

VIPEROUS BREATHINGS: THE MIASMA THEORY  
IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

by

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## ABSTRACT

The miasma theory was a commonly held medical contagion theory from ancient times until the last half of the nineteenth century. The theory claimed that bad odors on the wind or from decaying organic matter could transmit disease or infection to a person. This thesis argues that the miasma theory was far more than a contagion theory, it was also a social construct in the early modern period which allowed sixteenth and seventeenth England society to adapt the idea far beyond actual smells. In fact, this thesis shows that the theory was adopted metaphorically in social, political, and religious circumstances. The ephemeral nature of scents and thus the miasma theory allowed it to become a social construct for actual, perceived, and metaphorical smells in early modern England.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have often been told that writing a master's thesis is a solitary endeavor. And yes, the long hours of researching, writing, and generally organizing one's thoughts into a coherent argument on paper can be quite lonely at times. But the process of *making* a thesis is far from solitary. Were it not for a great many people, this project would have not been possible. Those who have been my support system through this entire adventure deserve recognition that is ill captured on paper. To my friends, thank you for the long hours of "tea talk," even if it was just a break from work. To my family I thank you for the supportive words of love and encouragement. Dr. Jacob Baum for his words of encouragement and advice. I would also like to express my gratitude to my thesis committee. Dr. Byron Pearson taught me to trust my instincts and capabilities and the unending reservoir of knowledge and passion for history from Dr. Brasington has kept my sense of wonder alive. And without Dr. Kim Engel-Pearson's astute insights and magical editing skills, no one would have been able to read this thing. Finally, I would like to thank Justin Adams who has been a loyal, loving, and patient companion while I strove for my goals. This thesis could have never been realized had this journey been a solitary one. Thank you all and God bless.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In 1590 Queen Elizabeth sent out a proclamation commanding the cleaning of “other filth of the issues and intralles, as well as of the beastes killed, and of other corruptions, were cast and put in Ditches, Rivers, and other waters, and also within many other places within, about, and nigh unto divers Cities, Townes, and Burroughs of the Realme, and of Suburbs of them, that the Ayre there was greatly corrupt and infected, and many maladies, and other intolerable diseases did daily happen.”<sup>1</sup>

The proclamation was an attempt to enforce parliamentary acts first passed in 1389 by King Richard II. The issue of waste and the corruption of the air due to rotting, putrefied rubbish was a constant in medieval and early modern England. Though this proclamation shows that the problem was not only prevalent in London but throughout the entire country of England, urban refuse and waste in particular could cause foul vapors to rise up and compromise the well-being of citizens. A popular contagion theory in sixteenth and seventeenth century England, the miasma theory, held that diseases were transmittable through odors or the air. In fact, the concept of odors communicating disease was so thoroughly ingrained in society that even non-medical areas of life were represented by olfactory verbiage and the miasma theory.

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<sup>1</sup> By the Queen: A proclamation commanding the execution of an acte of Parliament, provided for avoiding of dangerous annoyances about cities, burroughes and townes within the realme (London: Christopher Barker, 1590).

Infectious airs, noxious vapors, and deadly miasmas were phrases used to describe contagion theory in early modern England. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, entire books of medicine and approaches to prevention or healing were based on the olfactory driven theory. Indeed, the miasma theory was a concept centered on the perception of odors. The notion of miasmatic infection was rooted in ancient history and the term “miasma theory,” according to designer, Carl S. Sterner, dates from the seventeenth century but the theory was a long held idea even if the term was not always applied.<sup>2</sup>

Both Galen and his mentor Hippocrates, classical physicians, addressed the health effects of “airs.”<sup>3</sup> The roots of the miasma theory were developed from their observations.. According to these Greek physicians, decay need not be present for disease transmission; airs and winds were equally effective. Hippocrates noted that weather patterns in combination with astronomy and the time of the year caused certain airs to rise up, which affected the humors in a body. Winds from the north and south imbued specific ailments to a person. The sun naturally purified ill vapors and city dwellers facing the east were noted to be generally healthier than others. While the breezes carried diseases, designed fumigations were advised to ward off infection. It was thought that a physician could use the olfactory system to determine the bareness of a woman and what

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<sup>2</sup> Carl S. Sterner, “A Brief History of the Miasmatic Theory,” accessed October 15, 2015, [http://www.carlsterner.com/research/files/History\\_of\\_Miasmatic\\_Theory\\_2007.pdf](http://www.carlsterner.com/research/files/History_of_Miasmatic_Theory_2007.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Robert Maynard Hutchins, ed., *Great Books of the Western World: Hippocratic Writings and On The Natural Faculties* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 1952) 44–62.



would cause a menstrual cycle to begin. The olfactory system opened a human body to diseases brought by the wind and also provided physicians a way to assess health.<sup>4</sup>

The theory possibly gained a foothold in the Middle Ages and, as far as this thesis has shown, reached a peak in the early modern era and even beyond, which lasted through much of the nineteenth century, until being replaced by modern germ theory. According to most secondary sources, the miasma theory was most prevalent in popular culture of nineteenth century because of two issues. First, the long held theory was failing to prevent cholera from sweeping away whole towns and villages, and second, in the last half of the nineteenth century the theory was challenged and definitively replaced by John Snow's germ theory.<sup>5</sup>

Emily Waples, a scholar in biomedical humanities, claims the miasma theory was a tool used by American Gothic authors to transmit meaning and to capture the intangible in their popular culture writings, just as miasmas transmitted diseases by the air and smell.<sup>6</sup> Historian Stephen Halliday writes that Victorian London was mired in willing ignorance as the community held on to the miasma theory. He claims that the city's drainage systems were built on the "shaky conclusion" of miasma theory.<sup>7</sup> However, the miasma theory was well grounded in medical and cultural tradition centuries before Queen Victoria held the English throne.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 9, 134, 10, 138–139.

<sup>5</sup> Beverly P. Bergman, "Commentary: Edmund Alexander Parkes, John Snow and the Miasma Controversy," *International Journal of Epidemiology* 42 (2013): 1562–1564.

<sup>6</sup> Emily Waples, "'Invisible Agents': The American Gothic and the Miasmatic Imagination," *Gothic Studies* 17 (2015): 14.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Halliday, "Death and Miasma in Victorian London: an Obstinate Belief," *BMJ* 323 (2001): 1469.

Regarding the early modern era, associate professor of English, Lucinda Cole wrote an article discussing the powerful connection between rats, witches, and miasmas in early modern Europe.<sup>8</sup> Her observations, paralleling some in this thesis, conclude that early modern contagion theory had explanations of diseases rooted in naturalistic and theocentric concepts that were often indistinguishable from each other.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Cole argues that “distinctions between the natural and supernatural essential to nineteenth-century germ theory were in the process of being defined during the early modern period.”<sup>10</sup> Her essay shows, as many early modern and medieval essays on the senses do, the fluidity of religious, social, and scientific concepts.

Specifically in the sense of smell, Simon Kemp, a psychology professor at the University of Canterbury addresses the interchangeability of odors from real to metaphorical in the medieval era. And though he does not name the miasma theory, he wrote that “in medieval and early modern Europe, foul-smelling odors were themselves thought by many to constitute a health hazard.”<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, Kemp notes that Petrus Hispanus (thirteenth century philosopher Peter of Spain) observed fumes as corporeal substances and odors as spiritual ones.<sup>12</sup> Such an observation would make sense if odors were often described within a religious context. It also would account for the interchangeability of odor perceptions in medieval and early modern thought.

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<sup>8</sup> Lucinda Cole, “Of Mice and Moisture: Rats, Witches, and Early Modern Theories of Contagion,” *Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies* 10 (2010).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>11</sup> Simon Kemp, “A Medieval Controversy About Odor,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 33 (1997): 211.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

The miasma theory was a thriving contagion explanation for centuries and not only had medical origins but also social and religious roots, as will be shown in this thesis. Smell and scents were ephemeral and fluid concepts often adapted to fit the occasion. Most scholarly discussion of the miasma theory derives from articles. Often in monographs the theory is mentioned as an introduction to olfaction, but there is not a work discussing this far-reaching idea in depth. The miasma theory was based on smells, which were often fleeting, unruly, and difficult to contain. Thus, the perceptions and applications of the theory were varied. It is this observation that has only been touched upon in sensory scholarship. A better understanding of the miasma theory in early modern England would help scholars understand to a greater extent the fundamental connections between different parts of early modern society. The intermingling of religion, politics, medicine, and social expectations reveal the complexity of this seemingly simple theory.

It is this lack of miasma discussion in the majority of sensory historiography that this literature review would like to address. Smell is one of the last senses an aging person is left with. It is often the first sense a person perceives, even if it is subliminal, and scents can transport a person back along his or her timeline in an instant.<sup>13</sup> In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, entire books of medicine and approaches to prevention or healing were based on an olfactory-driven theory. The miasma theory of contagion proposed that “air became contaminated with ‘miasmas,’ poisonous vapors produced by putrefying organic matter and a person could become infected when

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<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Reinartz, *Past Scents: Historical Perspectives on Smell* (Chicago: Illinois, 2014), 6–7.

miasmas invaded the body and disturbed its vital functions.”<sup>14</sup> This thesis discusses the application and adaptations of miasmatic thought in early modern England, in the medical field and far beyond.

The unique lens of olfaction reveals that the miasma theory was applied outside health and wellness and was used to navigate social, political, and religious scenarios. These facets of life examined through other more traditional means veil the use of olfaction and the miasma theory in non-medical areas. English society at large was interested in, concerned with, and wrote at length about scents and smells, and what they meant to their culture. This olfactory preoccupation in turn caused early modern writers and diarists to enscent the world around them.<sup>15</sup> They did so because of the ingrained impression of smell.

Sensory history is a relatively new historical genre. Sight and sound have often been given prominence on the sensory hierarchy. However, there has been a consistent fascination with the smell of the past in historical and anthropological writing for the past thirty years. During these decades, historians and cultural anthropologists have searched to find parallel scents and to understand how smell has been defined in cultures. The obvious interesting parallels across time lead most of the literature to the macrocosmic timeline of the world’s scented past. Only in the last fifteen years have historians begun to narrow the dates of research to smaller periods.

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<sup>14</sup> Marianna Karamanou, et al., “From Miasmas to Germs: A Historical Approach to Theories of Infectious Disease Transmission,” *Le infezioni in Medicina* 1(2012): 52–56.

<sup>15</sup> Enscent is a verb I am introducing to olfactory language. Just as authors envision a future, fantasy, or alternate universe, so too they create idyllic, horrific, or preferred smellscape. The writers created olfactory environments, stimulating the reader’s imagination just as much as descriptions of visual scenes.

Previous historical literature on the early modern understanding of miasmas has been one-dimensional regarding olfactory responses and the miasma theory. Many historians have assumed the miasmatic theory was a blanket belief in the pre-industrial world. The assumption seems to be true. That understanding went far beyond the medical constraints modern historians place on it. Rather than explaining only disease and physical contagion, the theory in early modern texts was transformed to fit numerous social, political, and religious situations. What is more, in many cases the strict definition faltered and in some cases failed utterly in English society, ironically when it should have held up best. Aside from small introductions to the basic tenets of the theory, or its application to the plague, there is little English or translated work that studies the application of the miasma theory in early modern English life.<sup>16</sup> The following historiographic essay discusses work on olfaction primarily in England.

The first modern academic works written about smell and society originated in France. The *History of Shit* is a tangled, conglomerated observation of Renaissance France from the Freudian perspective. The chapters wander across time and psychological concepts with very little substantiated connections.<sup>17</sup> Dominique Laporte, a psychoanalyst, discusses how French society managed its waste and language. He observes that nearly simultaneous efforts to pass cleansing policies in French cities and to police the French language were contradictory. As language was economized and cleaned up, in reality, the actual filth remained and grew. The book is chaotic and steeped in a myriad of Freudian marginalization and condemnation of all that is female. Laporte

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<sup>16</sup> Non-English sources about the miasma theory in relation to early modern society may exist. I have used only translated works or English-based writings and have found very little.

<sup>17</sup> Dominique Laporte, *History of Shit* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978).

ascribes only feminine qualities to every French entity he is criticizing. The work rapidly within several historiographic schools including Annales historiography to Marxist historiography.<sup>18</sup> As with many academic writings from the 1970s, the attempt was to join psychoanalysis, traditional historiography, and the newly budding sociology. Unlike the great success Yi-Fu Tuan has made in his humanist geography, *History of Shit* falls short of the mark.

However, Laporte asks several questions that I believe should be kept in mind when conducting sensory history. Laporte wrote, “The domestication of waste must further find its rightful place in a history of the senses that will once and for all establish a plausible historicity of smell.” His scatological interpretations of the past are qualified, rightly so, with the admission of “that which occupies the site of disgust at one moment in history is not necessarily disgusting at the preceding moment or the subsequent one.”<sup>19</sup> This statement is an intriguing truth in osphresiology and one that must be kept in mind when studying smell throughout all of history.<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately, the anachronistic Laporte does not adhere to his own advice. He lays the veneer of 1970s psychoanalysis on to the sixteenth century.

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<sup>18</sup> The Annales historiographical school was developed by French historians Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre. The school, in addition to traditional historical methods, integrated methods and ideas from psychology, social sciences, and literature to better understand eras in totality. “Annales school,” accessed September 25, 2016, [http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/themes/annales\\_school.html](http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/themes/annales_school.html). Marxist historiography deals with economic patterns and class based analysis in history that explains large events. “Marxist school,” accessed September 25, 2016, [http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/themes/marxist\\_history.html](http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/themes/marxist_history.html).

<sup>19</sup> Laporte, 28, 32.

<sup>20</sup> Reinartz, 14–15. Osphresiology is the modern term for the physiological study of smell but will not be used in this paper because the term would not have been used in this paper’s time stream.

One of the first scholarly monographs about olfaction is *The Foul and the Fragrant* by Alain Corbin. Corbin, also of the Annales School, discusses the perception of odors in eighteenth and nineteenth century France. Specifically, Corbin draws attention to the contradiction between the racing tempo of scientific oosphresiology and the halting steps of culture and olfaction.<sup>21</sup> His work best described the Hippocratic and Galenic roots of the miasma theory in relation to the early modern social anxiety of smells.<sup>22</sup> *The Foul and the Fragrant* provides the first targeted historical analysis of a society and its relationship to scent.

Laporte and Corbin, though discussing France instead of England, have a few generalized observations about the early modern period that contradict each other. Laporte claims the development of the individual began in the sixteenth century when waste became unique to the person and thus, by privatizing excrement, the threshold of toleration rose because the muck was within the house, thus effectively desensitizing the person.<sup>23</sup> Corbin states differently in both cases. First, he claims the individual arose and waste was privatized in the *eighteenth* century.<sup>24</sup> Second, he contends that the threshold of toleration was lowered because scents were being compartmentalized.<sup>25</sup> The research for this thesis illuminates slightly in favor Laporte's observations. With that said, Laporte, who focuses only on scatological evidence, could bolster the notion of the individual rising in the sixteenth century because of the rise of the perfume markets during the same time. The threshold of tolerance rose and fell frequently depending on

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<sup>21</sup> Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 8.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 13–27.

<sup>23</sup> Laporte, 28–31.

<sup>24</sup> Corbin, 61.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

the calibration of class, epidemics, and one's definition of the other; therefore, the case could be argued for both Laporte and Corbin though the timeline of this thesis coincides with Laporte's work.

Finally, the French work, *Scents: the Mysterious and Essential Powers of Smell* by anthropologist Annick Le Gu  rer, is a brief recount of major olfactory points in history.<sup>26</sup> The book is written from an anthropological perspective, pointing out the fear of pestilence, the sanctity of smell, and how rationalism has affected the sense. The book is useful for scholars in the initial stages of research because it follows a generalized historical timeline. Meaning, the work and those like it are broad strokes of history spanning from the beginnings of written history to the present. The downside to this approach is that deeper discussion and specificity are sometimes sacrificed. Another chronological book, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*, is widely cited in the works of olfactory history.<sup>27</sup> Such a difference was most likely because *Scents* targets a more non-academic audience while the goals of *Aroma* are to inspire more research from fellow researchers.

Unlike Le Gu  rer, Constance Classen, a cultural historian, specifically focuses on the senses (sight, sound, smell), and her fellow authors of *Aroma* wrote to specifically prove that smell in western cultural history was extremely important, albeit, marginalized sense. It was treated thus because of the inherent interiority and personal nature of smells. This book was another first in the historiography of olfaction because it detailed dependence of smell in Western society throughout history. The authors claim the true

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<sup>26</sup> Annick Le Gu  rer, *Scents: The Mysterious and Essential Powers of Smell* (New York: Turtle Bay Books: 1992).

<sup>27</sup> Constance Classen, David Howes, and Anthony Synnott, *Aroma: the Cultural History of Smell* (London: Routledge, 1994).



reason smell has been relegated to an inferior sense is because a heightened olfactory awareness was essentially a threat. The belief that smells in premodern and early modern societies revealed the inner truth of a person therefore would disassemble civilization. They also claim that because smell was subjective and could not be contained in one particular area, olfaction was misleading and/or contradictory. Furthermore, the sense of smell was intrinsic and therefore destabilizing to large controlling groups like the government.<sup>28</sup> Classen and her fellow writers brought new and challenging ideas to the history of smell. Bridging the divide in the hierarchy of senses, *Aroma* laid the foundation on which to build further discussion and discovery.

Another more recent work, *Past Scents: Historical Perspectives on Smell*, is also often cited and provides an excellent historiography of smell from the Greek and Roman era to the twentieth century's famous perfumer Chanel. Jonathan Reinartz, a professor of medicine at the University of Birmingham (U.K.), provides a well-executed overview of societal ideas of olfaction in religion, class, gender, and location.<sup>29</sup> His work delivers an excellent introduction into the history of smell for the novice reader as well as the veteran scholar. In his sections pertaining to miasmatic theory, he relies heavily on two authors discussed below, C. M. Woolgar and Holly Dugan. However, Reinartz writes a concise overview of olfactory historiography up to 2014 and the shift in thought from one time period to the next. His work briefly discusses the olfactory observations of each era including the scholarly work written on olfaction. In order to gain a more thorough understanding of the historical sense of smell, one could then read the authors Reinartz relied on to compile his book.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 4, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Reinartz, 5.

If France inspired the initial inquiries into olfactory history, England has stimulated the largest selection of olfactory history in the last fifteen years.<sup>30</sup> *The Senses in Late Medieval England* by C. M. Woolgar, one of the leading authors in medieval English sensory history, examines the five senses within late medieval society. He not only gives a rich anthropological history of the tools used for each sense, such as pomanders for olfaction, but also the patterns of use, whether for necessity or vanity, and in various socioeconomic circumstances, from kings and the aristocracy to daily peasant life.<sup>31</sup> His reliance on household accounts and records is evident in much of his work. Woolgar helpfully collects statistical information and gleans responses of those in the past to certain objects by the frequency they were bought or bequeathed.

In the section on smell, Woolgar focuses on religion, disease, and the household as places and spaces where smellscape are of particular importance. He also mentions the process of cultivating incense, the production of perfume, and specific odorous elements that aid in medicinal practices. Woolgar breaks the boundaries of olfactory containment in his work by showing that this ephemeral, mostly intangible element is

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<sup>30</sup> Again, there may be research in other languages about other countries. However, in all my research I have found very little. Of the non-English articles one discusses modern Japanese senses of smell. Jacob Baum writes of German Christian olfactory usage and a few inroads have been made on the smell of the American West. Except the monograph by Martha Bayless, discussed later, far less olfactory history exists about other countries. Overall however, I would contend that England has captured the imagination of olfactory historians. See Brian Moeran, "Marketing Scents and the Anthropology of Smell," *Social Anthropology* 15 (2007): 153–168; Jacob Baum, "From Incense to Idolatry: The Reformation of Olfaction in Late Medieval German Ritual," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 44(2013): 323–344; Connie Y. Chiang, "The Nose Knows: The Sense of Smell in American History," *The Journal of American History* 95 (2008): 405–416.

<sup>31</sup> C. M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006). Woolgar also published a second book titled *The Great Household in Late Medieval England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999) but this historiography will not reflect the book; while useful, it is more served as a reinforcing work in the paper rather than a contributing factor to the history of smell.

present in every aspect of day-to-day life, particularly life in the late medieval ages. He expertly points out, in each facet of life, the pervasiveness of scents in late medieval culture. A crucial and often overlooked point Woolgar makes is that almost every term used to describe smell is borrowed from other terms used specifically for other senses or analogies. Because smell cannot be archived, historians must rely on the written descriptions.<sup>32</sup> Though not as detailed as *The Foul and the Fragrant*, Woolgar's work lays the groundwork of olfactory study in England.

*Hubbub: Filth, Noise, and Stench in England* by Emily Cockayne, a cultural historian who has written one of the newest and well researched works in olfactory history, is the monograph that aligns closest to this thesis.<sup>33</sup> Cockayne discusses all that was a nuisance, bothersome, or annoying to early modern England urbanites. She focuses on London, Oxford, and Cambridge, and a cast of historical figures to provide the bulk of her narrative. Each chapter reveals a unique annoyance for the sight, sound, smell, and touch; the book focuses on each sense and the urban assault of seventeenth and eighteenth century life in England. She writes, "This book is about how people were made to feel uncomfortable by other people—their noises, appearance, behaviour, proximity and odours."<sup>34</sup> Cockayne sheds light upon how intermingled the classes were in the city streets and the intense disparities of home life between the nobility and the poor.

Because *Hubbub* focuses on nuisances, it is negative by nature, as the writer intended. This skewed view of early modern life allows the reader to observe the entirety

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<sup>32</sup> Woolgar, 117.

<sup>33</sup> Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise, and Stench in England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

of urban annoyances at once, thus revealing patterns of behavior.<sup>35</sup> Cockayne discusses important nuances of early modern thought that are very useful to this thesis. First, combating odors was a continuous and ultimately futile effort in the city. The muck and murk was simply too vast to fully separate oneself from it or marshal a devoted collective to consistently clean.<sup>36</sup> *Hubbub* also discusses olfactory industry and commerce in relation to nuisances, implementing the Marxist historiography just as Laporte does.<sup>37</sup> However, while Laporte writes of the similarities between modes of production and the process of defecation,<sup>38</sup> Cockayne provides historical instances of the struggle between making money and the nuisances of smelly industry.<sup>39</sup>

The theme of business is continued in English literature professor, Holly Dugan's work, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England*.<sup>40</sup> The book discusses the real and documentable change perfume wrought on sixteenth and seventeenth century England.<sup>41</sup> Dugan begins her olfactory investigation with the

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<sup>35</sup> This particular skewed version of writing, while not providing a complete picture of early modern society, does tend to bring to light certain patterns masked by broader studies. This thesis employs the same method; by focusing on olfaction, the roots of miasma theory in various social circumstances are revealed.

<sup>36</sup> Cockayne., 187.

<sup>37</sup> Laporte, 9, 15. Laporte writes, "strictly speaking, the cleansing of language is less a political act than an economic one," claiming that "*waste* is caught in the crossroads" of subjugating the earth and the "gain-in-pleasure" drive which provides a "necessary outcome of socially profitable production."

<sup>38</sup> Laporte, 39–46.

<sup>39</sup> Cockayne, 199–202.

<sup>40</sup> Holly Dugan, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 2. Dugan writes, "This book explores how time and space determine the metaphoric and material history of smell, arguing that accents are cultural materials worthy of historical investigation. . . . I argue that [English perfume] provides a unique opportunity to examine historical relationships among materiality, perception, and representation while challenging implicit assumptions about the universality of sensory perception and the history of the human body" (2).

smellscape<sup>42</sup> of church, market, and garden while describing the intricate business and development of the perfume trade. Above all, Dugan shows that smells came in innumerable forms, abundant quantities, and varying strengths, all of which were addressed frequently by early modern society in a variety of ways.

Arguing against the Woolgarian approach that late medieval England was starved for scent language, Dugan claims the language was breathtakingly diverse.<sup>43</sup> However, Woolgar specifically discusses the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries while Dugan begins her research well into the seventeenth. From the church to the plague to ostentatious luxury items, and from the national economy to the illusion of the simple pleasure garden, Dugan, whose work is based on the extensive use of primary sources, has provided scholarship of the senses with an integral discussion of the sense of smell in early modern England.

Typically in olfactory history, an author presents one of two sides: the sweet or the smelly. Martha Bayless definitively sides with the smelly. Like Laporte, Bayless finds scatology a fascinating subject while Woolgar and Dugan both gravitate toward manufactured scents and their relationships with society, which often coincide with olfactory repression in some form or another, Bayless, in her book *Sin and Filth in Medieval Culture: The Devil in the Latrine*, offers an illuminating discussion of human waste and the literal and metaphorical connection it had to sin in medieval society.

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<sup>42</sup> Smellscape, as far as this thesis uses the term, is defined actively as an environment constructed around scents and odors that have an impact on the inhabitants. These scents or odors can typically be identified because they have a particular cultural, political, or religious significance. The passive understanding of smellscape is not a “true” smell but is just as significant. The passive smellscape are those of memory, which can be equally powerful in constructing present environments as the active smells.

<sup>43</sup> Dugan, 4.

Broaching a topic most find unpleasant and uncomfortable, Bayless reveals that while perfumes, incense, and gardens were developing and forming an impact in society, the discussion of filth in both the comedic sense and serious dialogue was flourishing particularly in medieval religious thought.<sup>44</sup>

Though Bayless's work, for the most part, focuses upon a much earlier time than Dugan's, the book seems to almost be a gritty response to the perfumed monograph published a year before.<sup>45</sup> Her work argues against the idea that unpleasant odors degrade society while hygiene and pleasant smells are the societal stabilizers claimed in *Past Scents*.<sup>46</sup> Bayless and Laporte both argue that civilization is stabilized by its connections to excrement. Both Cockayne and Bayless's monographs make the point that medieval people commonly believed that dung was powerful, profitable, and dangerous and as one will see, these perceptions continued well into the premodern era.<sup>47</sup> While all the previous authors' studies focused on France and England, the primary sources for *Sin and Filth* are drawn mostly from the twelfth century and derive from France, England, Germany, and other countries. Bayless also uses a plethora of current events as examples; possibly, she is attempting to bridge the gap of familiarity between our threshold of scatological tolerance and the past. Most importantly, *The Devil in the Latrine* lays the groundwork for studies on cross-European olfactory patterns.

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<sup>44</sup> Martha Bayless, *Sin and Filth in Medieval Culture: The Devil in the Latrine* (New York: Routledge, 2012), xvii–xviii.

<sup>45</sup> Though most of Bayless's time line runs from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, she uses works that were still read during Dugan's Early Modern era. For example, Bayless cites *Jacob's Well*, Chaucer, and, of course, many religious texts as well.

<sup>46</sup> Reinartz, 2–3.

<sup>47</sup> Bayless, 55.

The above authors have effectively built the groundwork for olfactory history as modern scholars know it. The sweet, the sweaty, and the sour have been discussed and appraised. However, each of these historians, anthropologists, and professors of English literature primarily discuss the *actual* scent of the past. In this thesis, I argue that the sense of smell went far beyond the act of smelling or the odors present *to* smell, but sinuously intertwined with traditionally “unscented” facets of life. By using the miasma theory as a basis of observation, this thesis branches out, showing the interchangeability between actual scents and actions, thoughts, and words.<sup>48</sup>

The study begins by assessing the explanatory gaps of the miasma theory, then discusses how interior and exterior smellscapes were engineered based on olfaction and the ingrained understanding of olfactory contagion theory. The thesis ends with a brief analysis of breath and the perception of smells. Specific questions have developed along with the research. Why were the tenets of the miasma theory followed so closely in non-medical areas of life? How much did olfactory hyper-vigilance factor into constructing environments or smellscapes? My work expands the collective olfactory historiography by displaying the navigating nature of smell in early modern England and revealing that the miasma theory was well developed, beyond medical applications, in early modern England, long before the nineteenth century when most historians date the height and rapid decline of the contagion idea.

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<sup>48</sup> This thesis was born from a graduate seminar discussing Europe up to 1648. Sensory history, being a relatively new genre of history, was intriguing because it is very difficult to pigeonhole senses and is almost impossible to do so with odors and the sense of smell. Not only is olfaction a deeply intimate and unavoidable action, it infiltrates all other aspects of life. One’s environment is constantly monitored and assessed by the nose even if the person is consciously unaware. What better topic to explore than the unintentional ways society has constructed their environments based on a sense that has historically been deemed subpar and relegated to the outskirts of scholarly thought?

## CHAPTER II

### THE FAILURES OF THE MIASMA THEORY

A remedy for shrunken sinews instructed the man or woman to “take young Swallows out of their nests . . . cut off the long feathers of [their] wings and tails, put them into a stone mortar and lay the hearbs upon them and beat them all to pieces, guts, feathers, bones, and all, then mix them with three pound of Hogs grease and set it in the Sun a month.”<sup>49</sup> This particular example of an odiferous poultice indicates that the miasma theory was not wholly subscribed to in the field of early modern medicine, though scholars have assumed miasmatic thought was prominent in healthcare. By revealing several key failures of the theory in medicine, and then by examining the environments of early modern life, this chapter exposes the layers of complexity of the theory and the society under observation. And while this thesis also deals with areas beyond the strictly medical, a brief picture of what the field of health, healing, and medicine looked like in sixteenth and seventeenth century England would be beneficial.

What is ironic, then, is that in many examples where the miasma theory should have applied, cases when pungent and putrid remedies should have been avoided at all cost, the opposite occurred. Intent and familiarity were two reasons for the peculiar dismissal of this concept that had thoroughly saturated early modern society, allowing

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<sup>49</sup> Samuel Strangeholes, *A Book of Knowledge in Three Parts* (London: Three Bibles, 1664), 97.



people to overlook any possible olfactory dangers. The idea of familiarity, which in turn leads to social expectations or tradition, was and still is a powerful tool for disregarding other traditions or commonly held beliefs. Medical manuals, bedding bequests, and early modern business practices demonstrate that the miasma theory was not an impenetrable wall of belief but rather a fisherman's net through which certain aspects of life filter.

First, the healing arts featured a heady mixture of biblical scripture, astrology, folklore, and the practical application of tinctures, herbs, poultices, and hope. In *A Book of Knowledge in Three Parts* by Samuel Strangehopes, the heavens were to be considered when applying specific medicines.<sup>50</sup> Particular attention had to be paid to the airs that changed the body for good or ill. According to Keith Thomas, one of the most influential early modern academics, the medical profession and field had little to offer. In fact, they were “helpless before most contemporary hazards of health.” Academic physiology focused on the humoral balance, but trained professionals were limited.<sup>51</sup> Often brews had a balance of good and bad smells. Indeed, one recipe called for four ounces of Dyl of Roses, and an ounce of brimstone, an ounce and half of Sack, which were to be “boyl[ed] . . . together till the Wine be consumed and so use it.”<sup>52</sup> The mix of noxious and pleasant

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 22–30.

<sup>51</sup> Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Penguin Group, 1971), 9, 10-11.

<sup>52</sup> Nicholas Culpeper, *The English-Physicians dayly Practise or, Culpeper's Faithful Physitian: Teaching every Man and Woman to be their own DOCTOR* (London: T. Coyers at the Black Raven in Duck Lane, 1696), 3. Brimstone is another word for sulfur (“Brimstone,” accessed November 12, 2015, Oxford English Dictionary, <http://www.oed.com>). “Dyl” may be a measurement, however the OED does not have an entry for the word. OED has many entries for the word sack. However, in this case I believe it to be “a general name for a class of white wine formerly imported from Spain

smells for sickness provided balance and hopefully relieved pain. Many people chose to take advice from apothecaries or to use medicinal manuals to self-medicate rather than pay the expensive fees for a doctor.

One pamphlet advertises, “the Rare Vertues of XI. Herbs and Plants, growing in *most Gardens in England . . . a great many of them but at a penny or two pence charge.*”<sup>53</sup> The paper is short and concise with no discussion on the theory of medicine but rather a numbered list of ailments and their subsequent cures, which can be created if one has access to a common garden. If a garden is unavailable, the pamphlet title makes clear, the average price was cheap and affordable. The elements of this guide might suggest a lower-class audience who would buy the herbs for personal use or to be used on the higher classes for whom they worked.

Yet neither doctors nor the plethora of medicinal recipes guarantee a speedy recovery and in many cases, the results were detrimental to the patient.<sup>54</sup> Conventional medicine was a treacherous avenue for the ill. The belief that smells, particularly those from waste or putrefied flesh, transmitted diseases was almost universal. The highly academic physicians understood the ancient theory behind the belief but it was commonly known that refuse could corrupt the air and adversely affect the body. Even so, medical knowledge was based on a mixture of magic, religion, and potions to stave off the myriad of ailments and common diseases.

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and the Canaries” (“Sack,” accessed November 24, 2015, Oxford English Dictionary, <http://www.oed.com>).

<sup>53</sup> Culpeper, 1 (emphasis mine).

<sup>54</sup> Thomas, 14. Thomas writes, “Some of the nostrums thus peddled reflected genuine country lore about herbs and roots; others did the patient severe or even fatal damage.”

The smelliest ingredients were typically used as topicals. Brimstone, the dung of horses, pigs, and birds, turpentine, old ale, and animal suet were used in abundance for all manner of plasters, ointments, and poultices.<sup>55</sup> While the suet and even the ale provide a common need for grease and lubrication, they are both nevertheless very pungent. The animal dung and brimstone would have been just as rank, but rather more detrimental to a body. The process of rotting ingredients for a certain amount of time as seen in the cure for shrunken sinews was repeated in other medicinal manuals such as *Culpepper's*. This smelly method was the most trusted, but other cures were equally noxious.

In *Queen Elizabeth's Closet of Physical Secrets* a particularly fetid directive involves worms suffocated in wine and oil then set in hot horse dung until the worms have rotted. After pressing them into a paste and adding turpentine, the instructions are to reheat the potent paste and apply to the aggrieved area.<sup>56</sup> Again, here is a malodorous means to a, hopefully, positive end. The more unctuous elements in *Culpepper's* include raw beef, bear's grease or stringent components like turpentine, and vinegar, all of which were to be applied to aggrieved areas in various combinations. Were these concoctions used, and if so, why?

Not one but several manuals give similar or more putrefied elements in medical recipes, this evidence suggests decaying decoctions were a normal addition to regular healing practices. Though most recipes included sweet-smelling herbs or, at the very least, plant-based solutions, the not infrequent instructions utilizing putrefaction highlights a certain disregard concerning the danger of olfactory-transmitted diseases.

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<sup>55</sup> Gervase Markham, *The English House-wife* (London: W. Wilson, 1653), 32–48.

<sup>56</sup> *Queen Elizabeth's closet of physical secrets*. (London: Blue-Bible in Bedford-street, 1656), 68–69.

Perhaps necessity or desperation for a possible cure drove the early modern person to utilize these unctuous ingredients. A less derisive conclusion is that the manuals were compilations of well-known remedies, some of which stood outside the fear of miasmatic infection because they were grounded in tradition and thus familiarity. These are examples of bad smells that do not necessarily equal bad omens or environments, but rather healing and prevention. If these remedies had been used for generations, the habits formed from ritual would override the possibility of further illness via the odor. Also, if the concoctions were intended to heal, the danger of odor was then neutralized by this intent. Here one gains another layer of understanding of the miasma theory as a cultural phenomenon outside of its medical value through the selective disregard of putrefaction or particularly powerful odors.

When ailments struck, the solutions were smelly but they were concocted with the purpose of curing or healing and applied on the area that required the care. They were, therefore, accepted as a pungent positive. Perception and environment allowed the miasma theory to waver. Early modern culture accepted noxious concoctions, even rotting decay, in and around their bodies. *Queen Elizabeth's Closet*, *The English Housewife*, *Culpeper's*, and *A Book of Knowledge* all contained receipts for sicknesses that involve fairly foul ingredients, and when applied in the right space with the right intention, those medicinally bad odors were associated as positives.

The second aspect of healing involves the environment in which the patient received treatment. Hospitals were not locations the general population came for medical treatment. The poor were the primary inhabitants of these structures because “no person of social pretensions would dream of entering one as a patient; and if he did he would

certainly be increasing his chances of contracting some fatal infection.”<sup>57</sup> Rather than being treated in hospitals, where they could contract a worse disease or become socially contaminated, people were usually cared for in their home bedroom environments. The bed and bedroom were foremost places of familiarity and comfort. They were also social environments at critical points in a person’s or family’s life. Birth and death were social events that occurred in the bedchamber, and the different odiferous stages of healing often transpired on the bed.

Illnesses varied widely with equally diverse remedies. Those ingredients of dung, putrefied baby doves, and decayed worms along with brimstone and animal grease would have naturally saturated the bedding once applied on the body. The air was thus filled with putrid stench and the bedding was imbued with the same. A premodern mattress was typically made of straw or feathers. Ralph Josselin, a vicar of Earls Colne and a diligent diarist, fell ill and was “taken to bed.”<sup>58</sup> There he ate little but drank copious amounts of strong beer and wine, which helped him vomit and sweat well.<sup>59</sup> In one entry he writes, “[I] drunk my broome beere in my bed; I endeavored to sleepe after it; I sweated indifferently.”<sup>60</sup> Three elements—alcohol, sweat, and vomit—were ingested, excreted, and ejected respectively while Josselin lay in the bed. The vicar’s retreat to his bed was a typical example of the early modern treatment of the ill, considering only the

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas, 15.

<sup>58</sup> “Ralph Josselin’s Diary,” accessed May 1, 2016, <http://linux02.lib.cam.ac.uk/earlscolne/diary/index.htm#70000005>.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> “The Diary of Rev. Ralph Josselin, 1616–1683,” edited by E. Hockliffe (London: Royal Historical Society, 1908), accessed May 1, 2016, [https://archive.org/stream/diaryrevralphjo00hockgoog/diaryrevralphjo00hockgoog\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/diaryrevralphjo00hockgoog/diaryrevralphjo00hockgoog_djvu.txt).

poor utilized hospitals. Bodily fluids, food, and drink were common in the bed, but the ill were also treated with the fetid and mephitic medicinal concoctions discussed above.

Smelly medical concoctions skirted the miasma theory because of intention. The theory was also ignored because the familiarity of one's bedroom, where the poultices, aromatics, and salves were applied, put the patient at ease. Lady Catherine Grey fell ill and was bedridden for three days while doctors brought their treatments to her.<sup>61</sup> The bedroom smellscape in which medicinal recipes were usually applied has an intricate relationship with odors and the social experience. The bed was the location for births, a particularly messy affair even without the lubricants and medicines applied. Mattresses were contaminated by multiple births and lifetimes of Josselins drinking, vomiting, and sweating on them. Yet, the beds, including mattresses, bolsters, and pillows, were handed down via dowries and wills as frequently as other furniture.

One particularly worn bed was gifted and bequeathed at least four times. Joan Harby, a widow and vowess, gave two "great beds," first given to her by her sister, to Simon Stalworth for his lifetime. After Simon passed, they were to be given to the church.<sup>62</sup> Beds and bedding were key moveable objects in early modern England.<sup>63</sup> Both

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<sup>61</sup> "Queen Elizabeth – Volume 46: January 1568," in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth, 1547–80*, ed. Robert Lemon (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1856), 304–305. *British History Online*, accessed October 3, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/edw-eliz/1547-80/pp304-305>. The examples of Josselin and Lady Grey are not the only ones. The bed was the common place one lay for illness and convalescence. If one was wealthy enough to have a house in the country convalescence might occur there. Aside from people with almost nothing, or those who had no concern for reputation, most people would not agree to be admitted to an early modern hospital.

<sup>62</sup> "Lincoln Wills: 1511," in *Lincoln Wills: Volume 1, 1271–1526*, ed. C. W. Foster (London: British Record Society, 1914), 44–46. *British History Online*, accessed January 29, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/lincoln-wills/vol1/pp44-46>.

were gifted and bequeathed for generations. It was customary for those of means to bequeath their beds, linen, pillows, and bolsters to a family member, servant, friend, or acquaintance. As mentioned above, treatments with decomposed ingredients were *advised* and ill smelling elements were used to heal and cure. The stuffed mattresses, pillows, and bolsters all absorbed odor after odor, inheritor after inheritor. Accumulation from births, food, drink, tinctures and tonics, sweating, and other discharges were literally imbedded into the bedding and then often passed on to family or friends. It is in the final stages of life, the deathbed scene and wills, where a decisive breakdown of the early modern miasmatic theory occurs.

At death, the bedroom became a public space. According to the early modern European historian, David Cressy, “The deathbed would be attended by ministers and friends, neighbours and kin, who would share godly comfort and bear witness to a satisfactory passing.”<sup>64</sup> Death and the beginnings of human putrefaction occurred in the bed surrounded by loved ones and friends. The sickroom and the deathbed overlapped as public spaces, adding to the experience of the bedroom smellscape. After death, wills notified who received the bed, linen, and other bedding, which illuminates an absence of olfactory concern that contradicts miasmatic theory. According to the belief that ill vapors could transport disease, bedding should have been given a high priority in the

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<sup>63</sup> A movable object was an item that could be gifted or bequeathed, other than businesses, housing, land, or other large monetary assets. Women in particular took advantage of movable objects to solidify a certain amount of social power, because legally they had very little power during this time. An excellent article discussing feminized power and movable objects is Martha C. Howell, “Fixing Movables: Gifts by Testament in Late Medieval Douai,” *Past and Present* 150 (1996): 3–45.

<sup>64</sup> David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 390.

cleaning regimen, with airing as well as frequent restuffing. However, neither seems to be the case for many sixteenth and seventeenth century beds and bedding.<sup>65</sup>

A lone voice of exasperation, Thomas Tryon, repeatedly attempted to rally the public into adding the mattress and bedding to their cleaning routine. In his work, *The Way to Health, Long-Life and Happiness*, Tryon approaches the cultural habit of bequeathing beds, writing, “Beds suck in, and receive all sorts of pernicious Excrements that are breathed forth by the sweating of various sorts of people, which have Leprous and Languishing Diseases, which lie and die on them: The Beds, I say, receive all these several Vapours and Spirits, and the same Beds are often continued for several Generations without changing the Feathers, until the Ticks are rotten.”<sup>66</sup> Tryon believed that unwholesome or dirty beds made people, particularly those with weak constitutions, sick with numerous illnesses. Not only were the bodies of his fellow citizens at risk but the amalgamation of many diseases confused doctors and compromised treatment methods.<sup>67</sup> According to cultural historian Elizabeth Cockayne, Tryon “observed that although much time was spent cleaning furniture, floors and clothes, beds were rarely aired. He claimed that if even a tenth of the time and effort exerted in making clothes and

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<sup>65</sup> The sample of wills discussed here are almost solely from the sixteenth century. There may be reasons for the lack of seventeenth century bedding bequests. First, because this study relies on an online database, there may be seventeenth century wills that have yet to be digitized. Second, there may have been an actual marked drop off of bedding bequests; however, given that Thomas Tryon’s famously ignored treatises on bed cleanliness was written in late in the seventeenth century, the likelihood is doubtful. Finally, such an important facet of feminine power and tradition was not likely to have dropped from hundreds to a handful of bequests in less than a few decades.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas Tryon, *The Way to Health, Long Life, and Happiness* (London: T. Carruthers, 1697), 435.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.



furniture clean was spent instead on bedding” contraction of diseases would fall dramatically.<sup>68</sup>

Why did early modern England disregard the vital olfactory contagion theory when it came to bed care? It is possible, excluding the minority of individuals like Tryon, that the large social and cultural significance placed on the bed as well as the personal and, therefore familiar, nature of bedding caused an unconscious breakdown of miasmatic thought. Tryon attempts to counter the notion that only the unfamiliar, which usually meant unwholesome, beds were fetid by writing:

These are the chief Reasons why man gets Diseases by lying with Diseased Persons, and in unclean Beds, and others not. It is a general custom when men go abroad or travel, to *desire clean Sheets*, imagining them to be a sufficient bulwark to defend them from the pernicious Fumes and Vapours of old stale Beds; but it is too short. For it is certain, that most or all Beds do perfectly stink, not ony those in Inns and Houses of Entertainment, but others; not but that every ones bed does smell indifferent well to himself; but when he lies in strange Bed, let a man put his Nose into the Bed when he is thorowly hot, and hardly any common Vault is like it.<sup>69</sup>

Though Parliament passed several bills indicating that only “good feathers” were to be put in featherbeds, there is no real evidence that the laws were enforced.<sup>70</sup> The bed

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<sup>68</sup> Cockayne, 58. Cockayne uses several works of Tryon including *A Treatise of Cleanliness in Meats and Drinks*. I have included her observations because the writings used in *Hubbub* are different from the ones used in this thesis.

<sup>69</sup> Tryon, 436 (emphasis mine).

<sup>70</sup> “House of Commons Journal Volume 1, 26 February 1552,” in *Journal of the House of Commons: Volume 1, 1547–1629* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1802), 18. *British History Online*, accessed March 5, 2016, <http://www.british->

was a tangible symbol of early modern life from birth to death. It was at once a private area for rest and contemplation and a public arena for social gatherings and reaffirmation of community. When the ownership of beds shifted, influence was bestowed and the process began again. A sample of roughly fifty wills, numerous diary entries, and letters shows the social importance placed on bedding items such as featherbeds, bolsters, and pillows that overrode miasmatic thought.

As Tryon mentioned, it was far easier to condemn unfamiliar bedding than one's own. John Thurloe, a pastor, and his brother Rogers Thurloe travelled to Sandown Castle on the Isle of Wight in 1656. John complained of the meager accommodations and a tricky host:

We found no provision at all made for us, not so much as a bed to lye on . . . only there was one pitifull bed so damp, that it had been enough to have spoyled us had we made use of it; and though we might have aired it, yet it was too bad to lye on, being stussed both bed and bolster with hops; yet one of our keepers told us a hop-bed was as good as down, besides that a pillow of hops was good for the

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history.ac.uk/commons-jrnl/vol1/p18b. According to other entries in the *Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities, 1550–1820*, various stuffings were banned for quilts for being abominable and contagious. Nancy Cox and Karin Dannehl, “Quadrille box – Quailer,” in *Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities, 1550–1820* (Wolverhampton: University of Wolverhampton, 2007), *British History Online*, accessed February 6, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/traded-goods-dictionary/1550-1820/quadrille-box-quoiler>. Another, in April of 1552, for stuffing of beds, bolsters and cushions. “House of Commons Journal Volume 1, 01 April 1552,” in *Journal of the House of Commons: Volume 1, 1547–1629*, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1802), 21. *British History Online*, accessed March 29, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/commons-jrnl/vol1/p21b>.

head; but we chose rather to lye upon the boards, and to make use of stools without pulling off our cloaths.<sup>71</sup>

Though assured by their “keeper” that hops beds were actually good for sleeping in, John and his brother took to the more trusted, albeit uncomfortable, wooden floor for sleep.<sup>72</sup> They noted that airing could have been an option if it were only the mattress, which indicates that aeration was not a completely disregarded concept, but the distrust of unfamiliar beds and unfamiliar people can clearly be seen through this letter.

In 1645 Ralph Josselin stayed in a poor house where he slept on a bed of straw with a quilt. He thanked the Lord that he slumbered contentedly, though he kept his clothes on.<sup>73</sup> Whether Josselin thanked God for a good night’s sleep because it was a straw mattress, because the accommodations were in a poor house, or both is not clear. However, due to the unfamiliar sleeping arrangements, he was surprised at having slept well at all. This is surprising given that, as previously stated, he frequently sweated, ate, drank, and vomited in his own bed.

How much cultural and economic emphasis did people place on beds and bedding? According to the introduction of the London Consistory Court Wills, “Few . . .

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<sup>71</sup>“State Papers, 1657: January (1 of 4),” in *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe, Volume 5, May 1656–January 1657*, edited by Thomas Birch (London: Fletcher Gyles, 1742), 748–761. *British History Online*, accessed February 10, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/thurloe-papers/vol5/pp748-761>.

<sup>72</sup> Though Mr. Thurloe and his brother found little appeal in a hops bed, as was stated by the keeper of the establishment, hops-stuffed bedding was used medicinally. Furthermore, “A pillow of warm Hops will often relieve toothache and earache and allay nervous irritation.” Mrs. M. Grieve, “A Modern Herbal: Hops,” accessed October 23, 2016, <http://botanical.com/botanical/mgmh/h/hops--32.html>.

<sup>73</sup> “Diary of Ralph Josselin,” The full entry stated, “We marched through Rutlandshire a pleasant little County to Bilsden in Leicestershire. Col. Rossiter with 4 troops of horse came up to us, we quartered that night at Houghton at a poor house, beef to our supper, pitiful black bread, I got a white load crust; our lodging was upon straw and a quilt; in our clothes, I slept well I bless my god, heard that Montrosse was entered England.”

citizens owned their houses or indeed any real property” but often mentioned bedding, which was always listed separately, usually stuffed with feathers and was “the most common bequest occurring in the wills.”<sup>74</sup> The will samples used for this thesis show that sixty-one percent of all bequeathed beds went to women. Beds and bedding offered women movable property and therefore a certain amount of control in society.<sup>75</sup> Women could use beds to their advantage by gifting them as a show of power or they could liquidate them for money. In the case of Mistress Alice Stevenson, her bed and chambers were to be used by Christin Jame’s wife upon childbirth. Even after death the feminized space of the birthing room held sway as a tool to engineer control.<sup>76</sup>

Bequeathed bedding also served as an equalizer of sorts, for people with multiple children. This does not mean equality in the modern sense, but rather as a society predisposed to deep patriarchy. Even so, Robert Parysh left each of his children—one son

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<sup>74</sup> “Introduction,” in *London Consistory Court Wills 1492–1547 London Record Society 3*, edited by Ida Darlington (London: London Record Society, 1967), ix–xxii. *British History Online*, accessed February 6, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol3/ix-xxii>.

<sup>75</sup> Early modern women did not have the luxury of owning property and most often were under the control of the nearest male relative. An exception to the rule included Bess of Hardwick, a practiced widow who used moveables to her advantage securing power and resources until she became the second most powerful woman under Queen Elizabeth herself. “Bess of Hardwick,” accessed December 1, 2013, <http://www.elizabethan-era.org.uk/bess-of-hardwick.htm>.

<sup>76</sup> Surprisingly, fourteen percent of the wills had an executrix, or female executor, rather than a man. One would assume the executrix would be the wife and usually that was the case. However, in a few cases, the executrix was the household maid. In the intriguing case of Mr. William Mason, his maid was deemed the executrix over his still living wife whom he called his “olde woman” (“Separate Wills: 1540–41 [nos. 123–48],” in *London Consistory Court Wills 1492–1547 London Record Society 3*, edited by Ida Darlington [London: London Record Society, 1967], 69–82. *British History Online*, accessed February 6, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol3/pp69-82>).

and four daughters—a mattress, coverlet, sheets, and one pillow.<sup>77</sup> Annys Borde gave a featherbed and bolster to her two sons to be appraised, sold, and the money split between them.<sup>78</sup> Thomas Jackson gave featherbeds of equal value to his son and daughter and two more featherbeds to both grandchildren, though the bed that went to his heir's daughter was worth more than the one he bequeathed to his son-in-law's girl.<sup>79</sup> James Hertly left his daughter the mattress that belonged to her mother, most likely a piece brought in from the mother's dowry.<sup>80</sup> The practical side to designating who received a bed was to ensure a piece of comfort for family members' future. Bequeathing beds and bedding was a tradition, an equalizer, a continuation of feminized space, and a symbol of community.

In many cases, beds were given to the loyal caretakers of the sick and dying; male and female personal servants also enjoyed the perks of receiving a bed. Marion Childerly left a featherbed to her lady's maid,<sup>81</sup> Cecily Clowgh left her maid a featherbed, bolster,

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<sup>77</sup> "Lincoln Wills: 1531 (March)," in *Lincoln Wills: Volume 3, 1530–1532*, edited by C. W. Foster (London: British Record Society, 1930), 109–124. *British History Online*, accessed February 8, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/lincoln-wills/vol3/pp109-124>.

<sup>78</sup> "Separate Wills: 1544–47 (nos. 200–45)," in *London Consistory Court Wills 1492–1547 London Record Society 3*, edited by Ida Darlington (London: London Record Society, 1967), 125–150. *British History Online*, accessed February 8, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol3/pp125-150>.

<sup>79</sup> "Lincoln Wills: 1521," in *Lincoln Wills: Volume 1, 1271–1526*, edited by C. W. Foster (London: British Record Society, 1914), 87–105. *British History Online*, accessed February 8, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/lincoln-wills/vol1/pp87-105>.

<sup>80</sup> "Lincoln Wills: 1532 (April)," in *Lincoln Wills: Volume 3, 1530–1532*, edited by C. W. Foster (London: British Record Society, 1930), 227–230. *British History Online*, accessed January 29, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/lincoln-wills/vol3/pp227-230>.

<sup>81</sup> "Commissary Court Wills: nos 285–314," in *The Church Records of St Andrew Hubbard, Eastcheap, c1450–c1570*, edited by Clive Burgess (London: London Record Society, 1999), 262–284. *British History Online*, accessed February 6, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol34/pp262-284>.

blankets, and a coverlet,<sup>82</sup> and Robert Knytht left his nursemaid the bed she slept on.<sup>83</sup> All of the wills show at least two generations of use. Others, like James Hertly's will, show at least three. Yet the concern of miasmas exuding disease seemed to be of little worry where these familiar beds were concerned. Did churches air out the beds they received? Did the benefactors typically restuff or air out the mattresses, pillows, and bolsters?

The bed served early modern society in multiple ways. The bed and bedding functioned as a tool of feminized power, gratitude for loyal services, a gesture of equality among descendants, and good faith with the church. In sickness or when ailments arose, the bedroom was a place for recuperation. The process of sweating, drinking, eating, vomiting, and applying smelly ointments, poultices, and plasters occurred in the bed and bedroom. Medicines of rank or even rotting nature were not viewed as carriers of disease but rather instruments of healing. The last throes of death and the ensuing decay was imbibed by mattresses, pillows and quilts soaked it all in. If these things occurred in the city, it is highly unlikely the beds were aired often enough. Though writers like Tryon reproached this behavior, the majority of early modern individuals did not see the putrid commonalities between the familiar beds that served in several important areas in their lives and those unfamiliar and disease-ridden ones found in inns and sinful brothels.

Familiarity with the recently deceased person transferred a similar acquaintance with the objects bequeathed. Therefore, while the bed or bedding itself may have been

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<sup>82</sup> "Separate wills: 1542–43 (nos. 149–99)," in *London Consistory Court Wills 1492–1547 London Record Society 3*, edited by Ida Darlington (London: London Record Society, 1967), 82–125. *British History Online*, accessed February 8, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol3/pp82-125>.

<sup>83</sup> "Register Palmer: nos. 1–40," in *London Consistory Court Wills 1492–1547 London Record Society 3*, edited by Ida Darlington (London: London Record Society, 1967), 1–25. *British History Online*, accessed February 8, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol3/pp1-25>.

unknown to the beneficiary, the bequest was familiar because of the person who bequeathed it. In the case of some loyal maidservants and manservants, they were rewarded with the bed they already slept in. Even the plague did not long deter the valuable movables from being transferred. Bed and bedding items belonging to a plague victim were strictly forbidden to be taken out, bequeathed, or sold until sixty days had passed.<sup>84</sup> However, there was no stipulation requiring the beds to be aired or restuffed before being sold again. Despite the miasmatic dangers a used and saturated bed seemingly threatened, the social and economic value of mattresses, pillows, bolsters, and quilts was too high to be negated. Beds and bedding were not the only transferable goods where cultural meaning created exceptions to the miasma theory; business was a strong motivator for people to ignore the possibility of olfactory transmitted diseases.

The process of bedding bequests was a system of exchanging valuables, it was a cultural facet of life with an added economic advantage. However, olfactory commerce and industry was a thriving sector of England's economy during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In 1650 a man claimed to have the power to change water into wine merely by drinking the liquid and purging it. The vomited liquid was then passed around for the audience to smell and confirm the goblets were holding water transformed into wine. Apparently the trickster duped many people out of their coin because of their reliance on their sense of smell.<sup>85</sup> Mistery Thomas Peedle and Thomas Cozbie wrote a revelatory pamphlet informing the public of the charade, thus *saving* the public from being tricked out of their money. In fact, the magnanimous duo encouraged ladies and

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>85</sup> Thomas Peedle, *The Fallacie of the great Water-drinker discovered* (London: B Alsop, 1650), A2.

gentlemen to stop by their shop and witness an example of the hoax . . . for a small fee. The water drinker is a unique example of scent profit, an established and growing sector of the economy in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The water drinker may have made money on his trick, but Mr. Peedle and his cohort also capitalized on the public's want of entertainment and their strong reliance on smell as well.<sup>86</sup>

Though the example of the water drinker may be unique, other olfactory businesses were common and flourished. Sulfuric spas provided health and entertainment, and dung was a product of monetary and class significance to those who controlled it. The places and items were valuable *because* they smelt. Even the whiffy piles of manure or the reeking spas were understood to have value because one could identify them by smell. An unscented pile of manure might have more dirt in it than feces and a spa that was lacking the mephitic vapors could be a ruse created with regular water. Even as charlatans capitalized on early modern preoccupation with smell, the olfactory sense was vitally significant in business.

Spas were inherently pungent spaces that provided health and entertainment services for the upper class. An advertisement titled *An Account of the Duke's Bagnio*, printed in 1683, announced the availability and benefits of bagnios, mineral baths, and spas for the gentry to use. The services were onsite and offered to the upper classes.<sup>87</sup>

Without proper filtration, iron water often has a smell of sulfur or rotten eggs, making the

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>87</sup> Samuel Haworth, *An Account of the Duke's bagnio and of the Duke's mineral bath and the new spaw of mineral drinking waters* (London: Printed for Sam. Smith, 1683). According to the Oxford English Dictionary a bagnio was "a bath, a bathing-house; especially one with hot baths, vapor-baths, and appliances for sweating, cupping, and other operations" ("Bagnio," accessed October 12, 2015, <http://www.oed.com>). The term can also mean a brothel. Cupping is the practice of drawing blood up to the surface of one's skin by applying heated glass cups to the body.



spas incredibly pungent. The perceived healing attributes of certain herbs and concoctions and the stink of spas did not deter use or attendance. Rather, the smell validated the space as genuine olfactory service.

According to medieval historian, C.M. Woolgar, “Hell was frequently characterized as sulphureous or reeking of corruption.”<sup>88</sup> Within the confines of a spa or bathhouse, the smell was accepted, frequently used, and promoted within English society. If the same rotten egg stench was noted elsewhere, suspicions would arise that devilry may be afoot. Among the multitude of cures the bagnio provided was “a more pleasant Air created in the Face [and] has been taken notice of in some ladies,” while the spa water also cured bitterness of the mouth.<sup>89</sup> The sulfurous waters purportedly offered a multitude of cures.

Another major sector of scent profit involved dung, specifically the excrement from livestock and horses (not people). Feces had a dual nature in early modern life. Human excrement was a physical parallel to the spiritual sloughing off sins.<sup>90</sup> Just as purging brought the humors back into balance, defecating was the body’s way of *literally* excreting sin. Therefore human dung was not viewed positively. Conversely, animal dung could bring fertility to farms and gardens and was often burned for warmth or used to insulate a house. As shown above, it was even applied to heal wounds. Cockayne writes that waste “was deliberately stored for sale, or for spreading on to privately owned horticultural land.”<sup>91</sup> However, the city of Dover decreed that the “common carrier,”

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<sup>88</sup> Woolgar, 121.

<sup>89</sup> Haworth, no page.

<sup>90</sup> For an in depth analysis on scatology, Martha Bayless’s monograph *The Devil in the Latrine* is an excellent resource.

<sup>91</sup> Cockayne, 188.

responsible for “the dust, compost and silage of the houses,” was not in charge of the dung and silage from the stables.<sup>92</sup> The waste of horses was considered quite valuable and the sale of the product would be up to the owner of the stables or possibly the hackney men in charge of the animals.<sup>93</sup>

The head gardener for Charles II was “for procuring and paying for all dung and all other charges relating to the garden.”<sup>94</sup> People with property would buy manure for gardens, fields, and shoring up walls. Even tanners used the dung of pigeons in the process of tanning hides.<sup>95</sup> As was shown earlier, dung was a commonly known ingredient in medicinal compresses; for example, to staunch a bleeding wound one would apply steaming hog’s dung to the wound.<sup>96</sup> Animal dung, despite its foul smell and decay, was understood to have value in early modern society.

Livestock and horse dung was an especially lucrative byproduct that typically benefitted the landowning class. It was the privilege of the landowners to maintain control of the dung produced on their property. For example, a 1542 lease of property came with the clause that William Newman, the lessee, “shall not carry away any of the

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<sup>92</sup> “Henry VIII: April 1546, 26–30,” in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 21 Part 1, January–August 1546*, edited by James Gairdner and R. H. Brodie (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1908), 334–359. *British History Online*, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol21/no1/pp334-359>.

<sup>93</sup> Cockayne, 188.

<sup>94</sup> “Entry Book: July 1682, 11–20,” in *Calendar of Treasury Books, Volume 7, 1681–1685*, edited by William A. Shaw (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1916), 530–545. *British History Online*, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-treasury-books/vol7/pp530-545>.

<sup>95</sup> “House of Commons Journal Volume 1, 11 November 1558,” in *Journal of the House of Commons: Volume 1, 1547–1629*, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1802), 51. *British History Online*, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/commons-jrnl/vol1/p51e>.

<sup>96</sup> Strangehopes, 92.

dung or muck produced upon the premises to other land.”<sup>97</sup> The proprietor had the authority to declare that any muck or dung must remain on the property whether the landowner’s livestock produced it or not. The rule had a twofold effect: by retaining the dung, the owner could use it as a source of fertilizer or as a source of revenue, selling it elsewhere.

In 1690 the privilege of procuring dung on one’s land was denied to the Earl of Bristol; though the record does not explain why the earl lost this aristocratic honor, servants armed with carts by order of the court came to “carry away the Hay and several Lords of Stones and Dung off the land . . . contrary to the privilege of the said Earl.”<sup>98</sup> The value of animal excrement was so high that the use of it was an effective privilege to revoke among England’s early modern nobility. Animal dung as fertilizer was yet another area where profit outweighed the possible objections to smell, and it created a distinction based on class because of proprietary law whereby landowners, and in some cases the government, benefitted from the smelly fertilizer. Thus the miasmatic theory faltered in the light of spas and their sulfurous attraction and in the business of dung because the intention of the spas was to heal and the purpose of dung was to produce growth and security.

Intention, familiarity, and location are the three major themes that allowed early modern English society to ignore the ingrained miasmatic notions and allow cultural

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<sup>97</sup> “Henry VIII: December 1542, 26–31,” in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 17, 1542*, edited by James Gairdner and R. H. Brodie (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1900), 678–691. *British History Online*, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol17/pp678-691>.

<sup>98</sup> “House of Lords Journal Volume 14, 12 November 1690,” in *Journal of the House of Lords: Volume 14, 1685–1691*, (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1767–1830), 549–550. *British History Online*, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/lords-jrnl/vol14/pp549-550>.

traditions to override the possible dangers. Medicinal applications at times called for the putrefied remains of animals or rotting animal dung. Treatments were indicative of the time—a mixture of folklore, Galenic physiology, and traditions. Often the possibility of falling detrimentally ill stirred greater fear than actual contagion. It is no wonder the recipes for healing seem extreme or strange to our sanitized world.<sup>99</sup>

The intention of healing counteracted the miasmatic dangers in medicinal recipes and in chalybeate or iron water spas. The noxious and sulfuric smell of the devil did not extend into the environment of spas because of healing objectives and carefully delineated locations. Animal dung was another scent business that skirted the understanding of miasmas and early modern contagion theory. Finally, the medicine- and human effluvia-saturated mattresses and bedding were rarely aired and often bequeathed for generations. The cultural tradition, social importance, and elements of familiarity and intent also bypassed the dangers of noxious vapors rising from these moveable objects. Clearly, intention, familiarity, and location easily overcame the qualms about air-borne transmission of diseases. Thus the medical theory, while well established in early modern society, was more a social construct than a scientific one and the application of the theory was bypassed when larger shared cultural norms came into play.

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<sup>99</sup> Falling ill could mean permanent disablement, disfigurement, and a lowered chance for employment or marriage. In *The Prospect Before Her* Olwen Hufton discusses working girls who attempted to plump their dowries were in constant fear of illness which, depending on the severity, could demolish any hope for a respectable existence (Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe, 1500–1800* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 99–100).

### CHAPTER III

#### INTERIOR SMELLSCAPES

Early modern English smellscapes can be roughly categorized as interior and exterior olfactory environments. This does not mean private versus public; rather, it is about spatiality and the understanding of boundaries or lack thereof. The physical area of a smellscape is often just as important as the smells like the importance of location in the spa smellscape. Boundaries offer an inclusivity or a means of keeping what is inside, inside. Interior smellscapes discussed in this chapter are the bedroom, the perfume and perfume markets, and the church's use of incense. All three of these environments created both public and private smellscapes that provided a specific interiority or inclusivity that was lacking in exterior smellscapes.

Parallels of the miasma theory can be found in each smellscape. The bedroom was a strong example of the medical application of the miasma theory, particularly when the it was transformed into the birthing room. Perfume markets created an overwhelming air with their strong scents, and perfume itself was a tool used to dispel or prevent unwanted odors or airs. Finally, the church often used frankincense for sanitation and an instrument to redefine the boundaries of religion and secularism. These three interior smellscapes provide a glimpse into the olfactory unease and the adherence to and creative application of the miasma theory in sixteenth and seventeenth century England.

A successful courtship and marriage culminated in the bedroom, a place that carried scents, both manufactured and natural, which conveyed the phases of life quite clearly from sleeping, sex, the miracle of birth, to the final stages of death. Upper classes perfumed their bed linen and “scented clothing and bedding were both a mark of the distinction of the lord and pleasant to all around.”<sup>100</sup> As demonstrated in the previous chapter, some concoctions were the antithesis of the miasma theory and the beds and bedding doubly so. Yet despite the foul and putrid medicinal concoctions or the ironic behavior found in bedding bequests, the bedroom smellscape was in accordance with the theory, particularly when the bedroom became the birthing room. The bedroom as an interior smellscape was defined by the specific and physical walls enclosing the room. It was also an idea. The birthing room became a redolent, feminized space that was limited yet public and bound within the bedroom.

Concerning olfaction, there is little that specifically singles out the wedding night.<sup>101</sup> Cressy has the most to say in his book *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, writing that the wedding night was filled with symbolic flowers that alluded to de-virginizing the young bride, appropriately titled deflowering.<sup>102</sup> Though a wedding may have taken place, one of the newlyweds may have been far too young to consummate the marriage immediately. According to Woolgar, “Upper-class marriages frequently brought with

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<sup>100</sup> C. M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 141.

<sup>101</sup> “Scottish Traditions,” accessed February 11, 2016, <http://www.scottish-at-heart.com/scottish-heather.html>. While no definitive olfactory actions are prescribed in English bridal traditions, Scottish traditions dictate that white heather should be incorporated into the wedding, specifically for the bride. According to Celtic legend, white heather grows only where no blood has spilled and is considered the luckiest of flowers.

<sup>102</sup> David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 360.

them a considerable disparity in age and physical dislocation.”<sup>103</sup> This was such a common occurrence that it is possible no real emphasis was made on the wedding night.

If the couple were to have a “bedding” after the wedding, according to British historian Olwen Hufton, certain fertility rites were imposed upon the newlyweds by their friends and family. She notes, “In Brittany the brew was of milk, eggs and herbs. Onions and eggs were very widely allotted powers of aiding conception. The various brews were administered by the young people celebrating the wedding.” Onions and leeks, like garlic, were understood as hot or heating foods associated with lust and therefore perfectly appropriate for one’s wedding night. Those foods were also used in association with incantations and rituals to prevent or cure barrenness. Such lust-inducing cuisine became a detriment after conception. Even so, the fertility rites were the first steps creating a solely feminized space because “very rarely did the recipes and rituals involve the man.”<sup>104</sup> Thus, a role of power in favor of the woman in the bedroom was created at the onset of a couple’s marriage.

Once consummation and pregnancy ensued, a confusing array of mephitic aromas constantly punctuated the bedroom environment. Securing the hereditary line was of the utmost importance. Wives, particularly those of the upper classes, could expect to be

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<sup>103</sup> C. M. Woolgar, *The Great Household in Late Medieval England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 96.

<sup>104</sup> Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe, 1500–1800* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1996), 179–181. “Protestantism could not eradicate the belief or hope that taking certain waters, herbal mixtures, or eggs, leeks and onions while performing particular incantation or acts could lift the curse of barrenness” (180). It is also important to note that the expectations of large families and numerous births are relegated to the upper and middle classes. Hufton writes, “For working women, all kinds of factors determined their reproductive record. Seasonal migration, or mortality crises arising from harvest failure . . . the dislocation attendant upon plague, for example all had their part to play in shaping the record” (181).

continuously pregnant throughout their marriage while they still bore the ability.<sup>105</sup> The process of pregnancy, birth, and the lying-in period introduced significant points of smell and was an expected event in any household. Treatises like *Queen Elizabeth's closset of physical secrets*<sup>106</sup> and *Every woman her own midwife* gave women instructional guides to the entire birthing procedure. Childbearing was covered in strongly scented vapors from conception to well after the lying-in period.

Cultural expectations during the birthing period meant there was also a long spell in which the bedroom became almost solely a feminized space wherein the men were absent. Kathryn A. Edwards writes that “birth in particular was a female activity, and into the eighteenth century it was regarded as obscene for a male doctor to be physically present for any gynecological examination.”<sup>107</sup> In the early modern culture where men had supremacy over nearly every aspect of society, childbirth was the woman's domain.<sup>108</sup> Further, aside from kitchen implements, a woman's personal property,

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<sup>105</sup> Woolgar, *The Great Household*, 97: “A near-continuous sequence of pregnancies could be the lot of the aristocratic or royal woman.”

<sup>106</sup> *Queen Elizabeth's closset of physical secrets* (London: Blue-Bible in Bedford-street, 1656), 5–6; *Every woman her own midwife* . . . to which is annexed cures for all sorts of diseases incident to the bodies of men, women and children (London: Printed for Simon Neale, 1675). *Queen Elizabeth's closset* was compiled by four highly acclaimed physicians who found the works in an English abbey. The book was most likely ascribed to Queen Elizabeth because, as the sovereign, she would be the proprietor of any public property. William Sheares had the work printed in 1656, and according to the title it was presented to the queen. The work primarily concerns itself with pregnancy, birth, and childcare but also treatments of the common deadly diseases of plague and small pox. *Every woman her own midwife* is nearly word-for-word the same as *Queen Elizabeth's closset*.

<sup>107</sup> Kathryn A. Edwards and Susie Speakman-Sutch, trans., *Leonarde's Ghost: Popular Piety and "The Appearance of a Spirit" in 1628* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University, 2008), 21.

<sup>108</sup> Some scholarship claims that midwifery was in decline beginning in the eighteenth century because male obstetricians began taking over; however, Hufton claims this observation to be “over-hasty and crude” (Hufton, 187). I agree with Hufton to a certain



consisting primarily of moveable objects, could be found in the bedroom and included items such as bedding, clothing, and jewelry.<sup>109</sup> Spaces where females had social power also contained the physical sources of capital, their assets derived from the household such as kitchen utensils, jewelry, clothing, and bedroom furnishings. While technical control of property was given to their fathers, husbands, and sons, women enjoyed real social power in both the birthing activities and in the items they were able to bequeath.

The birthing process was a deeply intimate yet publicly significant affair.

Relatives, trusted family friends, and midwives were granted access to the bedroom for the occasion. For the upper class, it signified trust in those picked to be on hand during the most of the pregnancy, and for the lower classes it was expected that the surrounding village women and female family members would lend a hand.<sup>110</sup> The event was educational for young maids, a preview of what was to be expected, and it also provided an opportunity for experienced females to mingle.<sup>111</sup> Similar to some of the advantages

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point. For example, in 1879, a school for midwives and midwifery nurses was established in order to accommodate all the students. See “York Road,” in *Survey of London: Volume 23, Lambeth: South Bank and Vauxhall*, edited by Howard Roberts and Walter H Godfrey (London: London County Council, 1951), 40–44. *British History Online*, accessed February 24, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol23/pp40-44>.

<sup>109</sup> Martha C. Howell, “Fixing Movables: Gifts by Testament in Late Medieval Douai,” *Past and Present* 150 (1996): 3–45.

<sup>110</sup> *Leonarde’s Ghost*, 13. The universality of childbirth and the traditions surrounding the birthing and lying-in were very similar throughout Europe. Edwards writes, “Neighbors were also believed to have responsibilities to each other; for example, neighborhood women were expected to assist any of their neighbors who were giving birth” (3). It is likely that the upper classes and the wealthy could be more selective in who attended the birth.

<sup>111</sup> Hufton, 190–192: “In large households, the birth occurred in a warm, darkened room with a blazing fire, plenty of bowls of water and a lot of women relatives and friends as well as the midwife,” Hufton writes. “The birth and attendant rituals over, some of the women relatives might stay on,” he continues, “The childbed helpers were ‘gossips,’

that can be gained from godparents, ladies could mend quarrels with neighbors, show preference to specific women, or gain advantages within higher circles all by utilizing the communal effort early modern culture dictated for bringing a life into the world.<sup>112</sup>

Yet despite the possible ways to capitalize on the regular occurrence of childbirth, the main point in having friends, family, and a midwife around was to bring the mother-to-be and the unborn baby safely through the ordeal. The experience of birth was, for the attending ladies, a time of joy, close observation, and skillful work. *Queen Elizabeth's closset of physical secrets* details exactly what should be done during pregnancy, birth, weeks of lying-in, possible complications, and newborn care in the early modern period.<sup>113</sup> The entire work is a testament to the pungency of early modern life. In the months leading up to the big event, the pregnant woman was cautioned to stay in bed and only have tepid, half baths “of sweet water with emollient hearbs”<sup>114</sup> Meanwhile, she was given a regimen of rubs to be left on the body and frequently reapplied. The attendant women applied the odiferous prescriptions, while the bedroom was to be strewn with straw, willow, rosewater, and vinegar, and the bed included a large bolster made of linen and straw.<sup>115</sup> The straw bolster would be more supportive than other stuffing like wool or feathers. Some seventeenth-century professionals claimed straw to be much more hygienic.<sup>116</sup>

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women who perhaps knew something intimate about every man in the village revealed during the hours when they sought to distract the mother.”

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 72–73.

<sup>113</sup> *Queen Elizabeth's closset*, 5–6.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>116</sup> Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise & Stench in England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 59. Thomas Tryon was a fierce advocate for “‘Chaff-beds’

Most of the poultices and rubs were comprised of intensely fusty ingredients. Because of the unpleasant smells there was a distinct and purposeful attempt by the authors of *Queen Elizabeth's Closet* to nullify or, at the very least, mask the malodorous elements used in the rubs, glysters,<sup>117</sup> poultices, and wraps. From the fourth to the seventh month, the woman could enjoy a rub and glyster concocted of tangy vinegar, whiffy veal broth, and heady rose water that helped her swollen feet. The genitals, from the sixth month on, were to be rubbed inside and out with potent deer suet<sup>118</sup> and the sweet oil of lilies, while her stomach was lathered with oil of roses and violets.<sup>119</sup> The reeking elements were somewhat dampened by the aromatic floral oils. While still pregnant, the woman's stomach was given a sweeter smelling treatment than her private parts in order to keep the baby from coming too soon. Floral oils provided a balance of aromas that could have merely been a coping mechanism for the stench or as a way to counteract the ill effects of the products used. This scent-based strategy shifted after the labor pains began.

Woolgar writes, "Many believed that the uterus might move around the body, causing cardiac and pulmonary disorders as well as those associated with the

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(straw-stuffed mattresses)" Cockayne writes, "The hardness of the chaff will prevent the sagging that occurs in softer featherbeds" (59).

<sup>117</sup> "Glyster," accessed February 20, 2015, Oxford English Dictionary, <http://www.oed.com>. "A medicine injected into the rectum, to empty or cleanse the bowels, to afford nutrition, etc.; an injection, enema; sometimes, a suppository."

<sup>118</sup> "Rendered Suet," accessed February 23, 2016, Time Travel Kitchen, <http://timetravelkitchen.blogspot.com/2012/01/rendered-suet.html>. There are a couple of opinions on the smell of suet, the first being like fish gone bad. Another observation is an extremely heavy smell of broiled beef. See "Suet Part two," accessed February 23, 2016, Savoring the Past, <http://savoringthepast.net/2013/01/21/suet-part-two-what-it-is-what-it-isnt-and-what-to-look-for/>.

<sup>119</sup> Queen Elizabeth's closset, 5–6.

reproductive system.”<sup>120</sup> In order to drive the roaming female organ back to its place, unpleasant smells were wafted around her nose, likewise pleasing smells were put near her groin to draw her uterus down into its rightful location.<sup>121</sup> After labor began and the woman was settled into the bed, a number of suffumigations,<sup>122</sup> or burned incense and herbs, were wafted around the genitals while calming chamomile and other “odoriferous oils” were rubbed on the “secret parts” to speed the delivery.<sup>123</sup> If the oils and smoke did not succeed, a bath of mallows,<sup>124</sup> maple-smelling fenugreek,<sup>125</sup> roses, violets, and bitter wormwood was prepared and the woman was submerged and rubbed down with the stew.<sup>126</sup> According to *Queen Elizabeth’s closset*, “Suffumigations of the genitals, [were used] to facilitate delivery . . . Musk, Ambergreace, Gallia Moscata, Aloes-wood, put upon hot coals, and also sweet hearbs, mint, pennyroyal, calamint, origanum, majoram, are of a pleasant and grateful smell, and open women’s passages, and draw down conception. But we must beware, that such sweet smells of this kind be not used to the nostrils, but rather Balls of Galbanum, Assefoetida, mirrh, or Rue.”<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Woolgar, 126.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 126–127.

<sup>122</sup> “Suffumigations,” accessed February 20, 2016, Oxford English Dictionary, <http://www.oed.com>.

<sup>123</sup> *Queen Elizabeth’s closset*, 7, 9.

<sup>124</sup> “Mallows or Marsh-Mallows,” accessed February 22, 2016, Oxford English Dictionary, <http://www.oed.com>. A common plant found in waysides and waste places.

<sup>125</sup> “Fenugreek pungent sweat, how to get rid of it,” accessed February 22, 2016, <http://www.fenugreekworld.com/fenugreek-pungent-sweat-how-to-get-rid-of-it/>. According to this blog, Fenugreek, and the body sweat of those who have ingested fenugreek, have a strong odor of maple syrup.

<sup>126</sup> *Queen Elizabeth’s closset*, 11.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 7–8 (emphasis mine). “Asafoetida,” accessed February 23, 2016, Oxford English Dictionary, <http://www.oed.com>, has an alliaceous, or onion smell which is spicy and strong.

According to the miasma theory, the child and womb could be influenced by scents and thus the midwife and attendants had the ability to manipulate the organs and navigate the fetus to the desired location. The same remedy for the roving womb was put into place if the afterbirth had not descended; ginger or other sharply scented things were put up the woman's nose to induce a sneeze while her mouth and nose were stopped up. Another option was a suffumigation of horse hooves, which was wafted about the face.<sup>128</sup> While the child was still in the womb, sweet scents were wrapped around the stomach and after the baby began its descent, those smells were placed at the groin. Pleasant smells belonged near the genitals while the bad ones went near the face and nose in a normal birth.

A different strategy of scents was applied in cases of complications such as a prolapsed uterus, yet the medicinal applications still aligned with the miasma theory. A linen cloth smeared with tar was wrapped around the woman's stomach "for the womb, *by reason of the evil scent*, is drawn in again."<sup>129</sup> This statement is quite telling. The womb, after producing the child, was then drawn to "evil scents."<sup>130</sup> A complete reversal of scent space ensued if the terrible, but regular, misfortune of a child dying before birth occurred. For example, the bad smelling components, including rue, mugwort and wormwood, previously ingredients placed against a mother's face in a regular birth, were now placed on the belly and near the groin while the mother's nose and mouth were plugged and sneezing is induced.<sup>131</sup> Like the womb itself, a dead child was thought to be

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<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 11–12.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 (emphasis mine).

<sup>130</sup> Hufton writes that there was an Anglican version of the Catholic Purification process called "churching" (193). Both are what this paper refers to as the lying-in period.

<sup>131</sup> *Queen Elizabeth's closset*, 12.

drawn to the bad smelling items.<sup>132</sup> During a successful pregnancy the womb was slathered with “good” smells. However, in complications with the mother after birth or to draw out a deceased baby, the scent tactics changed because of the assumed evil smell of female reproductive organs and the belief that both the genitals and death were attracted to bad smells. In other words, like was attracted to like, but whether this was because of the smell associated with female genitalia or founded on a gender-based moral shortcoming is unclear.

According to these instruction manuals, early modern birthing was a precarious process that required the midwife and attending ladies to have a clear knowledge of herb lore and a fully stocked store of ingredients in order to adapt to any circumstance that might have arisen with the mother and child. Interestingly, these works were compiled by male doctors who, unless a dire emergency arose, were not present or active in the birthing process. Therefore, one must wonder if midwives and female attendants actually applied these instructions or if they had an entirely different set of procedures.<sup>133</sup>

Unfortunately, aside from cases of monstrous births,<sup>134</sup> or accounts of ill-fated mothers and children passing away, historians know very little of the actions performed

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 12–14. Though having nothing to do with scent, a common practice was to attach the stone of Ætites to the thigh to draw down any type of pregnancy. However, one must quickly remove the stone after the event, lest the womb follow it out of the mother. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, Ætites stone was a pebble of hydrated iron oxide containing a loose kernel that rattled. Medicinal and magical properties were attributed to the stone (accessed February 24, 2016, <http://www.oed.com>). Keith Thomas’s work *Religion and the Decline of Magic* expands on this point.

<sup>133</sup> Though outside of the scope of this thesis, an in-depth study of the birthing room smellscape could incorporate the available midwifery manuals to find out if midwives practiced the patriarchal birthing texts.

<sup>134</sup> David Cressy, *Agnes Bowker’s Cat: Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 21; *Queen Elizabeth’s Closet*, 10. Monstrous births were children born malformed or under nefarious circumstances.

in successful birthing. Though historians cannot confirm use of works like *Queen Elizabeth's closset*, it is certain that the bedroom was a feminized space. Shakespearean scholar Gail Kern Paster, in *The Body Embarrassed*, states that “since women in early modern Europe ordinarily gave birth under conditions monitored only by other women, childbirth in the period has been interpreted as an inversion of customary gender hierarchies—one of the instances of temporary but genuine female empowerment.”<sup>135</sup> From the first pungent stages of fertility rights, which signified an empowerment of feminine actions, to the birthing process that added to the odor of the feminized environment, the smellscape of the bedroom adhered strictly to the miasma theory in female bodily applications.

Even after the child was born, olfactory concern was evident. In the well-defined feminized space of birthing and child rearing, the wet-nurse was an essential element. To nurse one's own offspring was considered at best crass, and at worst, bad for the child. Instead, a wet-nurse was brought in to suckle the babe and raise it until a certain age. *Queen Elizabeth's closset* gave advice on the behavior of a wet-nurse in detail, most of which pertained to olfaction. She was to avoid aromatic spices, strong wines, and potent smelling foods such as leeks, garlic, and onions.<sup>136</sup> It was thought the young child would be corrupted or otherwise changed by the smells of the wet-nurse if those smells were too strong.

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Cressy's monograph *Agnes Bowker's Cat* delves into the societal implications of monstrous births. In *Queen Elizabeth's closset* the verbiage changes slightly from “child” to “creature” when listing reasons the child is not coming out properly: “And that cometh to pass by reason of divers causes; for either some strong heat coming from the natural parts, doth too much straighten the inward parts, or the Creature is too big” (10).

<sup>135</sup> Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), 165.

<sup>136</sup> *Queen Elizabeth's closset*, 19.

Furthermore, sex was forbidden to the wet-nurse during the period of nursing for fear of corrupting her milk: “Copulation of the Nurse exceedingly offendeth, and hurteth the Child as what which chiefly retracteth and diminish the Milk and maketh it of an unsavory taste, tasting hot, and rank or goatish.”<sup>137</sup> Therefore, impure acts resulted in bad smells. Clearly a monitoring system was put in place by the adult family of the child. Most likely, they used the network of family and friends to spy on the eating and sleeping habits of the nursemaid. The household and extension thereof pulled together to circumscribe olfactory impropriety. This is an extension of female propriety as well as the miasma theory. Moral laxity would cause a physical transformation of the nurse’s milk into something rancid and unusable. Instead of a smell affecting the person, here actions could cause a miasmatic problem.

As one can see, the bedroom as birthing room and beyond was an interior smellscape that usually deferred strictly to the miasma theory. Though the bedding, as discussed previously, was an ironic departure from the contagion theory, the odorific applications during pregnancy, childbirth, and after directly coincided with it. No matter the issue with the mother-to-be, like was attracted to like and the bad smells were associated with death and mishaps during birth, while good scents, perfumes, herbs, and incense were connected to the healthy child and a smooth delivery. The bedroom was also a scented feminized space in which women had sole control.

In addition to the iron water spas, urban centers of England had several other key smellscapes that performed vital roles in early modern communities. Perfume markets

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.



contained clouds of heady and sometimes overwhelming smells. <sup>138</sup> All levels of society benefitted from scent products and services, though the middle and upper classes benefitted the most because they had the disposable income to purchase more expensive perfumes and attend exclusive bagnios. Even animal dung was a privilege of the landed class as was shown in chapter two. But while the poor did not have access to the same types of scent products, they were far from being left out. The humble still coated themselves with unctuous concoctions, powders, and perfumes to drive the smell of unwashed bodies from their immediate surroundings. The perfume market was a designated space and the interiority of perfume, aside from physically bottled or applied to specific objects, occurred when women established a process of making the perfumes at home. Perfumes were used to diffuse ill vapors or fetid airs about one's person and therefore were an olfactory preventative from possible infection via miasmas.

Particularly in the sixteenth century, perfumes gained a large foothold in the London economy. Lewes Roberts, in *The Merchant's Mappe of Commerce*, written in 1671, suggested a unified way to arrange market products in English cities and towns. One section of *The Merchant's Mappe* reminded merchants of what constitutes a spice, drug, or other merchandise such as perfume. <sup>139</sup> In addition to reconstructing the geography of urban commerce, the book also suggested training people to separate quality from subpar ingredients. The art of garbling—separating the unwanted or inferior

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<sup>138</sup> Dugan, 155. Dugan writes, “Throughout the seventeenth century, gardens were increasingly imagined as a way to escape urban sensory assaults, promising a horticultural respite.” As the cloying smell pervaded the close quarters of the city, aristocrats were drawn out to the country and its illusion of simple olfactory delights. This is not strictly an exception to the miasma theory and therefore belongs in the urban smellscape section.

<sup>139</sup> Lewes Roberts, *The Merchant's Mappe of Commerce* (London: printed for R. Horn, 1671), 42.

parts of spices, drugs, and perfumes—was recommended. The people testing products would have to use a multitude of senses<sup>140</sup> to confirm the worth of each batch of perfume, frankincense, turmeric, or aniseed.<sup>141</sup> The garbler would then apply his seal on the products.<sup>142</sup> The markets were filled with highly valued commodities that also had a strong aroma and flooded the market spaces with strong scents. The effect created a profit-centric smellscape.

Who frequented the markets to purchase these garbled, sealed, and displayed wares? Spices and drugs called to a variety of people for cooking, medicinal value, and scenting the body. Herbs for the same reasons were also sold in the markets and drew those city dwellers that did not have access to a garden. Perfumes varied in quality and price, attracting a variety of socioeconomic groups.<sup>143</sup> There was also a parallel movement of do-it-yourself perfume manuals that encouraged upper class ladies to make perfume and scented objects.<sup>144</sup> *The French Perfumer* by Simon Barbe was a do-it-yourself manual on making perfumes, perfuming objects, and buying certain ingredients from the markets. Dugan writes, “Housewives quickly learned how to reproduce the sundry powders, pomanders, sweet waters, and perfumed objects produced by grocers, apothecarists, perfumers, glovers, milliners, and haberdashers . . . perfume participated in

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<sup>140</sup> Dugan, 129. She writes, “A merchant’s senses are vital” in determining inferior product.

<sup>141</sup> Roberts, 43–44.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>143</sup> Cockayne, 63. Cockayne writes, “Given the relative limitations of the cleansing routine, many citizens resorted to cosmetics and perfumes to hide the dirt and mask odour . . . There was a healthy market in product to mask the smell of human discharges.” Perfumes and perfumed objects varied in quality and therefore expense, which allowed many groups of people to enjoy some sort of perfume.

<sup>144</sup> Simon Barbe, *The French Perfumer* (London: Printed for Samuel Buckley, 1696), 3. Were scented items all gathered in the same place? Or did each section of product have a selection of perfumed ones? Where they classified by quality of product or perfume?

the construction of private space and public, and national identity.”<sup>145</sup> By observing the types of perfume recipes, one can see what was bought and sold at markets and understand that perfume was being transferred from the public space of markets to the more private interior of the house.

Manuals like Barbe’s work instructed the reader how to skirt the expensive shops; it also listed the many different perfumed objects that were desirable to English society and that those items could be purchased at the markets. The discourse taught the reader how to perfume fans, wigs, gloves, and clothes, and how to make pomanders, wash balls, scented oils, potpourri, and even perfumed tobacco. All of the items, before perfuming, still needed to be purchased but the price increase of scented commodities would be skirted. Though *The French Perfumer* educated readers in the art of making perfume and perfuming moveables such as pomanders, clothing, and wigs at home, there was still a thriving market for both low and high classes of perfume and perfume accessories.

The thriving perfume markets and books like *The French Perfumer* are examples of a sense of English cultural nationalism being developed. The text is an example of English authors transforming what was largely a foreign profession and process to an English activity by encouraging English noble women to produce perfumes and perfumed accessories at home. The majority of the book educated the reader on the origins of the scent, how and when it was procured, and how to tell if it was still fresh enough or stored properly to buy. Many of the products were imported but most of them could be obtained in an average aristocratic garden, another cultural staple of Englishness. What is more, in one section Barbe labeled the perfumes from foreign places such as Rome and Spain and

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<sup>145</sup> Dugan, 151.

taught the reader how to make them at home, thereby rebranding the products as English.<sup>146</sup>

Most importantly, the perfume markets and the perfumed smellscape were appropriated into aristocratic households, and the process of aristocratic women perfuming objects created scented feminized spaces. The women plucked the ingredients from their own pleasure gardens and then made perfumed objects. Many of the finished products were moveable items, such as pomanders and clothes, which then created more real power for women. Real power translated into products and objects that could be sold or gifted to buy products, elicit a response, or influence a person or group. The movables were then handed down or gifted to others thus expanding the feminized smellscape laterally and forward in time. It was a female-specific activity, centered on olfaction, which created a space and a latent control outside the birthing process—a new space that was almost completely created and controlled by women.<sup>147</sup>

Though both perfume and the production of it made for interesting real and constructed interior smellscape, incense was a far more complicated tool of engineered environments, fraught with symbolic, cultural, and political meanings. Used inside the church, incense created an interior smellscape that was exceptionally public, but again, bound within the walls of the sanctuary. In particular, two smellscape surrounding the plague and the church were inseparably intertwined in early modern England. Incense was purchased by individuals and gifted or bequeathed to churches; however, the church

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<sup>146</sup> Dugan, 43–69. Dugan discusses the adaptation of particular scents and perfumes as “English” and the rise of nationalism in *The Ephemeral History of Perfume*.

<sup>147</sup> Did the noble women pluck the flowers themselves? Was that a created space and activity as well? Perhaps their servants did it but the detailing of when to cut each plant seems to signify an expectation that the women went through the entire process.

could not rely solely on bequests or donations to keep an adequate supply on hand.<sup>148</sup> Churchwardens, elected members of the church who kept vigilant church account records, also purchased incense. In surviving accounts, there are diverse examples of olfaction and its implications in early modern society both in a literal and metaphorical sense. The accounts display the management of donations and supplies, the methods of sanitation, and the responses to large events and disasters. Eamon Duffy utilizes the churchwarden accounts in his book *The Voices of Morebath* to great success.<sup>149</sup> He reconstructs the microcosm of a small town with these documents and discusses the unrest felt in the countryside about the Reformation. Incense was a very popular tool as both a disinfectant and for religious purposes.

The translators of a particular set of churchwarden accounts noted that the Reformation did not eradicate the use of incense in the churches. Instead, “incense continued . . . to be used; its purchase appears in the accounts for the years 1559, 1566, 1568, 1571, 1572, 1573, and 1575.”<sup>150</sup> In 1665 at a church in Solihull, Warwickshire, frankincense was bought specifically for the first sacrament.<sup>151</sup> It is clear, according to this set of accounts, that incense was still used here for religious purposes; however, it is

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<sup>148</sup> “Bridgemasters' Account Roll 1, 1381–2,” in *London Bridge: Selected Accounts and Rentals, 1381–1538*, edited by Vanessa Harding and Laura Wright (London: London Record Society, 1995), 1–29. *British History Online*, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol31/pp1-29>.

<sup>149</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).

<sup>150</sup> Charles J. Cox, *Churchwardens' accounts from the fourteenth century to the close of the seventeenth century* (London: Methuen, 1913), accessed October 10, 2015, <https://archive.org/details/churchwardensacc00coxj>.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

one of only a handful in the churchwarden records where incense was bought for the specific reasons of ceremony.<sup>152</sup>

Dugan mentions that the rise of the luxury perfume markets created confusion in the space of sanctity, both of which were associated with smell. She writes, “When read against the early Reformation struggles, olfaction emerges as a troubled threshold of perception, and perfumes as fraught tools of conversion.”<sup>153</sup> As noted earlier, the markets themselves were deliberating on what qualified as what type of scent, spice, herb, or medicine, therefore the confusion between sanctified and the secular smellscape would have naturally increased.

There was also a possible dilution of religious power, a blurring of lines, when perfume was worn and incense used within the secular sphere or for secular purposes. The churchwardens used frankincense as a disinfectant at one point when forced to house soldiers for a considerable time. Daniel Brown was paid by the church to watch the soldiers and clean up after they left. He used a variety of incense bought for this reason, including frankincense and juniper, which Cox claims was used for deodorizing purposes as well, and “in 1664, a shilling was spent on frankincense to sweeten the church after one of these visits.”<sup>154</sup> One can also argue that incense was also used to symbolically cleanse the violence of war or secularism of the soldiers from the church. In this situation, St. Lawrence reestablished its space from barracks back to sanctuary and a holy

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<sup>152</sup> Dugan, 30. Jonathan Harris claims that “religious perfume, specifically incense, was emptied of all symbolic meaning.”

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>154</sup> Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts*. “Sprigs of juniper, burnt on a brazier, were sometimes used in churches as an adjunct to, or in place of, frankincense for odorous or deodorising purposes.”

place of God by reintegrating the “odor of sanctity.”<sup>155</sup> One way to do this was to utilize incense both as a deodorizer and as a scent to please the Lord.

Frankincense was bought nine times at St. Colimb Major from 1533 to 1534, and according to Cox, “Its use was obviously to perfume the building or to act as a disinfectant . . . In three cases the use of frankincense has been noted in connection with the burial of paupers; it was probably placed on the body in infectious cases.”<sup>156</sup>

Solidifying this statement, in 1541, half a pound of frankincense was purchased in addition to a shroud and thread in which to wrap a paver’s deceased daughter.<sup>157</sup> Though in this particular case, assuming she was infected is conjecture; it could very well have been a common practice, particularly in the cases of day workers who had not the means to afford elaborate burials or embalming practices.

The market for incense was steady due to its many beneficial uses. Incense created scented environments of sanctity and sanitation within the church and those connotations would reverberate back to the smellscape of the markets. For literal and metaphorical cleansing, incense worked as a preventative to oncoming odor. Incense also helped emphasize the interiority of the church’s environment. The conception of cultural miasmatic thought and its possible underlying meanings have a clarifying effect on the blurred lines of sanctity and secular, through the lens of olfaction and miasma theory.

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<sup>155</sup> Classen, 52–54. Classen writes that the odor of sanctity was often identified with the presence of the Holy Spirit and that it “stood in opposition to the stench of moral corruption.” She does not however, make the connection of miasmatic theory. The same contagion idea is occurring but it is now the metaphorical stench of corruption and the possible danger or infection of the soul.

<sup>156</sup> Cox, Churchwardens’ Accounts.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. “1541 {St. Coliimb Major). Paid George Collins for a shroude for ye pavers daughter and for an halfe pounce of Francke encence and for a penarde of threde, 8s. 5d.”

Churchwardens used frankincense to reestablish those lines and thus reaffirm the power of the church when perfumes increasingly blurred those boundaries.

The interior smellscapes shown here demonstrate how scents and odors were used to express inclusivity, establish boundaries, and prevent a literal or metaphorical illness from unwanted odors, both actual and perceived. The birthing room and the process of homemade perfumes were feminized and odiferous interior smellscapes. The process of pregnancy, birth, and nursing was pungent and adhered strictly to the medical miasma theory. Perfume markets created unique and sometimes overpowering smellcosms while housewives and aristocratic ladies learned to make perfumes at home and rebranded the scented process as both English and feminine. Furthermore, perfume was utilized in olfactory repression and to avoid noxious airs and ill vapors. Finally, the churchwardens employed incense as a sanitizer and an instrument to redefine the spaces between secular and sanctity. These interior smellcosms apply the miasma theory literally and metaphorically; but they also describe early modern life culturally, economically, and religiously.



CHAPTER IV  
EXTERIOR SMELLSCAPES

The Jilts with their Cullies by this time were Prancing  
Within a large Shed, built on purpose for Dancing;  
Which stunk so of Sweat, Pocky Breaths, and Perfume,  
That my Mistress and I soon avoided the Room.<sup>158</sup>

This poem was written by patron Ned Ward after a rather disconcerting experience at the New Tunbridge Wells, otherwise known as the Islington Spa. Smellscapes were created by physical smells and perceived scents or odors. Exterior smellscapes have a specific element of Other in them.<sup>159</sup> For Mr. Ward, the Other was the lower class people and the prostitutes. Early modern England had complex and important smellscapes with distinct cultural meaning in sixteenth and seventeenth century life. Olfactory preoccupation and concern, which led to the miasma contagion theory, developed certain scent environments. Physical odors that make up a smellscape are, mostly, straightforward; they create memories or reinforce ideas that can be recalled again with the said smell or mixture of smells. Perceived odors are more a cultural

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<sup>158</sup>“Spa Green to Skinner Street,” in *Survey of London: Volume 47, Northern Clerkenwell and Pentonville*, edited by Philip Temple (London: London County Council, 2008), 84-108. *British History Online*, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol47/pp84-108>.

<sup>159</sup> Other, as used in this thesis refers to how one group or person views other groups or person that is different. The Other is most easily ascribed to those who differ in creed, color, or country but, as will be discussed later, the Other can easily become someone as close as family.

phenomenon. A perceived smell can be present in a smellscape whether, first, a true smell exists and therefore the cultural assumptions associated with the odor are justified, or, second, the smell is not there but is understood as present because of defined notions or cultural norms. Perceived odors can also arise when the constructed smellscape is then reconceived as a metaphor to comment on the social, political, or religious climate. Finally, a smellscape could evolve from actual smells when scents or odors became associated with words or actions.<sup>160</sup>

Exterior smellscapes comprised of both real and conceptual odors usually followed the miasma theory standards but this application of the theory constitutes an expansion from its original medical paradigm to a wider cultural use. Again, the fluidity of smells and olfaction gave latitude with the miasma theory, which in turn allowed the idea to seep into other areas of life. In reacting to smellscapes, which are often a medley of odors, people followed and then utterly disregarded the contagion theory. Many of the inconsistencies in the use of the miasma theory in early modern life are contained in the smellscapes discussed below. The smellscapes shown here will display the diversity, range, and influence of olfaction and the miasma theory in early modern society. They will also show a developing perception of scent that has less to do with actual odors present than constructed social norms.

Harking back to Mr. and Mrs. Ward's unfortunate experience, spas were public spaces that sometimes facilitated a mixture of low and high classes and prostitutes all gamboling about in vigorous pursuits. The metaphorical class odor and the real odor of perfumes and sweat combined to fill the room with such an overpowering reek that the

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<sup>160</sup> Words and actions becoming scented are more fully discussed in the final chapter.

man and his wife left this debaucherous dance hall. It was not only the actual odors that drove Mr. and Mrs. Ward from the room: it was the metaphorical stench of class and actions of the people inhabiting it. Spas were complex smellscape that often provided an ironic sulfuric space for healing but also a social experience of either wholesome or lascivious activities, which imposed further layers upon the odorific environment.

The health aspect of chalybeate spas or iron water wells was only part of the allure. Entertainment and a certain breakdown of propriety were also a great appeal. Recalling *The Duke's Bagnio*, it advertised exclusivity in their spa, which provided a delivery service that took the “drink” to all sorts of people for a small fee. This action would prevent the poor or lower classes from loitering around the establishment, ruining the atmosphere. Yet the spa still made a profit selling the “drink” to those who wished to pay. The drink was a purgative that allowed ill humors to be expelled from the body, usually in the form of diarrhea. The facility even had different days for men and women to attend, which allowed for gender-specific gatherings.<sup>161</sup> According to *The London Spaw Advertisement, August 1685*, the “spaw” provided separate areas for each gender.<sup>162</sup> This particular spa held up to eight people comfortably, which meant bathing places such as this were foul-smelling spaces of male and female congregation. It was a location where social gatherings could occur and the sulphurous smellscape facilitated them.

Though some spas separated the sexes, that decision was site-specific. At the Islington Spa, for example, neither the genders nor the classes were divided. Instead, the clientele was quite varied: “The establishment offered coffee, dancing and gambling, for a cut-price entrance fee of three pence. It was thus anything but exclusive, and was well

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<sup>161</sup> Haworth, *An Account of the Duke's bagnio*.

<sup>162</sup> *The London Spaw Advertisement, August 1685* (London: n.p., 1685).

attended by a varied and picturesque crowd that included fops, sharps and prostitutes.”<sup>163</sup>  
In the demarcated space of spas, the odor was accepted and embraced by the patrons.

The rotten egg smell was a confirmation of a legitimate spa even though the smell of sulfur could suggest rottenness and devilry. And therein a possibility presents: did the smells have a wicked effect on the patrons? The miasma theory at its basic level meant decaying smells caused illness. Because the theory is not only physiological but also social, perhaps the rotting egg smell had a wayward effect on the mindset of the spa clients. Possibly, because the patrons were subconsciously inhaling the bad smells, inherently associated with the negative and because the smells were mitigated by the healing properties, morally questionable actions and less than upstanding behavior may have been accepted and seedy entertainments allowed. Did the smellscape of spas allow inhibitions to be lowered? Though these questions lie outside the scope of this thesis, the possibility that space association allowed smells with a bad reputation to be negated and even celebrated is intriguing. Depending on the particular chalybeate spa, groups were divided or joined. It was an environment based on scent that had powers of healing, entertainment, fellowship, and fraternization. Both real and perceived smells abounded as Mr. Ward reveals by his disparaging remarks about the lower class ladies of the dance hall.

Cities attempted to define lines between what was acceptable to the senses and what was not. Acts and proclamations continually were issued in the sixteenth and seventeenth century to establish order. Recall that in 1590 Queen Elizabeth I demanded that certain refuse be disposed of properly throughout the realm. Numerous other appeals

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<sup>163</sup> “Spa Green to Skinner Street.”

for the proper management of waste abounded. The collection of dung, specifically that of horses and other livestock, afforded an opportunity for people to sell it or use it in gardens and on farms. Human excrement, offal, and dung of no use were classified as legal nuisance and a legitimate health hazard.

Thomas Burton, a diarist, wrote that to have a man set dung on his property would be akin to handing the title of the land over.<sup>164</sup> In some cases, leases specified that the lessees should not lay dung or other noisome muck on the proprietor's ground, which would be bothersome to the landowners, and possibly, if they were of Burton's mind, insulting them in the process.<sup>165</sup> Those possible foul smellsapes led proprietors to put stipulations on leases. One lease written for a vicar demanded that no noisome livestock could be kept nor any privy erected without the church's acquiescence because of their potential to cause a disturbance.<sup>166</sup>

But livestock and their noxious habits were not the only issues. Inhabitants of English cities were responsible for setting out their waste at the appropriate time and place and they were also tasked with maintaining the cleanliness of the street in front of

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<sup>164</sup> "The Diary of Thomas Burton: 11 March 1658–9," in *Diary of Thomas Burton Esq: Volume 4, March–April 1659*, edited by John Towill Rutt (London: H. Colburn, 1828), 119–139. *British History Online*, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/burton-diaries/vol4/pp119-139>.

<sup>165</sup> "Livery Company Records: the Drapers and the Mercers (nos 420–23)," in *London Viewers and their Certificates, 1508–1558 Certificates of the Sworn Viewers of the City of London*, edited by Janet Senderowitz Loengard (London: London Record Society, 1989), 160–162. *British History Online*, accessed April 27, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol26/pp160-162>. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, noisome has several meanings including noxious, injurious, annoying, and unpleasant. The word was liberally applied in early modern texts, particularly regarding "nuisance" laws.

<sup>166</sup> Historical Manuscripts Commission, "Acts and accounts: 1630–41," in *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Dean and Chapter of Wells: Volume 2* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1914), 392–425. *British History Online*, accessed April 30, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/wells-mss/vol2/pp392-425>.

their homes and shops. The maintenance of large cesspits and open sewers were the prerogative of the city but the results were inconsistent. In 1634 Thomas Gibbon and his neighbors petitioned the city council to fix a common sewer that ran past the complainants' houses in London because it made the air unpleasant and infectious with stench.<sup>167</sup> Whether or not Gibbons and his mates saw the sewers fixed is unknown. However, the complaint reveals that residents had a limit of toleration and that in the case of nuisance complaints, the miasma theory held strongly.

A petition set before Queen Elizabeth I in 1595 attempted to convince the government to close up a London common ditch because of the overpowering stench and claimed that more people died of plague in the proximity of that ditch than anywhere else in London. Apparently the smell was of monumental proportions and the petition suggested planting perfumed gardens in the space after.<sup>168</sup> According to the petition, the smell in particular, in line with the miasma theory, was causing preventable deaths. Another order to repair the London streets was sent out in 1647 by the House of Lords. Like many such laws, it was intended to clean the offending filth and thus to prevent disease.<sup>169</sup> In 1662, Charles II passed an act for repairing and maintaining the highways and sewers of London. The act gave permission to widen existing sewers and scour them

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<sup>167</sup> "Charles I – volume 281: Undated 1634," in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles I, 1634–5*, edited by John Bruce (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1864), 421–436. *British History Online*, accessed April 30, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/chas1/1634-5/pp421-436>.

<sup>168</sup> "Queen Elizabeth – Volume 252: May 1595," in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, 1595–97*, edited by Mary Anne Everett-Green (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1869), 34–48. *British History Online*, accessed April 30, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/edw-eliz/1595-7/pp34-48>.

<sup>169</sup> "House of Lords Journal Volume 9: 13 March 1647," in *Journal of the House of Lords: Volume 9, 1646*, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1767–1830), 77–80. *British History Online*, accessed April 30, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/lords-jrnl/vol9/pp77-80>.

until the putrid stench abated and became less of a hazard for travelers.<sup>170</sup> London's rapidly increasing population forced the government to accommodate for the extra filth. The smellscape was overpowering and forced action from residents and local government in order to prevent an epidemic or localized sickness caused by the stench.

The problem in keeping a city clean was that much of the burden of maintaining a clean environment fell on the citizens; how the neighbors dealt with the process of waste removal and sewage cleaning varied widely and was often not effective.<sup>171</sup> Scavengers and rakers were hired by the town commissioners to pick up the waste at designated areas. It was immensely difficult to convince everyone involved to work in harmony. According to Cockayne, the process was an unmitigated disaster. "Urban waste disposal worked well if the householders carried out their duties, at the correct times," she explains. "However, a sluttish observation of the rules and a complete failure to sweep were common. [And] the post of scavenger was neither the most prestigious nor desirable of civic positions, and many co-optees were reluctant to fulfil their obligations."<sup>172</sup>

The space of filth—cesspits, sewers, and ditches—was a dominant feature of early modern life and suffused cities with the reeking miasmas of human waste. These noxious odors constituted a reoccurring and unwanted smellscape; they were nevertheless a constant element of early modern life. Documents written at the time reveal a continuous effort to control the odors thought to transmit disease.

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<sup>170</sup> "Charles II, 1662: An Act for repairing the High ways and Sewers . . . and for the enlarging of several strait & inconvenient Streets and Passages," in *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 5, 1628–80*, edited by John Raithby (n.p.: Great Britain Record Commission, 1819), 351–357. *British History Online*, accessed April 30, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/statutes-realm/vol5/pp351-357>.

<sup>171</sup> Cockayne, 143; "Charles II, 1662." In fact, one part of the act forced a person to forfeit forty shillings for each month he failed to clear his allotted area.

<sup>172</sup> Cockayne, 186–187.

Disgust over these miasmatic smellscapes was constant and the authorities enjoyed limited success in regulating refuse. In just under twenty-five years, Middlesex County fined seventeen people for dumping feces and offal on highways and thoroughfares while eleven were charged for blocking or neglecting to scour sewers.<sup>173</sup> Though these numbers seem small, these people and those helping them must have dumped a prodigious amount of garbage and muck to block a sewer and be brought up on charges. In the case of highways, enough waste would have to be dumped to either impede travelers or waylay them because of the smell. One reason so few charges regarding befouling public spaces are available is that the anonymity of the act gave the offender more chance to get away with the crime. It was far easier to convict residents for a dirty street front or for neglecting to care for their waste.

Authorities had better luck with laws regulating smelly businesses. Though some businesses smelled strongly and thrived *because* of the smell, such as spas, other businesses such as chandlers, butchers, tanners, and pig-keepers often produced such odiferous vapors that they were relegated to the outskirts of a city or to non-residential areas. The treatment of these businesses aligns perfectly with miasmatic thought; in some cases the businesses were moved about like pawns on a chessboard. William Shewell, a chandler who had been told to melt his wares in London by the Middlesex Justices of the Peace, was brought yet again to court because of his noxious melting house on Turnmill

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<sup>173</sup> “Summaries of the True Bills: Elizabeth,” in *Middlesex County Records: Volume 2, 1603–25*, edited by John Cordy Jeaffreson (London: Middlesex County Record Society, 1887), 247–287. *British History Online*, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/middx-county-records/vol2/pp247-287>.



Street.<sup>174</sup> People with livestock and butchers threw their dead animals, dung, and entrails into the nearest available open areas, which produced a putrefying stench.

Some citizens of Cambridge wrote a proclamation to its less sanitary inhabitants, listing nineteen rules for keeping the streets clean for individuals and for businesses.<sup>175</sup> These proclamations show that sanitation was a constant issue in early modern life and it was often when the stench intensified or thoroughly saturated people's environments, that actions and complaints appeared. The cities' refuse caused smellscapes, which in turn led to citizens, and local and even national governments to step in and attempt to stem the suffocating tide of sludge from overwhelming the urban areas. These smellscapes and the reactions they caused stemmed from the basic understanding that the miasmas would cause illness. Only a massive overhaul of behavior or government action would stop these smellscapes caused by ordinary human behavior from appearing over and again.

The Great Fire of 1666 swept through the crowded city of London destroying a great amount of property in its hungry flames. As devastating as the fire was, it also provided an opportunity to change London's environment from the noisy, smelly, labyrinthine mess that it was, to a sweeter smelling, less cluttered city. King Charles II wrote an act for rebuilding London beginning with sewers and streets. The whiffy and olid muck were major problems that were largely burned away, cleansed by the fire.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> "Nuisances," in *Analytical Index To the Series of Records Known As the Remembrancia 1579–1664*, edited by W. H. Overall and H. C. Overall (London: E. J. Francis, 1878), 263. *British History Online*, accessed April 30, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/index-remembrancia/1579-1664/p263>.

<sup>175</sup> Whereas divers and disordered people inhabiting amongst us (Cambridge: n.p., c.1635).

<sup>176</sup> "Olid, adj," *Oxford English Dictionary*, accessed September 2016, <http://www.oed.com>, September 2016. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, olid means rank, fetid, or having a bad smell.

The city's environments changed because of this disaster. Whole streets were moved outside the castle walls because of their dubious natures.<sup>177</sup> Sewers and drains were enlarged and built anew and reeking trades were diminished or removed from the main streets.<sup>178</sup> Preventative measures were taken to ameliorate the atmosphere of London that had become worse as the population increased. The acts were a magnificent wholesale restructuring of the city, a plan to build a clean place with better flowing sewers and unsoiled streets. Whether the actions were successful is unclear, but out of these ashes grew a tremendous opportunity to reconfigure London's urban environment so that it had the infrastructure conducive to promoting the health of its citizens.

Perceived space was also reconfigured when the Other is involved. Assigning odor to the Other creates even more space and also assumes the person or group doing the assigning is scentless or smells good. Olfactory prejudice was rife in the early modern era and sometime extended into olfactory retribution.

A 1653 pamphlet titled *A Dutch-men's Pedigree* is an excellent introduction to how foreigners were perceived in England during the mid-seventeenth century and provides an example of the Other in literature. This English origin story of the Dutchmen involves the turds of a "great, huge, large, horrible, terrible, hideous, fearful, filthy, ugly,

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<sup>177</sup> Eneas Mackenzie, "The present state of Newcastle: The eastern suburbs," in *Historical Account of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne Including the Borough of Gateshead* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Mackenzie and Dent, 1827), 182–186. *British History Online*, accessed March 4, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/newcastle-historical-account/pp182-186>.

<sup>178</sup> "Charles II, 1666: An Act for rebuilding the City of London," in *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 5, 1628–80*, edited by John Raithby (n.p.: Great Britain Record Commission, 1819), 603–612. *British History Online*, accessed March 4, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/statutes-realm/vol5/pp603-612>.

monstrous, misshapen, prodigious, preposterous” horse, and a butter box.<sup>179</sup> Upon seeing the British navy, “a sudden fear surpriz’ed [the horse] and set him into such a violent purging condition, that he never left shitting till he purged life and all out of his body.”<sup>180</sup> Adhering to a prophecy, Germans were sent out to where the dung was with the large butter box in tow. However, the overwhelming smell was an unbearable obstacle. The Germans “had far sooner the scent of the place in their nostrils than the sight thereof in their eyes; for above twenty miles about there was such a filthy noysome stink, that many of the men that help’d to carry the said Box thither, were choaked with it, and others sate down to stop their nose, but the rest ran home again, and left the Box behinde them.” Some of the men were even killed by the stench and therefore the devils that had come to watch took over the work.<sup>181</sup>

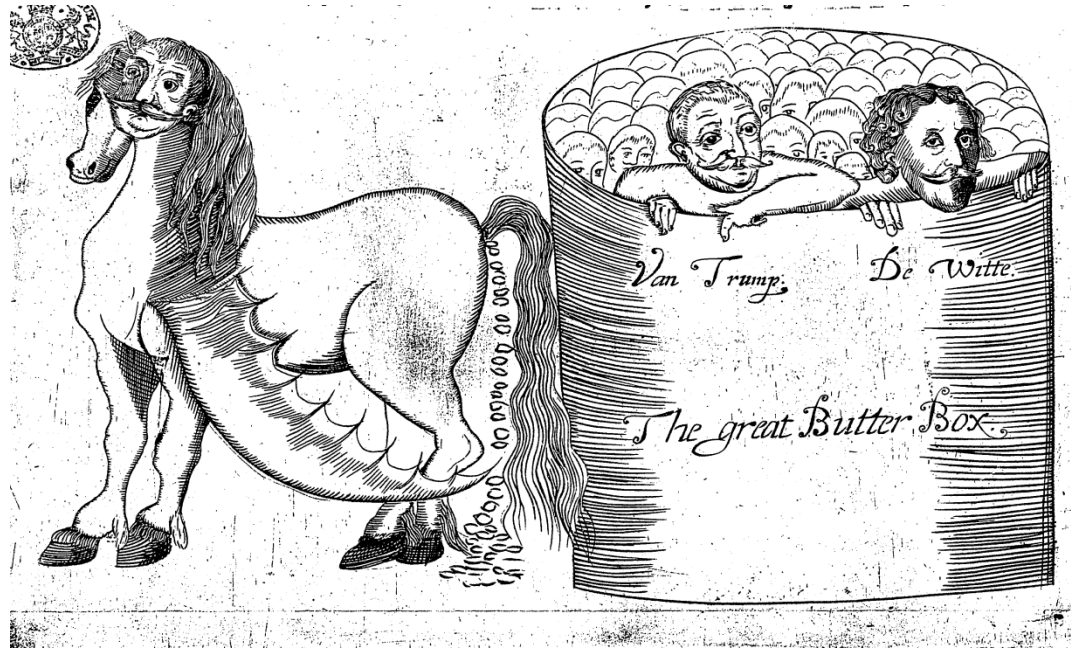
According to the tale, the foreign Dutchmen that emerged were products of devilry and shit. Below is the drawing depicting the great horse, his turds, and the Dutch people appearing from the butter box. Scents, particularly the unpleasant ones, are most effective when used to ostracize a group of people. It allows the accuser to associate his or her object of disdain with poor health, hedonism, possible affiliations with the devil, and general unpleasantness. The process of fashioning an olfactory Other created a distinct scent-space wherein prejudice and dismissiveness could thrive. The negative attributes or rottenness of the Other was seen as a danger to the English people and therefore the miasmatic thought was transformed into a means for cultural and political bias.

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<sup>179</sup> [D. F.], *The Dutch-men’s Pedigree* (London: n.p., 1653).

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*



Most of the cases of olfactory retribution or prejudice occurred close to home and the victims could be foreigners or simply the annoying neighbors. Unlike the theoretical origin story of the Dutchmen, some people chose to utilize actual feces. During the short reign of Edward VI, a man was indicted for deliberately defiling his neighbor's well with dung.<sup>182</sup> A French ambassador in London, Michel de Castelnau, sieur de la Mauvissiere, was continually harassed by his English neighbors who broke his sewer, which the authorities apparently did not fix, and thus filled the house with an awful smell.<sup>183</sup> Even worse, the Mauvissiere complained that William Grise "has blocked up my windows with dung and filth, enough to poison us, and taken away all the light from my house, uttering

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<sup>182</sup> "Summaries of the True Bills: Edward VI," in *Middlesex County Records: Volume 2, 1603–25*, edited by John Cordy Jeaffreson (London: Middlesex County Record Society, 1887), 245. *British History Online*, accessed April 4, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/middx-county-records/vol2/p245>.

<sup>183</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Michel de Castelnau, sieur de la Mauvissiere: French Diplomat," accessed April 4, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Michel-de-Castelnau-Sieur-de-La-Mauvissiere>.

a thousand insults, calling us French dogs, villains, cowards”<sup>184</sup> By using dung and sewage, the Englishmen not only offended the French ambassador, they also labeled him and his house as distinctly foreign.

English court records for the early modern period also show that individuals were brought up before the court for acts of olfactory retribution. A plot was uncovered at the onset of Queen Elizabeth’s reign in 1587. John Clarke planned to burn the Earl of Leicester’s house in an attempt to raise a Catholic rebellion. But he was also arrested and imprisoned for making poisonous perfumes.<sup>185</sup> This trend of deadly perfumed reprisals continued a few years later as John Stanley confessed in the Tower that he was employed to take a perfume and “cast it in the way of Her Majesty, to cut off her life.”<sup>186</sup> Again, in February of 1600, Sir Walter Levenson, a knight of the realm was imprisoned for concocting poisons. One in particular was a perfume so toxic that it would poison all who smelled it.<sup>187</sup> The miasmas created from poisoned perfumes were the next level of olfactory retribution. Instead of disparaging remarks or reeking dung, assassins were now

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<sup>184</sup> “Elizabeth: August 1584, 1–10,” in *Calendar of State Papers Foreign, Elizabeth, Volume 19, August 1584–August 1585*, edited by Sophie Crawford Lomas (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1916), 1–19. *British History Online*, accessed March 21, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/foreign/vol19/pp1-19>.

<sup>185</sup> “Queen Elizabeth – Volume 198: February 1587,” in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, 1581–90*, edited by Robert Lemon (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1865), 383–391. *British History Online*, accessed April 4, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/edw-eliz/1581-90/pp383-391>.

<sup>186</sup> “Queen Elizabeth – Volume 268: October 1598,” in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, 1598–1601*, edited by Mary Anne Everett Green (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1869), 102–115. *British History Online*, accessed April 4, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/edw-eliz/1598-1601/pp102-115>.

<sup>187</sup> “Queen Elizabeth – Volume 274: February 1600,” in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, 1598–1601*, ed. Mary Anne Everett Green (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1869), 391–406. *British History Online*, accessed April 4, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/edw-eliz/1598-1601/pp391-406>.

recreating a means for dismissing noxious airs with the intent to kill their enemies. Using poisoned perfumes was particularly popular in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. These men were attempting to change the course of their country's history by assassinating the ruling monarch with deadly scents.<sup>188</sup>

Though the Other as shown above was easily categorized and therefore despised, the ultimate Other was created when whole cities divided against themselves. During stressful times like the plague years, many people in England believed two groups of people existed in their society: the sick and the yet to be sick. Fear of contagion caused English urban cities to demarcate spaces of health and sickness, which in turn ascribed the diseased as the Other. The plague caused urban England to create the Other amongst themselves. Geographical lines and the medical miasmatic theory were never more pronounced than when the plague struck. The plague was a perfect disease for creating panic, fear, and a dose of otherness among fellow Englishmen. A proper English death was one where the dying people lay in their own beds, surrounded by family, friends, and priests. The plague disrupted much of what made a "good" death and stalked early modern society with worrying, persistent irregularity. The humanist geographer Yi-Fu Tuan writes, "Human beings cannot bear to live in a permanent state of anxiety. They need to retain a sense of control, however illusory."<sup>189</sup> Contagious diseases did not always mean the plague but were still placed under the umbrella of the disease as a fear induced precaution. With the inconsistent medical advice and application, all fast

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<sup>188</sup> As shown in the first chapter, men and women alike applied copious amounts of powders and perfumes to their person to mask smell or prevent a smell from reaching them. Did the attempts on the queen's life via perfume mean the application of perfumes for men were waning into a more feminine action?

<sup>189</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), 69–70.

spreading diseases were watched with apprehension and dread. As with the case with smells, the plague touched every aspect of life in early modern England. Churches attempted to stem the tide of plague induced panic and created spaces designed for the sick while the healthy fled the cities and ingested and applied stinky concoctions lauded to stave off the plague or to cure one who showed the tell-tale signs.<sup>190</sup> The smellscape of the plague created a suggestion of fear and apprehension in the air because mere quarantine of the diseased was not enough. The stench of the dying—and thus the stench of fear—could blow to the healthy parts of the city at any moment.

A paper consisting of four years of plague statistics compiled by eight major London parishes was published in 1665. The document noted all deaths, and separately those who died of the plague every Thursday of each month. Tens of thousands of people died from the disease each year and rose to a peak of 35,403 plague deaths in 1625.<sup>191</sup> The sickness caused English communities to divide themselves into the sick and the healthy. More importantly, those communities divided their physical environments between the uninfected and the contaminated areas. A primary indication that one was crossing the boundaries between health and disease was the pervading stench of the

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<sup>190</sup> Mary Dobson, *Disease: The Extraordinary Stories behind History's Deadliest Killers* (New York: Metro Books, 2013), 17. According to Dobson, "Authorities ordered cleaning up of dung heaps, and quarantining the infected. Individuals sought to save themselves by smoking tobacco, sitting under a foul-smelling latrine or sniffing roses. Viper fat, spiders' webs, toad poison, woodlice and crab's eyes were a few of the antidotes offered for sale. When the plague threatened London, someone suggested filling a ship with peeled onions and letting it float down the Thames, in the hope that its absorbent powers would protect the city" (17).

<sup>191</sup> *The Four Great Years of the Plague* (London: printed for Peter Cole, 1665), 1. The total death toll for 1625 was 51,758 and the parishes who compiled this list were: Stepney, Redriff, Islington, Newington, Lambatch, Hackney, Covent Garden, St. Margarets Westminster. If the numbers are correct, one can only begin to imagine the numbers for all of England. However, one must be aware that exaggeration was a frequent side effect of the plague.

dying, the dead people and the animals that had been killed to prevent the plague from spreading.

Containment methods began with in-home separation and a collection of charitable donations. Without revenue, no one would be willing to mark infected houses, dispose of the diseased bodies, or maintain the plague houses. Therefore in 1577 the Corporation of London published several articles of protocol to be followed in case of an outbreak. Identification of all infected people was a critical first step followed by quarantine to prevent poor people from leaving the city and spreading the disease. A specification noted that the rich must not be allowed to flout inspection and due containment processes; yet, there is no mention of barring the rich from leaving.<sup>192</sup> The separation of classes endured through epidemics.

Searchers, who were usually women of “honest reputation,”<sup>193</sup> were paid by the city or churchwardens to go door to door finding those with infection. The searchers were directed in identifying the infected by their sense of smell when walking next to a likely plague victim.<sup>194</sup> According to one pamphlet from this period that warned of the signs of

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<sup>192</sup> Corporation of London, Court of Common Council, Articles to be enquired of, what orders have bene put into execution for the restreinyng of the infected of the plague, within the citie of London and liberties thereof (London: J. Day, 1577).

<sup>193</sup> *The Orders and Directions* (London: Printed for G. Horton, 1665), 2. Even though the women were supposed to be of an honest reputation, they were forbidden to work in public spaces like markets or as laundresses. This was another measure in creating a “safe” space in which the town or city could keep running. “No Searcher, during this time of Visitation, be permitted to use any publick work or impoyment, or keep any shop or stall, or by employed as a Landress, or in any other common employment what soever.” It is unknown if this decree was adhered to strictly or haphazardly because public fountains were crucial to city-dwellers for bathing, cleaning, and drinking—a conundrum between keeping the water as pure as possible and possibly endangering those who have to have access to water.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.



the “pestilence,” unsavory, sour, or stinking breath was one of ten signs of the plague.<sup>195</sup> To protect these women and to enforce the quarantine laws, overseers worked in two shifts—morning and night—in order to keep those who were sick from coming out of their quarantined houses. Quarantined spaces were not just delineated by markings and padlocks on the gates and doors. They were *patrolled* spaces to further solidify the line between danger and safety.

It was imperative that servants of the infected maintain proper distance from the outside world as well. As shown previously, beds and bedding were quarantined for sixty days. A nurse-keeper who left a house where plague was present “before 28 days after the deceased of any person dying of the infection” had elapsed, was required to sequester herself until the allotted time period was over.<sup>196</sup> People and objects moving from quarantined premises had to first experience a period of isolation to hopefully confirm that they would not pass on the pestilence to others. At the height of the fear that plague caused, the miasmatic theory reigned as the contagion theory.

It was no wonder there were mass exoduses from urban areas. The rich had the capabilities, despite regulations put into place, to leave urban centers when the disease began to sweep through the cities. The seventeenth-century woodcut below depicts wealthy families fleeing the plague. They, with their carriages, horses, and aristocratic clothing were fleeing while death, in the form of macabre skeletons, danced around the wagons and roads.

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<sup>195</sup> The signes that doe declare a person to be infected with the pestilence (London: T. Snodham, 1625).

<sup>196</sup> The Orders and Directions, 2.



Aside from acts and rules passed by the governing bodies, many other writings debated the merits of leaving or remaining in the cities. Though quasi-impartiality was supposedly maintained, most writings that encourage citizens to stay in one place specifically targeted the poor. *Some Wholesome Counsells and Directions* subtly alluded that fleeing one's home was neither godly nor lawful.<sup>197</sup> Rather, the poor should "bid [the plague] welcome, accept it, kisse the Rod, and the hand that holds it, drink the cup, which though it may be bitter, yet may prove wholesome and not poisonous in the least."<sup>198</sup> The literature was designed to convince the poor to remain at home and not spread the infection around the country, and claimed by doing so they will receive God's favor.

When the number of infected became too many to simply quarantine in their houses, the next step was to gather them up in one area. Once again, it was the poor and those without familial support who were put in large buildings together. The charnel

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<sup>197</sup> *Some wholesome counsells and directions drawn up, and given out by occasion of the present plague, specially for the benefit of such poor families and persons, as either now are or have been visited therewith, and are recovered* (London: n.p., 1665), 5. An interesting note on the preface: the author, who is anonymous, refers to the work of his contemporary, Mr. Richard Baxter, by writing, "that those sweet and savory Papers of his, which like so many Boxes of Precious Ointment broken open, have filled the City and Country with such an Odiferous and Fragrant smell, as hath much refresh the nostrils of many" (4). Such high praise is intriguing. Was the anonymous writer an actual contemporary of Mr. Baxter or was this Mr. Baxter himself? Either way here is an excellent example of how the spread of literature and ideas is likened to fragrance.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

house was usually established by churches, and like the housebound spaces, one could, to some extent, avoid these communal plague houses thereby skirting the noxious exterior smellscape. However, the precarious nature of the state religion, Protestant Christianity—as opposed to Catholicism—complicated matters in early modern England.<sup>199</sup>

The practice of charity and good works also began to diminish. Working with the sick, old, and infirm had its own olfactory pitfalls given that the elderly and unwell often had an unpleasant odor about them. It is yet another example of immersing oneself in unpleasant odors because the action has a positive connotation. By performing charitable deeds, the church and individuals were fulfilling their duties to God. Individuals who performed good works were also held in esteem within their community and by extension the church. But because Protestantism has no purgatory, one could argue that after the Reformation the amount of charitable contributions began to decline. Without the need to lessen one's time in purgatory, the only gain in working with the diseased would have been to attain the aforementioned esteem.

In 1665, the churchwardens “distributed to the releefe of the poore infected that were shut upp, and for the Coles which made the fires by order of the Lord Mair.”<sup>200</sup> This meant, they most likely fed or treated the diseased and offered them, at the behest of the

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<sup>199</sup> Reinartz, 36. The church and priests acted as a medium between reality on Earth and God in Heaven, though with the advent of many Protestant sects that reliance was diminishing. An important tool to connect the masses on Earth and God above was the use of smell: utilizing products that produced a scent in cleansing rituals and baptisms, olfaction was deeply ingrained in Christianity. According to Reinartz, “Smells varied in intensity in the world of religion, but they served effectively to demarcate space, objects, and actions” (36). Such demarcated lines began to blur in the during the seventeenth century.

<sup>200</sup> Cox, Churchwardens' Accounts.

local lord, fuel for warmth. During the plague years, churchwarden accounts in various urban cities of England, noted the overwhelming numbers of dead people obstructing the streets and the amount paid to individuals tasked with killing dogs because of the fear that they carried the disease. In fact, 570 dogs are recorded as being dispatched in 1625 while thousands of poor folk died in each epidemic. It was the church's duty to dispose of many of the bodies, which is why 272 loads of gravel were bought in 1626 for the graves of nearly 1,500 poor people.<sup>201</sup> The sheer number of unburied people and animals created a terrifying scent space. The smell of rotting corpses permeated the city in large swaths and created an amorphous fear space. The edges of this danger zone blurred when fickle winds shifted carried the perilous smell of putrid remains into the supposed safe districts.

New quarantine houses in 1609 and pest houses in 1642 were also funded from the church coffers.<sup>202</sup> Within this brief yet horrifying picture the accounts have painted, one can image the aroma of incense mingled with the smell of the dead and dying within cities. Space and location are noteworthy here because the church, with urban government support, designated locations in which to confine the diseased. In 1630, Charles II enacted a law allowing England's citizens to be taxed for charitable purposes—care, quarantine, and burials—of poor plague victims. Non-compliance would result in jail without bail until the person paid up.<sup>203</sup> According to Tuan, "Fear of disease is closely linked to fear of many other phenomena, including defects in the self, tainted or bewitched objects, evil persons, demonic spirits, and a malfunctioning cosmos."<sup>204</sup> Thus,

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> An act for the charitable reliefe and ordering of persons infected with the plague (London: printed by Robert Young, 1630).

<sup>204</sup> Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear*, 87.

pest and quarantine houses served a much larger purpose than just the containment of disease, they were spatial elements that allowed the rest of the community to feel secure and safe from these other entities associated with the fear of the disease. These houses are also smellscapes of the dying, or rather, physical locations explicitly associated with the reek of death.

Thomas Dekker, a prolific early modern English writer, wrote *A Wonderful yeare*, a commentary on facets of society including the plague. Having grown sick of the rich ignoring the poor and dying he wrote, “To some, the very sound of death’s name, is instead of a passing bell, what shall become of such a coward, being told that the self-same bodie of his, which now is so pampered with superfluous fare, so perfumed and bathed in odoriferous waters, and so gaily appareled in varietie of fashions must one day be thrown (like stinking carrion) into a rancke and rotten grave.”<sup>205</sup>

As one can see, he condemned the rich for averting their eyes and resources from the growing problem. What is interesting is that he did not mention the landed or wealthy directly but rather the luxury of perfuming one’s body, of frequenting spas and using medicinal waters. Dekker, using scent language, effectively created a platform on which to comment on the deplorable state of the country, the sweeping plague, and the decadence of the affluent.

Dekker used scent language to comment on his society’s reaction to those who contracted the plague. His depiction of the pestilence and the charnel houses paints an agonizing picture of what London was going through. He wrote,

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

What an unmatched torment were it for a man to be boarded up every night in a vast silent Charnel-house: hung (to make it more hideous) with lamps dimly and slowly burning, in hollow and glimmering corners: where all the pavement should in stead of greene rushes, be strewn with blasted Rosemary, withered Hyacinths, fatal Cipresse, and Ewe, thickly mingled with heapes of dead mens bones: the bare ribbes of a gather that begat him, lying there: here the Chaples hollow skull of a mother that bore him and round about him a thousand corpses, some standing bolt up right in their knotted winding sheetes: others halfe moulded in rotten coffins, that should suddenly yawne wide open, filling his nostrils with noisome stench, and his eyes with the light of nothing but crawling worms.<sup>206</sup>

Dekker was disgusted by the treatment of plague victims in the plague houses frequently erected when the disease struck. This space was rife with the smell of infection, death, and decay. His enscented scene connected deeply with his readers and also instilled the association of containment, putridity, and certain death with the physical spaces and environments erected to house the infected. Despite the ghastly conditions of the pest houses, containment methods did help prevent the disease from spreading somewhat. The implementation of the miasma theory in cities sometimes kept the worst at bay, but it is important to note that almost without exception when disaster struck, the contagion theory was adhered to in these exterior smellscapes. The plague created a macro-smellscape that forced English society to restructure their physical environments to stave off the disease by creating an environmental Other as well as a human Other.

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<sup>206</sup> Thomas Dekker, *The Wonderfull yeare* (London: printed by Thomas Creede, 1603), accessed November 1, 2016, <http://www.luminarium.org/renascence-editions/yeare.html>.

Both the spaces and those infected with the plague were often identified by smell, and the physical space was a definitive reminder that death by plague was arbitrary and tangible.

The Other is a common theme in these early modern exterior smellscape. The miasma theory was applied and reworked to assign olfactory prejudice and even exact reeking revenge on the Other in question. Spas were locations of healing and in some cases lascivious behavior. It was also a public space that mixed genders and classes to the chagrin of some. Foreigners and political or religious adversaries found themselves labeled as the Other and were subjected to physical and metaphorical olfactory retribution. Finally, the ultimate Other was revealed when plague broke out in English cities. Both interior and exterior smellscape provide strong evidence that early modern English society abided, for the most part, by the miasmatic theory in a medical and symbolic sense.

CHAPTER V  
BREATH, BREATHINGS, AND AIR

“Do not sigh with your breast, or cough or breathe hard in the presence of your sovereign, or hiccough, or belch, or groan never the more . . . or with puffing and blowing cast foul breath upon your lord.”<sup>207</sup> This excerpt is from *The Babee’s Book*, a manners manual used to educate aristocratic youth on appropriate etiquette in early modern England. Although actual breath was individual, it was not a personal matter. Rather, the smell of one’s breath was society’s business in many instances. In this example, the young man is advised to mind his manners and particularly the smell of his breath in order not to offend his lord. Woolgar points out that often with improved conditions of life came a more complex etiquette system.<sup>208</sup> Thus, manners manuals were designed to train people in proper decorum, be they servants or masters.

Attention to hygiene allowed the aristocracy to maintain close quarters and observe proper deference depending on who was around them. Cockayne writes, “The most fastidious citizens were concerned about their body odours, and feared the potential

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<sup>207</sup> Edith Rickert and L. J. Naylor, trans., *The Babee’s Book: Medieval Manners for the Young*, Middle English Series (Cambridge, Ontario: In Parentheses Publications, 2000), 30. Accessed October 12, 2015,  
[https://archive.org/stream/thebabeesbook00furnuoft/thebabeesbook00furnuoft\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/thebabeesbook00furnuoft/thebabeesbook00furnuoft_djvu.txt).

<sup>208</sup> Woolgar, *The Great Household*, 197.



of offending others with stale sweat or bad breath.”<sup>209</sup> She also infers that this was the expectation of the noble born and to disregard this advice would be to act like a commoner. Hierarchy in the upper classes was an intricate affair; infecting the air around one’s betters could lead to all manner of social issues. There was also the practical concern about infection from the lower or inferior classes who were thought to more easily carry diseases.

The final transformation of the contagion theory is exemplified in breath, words, and scent literature. Breath was at once an intimate bodily function and indicated the character of a person. Early modern English society was deeply aware of odors both real and metaphorical. Smellscapes displayed the broad application of the miasma theory and olfactory concern in early modern English environments and a crucial social microcosm of those odorific environments was one’s breath. Space and location were key to the meaning of odoriferous bodily functions within social expectations and comportment, but the space of language and literature was far more ephemeral. Nevertheless, the miasma theory is evident in both actual and metaphorical smells.

In this chapter, breath, words otherwise known as breathings, and scent language show the olfactory ideal and how words have both power and a metaphorical smell. The fluidity of the odor-based miasma theory, as previously discussed, allowed it to be adapted beyond true physical smells to the world of words and language. Again, intent is central to the examples of breath and breathings found in the early modern era, particularly when words smell. As described in the previous chapter, infection of the body often manifested itself in foul breath. The intent behind words was identified in

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<sup>209</sup> Cockayne, 62.

olfactory terms because they could cause an infection of the mind or one's honor, or conversely, they could also prevent the infection.

Many tonics for fresh breath were available to early modern people. *Clark's dentifrices* offered all manner of cures for the mouth including one for sweetness of breath and to cure rottenness of the gums.<sup>210</sup> Tobacco was not merely a recreational item but a medicinal tool.<sup>211</sup> Mouthwater or gargarism had many recipes including one made from barley water and another from red oak leaves and boiled wine.<sup>212</sup> According to *The French Perfumer*, "Amber is extraordinarily good for the stomach; too much musk is hurtful to the mouth, so the less you put in your compositions the better: Never put in Civet, it is very improper for the mouth."<sup>213</sup> It is apparent from the warnings found in *The French Perfumer* that people were attempting to perfume their mouths and accidentally poisoning themselves.

Of course, there were those who capitalized on this breath-conscious society and sold mouth elixirs that were truly harmful. John Turner, a medical surgeon, was accused in 1613 of treating mouth conditions with precipitate and rosewater, and in one case he

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<sup>210</sup> Clark's dentifrices so much enquired after, and of such experienced efficacy for making the teeth white as ivory . . . and by the use of one of these papers, have had them all clean and fastned (London: n.p., 1662)

<sup>211</sup> Nancy Cox and Karin Dannehl, "Tobacco – Tolu lozenges," in *Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities, 1550–1820* (Wolverhampton: University of Wolverhampton, 2007). *British History Online*, accessed March 29, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/traded-goods-dictionary/1550-1820/tobacco-tolu-lozenges>.

<sup>212</sup> Cox and Dannehl, "Molasses – Mouth water," in *Dictionary*; Cox and Dannehl, "Gaiking powder – Gauntlet," in *Dictionary*.

<sup>213</sup> Barbe, 16.

sold straight mercury water.<sup>214</sup> In general, physical breath was managed as a regimen of health and social comportment.

“Breathings” on the other hand, were words both verbal and written that came with a distinct olfactory attribution. Both good and bad odors were associated with scented language because of the intent behind them. A great amount of writing also attempted to capture the scented ideal, which reveals social odor expectations. Scent language in early modern literature allows historians to glimpse cultural ideals, expectations, and assumptions about how people smelled and the scents others tolerated around them. What did writers enscent when they wrote a character? What influence did those literary scents have on the general population? Poetry, ballads, and plays, which often contained scent language, were widely distributed, sung, and watched. This exposure to scent language would have naturally ascribed certain smells to certain characters. For example, the mustachioed villain might carry a foul stench about himself while the virginal maid was surrounded by a floral perfume. Thus, imbedded associations carried over to daily life.

Michael Drayton, a prolific early modern writer, wrote *Endimion and Phoebe* in 1595. This poem was a modern adaptation of two Greek characters: the ever-slumbering Endymion and the Titaness, Phoebe.<sup>215</sup> Drayton applied the veneer of his contemporary

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<sup>214</sup> Margaret Pelling and Frances White, “TURNER, John,” in *Physicians and Irregular Medical Practitioners in London 1550–1640 Database* (London: Centre for Metropolitan History, 2004). *British History Online*, accessed March 29, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/london-physicians/1550-1640/turner-john>. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a precipitate was a solid mercury compound (accessed November 10, 2015, <http://www.oed.com>).

<sup>215</sup> M. Grant and J. Hazel, *Who’s Who in Classical Mythology* (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979), 127, 279–280. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, Endymion was

life onto the classic tale.<sup>216</sup> The scene was set with aromatic and floral beauty that surrounds Phoebe.<sup>217</sup> C. M. Woolgar writes, “The pleasure taken in the smell of flowers and the countryside was widespread and is particularly evident in English poetry from the fourteenth century onwards.”<sup>218</sup> This scene performed and read to an early modern audience would have had a subliminal effect that might dictate preferences in perfumes, sachets, nosegays, gardens, potpourri, decorations, and tokens of admiration. Floral flattery is rife in early modern literature. Desirable women were portrayed as beautiful and as aromatic flowers or scents. John Skelton’s short poem *To Mistress Margaret Hussey* likens the woman to a midsummer flower or a sweet pomander. Perhaps she was literally sweet-smelling or perhaps she was pure as a flower or cleansing as a pomander.<sup>219</sup>

Drayton also revealed the early modern concern for one’s breath, writing, “For this boyes loue, the water Nymphs haue wept. Stealing oft times to kisse him whilst he slept: And tasting once the Nectar of his breath, Surfet with sweet, and languish vnto death.”<sup>220</sup> In the case of lucky Endimion, his sweetness of breath kept drawing the water

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very handsome (accessed July 20, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Endymion-Greek-mythology>).

<sup>216</sup> Michael Drayton, *Endimion and Phoebe* (London: James Roberts for John Busbie, 1595), accessed November 3, 2015, <http://www.luminarium.org/renascence-editions/drayton1.html>. Drayton also discussed the British Empire indirectly by mentioning silk bought from Africa and India and pearls retrieved from the Orient.

<sup>217</sup> For a full account of *Endimion and Phoebe* refer to <http://www.luminarium.org/renascence-editions/drayton1.html>.

<sup>218</sup> Woolgar, *The Senses*, 128.

<sup>219</sup> John Skelton, “To Mistress Margaret Hussey” (1523), in *Poetry of the English Renaissance 1509–1660*, edited by J. William Hebel and Hoyt H. Hudson (New York: F. S. Crofts & Co., 1941), accessed October 21, 2015, <http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/hussey.htm>.

<sup>220</sup> Drayton. Drayton also comments on bathing, “and I suckt Nectar from her downe-soft pap. The Well wherein this body bathed first. Who drinks thereof, shall neuer after thirst.

nymphs to him. One's breath could augment or stall the efforts of an admirer, dictate social situations, or even call into question the integrity of one's character. Woolgar writes, "Unpleasant body odours displayed one's character as a person. There was a real concern about bad breath."<sup>221</sup> In the case of Endimion, he served as the ideal as far as breath scents are concerned; his seductive exhalations enabled him to enchant mythical creatures into kissing him.

One of the greatest writers and playwrights of the early modern era, William Shakespeare, used olfactory references in his works.<sup>222</sup> In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Bottom says, "Most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic; for we are to utter sweet breath, and I do not doubt but to hear them say it is a sweet comedy."<sup>223</sup> In other words, to have foul breath would possibly compromise the actual play. This Shakespearean play reveals that this breath-conscious society believed potent smelling foods were a hindrance to conversation or performances. Admonishments for eating garlic did not end with nursemaids. According to Mark S. R. Jenner, leeks, garlic, and onions became symbols of

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The water hath the Lunacie appeased\And by the vertue, cureth all diseased. The place wherein my bare feete touch the mold\Made vp in balls, for Pomander is sold." Here Phoebe is such the olfactory ideal that she is capable of curing diseases from water in which she bathed and prevent illness with the pomanders sold out of the ground her bare feet touched.

<sup>221</sup> Woolgar, *The Senses*, 127.

<sup>222</sup> The incredible volume of Shakespearian work is overwhelming and deserves a separate research paper dedicated to scent language used by him. From a quantitative standpoint, the entire works of Shakespeare uses the word "flower" seventy times, "rose" seventy-five times, "plague" nearly one hundred times, and finally "smell" over sixty-five times. The complete works of Shakespeare can be sorted via word search on the website <http://www.shakespeareswords.com/Search.aspx>.

<sup>223</sup> William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer's Nights Dream*, in *Shakespeare's Words: A Glossary and Language Companion* by Ben Crystal and David Crystal (London: Penguin UK, 2002), accessed November 29, 2015, <http://www.shakespeareswords.com/Plays.aspx?Ac=4&SC=2&IdPlay=4#127677>.

the Other beginning in the early modern period and coming to full swing in the eighteenth century.<sup>224</sup>

Conversely, in the play *The Taming of the Shrew*, Lucentio replies to Tranio, “Tranio, I saw her coral lips to move. And with her breath she did perfume the air. Sacred and sweet was all I saw in her.”<sup>225</sup> Beauty and seductive scents went hand in hand while hot, spicy, and pungent foods caused conversation to become boorish and might ruin the carefully constructed ambiance of a play. These excerpts offer modern readers easily understood examples of the early modern olfactory ideal.

Actual scents, odors, and the olfactory ideal were often portrayed or enscented in literary works. Real and imagined smellscapes, like Dekker’s plague houses or Drayton’s vision of Endimion and Phoebe, served to create metaphorical odors for readers. These literary smellscapes provided a basis on which early modern society could compare the real world. However, referring to the ideal, reality could never match the perfection wrought on paper. Expectations though, were presumptions about Others with a usual grain of truth behind them. In the play *From This Gate*, two friends Tattle and Mirth are discussing the gossip they have heard including tidbits like “who kist the butcher’s wife with the cow’s breath?”<sup>226</sup> Whether the butcher’s wife had breath like a cow is irrelevant. What is important to note is the assumption behind the olfactory insult. She was certainly

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<sup>224</sup> Mark S. R. Jenner, “Civilization and Deodorization?” in *Civil Histories* edited by Peter Burke, Brian Harrison, and Paul Slack (New York, Oxford University Press, 2000), 139.

<sup>225</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, in *Shakespeare’s Words*, accessed March 23, 2016, <http://www.shakespeareswords.com/Plays.aspx?Ac=1&SC=1&IdPlay=24#197692>.

<sup>226</sup> John Stow, “Notes: Volume 2, pp.101–229,” in *A Survey of London. Reprinted From the Text of 1603*, edited by C. L. Kingsford (Oxford: Clarendon, 1908), 374–388. *British History Online*, accessed April 9, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/survey-of-london-stow/1603/pp374-388>.

part of the lower classes and what is more, she was part of a business that often caused olfactory unease, as discussed previously.<sup>227</sup> This olfactory example shows the expectations society had placed on both butcher shops and the people who ran them.

Cockayne writes that “[t]he social classes mixed on the streets: the tattered and torn rubbed shoulders with the well-heeled rich.... Wealthy citizens were particularly unnerved by the way their body space was invaded on the streets. This was fueled by fears of being dirtied.”<sup>228</sup> Yet the poor were not necessarily the same as the lower classes and while beliefs about the smell of the poor abounded, they could also be viewed with an air of holiness. For example, guilds, or companies, of London were expected to adhere to a level of morality. A document by the City of London Livery Companies stated, “The rules of all the bodies were such as to inculcate respect for the law, commercial honesty, and a high standard of conduct, together with kindness and consideration for the brethren and sisters, *and for the poor. They also breathe a spirit of very simple piety.*”<sup>229</sup> The inherent virtue exhaled from the poor was a strong reason for guilds to treat them with kindness and charity. Here the breath of the poor is an admirable show of humble faith. Breath in this example morphed into a metaphorical breathing rather than what the breath of the poor actually smelled like.

The best way to show the fluidity between real and imagined scents is through posies. A posy was a small bunch of flowers, or nosegay, easily held in one hand. It was

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<sup>227</sup> Cockayne, 96–99.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>229</sup> City of London, Livery Companies Commission, “Report of the Commissioners: Part 1,” in *City of London Livery Companies Commission. Report; Volume 1* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1884), 7–20. *British History Online*, accessed April 9, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/livery-companies-commission/vol1/pp7-20> (emphasis mine).

also a selection of short poems and rhetoric.<sup>230</sup> A floral posy was carried and smelled at regular intervals, usually by women; they also served well as gifts or as means of distraction in an aristocratic garden.<sup>231</sup> The written posy was often a short poem or sensual statement gifted with a small token or inscribed on a ring. Thus the floral posy and its olfactory benefits were transferred into literature and a metaphorical smell that benefitted the reader. The great Duchess of Newcastle, Margaret Cavendish, wrote a fitting connection between the two posies, “My lips shall be as flowery banks, whereon sweet Rhethorick grows . . . from which banks, love shall wish to gather Posies of kisses, where every single kisse shall differ as Roses, Pinks, Violets, Primroses, and Daffidillies.”<sup>232</sup> Cavendish understood the romantic and sensual nature of the floral *and* written posy. Love was represented as flowers of all sorts in both the literal and rhetorical sense; the composed posy was the written equivalent of the floral posy.

The sweet fragrance of flowers was paralleled in love poems, which were published in several works that lent advice and ammunition for the yearning gentleman, a pining lady, a feuding husband and wife, or a scorned lover. The intent behind the words gave off a metaphorical fragrance. Typically, as in *Loves garland*, the key to success was the modest size of the gift; usually smaller garments such as gloves, handkerchiefs, or

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<sup>230</sup> “Posy,” Oxford English Dictionary, accessed February 18, 2016, <http://www.oed.com>.

<sup>231</sup> Early modern English gardens were interesting smellscapes that allowed both sexes to intermingle in business and pleasure. Holly Dugan has a spectacular section in *The Ephemeral History of Perfume* that discusses the intense social significance of gardens to the upper classes.

<sup>232</sup> Maria Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, *Playes* (London: Printed by A. Warren, 1662), accessed February 22, 2016, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A53060.0001.001/1:20.6.10?rgn=div3;view=fulltext>. The original print can be found at <http://eebo.chadwyck.com.databases.wtamu.edu/search>.



rings had a posy-poem that could be rolled and discreetly attached to the gift. According to *Loves garland* and *Cupids posies*, the presents and poems were adapted for all levels of intimacy and class. The short posy poems found in the wooing manuals were not the only representations of floral flattery, but it was a common tradition during courtship or to win favors with the opposite sex.<sup>233</sup>

This advice was acted upon by virtually everyone regardless of class or relationship status, from nobles to village peasants, mistresses to the married, and those in the courting process, both male and female. For example, “A posie sent by a yon man to a pretty young maid in the same Town, with a very fair point of Carnation colour Ribbon . . . My dearest Love I send this ribbon poin to thee, in Hope the young men of the town, shall not still point at me: Because I am thy lover true then grant me thy love [which is?] Due.”<sup>234</sup>

In *Loves garland*, “the Posie of a Ring from a cross Lover” was also accompanied by “a Posie shewing man and wife to be one.”<sup>235</sup> With luck, the posies were successful and thus the next steps of courtship proceeded. These works show a vein of scent-language throughout the processes of love, desire, and intimacy.<sup>236</sup> Posies of both kinds

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<sup>233</sup> *Loves garland* or *Posies for rings, hand-kerchers and gloves and such pretty tokens that lovers send their loves* (London: R. C., 1648) and *Cupids posies for bracelets, hand kerchers and rings, with scarfes, gloves and other things* (London: John Wright, 1642).

<sup>234</sup> *Cupid’s posies*, 30.

<sup>235</sup> *Loves garland*, 4, 6.

<sup>236</sup> Though some works consist only of simple poems and corresponding gifts, *The beau’s academy* is an early modern version of Neil Strauss’s series of books including *The Game: Penetrating the Secret Society of Pickup Artists* (New York: Regan Books, 2005) and *Rules of the Game* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009). Both works instruct men in the art of seduction. *The Beau’s Academy* is a detailed compilation of public and private scenarios in which the author, Edward Phillips, lent advice on how to complement all aspects of the female body, gave examples of conversations and the appropriate replies, and bestowed pretty poetry and witty one-liners to be memorized and used on the fairer

show the transition of true smells to literary ones. The process was similar for foul odors as well. Through the lens of the miasma theory, people in the early modern era ascribed odors to non-scented words and actions to convey putrefaction, infection, or disease. There are also remedies or preventative suggestions, just like the medicinal recipes that could ward off the infection of devilry, otherness, or a bad reputation.

During the reign of King James I, a poem was written entitled “Smellinge.” James I was a monarch officially declared as Protestant but with Catholic leanings and eccentric behavior. The poem lists the points of contention one writer found in his king’s character from the nose outward and displays an acute understanding of odorific actions and perceived and assumed smells:

Where myrhe and franckinsence is throwne On altars built to Gods unknowne,  
Oh, let my Sov'raigne never smell Such damned perfumes are fitt for hell. Let no  
such sent his nostrells staine, From smells that poyson can the braine Heaven still  
preserve him. Next I crave Thou wilt be pleased, greate God, to save My  
Soveraigne from a Ganimede, Whose whorish breath hath power to leade His  
excellence which way he list. Oh, let such lipps bee never kist. From a breath so  
farr excellinge, Blesse my Soveraigne and his smellinge.<sup>237</sup>

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sex. See Edward Phillips, *The beau's academy, or, The modern and genteel way of wooing . . . so plain and easie that the meanest capacity may in a short time attain to a perfection of arguing and disputing* (London: Printed for O. B., 1699).

<sup>237</sup> “Cecil Papers: 1620–1629,” in *Calendar of the Cecil Papers in Hatfield House, Volume 24, Addenda, 1605–1668*, edited by G. Dyfnallt Owen (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1976), 237–271. *British History Online*, accessed May 9, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-cecil-papers/vol24/pp237-271>. “Ganymede,” Oxford English Dictionary, accessed March 21, 2016, <http://www.oed.com>. A ganymede is a homosexual man or a cupbearer of liquor. Another name for a ganymede is bardash, a term used in the young adult series *The Legend of Beka Cooper*. See Tamora Peirce, *The Legend of Beka Cooper #3* (New York: Blue Fire, 2011).

The poet warned against smelling Catholic incense lest the king's brain be poisoned, thus turning him away from the Protestant cause. The work also strongly opposes the alluring power of breath in homosexuals.<sup>238</sup> Though the poem lyricized all five of the senses, it reveals cultural assumptions of how smell could alter a personality or lure one onto a certain path. It also shows that people at this time knew smell traveled directly from the nose to the mind and that they believed this made smells far more dangerous than the presumptions rendered by other senses such as sight and sound, both of which can be altered and changed to control what reaches the brain.

Burning the correct incense, according to some Protestant writers, kept many woes at bay. *A Perfume against the noysome Pestilence*, written by Roger Fenton in 1603, warned that only incense taken from the altar, used in the manner of the biblical figure Aaron, could be used to rid the world of its issues.<sup>239</sup> This was Fenton's literal solution to current problems. Only the fire taken from an altar would burn the incense correctly and thereby "difoule the odours." Fenton used the common strategy of invoking a biblical example, adapted accordingly, to fit contemporary grievances. God in this scenario had turned deaf ears to the English because of foreigners, homosexuals, and/or misaligned planets. In turn, His deafness allowed the plague to rise and establish a foothold that could only be remedied by burning the right incense from an altar's flame.

Other issues that could be cured by the olfactory ritual were "Atheists [who] hath poisoned our ayre: for while they be suffered to breath in a Christian common-wealth,

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<sup>238</sup> "Queen James and His Courtiers," *Gay History and Literature* 8 (2012): accessed December 1, 2016, <http://rictornorton.co.uk/jamesi.htm>.

<sup>239</sup> Roger Fenton, *A Perfume against the noysome Pestelince: Prescribed by Moses unto Aaron* (London: R.R., 1603), 6.

they must needs infect [and can be fixed] by the incense of sweet odours.”<sup>240</sup> The sweet odors would also ward off loose women who have “wonton attyres and unseemlie fashions wherein our women disguise themselves.”<sup>241</sup> This early modern writer believed that evil and sickness could be both represented and eradicated by specific scents and smells. Therefore, Fenton suggested an olfactory arming against earth’s evils. The miasmatic disease was within the souls of morally misaligned people.

Breath figured largely into the ethical and wellness notions of early modern England. There was a variety of breath types: literal breath that was associated with physical disease, moral laxity, or low class; discussions of one’s breath and how it affected one’s surroundings; and the metaphorical breathings of words that could alter thoughts and minds. In 1613 William Leigh wrote a cautionary sermon titled “The Perfume of Prayer,” and included in *The Drum of Devotion*, warning people about the precariousness of praying insincerely. One must have the Holy Ghost in one’s heart, according to Leigh, “as the Holy Ghost ever gives the gust, power, and spirit of prayer, without which it is no perfume, but a stinch in the nostrils of the Lord of Host.” With sincere prayer and the Holy Ghost present, words and breath became pleasant, meaningful, and worthwhile to God, “The incense of our prayer answereth the perfume of his spirit in which sweet ayre we are carried and breath unto salvation.”<sup>242</sup> In this metaphorical sense, one’s sincerity and the presence of the Holy Ghost during prayer time offered sweet smells that gave pleasure to the Lord; without those elements the prayer turned sour and displeasing.

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>242</sup> William Leigh, *A Drumme of Devotion striking out an allarum to prayer* (London: Thomas, 1613), 58, 59.

Three additional notable passages from the period deal with breath, breathing, and their ties to prayer. Prayer, being a vocal act, meant one's breath was a component, yet there was reciprocating breath as well from the Almighty. For example, in the *Drumme of Devotion*, "The Holy Ghost is the holie guide of all our holy actions, it is the seasoner of the soule, and the shoulder of all our sanctity; it is the mother of piety, and it openeth the doore to all true devotion; *where it breathes*, there is the perfume of prayer; *where it breathes not*, there is sinne and silence, without cry or calling upon the name of the Lord, that they might be saved."<sup>243</sup>

In these examples one can note both the importance of prayer in attaining the correct attitude and early modern views about hygiene concerning breath. They also show an assumed intimacy during prayer wherein God and the one praying are close enough to influence each other via breathing. Finally, Leigh states that faith "is the spirit breathing, a passion from us more sweete then incense in the nostrils of the Lord of Host."<sup>244</sup> The sweetness of prayer was a physical act of the body that transformed into a metaphorical pleasure for God. If one had foul breath, it was assumed that the scent rising upwards would not be pleasing to the Lord or that the parishioners were possibly of questionable scruples.<sup>245</sup> The principal of fresh breath touched all areas of society and revealed to

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<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 63–64 (emphasis mine).

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>245</sup> Kathryn A. Edwards and Susie Speakman-Sutch, trans., *Leonarde's Ghost: Popular Piety and "The Appearance of a Spirit" in 1628* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University, 2008), 21. In the case of *Leonarde's Ghost*, a story of a woman who witnessed a ghost during her lying in period, Leonarde was advised to watch the ghost to make sure it was no devil. One of the attributing factors that might indicate demonic forces was that the devil "stirs up in the air some stinking smell that one knows well could only come from the infernal tongue" (69).

individuals that evil scents meant at the least an insincerity toward God and at worst that the roots of devilry abided in their hearts.

Breath or breathings could be a blessed gift to the Lord or convey perceived evils of immoral or corrupt people. Another example displays Protestant fervor. During the debates over the Exclusion Bill of 1680,<sup>246</sup> an attempt to keep the Catholic prince James the Duke of York from the English throne and replace him with the protestant Duke of Monmouth, the words of a supporter of the bill were recorded. That zealous attendant stated, “I have a Family as well as others; and as for setting up Idolatry, rather than my Children should breathe in such an air, I had rather they were buried—All the mischiefs in the World that may ensue upon this Bill of Exclusion have been ingenuously offered you by Legge; but if you quit this Bill, pray sit down and take up a Popish Successor, and renounce the Protestant Religion.”<sup>247</sup> Several decades before the Exclusion Bill, the Leveller, William Walwyn wrote that heresy had a stench to it.<sup>248</sup>

The attendant would rather have seen his children dead than be influenced by the popish air breathed by James II. It was the possible damage to the children’s souls that the attendant was concerned about rather than an actual stench; the disease was brought

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<sup>246</sup> Elizabeth Knowles, “Exclusion Bill,” *The Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* 2006, accessed March 26, 2016, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O214-ExclusionBill.html>.

<sup>247</sup> “Debates in 1681: March 26th,” in *Grey's Debates of the House of Commons: Volume 8*, edited by Anchtell Grey (London: T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt, 1769), 309–338. *British History Online*, accessed April 9, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/greys-debates/vol8/pp309-338>.

<sup>248</sup> William Walwyn, *A Parable or Consultation of Physitians upon Master Edwards* (London: printed by Thomas Paine, 1646), accessed March 26, 2016, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/pages/leveller-tracts-3?q=smell#>.

by words.<sup>249</sup> The devil, or “old Nick” and his minions, were often described with air. Another connection to the bad miasmas in the air and devilry, “Great Lucifer, Prince of the Ayre, and of the Divells,” was a connection between infection in the physical air and the infection of the spirit.<sup>250</sup>

Well beyond the fight against Catholicism, the Anglican Church had plenty of its own reforms that caused equally intense reactions. In the 1640s, Joseph Hall wrote *Fanatick Moderation*, a booklet cursing the “reformers” who had corrupted and (for all intents and purposes) caused the spiritual death of many members of London’s clergy. His subtitle proclaims “A General Bill of Mortality of the Clergy of the City of London, who were Defunct, by Reason of the *Contagious Breath* of the Pretended Reformers of that City.”<sup>251</sup> The miasma theory resonates throughout this work because the contagious words of the reformers effectively killed the souls of London’s clergy. In some fear-mongering religious texts such as *England’s alarm to war against the beast*, scripture amidst political criticisms were there to help Christians “Resist the Prince ruling in the

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<sup>249</sup> William Walwyn, *A Word in Season: to all sorts of well minded people in this miserably distracted and distempered nation* (London: printed by Thomas Paine, 1646), accessed March 26, 2016, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/pages/leveller-tracts-3?q=smell#>. Walwyn also noted that one must avoid paths that “seeme to be strewed with Roses and perfumes, yet are the ways of death, and when we least suspect, bring us to destruction.” In the context of religion, bad smells were usually associated with devilry; however, one must also be cautious of the illusion of sanctity in sweet aromas. False sanctity in pleasant odors could lead a faithful person astray.

<sup>250</sup> A declaration of old Nick, prince of the air, and all his infernal crew, to the inhabitants of the whole world, but chiefly to the Quakers of Great Britain &c. (London: George Morgan, 1660).

<sup>251</sup> Joseph Hall, *Bishop Hall’s Hard Measure or Fanatick moderation . . . from the year 1641, to the year 1647* (London: A. Moore near St. Paul’s Church, 1680–1689), 1 (emphasis mine).

Aire,” another example of how some Christians believed that the devil and his minions were present in the very air they breathed.<sup>252</sup>

Political writings were also filled with olfactory imagery. One such publication, *An antidote against an infectious aire*,<sup>253</sup> was a response to Parliamentary proceedings in which Charles I had several accusations leveled against him.<sup>254</sup> Evil or bad actions were recognized by “sniffing” them out and were usually political in nature. Olfaction was a tool for discernment that was often associated with the act of sniffing or smelling. Truth and deceit both had a particular odor. Henry VIII had encouraged his nephew James to take control of the monasteries for profit but that “he must keep [the plan] very close and secret; for if the clergy smell it they will thwart him by provoking war or rebellion.”<sup>255</sup> Sir Francis wrote to Sir Cecil that two master gunners “both smell some gains to arise” in governing a troop of other gunners.<sup>256</sup> Shakespeare’s *Passionate Pilgrim* recommends careful speech lest the woman smell the male protagonist’s trickery.<sup>257</sup> The basic function

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<sup>252</sup> Englands alarm to vvar against the beast by command from heaven . . . and the slain of the Lord shall be many (London: Printed for Thomas Vunderhill, 1643).

<sup>253</sup> *An Antidote against an infectious aire . . . unto the declaration of the 11th of February, 1647* (London: n. p., 1647).

<sup>254</sup> John Rushworth, "Proceedings in Parliament: January 31st–February 26th, 1647," in *Historical Collections of Private Passages of State: Volume 7, 1647–48* (London: D Browne, 1721), 979–1010. *British History Online*, accessed August 19, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/rushworth-papers/vol7/pp979-1010>.

<sup>255</sup> “Henry VIII: January 1540, 21–31,” in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 15, 1540*, edited by James Gairdner and R. H. Brodie (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1896), 29–55. *British History Online*, accessed March 28, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol15/pp29-55>.

<sup>256</sup> “Elizabeth: August 1560, 11–20,” in *Calendar of State Papers Foreign, Elizabeth, Volume 3, 1560–1561*, edited by Joseph Stevenson (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1865), 227–246. *British History Online*, accessed March 28, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/foreign/vol3/pp227-246>. A gunner operated the cannons on a ship.

<sup>257</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Passionate Pilgrim*, in *Shakespeare's Words*, accessed January 12, 2016, <http://www.shakespeareswords.com/Poem.aspx?IdPoem=51#309>.



of smell extended well past literal scents. The common vernacular was imbedded with olfactory characteristics. Society also articulated the *perception* of one's deeds as sniffing them out, perceiving actions or plans hidden. Thus the olfactory system was used as a tool to find the infection: in the literal sense it was used to identify rotteness, putrefaction, or illness; in the metaphorical sense it was used to identify unscrupulous actions.

Breathings could also, with the correct intent, go forth as airs of healing or the restoration of one's reputation. Deference to the monarch was partially expressed in olfactory terms. Good tidings were exhaled for good health. Right before members of the House of Commons fell to their knees, in one of the last parliaments held by Queen Elizabeth before her death in 1603, they exclaimed, "But, in all Duty and Thankfulness, prostrate at Your Feet, We present our most Loyal and Thankful Hearts; even the last Drop of Blood in our Hearts, and the last Spirit of Breath in our Nostrils, to be pour'd out, to be Breathed up for Your Safety."<sup>258</sup> Just as pure thoughts made the breath of prayer sweet, so too the good intentions verbalized by the Commons towards Queen Elizabeth I made their breathings sweet. In that case, the statement of the Commons was in line with the religious teachings that preached breath and the combined "breath" or perhaps prayers would envelope the queen and keep her safe. Circumstances, intent, and the present company effectively muted the dangers of the miasmas. Intention alone could change the quality of air breathed out and circumstances could negate the ill effects of breath.

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<sup>258</sup> Heywood Townshend, "Proceedings in the Commons, 1601: November 27th–30th," in *Historical Collections: Or, An Exact Account of the Proceedings of the Four Last Parliaments of Q. Elizabeth* (London: T. Basset, W. Crooke, and W. Cademan, 1680), 253–266. *British History Online*, accessed April 9, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/parliament-proceedings-eliz1/pp253-266>.

Exhalations also revealed early modern assumptions about class. As a salutation, the dowager Lady Russell wrote to her nephew Sir Robert Cecil, “[I am] so loath to trouble you further at this time, I humbly thank God for the heavenly breath proceeding from a saint so sweet and gracious to me as you write.”<sup>259</sup> She was showing deference and flattery to her nephew by claiming his breath, meaning actions and words, to be the work of God. Conversely, sweet breathings from those higher in rank might benefit the person being discussed or written about. Thomas Arundell, whose father died in disgrace, wrote to Sir Robert Cecil concerning his father’s bequest to Queen Elizabeth. The objective was that “the remembrance of him might be ennobled in so excellent a mind, and his name, perhaps, sweetened by the breath of so gracious a princess” and thus “in all humility, to importune her favour to the accepting of the whole legacy and last humble petition of her late loyally dutiful and now dead servant. So shall I, whose spirit is dead with disgraces and whose life is even buried in the solitary thought of my darkened estate, be again restored to life and light.”<sup>260</sup> By her sweet breathings, or praise, the queen could restore the tarnished honor and/or alter the fate of her subjects. The miasmatic “disease” here is the stain of honor to the son and the “cure” is his sovereign’s breath or words of praise.

Breath was the most important indicator of one’s true self. Words were exhaled and carried a physical smell, a vapor that could infect the air or a perfume that sweetened

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<sup>259</sup> “Cecil Papers: June 1596, 1–15,” in *Calendar of the Cecil Papers in Hatfield House, Volume 6, 1596*, edited by R. A. Roberts (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1895), 208–216. *British History Online*, accessed April 9, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-cecil-papers/vol6/pp208-216>.

<sup>260</sup> “Cecil Papers: February 1599, 16–28,” in *Calendar of the Cecil Papers in Hatfield House, Volume 9, 1599*, edited by R. A. Roberts (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1902), 72–88. *British History Online*, accessed April 9, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-cecil-papers/vol9/pp72-88>.

it. Words carried metaphorical odor as well. Thus smelling was both a physical and an intellectual act. To smell out a person was to figure out their motives. Exhalations were actions saturated with political and societal importance as was the masking of odors. Instruction manuals from the early modern period that offered advice on olfactory repression also instructed their readers to “let courtesy and silence dwell with you, and tell no *foul* tales to another,”<sup>261</sup> indicating that saying undesirable phrases, lying, or cursing frequently could be associated with bad smells. Breath was conceptualized as a moral and societal compass, and the community used it as a tool to place rank, recognize piety, convey condescension, and bestow praise upon people of all classes and stations.

## **Conclusion**

Sensory history (a relatively new genre of academe and olfactory history even more so) has not yet delved into the intricate application of miasma theory in early modern society. Rather, if the contagion theory is mentioned, scholars use it as a catchall, writing that the society fully abided in the *medical* theory and the idea of smells transferring diseases. However, the olfactory nature of the miasma theory meant the theory, like odors, was transient, changeable, and adaptable. This thesis has shown that it was indeed used as a medical theory as secondary literature has attested, but it was also a

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<sup>261</sup> Rickert and Naylor. Naylor states in a footnote, “*The Boke of Nurture . . .* British Museum contains three early editions, of 1550[?], 1568, and 1577; and Dr. Furnivall mentions two others printed between 1551 and 1586” (no page). The translated publication date for *The Babee’s Book* was in the late nineteenth century. According to Naylor in the preface, “Clearly it would seem that one of the very treatises in this collection was studied by these young pages of Edward IV” (no page). While these are not exact dates they do lend a useable timeframe for the research. This book is a sample of the rules of etiquette in late medieval England. One can only presume, as noted above by Woolgar, that these rules and guidelines only became more intricate as time progressed toward the nineteenth century, an era of intense social expectations and rigorous etiquette rules.

*social construct* that went far beyond medicinal value and was given social importance to a degree not yet realized or discussed by modern historians. Early modern England *reodorized* its physical and metaphorical environments. The ephemeral nature of odors therefore meant that early modern society attached the contagion idea to literal and metaphorical smells, which in turn could cause actual and perceived threats to the body, the soul, and even the honor of a person

This thesis shows the breadth of miasma theory application in early modern society. The deep and intimate inclusion of the olfactory contagion concept in sixteenth and seventeenth century English culture and society reached far beyond real smells and into perceived and metaphorical odors as well. Actual smells that were fetid or rotting were considered a constant threat unless overridden by social norms that involved intent, familiarity, or tradition. Literature was enscented with the olfactory ideal or horrific and reeking reality. Honor was bestowed or revoked and piety or devilry was detected through metaphorical and perceived odors. The theory, because it relied on olfaction, meant it was changeable and transcended the boundary between real and metaphorical smells as easily as odors crossed physical boundaries. I began this study to understand the depth of olfactory concern in early modern England. Through the research of this thesis it is clear that concern was widespread and used as a tool to engage in social, political, and religious issues. Real and metaphorical odors were treated as equally threatening.

The historiography of sensory history, and olfactory history in particular, is still in its first stages of development. Historians and other scholars have had a one-dimensional view of the miasma theory, applying it almost exclusively to the medical field and considering it a blanket belief. This thesis expands the boundaries of sensory and

olfactory history by showing that the miasma theory was socially constructed and, therefore, bypassed in certain situations and that it was also applied beyond the medical field to almost every aspect of early modern life.

My research has answered the questions I raised in the introduction. The tenets of the miasma theory were more easily followed in perceived and metaphorical scenarios because odors and scents were constructed and, therefore, controlled by the people promoting them. Olfactory hyper-vigilance was crucial to constructing early modern environments. Other questions raised during the course of my research include, when and where did smells and odors begin being transferred from the physical world to that which was perceived and metaphorical? Europe experienced the Renaissance and the beginnings of the Enlightenment during the timeline of this thesis and yet from what I can discern, only visual (paintings) and audial (music) contributions were made. Was olfaction the last sense to revolutionize? Has the concept of smells ever evolved? Which came first, ritualized olfactory tradition or olfactory repression? Despite what this thesis has proven—that miasmatic thought in early modern England was complex, intuitive, and pervasive—there is still much work that needs to be done to fully understand the importance of senses in the past.

I opened my thesis with a proclamation by Elizabeth I demanding more vigilant upkeep of the nation's cities to prevent foul airs from corrupting the country. I end it with a letter written by William Cecil, Lord of Burghley and advisor to Elizabeth I, to William Herle, informing him of "certain malicious speeches which were circulated against him." According to Cecil, he had "long been *afflicted* with such kinds of *viperous breathings*,

and has borne the same patiently, leaving the revenge to Almighty God.”<sup>262</sup> From odiferous urban airs to the malignant mutterings of foes, the olfactory concern and the miasma theory were crucial to early modern life.

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<sup>262</sup> “Queen Elizabeth – Volume 180: July 1585,” in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, 1581–90*, edited by Robert Lemon (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1865), 249–256. *British History Online*, accessed March 17, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/edw-eliz/1581-90/pp249-256> (emphasis mine).

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- . *Cupids posies for bracelets, hand kerchers and rings, with scarfes, gloves and other things*. London: John Wright, 1642.
- . *A Declaration of Great Lucifer, Prince of the Ayre, and of Divells, and of all the damned crew in Hell. In Answer to a Petition presented to them by a Parliament Man, Dated in August 1648*. London: Printed in Hell neere Westminster, 1648.
- . *A declaration of old Nick, prince of the air, and all his infernal crew, to the inhabitants of the whole world, but chiefly to the Quakers of Great Britain &c.* London: George Morgan, 1660.
- . *Every woman her own midwife, or, A Compleat cabinet opened for child-bearing women furnished with directions to prevent miscarriages during the time of breeding, and other casualties which usually attend women in child-bed: to which is annexed cures for all sorts of diseases incident to the bodies of men, women and children*. London: Printed for Simon Neale, 1675.
- . *Englands alarm to vvar against the beast by command from heaven, and his Israels example upon earth, comming-in to rescue David out of the hands of a cruell Lord and a bloody edomite : upon the same ground from scripture and reason Israel had then and Christians now : to resist the prince ruling in the aire and with the kings of the earth : in 3. sections ... : also to confirme the hearts and hands of the godly in their warfare and to strike terrour to the wicked fighting [sic] for the devill and against Gods hidden ones contrary to the vow in baptisme, oath of allegiance, and covenant entered into by all good subjects : and to stablish the heart in a patient expectation of the glorious end God will make :*



- though for a time He will plead with all flesh by fire and by his sword, and the slain of the Lord shall be many.* London: Printed for Thomas Vunderhill, 1643.
- . *An excellent new song, call'd The Fairy Queen, or, the merry companions.* London: n.p., 1692–1695.
- . *An excerpt out of a book, shewing, that fluids rise not in the pump, in the syphon, and in the barometer, by the pressure of the air, but propter Fugam vacui. At the occasion of a dispute, in a coffee-house, with a doctor of Physick.* n.p.: To be had at Powell's Coffee-House, 1660–1700.
- . *A lamentable list of certaine hidious, frightfull, and prodigious signes, which have bin seene in the aire, earth, and waters, at severall times for these 18. yeares last past, to this present: that is to say, anno. 1618. untill this instant. anno. 1638. in Germany, and other kingdomes and provinces adjacent; which ought to be so many severall warnings to our kingdome, as to the said empire. To the tune of aime not to high.* London: for Tho. Lambert, 1638.
- . *The London-Spaw.* London: n.p., 1685.
- . *Loves garland or Posies for rings, hand-kerchers and gloves and such pretty tokens that lovers send their loves.* London: R. C., 1648.
- . *Newgates remonstrance to His Excellency the Lord Gen: Cromwel: or, The humble petitions of the poor-distressed debtors and convicts, who have now received breath from his Highness. And His Excellencies resolution concerning the languishing and deplorable prisoners in the upper-bench, fleet, marshalseyes, poultry counter Ludgate. Newgate, Woodstreet counter. And else-where. Published according to order.* London: Printed for G. Horton, 1653.

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