts of sexual play. Old Banks claims, “I cannot choose, though it be ten times in an hour, but run to the cow and taking up her tail kiss, saving your worship’s reverence, my cow behind”: an absurd rendition of the claimed witch’s practice of pledging loyalty to Satan by kissing his anus (4.1.55-6).¹⁷ What was once a practice peculiar to witches—the erotic embrace of the animal familiar and resulting evidence of the witches’ moral and spiritual collapse—now anxiously attaches itself to her male accusers despite, it appears, their best efforts to assert their own innocence.

Finally, the relationship between vulnerable human bodies, animal familiars, and witchcraft reappears at the end of the play as the fool, Young Banks, questions Tom about the means by which he takes another’s shape. Young Banks wonders, “pray you, Tom, one question at parting—I think I shall never see you more—where do you borrow those bodies that are none of your own? The garment-shape you may hire at a broker’s” (5.1.121-3). Tom responds,

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The old cadaver of some self-strangled wretch
We sometimes borrow, and appear human.
The carcass of some disease-slain strumpet
We varnish fresh, and wear as her first beauty...
An hot luxurious lecher in his twines,
When he has thought to clip his dalliance,
There has provided been for his embrace
A fine hot flaming devil in her place. (5.1.139-142, 144-7)

In this account, we discover, the devil's work is much like the theatre's. It makes use of marvelous coverings, often acquired secondhand, and their potential to transfix and amaze carries with it a distinctly feminine, bodily, and (in Tom's account) unsettling provenance.

Tom's "costume" clearly suggests a metatheatrical gesture towards playhouse performance. He performs the role of a (refurbished) "strumpet," and his rehearsal is so effective that it draws the unsuspecting "lecher" into damnation. There are a flurry of intriguing routes for investigation present in Tom's account—the imaginative relationship between the theatre and grave-robbing, the antitheatricalist railing against the theatre as "sathan's synagogue,"¹⁸ Tom's seeming confirmation of those anxieties,¹⁹ the potential link in these lines to the female economy of clothing suppliers that furnish the theatre,²⁰ and its representation of the transvestite theatre (among others). However, in line with the focus of this project, what interests me most is the particularly female bodily source, use, and form of the costume of that the male canine Tom employs.

He "borrows" the corpse of a suicide or prostitute, which, after some slight alterations and laundering—"We varnish fresh"—he wears as if it were new. In addition to the necessary necrophilic consequences that this refashioning implies, Tom's metatheatrical allusion to the renting and modifying of clothing for performance re-imbues theatrical performance with the taint of witchcraft at the same time as it couples Tom's (and perhaps Sawyer's) witchcraft with the erotic confusion of the duped "hot luxurious lecher in his twines." *The Witch of Edmonton* concludes, not by having its witch/familiar relationship persist as an identifiable but static characteristic of English witchcraft, but as a site of erotic, bodily, gendered, and bestial combination that reaches out of itself implicating the theatrical context that presents it.

Moreover, this explosion of association reaches simultaneously outward and inward as we consider the "material" of Tom's theatrical costume. Here, dead human flesh becomes clothing—clothing that covers and conceals the canine or demonic Tom. This last distinction—canine or demonic—is left crucially unclear. Young Banks speaks to Tom in dog form: the "shape" in which we as readers and audience members have, like Banks, known him for the entirety of the play. Is this Tom's "true" shape? At this moment, we are also reminded of the fact that Tom is, of course, played by a human actor. Is Tom a demon in dog's dress, in a dog's skin, or a dog's costume; or is he a demonic dog? Rhetorically, Tom's phrasing suggest the image of a dog dressing himself in the skin of a dead woman; and, regardless of his "actual" original species (a

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source that the play seems determined to obscure and ceaselessly defer), this speech leaves us with the unsettling image of a dog employing human skin as clothing.

In this, *The Witch of Edmonton* seems to gesture towards a classical and Renaissance preoccupation: the shameful necessity of humans to “borrow” skin from animals in order to clothe their inferior nakedness. Laurie Shannon neatly details the contradiction this poses for humans since,

Clothing may be “proper” to humankind in the registers of decorum and possession or ownership, but it is not a “property” in the early modern sense of either a natural-historical endowment or way of working. In early modern terms, the problem of clothing suggests just the reverse: a supplement calibrated as a debt humans incur rather than a property owned or mobilized. Clothing must be borrowed, from mainly animal creditors at that. . . . [Animals are not considered naked in the Renaissance] because Nature is understood to have equipped them fully by bestowing “particular additions,” [and] they are fully clothed just as they are. In other words, in the comparative integrity of their embodiment, animals are not naked because they are consistently conceived as the best-dressed creatures on the planet.²¹

Humans must borrow clothing from animals, clothing that inevitably is the skin/clothing of those same animals. As such, it creates a bond between man and animal, a union the betrays the uneasy insufficiency of humankind, but also a bond in Shylock’s use of the term—a debt that implies violence, past, future, and present. Tom reverses this process, and thus exposes in more extreme terms the bonded-ness of human/animal clothing as well as the transgressive violence implicit in wearing the flesh of another creature. His reversal also serves as the occasion to again emphasize the moral and erotic confusion of the animal familiar for male identity. As the “luxurious lecher” embraces the devil/dog/strumpet, he is not only duped but discovers that the object of his desire, in the very act of human embodiment, has disrupted and disoriented his inflamed affections.

Considering the intersection of animals, humans, and theatrical clothing, Fudge, Gilbert, and Wiseman observe that

the wearing of clothes—which seems to differentiate the human from the non-human—was sometimes interpreted as threatening or destroying that identity. Under certain circumstances, as in the theatre, the clothing of the body was seen to signify a deterioration of deviation from full humanity. Not only was actorly display a temptation to bestial lust in all its forms, but the use of clothing could, perhaps, alter the body within.²²

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In the case of Tom, “the clothing of the body” signifies a bit more literally—he is clothed in the body of a human, in a human body. And yet not, since the actor playing the role of Tom is both clothed in canine costume/apparel (an importantly blurred distinction here) as Tom the dog, and since Tom’s announced costume in other scenarios (as a dead prostitute, etc.) appears to collapse into the actor’s own body during this speech act.

Though Tom inverts the process wherein humans must make use of the superior skins of animals, he does not as a consequence produce a more accommodated human. Instead, his related performance serves to further place humans at the mercy of animals and animal familiars. In effect, Tom’s account and the examination of animal familiars that I have attempted in this essay serve not only to confound the now familiarly uncertain distinction between human and animal but to repeatedly press them together in ways that yield not categorical confusion, or not only confusion, but a multiplication of anxiety, erotic possibility, and authorial disruption.

Notes

1. All parenthetical citations are from William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, John Ford, “The Witch of Edmonton,” in *Three Jacobean Witchcraft Plays*, ed. Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).

2. James A. Serpell provides an invaluable survey of the habits and characteristics of witches and their familiars in the early modern imagination. He observes that “the vast majority of [animal familiars] . . . manifested themselves as commonplace animals, usually creatures no bigger than a dog, and often much smaller, in the case of insects such as flies, bees, or moths. Occasionally, the same familiar could appear in a variety of guises. Elizabeth Francis’s familiar ‘Sathan,’ a key figure in a famous 1566 trial, appeared first ‘in the likeness of a white spotted cat’ but later transformed himself into a toad, and later still a dog with horns on his head” (158). He continues, “Often referred to as ‘spirits’ or ‘imps,’ familiars could be acquired from a variety of sources. Many were represented as gifts of the Devil, given in return for a promise of allegiance. Others, like ‘Sathan,’ were obtained from other witches, or passed around and shared between groups of witches. Frequently, they just appeared out of nowhere, like stray cats, offering their services and demanding to be fed” (158). Both quotations are from James A. Serpell, “Guardian Spirits or Demonic Pets: the Concept of the Witch’s Familiar in Early Modern England, 1530-1712” in *The Animal/Human Boundary: Historical Perspectives*, eds. Angela N H. Creager and William Chester Jordan (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2002) 157-190.

3. Erica Fudge, et al., “Introduction: the Dislocation of the Human” in *At the Borders of the Human: Beasts, Bodies and Natural Philosophy in the Early Modern Period* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 1.

4. Fudge, et al., “Introduction,” 1.

5. Bruce Boehrer, *Shakespeare Among the Animals: Nature and Society in the Drama of Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 44.

6. Laurie Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal: Cosmopolity in Shakespearean Locales* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 2.

7. Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal*, 28.

8. All *Macbeth* quotations are from William Shakespeare, “Macbeth,” in *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean Howard, and Katharine Eisaman Maus (New York: Norton, 1997), 2564-2618.

9. I list these items in this somewhat unwieldy enumeration in order to break them out of their textual, rhythmic incantation. It is perhaps typical, though by no means incorrect, to fall

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prey to the paced and enchanting cadence of the witches' read offerings. By breaking them out of their couplets, and hence their incantation, I hope to also reveal the sheer size, scope, and variety of the items they bring together.

10. Though not published until 1778, scholars reason that the play is a product of the years between 1613 and 1627. See Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge, "Introduction: *The Witch*," in *Three Jacobean Witchcraft Plays*, 13. This period of composition and performance puts the play squarely in the middle of *Macbeth's* own history, typically thought to stretch from 1606 to its first publication in the 1623 Folio. I point to these dates not to assert their fixity, or to imply that they reveal something about the indebtedness of one play or playwright to the other, or as a preface to a source-study or history of the play's reception. Rather, I offer them as an indication of the extreme complexity of the two plays' relationship and as evidence of their potential for repeated and (possibly infinite) cross-pollination. This, indeed, is the thesis of Jonathan Goldberg's deconstruction of the notion of *The Witch* as *Macbeth's* "source," as well as a deconstruction of source-study more generally. Goldberg's reading places "emphasis on the 're' in representation, the haunting specter of duplication that unmoors texts and events from a positivistic view of history or literature" (159). See Jonathan Goldberg, "Speculations: *Macbeth* and Source," in *Shakespeare's Hand* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 152-175.

11. All Middleton quotations are from Thomas Middleton, "The Witch," in *Three Jacobean Witchcraft Plays*, 85-142.

12. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "coll" as "an embrace around the neck" though its only example of this usage is from this play (*OED*). See "coll, n.1," *OED Online*, December 2015, Oxford University Press, accessed February 22, 2016.

13. William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, John Ford, &c. *The Witch of Edmonton: A known true Story, Composed into a Tragic-comedy* (London, 1658).

14. The *OED* gives a number of contemporary uses of "ingle" to suggest a male, usually younger, sexual partner:

1. A boy-favourite (in bad sense); a catamite.

1592 T. Nashe *Strange Newes* 277, I am afraid thou wilt make me thy ingle.

1598 J. Florio *World of Wordes* *Catamito*, a ganimed, an ingle.

1602 B. Jonson *Poetaster* i. ii. 16 What? shal I haue my son a Stager now? an Engle for Players?

1602 T. Dekker *Blurt Master-Constable* sig. G4^v, Ioues own Ingle (Ganimed). See "ingle, n.2," *OED Online*, December 2015, Oxford University Press, accessed February 22, 2016.

15. Given the *OED's* association of "ingle" with "Ganimed," it is interesting to consider the other possible boy/animal erotic unions that these lines might call to mind for an early modern audience.

16. Here, one is reminded of Bruce Boehrer's reading of Robin Goodfellow's elision of *Midsummer's* Jills and mares. See Boehrer, *Shakespeare Among the Animals* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), especially chapter one.

17. See Serpell, "Guardian Spirits or Demonic Pets," 182-83.

18. Philip Stubbes, *The Anatomy of Abuses* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1972), 143.

19. See here Jean Howard's discussion of the use of antithetical rhetoric by theatre companies: Jean Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 1994), esp. "Chapter Three: Antitheatricality Staged," 47-72.

20. See Beverly Lemire, *Dress, Culture, and Commerce: the English Clothing Trade before the Factory, 1660-1800* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); Margaret Spufford, *The Great Reclotting of Rural England: Petty Chapmen and their Wares in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984); and Garthine Walker. "Women, Theft and the World of Stolen Goods," in *Women, Crime, and the Courts in Early Modern England*, eds. Jennifer Kermode and Garthine Walker. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 81-105.

21. Shannon, *Accommodated Animal*, 126.

22. Fudge, et al., *At the Borders of the Human*, 3.

Familiar Creatures

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