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“YOU HAVE WITCHCRAFT IN YOUR LIPS”: SENSORY WITCHCRAFT IN
SHAKESPEARE’S *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA* AND *MACBETH*

by

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“YOU HAVE WITCHCRAFT IN YOUR LIPS”: SENSORY WITCHCRAFT IN
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University of Nebraska, 2020

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Scholarship on witches and witchcraft within Shakespeare’s plays has been a popular subject for many scholars. But one of Shakespeare’s most famous characters has not yet been integrated into this scholarship: Cleopatra from *Antony and Cleopatra*. Although scholars have often noted her “witchiness,” none have argued for an interpretation of Cleopatra as a witch. This is because traditional definitions of witchcraft have not been able to include Cleopatra. In comparison, Lady Macbeth from *Macbeth* has often been cited as the fourth witch in the play. But this interpretation relies upon examining Lady Macbeth’s perceived masculinity, which subsequently also makes her the most reviled in the play. Both Lady Macbeth and Cleopatra are powerful female characters who have witch-like qualities. They are seductive and intimidating and consider their own passions first and foremost. Using the tools within the domestic sphere and their own feminine wiles, the power of witchcraft allowed women to move from affairs of the household to affairs of the state. Shakespeare was clearly interested in the connection between female power and witchcraft. He was not afraid to utilize this feminine power for dramatic purposes, but also recognized its chaotic potential, thus ensuring those endowed with such power must perish or fail. In this thesis, I will explore the historical depiction of the power of witchcraft in conjunction with the senses, arguing that Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth’s manipulation of the senses can be interpreted as witchcraft. This form of witchcraft, which I will refer to as sensory witchcraft, stems from the characters’ innate feminine qualities rather than the taking on of masculine qualities.

Dedication & Acknowledgements

To Paul: You're the Antony to my Cleopatra (except for that last bit)

To my cat, Miata: Because every witch needs a black cat

To my advisor, Dr. Julia Schleck: I could not have chosen a better advisor. I have really enjoyed working with you, hearing your feedback, and chatting about cats, biking, and made-up words. Thank you!

To my committee members Dr. Kelly Stage, Dr. Stephen Buhler, and Dr. Carole Levin: Gramercy, sir and ladies! Thou art the finest committee members a student can ask for.

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Introduction

Antony and Cleopatra and *Macbeth* are two very different plays. The former is a tragic historical romance set in the Mediterranean. The latter is a supernatural tale about madness and power. But the two plays may have more common with one another than previously thought. There is growing belief that *Macbeth* and *Antony and Cleopatra* were acted in the same season and that the same boy actor, John Rice, could have played both Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth.¹ *Macbeth*, with its observations of smoke and darkness, is obviously referencing the gunpowder plot of 1605, an attempt to blow up parliament in order to assassinate King James I. The witches in *Macbeth* further connect the play to King James I, whose interest in demonology and prosecuting witches is well documented.² *Antony and Cleopatra*, with its strong female monarch as the main protagonist, serves as a reminder of England's previous ruler, Queen Elizabeth I. King James I's reign was marked by a reckoning of masculine power in response to Queen Elizabeth I's previous rule. While this latter play is not usually associated with witchcraft, these connections between the two plays and King James I seem to indicate otherwise. Both *Macbeth* and *Antony and Cleopatra* feature powerful female characters who have witch-like qualities. They are seductive and intimidating and consider their own passions first and foremost.

Scholars have frequently alluded to Lady Macbeth as the "fourth witch" in the play.³ Lady Macbeth's masculinity and violent tendencies have often led scholars to

¹ Garry Wills, *Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare's Macbeth* (New York: New York Public Library: Oxford University Press, 1995), 77-78.

² Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 125.

³ Garry Wills, *Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare's Macbeth*, Diane Purkiss, "Body Crimes: The Witches, Lady Macbeth and the Relics," Janet Adelman, "'Born of Woman': Fantasies of Maternal Power in *Macbeth*," and Stephen Greenblatt's "Shakespeare Bewitched" to name a few.

interpret her as a malevolent or murdering mother figure. As of yet, however, no scholar has asserted that Cleopatra is also a witch, although some scholars have noted her “witchiness.”⁴ The closest scholars have come to identifying Cleopatra as a witch has been to compare her to Circe, the witch from *The Odyssey*.⁵ This is rather disappointing, especially considering that Cleopatra is one of Shakespeare’s greatest female characters and scholarly interest in Shakespearean witchcraft has touched on so many other female characters.⁶ It is no coincidence that the Shakespearean characters most associated with witchcraft are portrayed as domestically or politically powerful.⁷ The identification of “witch” was an identification of relative power.⁸ Since women were often denied access into more traditional forms of power, witchcraft was one means for women to empower themselves.⁹ Using the tools within the domestic sphere and their own feminine wiles, the power of witchcraft allowed women to move from affairs of the household to affairs of the state.¹⁰ Shakespeare was clearly interested in the connection between female power and witchcraft. He was not afraid to utilize this feminine power for dramatic purposes, but also recognized its chaotic potential, thus ensuring those endowed with such power must perish or fail. In this thesis, I will explore the historical depiction of the power of witchcraft in conjunction with the senses, arguing that Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth’s

⁴ Garry Wills uses Cleopatra as comparison to strengthen his case that Lady Macbeth is a witch in his book *Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare’s Macbeth*. Kirstie Gulick Rosenfield uses *Antony and Cleopatra* as an example of staging witchcraft in early modern theatre.

⁵ Clifford Davidson, Gareth Roberts, and Karen Britland argue that Cleopatra is a Circean figure.

⁶ Joan La Pucelle, Margery Jourdain, Eleanor Cobham, Margaret of Anjou, Sycorax, Lady Macbeth, the three witches, Hecate, Ophelia, Queen Elizabeth, Jane Shore, Paulina, and Hermione that I am aware of.

⁷ Stephanie Irene Spoto, “Jacobean Witchcraft and Feminine Power,” *Pacific Coast Philology* 45 (2010): 66.

⁸ Spoto, “Jacobean Witchcraft and Feminine Power,” 67.

⁹ Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 169.

¹⁰ Spoto, “Jacobean Witchcraft and Feminine Power,” 66.

manipulation of the senses can be interpreted as witchcraft. This form of witchcraft, which I will refer to as sensory witchcraft, stems from the characters' innate feminine qualities rather than the taking on of masculine qualities.

Interest in sensory history or the history of the senses has grown steadily since the 1990's. Shakespeare has become a focal point for work in this field of research due to his pervading sensory allusions and metaphors.¹¹ Danielle Nagler's 1996 essay, "Towards the Smell of Mortality: Shakespeare and Ideas of Smell 1588-1625," contextualizes Shakespeare's own treatment of the sense of smell through many of his works. Nagler is one of the first to examine the importance of smell within *Macbeth*, arguing that Lady Macbeth purposefully manipulates smell in order to cause "sensory disorder."¹² Jonathan Gil Harris follows Nagler's line of thought in his own interpretation of smell in *Macbeth* from 2007, "The Smell of *Macbeth*." Harris, however, concentrates on how smell connects the audience to the world on stage. Most recently, Holly Dugan has elaborated on the significance and use of Cleopatra's perfume in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Building off of her own research on perfume and the work of scholars like Jonathan Gil Harris, Dugan argues that Cleopatra's perfume "designate[s] a wide sphere of environmental influence" and that "the play's oblique olfactory references suggest that perfumes signified Cleopatra's power and desirability in ways visual codes could not capture."¹³ My argument aligns itself closely to Dugan's, but whereas Dugan focuses on play's use of smell from a theatrical angle, my own assessment of Cleopatra's control of smell fits into

¹¹ Holly Dugan, "Shakespeare and the Senses," *Literature Compass* 6 (n.d.): 726.

¹² Danielle Nagler, "Towards the Smell of Mortality: Shakespeare and Ideas of Smell 1588-1625," *Cambridge Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (1997 1997): 52.

¹³ Holly Dugan, *Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 21.

how she utilizes the senses as a witch. My argument not only accounts for Lady Macbeth and Cleopatra's purposeful use of smell, but also explains why they would be controlling that sense in the first place, an explanation that, until now, had not been considered by other scholars.

Scholarly interest in *Antony and Cleopatra* often focuses on Cleopatra's femininity and sexuality, especially in comparison to the Roman masculinity.¹⁴ Cleopatra's femininity makes it difficult to include her in scholarship on Shakespearean witchcraft because most examples of witches in Shakespeare rely upon masculine qualities instead of feminine qualities. The characters most associated with witchcraft in Shakespeare's plays usually have a masculine characteristic, "Joan cross-dresses and acquires a male warrior's fighting skill; the Countess of Auvergne, Margaret, Eleanor, and Lady Macbeth have a masculine 'spirit' . . . the witches in *Macbeth* have beards that cause Banquo to question their sex; even Margery Jurdain becomes a mouthpiece for a male demon in her trance state."¹⁵ These characters configure their power in masculine terms. Lady Macbeth's references to manhood suggest that she perceives manliness as equaling power and womanliness as equaling powerlessness.¹⁶ Even early modern writers viewed witches as servants of the masculine devil, operating with his permission rather than acting as independent agents of evil.¹⁷ Recently, scholarly interests in witchcraft and sensory history have begun to overlap, reexamining the nature and power of the witch

¹⁴ Mary Thomas Crane, "Roman World, Egyptian Earth: Cognitive Difference and Empire in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*," and Jonathan Gil Harris, "'Narcissus in Thy Face': Roman Desire and the Difference It Fakes in *Antony and Cleopatra*" are two notable examples.

¹⁵ Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 167.

¹⁶ Irene G Dash, "Dependent Identities: *Macbeth*." In *Women's Worlds in Shakespeare's Plays*. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), 207.

¹⁷ Merry E Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 256.

through the senses. Constance Classen's 2005 article, "The Witch's Senses: Sensory Ideologies and Transgressive Femininities from the Renaissance to Modernity," is the most notable example of this scholarship, portraying how the witch is associated with early modern concepts of the senses, particularly the feminine senses, and why this association made the witch powerful and feared. This thesis elaborates on Classen's work and applies her ideas to Shakespearean literature. By using Classen's ideas, Cleopatra can be included into the scholarship on Shakespearean witchcraft, and Lady Macbeth's identity as a witch can be reexamined and connected back to sensory scholars' ideas on smell in *Macbeth*.

In section one I will examine the nature and power of the witch as described by early modern texts such as Kramer and James Sprenger's *The Malleus Maleficarum* and Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*. By examining these texts in conjunction with early modern ideas concerning the senses and gender, I will show that witchcraft can be defined in terms of sensory manipulation. Following traditional gender norms, early modern writers believed witches received their power from a masculine source, the devil. The description of witches and how they use their power, however, reveal a distinct connection to the feminine senses of touch, taste, and smell, which were considered natural to women. Witches, in my definition, pulled upon these innate senses as their main power. To further prove my point, I will investigate an example of a sensory witch within early modern England—Circe from *The Odyssey*. Lady Macbeth and Cleopatra both follow in Circe's practice of sensory witchcraft.

In section two, I will begin my textual analysis of Shakespeare's plays, starting with *Macbeth*. I argue that Lady Macbeth's manipulation of the senses can be interpreted

as sensory witchcraft. As mentioned previously, scholars have explored interpretations of Lady Macbeth as the fourth witch in the play. They have done so by primarily discussing her masculinity or unmotherly manner. Lady Macbeth even thinks of herself in masculine terms, but still relies upon the feminine senses to enact her plans. But Lady Macbeth is not the only witch capable of sensory manipulation. The three witches or weird sisters also use the senses to manipulate Macbeth. In the first half of the play, Lady Macbeth's sensory manipulation of Macbeth is more powerful and successful than the weird sisters. She uses perfume, food, drink, and sex to control her husband and other men such as King Duncan and Banquo. In the last half of the play, however, the weird sisters' sensory manipulation of smell and air overtakes both Macbeths, resulting in Lady Macbeth madness and subsequent suicide.

In section three, I will discuss Cleopatra's sensory witchcraft and argue for her inclusion into the scholarship of Shakespearean witchcraft. Cleopatra's connection to Circe and the Mediterranean have hampered scholars from interpreting her as a witch within the traditional parameters, but using my definition of sensory witchcraft, Cleopatra can be included into Shakespearean witchcraft scholarship. From the start of the play, we see that her manipulation of Antony's senses is successful. Antony is utterly infatuated with Cleopatra, and under her influence gives in to his desire for material comforts and forgets his duty to Rome. He spoils himself with the feminine senses of touch, taste, and smell. His behavior shocks and disgusts the Romans, who base their idea of masculinity upon ignoring their senses and depriving themselves of material comforts. After Antony's death, Caesar demands Cleopatra's surrender. Refusing to submit to Caesar, Cleopatra commits suicide using her powers of sensory witchcraft.

Both Lady Macbeth and Cleopatra are figures of relative power within their respective plays. They dominate their domestic and political spaces as well as their men. They use sensory witchcraft as a way not only to gain self-gratification but also power. We will see in the coming sections how sensory witchcraft enabled women to use the domestic tools around them as avenues for empowerment, and how successful Lady Macbeth and Cleopatra are at using these avenues. However, no matter how successful Lady Macbeth and Cleopatra become, they must inevitably fail or be defeated in the end, ensuring the dominance of masculine power and restoration of the established natural order.

Section I. “I’m not a witch, I’m your wife!”: Defining Early Modern Witches & Sensory Witchcraft

In his 1612 pamphlet, *The Witches of Northamptonshire*, George Gifford defines the witch as “one that worketh by the Devil or by some devilish or curious art, either hurting or healing, revealing things secret, or foretelling things to come which the Devil hath devised to entangle and snare men’s souls withal unto damnation.”¹⁸ The witch was an evil-doer. Most early modern writers agreed with this consensus but were divided about the witch’s nature and power.¹⁹ What is the nature, or more simply, the qualities and characteristics that define the witch? Where does the witch’s power come from and how in control are the witches of this power? Early modern writers wrestled with these types of questions in an effort to understand the *real* power behind the witch. They conceded that the female witch’s power was from the devil, “As I told my friend, the devil doth bewitch men by meanes of these witches, and leade them from God.”²⁰ This explanation, that female witches were dependent on the devil for their power, fit into traditional conceptions of proper gender roles.²¹ Good Christian women were subservient to their husbands and fathers. Female witches were subservient to the devil. The nature and power of female witches, however, was overwhelmingly linked to the domestic realm of women. This domestic realm was understood in terms of the senses: touch, taste, and

¹⁸ George Gifford, *The witches of Northampton-shire Agnes Browne. Ioane Vaughan. Arthur Bill. Hellen Ienkenson. Mary Barber. Witches. Who were all executed at Northampton the 22. of Iuly last. 1612.* (London: Printed by Tho: Purfoot, for Arthur Iohnson, 1612, *Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership*) <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A17030.0001.001/1:1?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>

¹⁹ Marion Gibson and Jo Ann Esra, *Shakespeare’s Demonology: A Dictionary*, (London; New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2014), 197.

²⁰ George Gifford, *A Dialogue Concerning Witches & Witchcrafts* (London: Percy Society, 1842), 14, https://www.google.com/books/edition/A_Dialogue_Concerning_Witches_Witchcraft/YpRMAAAAcAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1.

²¹ Merry E Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 256.

smell. The feminine senses were instinctual to women, and in the witch they were intensified, corrupting the body and spirit of a woman.

In this section, I aim to find a new way of looking at the witch's power source. I will do this by reexamining historical notions about the power of witchcraft and the ways the witch was described to have used this power in early modern texts, specifically, Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger's *The Malleus Maleficarum* and Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*. These texts are two of the most popular treatises on witches and witchcraft and held an enormous amount of influence during the early modern period. In their dictionary of Shakespearean demonology, Marion Gibson and Jo Ann Esra strongly imply that ideas and descriptions from Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* were "pillaged by many dramatists of the period, including Shakespeare."²² Using these texts, I will establish that the foundation of the witch's identity was based upon feminine qualities and that the witch's power originated from her own manipulation of the senses.

The Nature of the Early Modern Witch

The innate qualities of women were defined by power structures that continually placed women in a subservient role to men. One of these structures is humoral theory, the basis of most medieval and early modern medicine. Humoral theory argued that all bodies were composed of four humors: black bile, yellow bile, blood, and phlegm. Each humor was associated with certain sensibilities, temperaments, and elements. It was this system that explained the major physical differences between men and women. Men were characterized as hot and dry because their male organs were external. Women were characterized as moist and wet because their female organs were internal. The heat and

²² Marion Gibson and Jo Ann Esra, *Shakespeare's Demonology: A Dictionary*, (London; New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2014), 33.

dryness associated with men made them vigorous, honest, and loyal. The cold and wetness of women, however, represented their lethargy, inconstancy, and duplicity. Therefore, the coldness of witches only served to reinforce their “essential femininity” and “destabilizing influence on society.”²³

Physical differences between men and women also manifested in the senses. Early modern people perceived their sensory experiences differently than we do. Today, we know the senses are biological receptors that allow us to perceive the world and respond accordingly. For them, the senses perceived both physical and spiritual qualities. The senses explained both the physical and spiritual worlds and were attached to strong moral connotations. Someone’s appearance, for example, portrayed both their physical beauty and moral integrity. Even a person’s smell was an immediate indicator of their moral worth. Sensory perception not only enabled the transmission of information about objects, but also allowed for the transmission of tangible qualities between parties.²⁴ Contemporary optical theory asserted that physical beams were produced from the eyes to the particular object seen, which meant that a person could be influenced by looking at certain objects or even people.²⁵

The senses were gendered. The masculine senses, sight and hearing, were considered “the higher senses.” These two senses were associated with rationality and logic because men were meant to be the overseers of the world. Early modern men saw their domination over nature and women as ordained by God. In the first creation account

²³ Constance Classen, “The Witch’s Senses: Sensory Ideologies and Transgressive Femininities from the Renaissance to Modernity,” In *Empire of the Senses*, edited by David Howes (New York: Berg Publishing, 2005) 73.

²⁴ Christopher Michael Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 2.

²⁵ Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), 399.

in Genesis, men and women are given “dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth” (Genesis 1:26 KJV). In the second account of creation, men are created before women, thus establishing men’s dominance over nature and women. The remaining senses of touch, taste, and smell were feminine. They were known as “the lower senses” because of their connection to the sensual or animalistic. Touch, taste, and smell did not enable rational or logical thought. They were representative of primal urges: the urge to eat, to mate, and to survive. Like beasts, women were thought to be incapable of rational thought and instead were ruled by emotion. This symbolic division of the senses carried enormous social influence.

Even under normal circumstances, the feminine senses were harmful to men. A woman’s touch was believed capable of debilitating and destabilizing a man’s body and mind.²⁶ It was even believed that an excess loss of semen led to physical and mental degeneration, and even blindness. Some early Christian ascetic monks were so afraid of a woman’s touch, they would refuse to touch their own mothers, for fear it would corrupt them, “Because the body of a woman is fire. And even from my touching thee, came the memory of other women into my soul.”²⁷ The humoral nature of a woman’s body made her predisposed to putrid and decaying smells. In *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, Scot writes that women use their horrid smells to bewitch those they meet, “Women are also (saith he) monethlie filled full of superfluous humors, and with them/ the melancholike bloud boileth ; whereof spring vapors, and are carried up, and conveied through the

²⁶ Classen, “The Witch’s Senses: Sensory Ideologies and Transgressive Femininities from the Renaissance to Modernity,” 71.

²⁷ Helen Waddell and Basil M Pennington, *The Desert Fathers: Translations from the Latin* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998) 79.

noethrels and mouth, &c ; to the bewitching of whatsoever it meeteth. For they belch up a certeine breath, wherewith they bewitch whomsoever they list.”²⁸ The smells associated with menstruation were regarded as particularly disgusting and poisonous. It was widely believed that menstruating women could “rust iron, turn wine sour, spoil meat, or dull knives” by their mere presence.²⁹ Even older women, who no longer menstruated, were thought to expel foul odors from their eyes and orifices because they no longer had a natural way to rid themselves of their corrupt internal fluids.³⁰ Smells had long been associated with moral worth, with good scents indicating purity and bad smells indicating sinfulness. Thus, the bad smells associated with women, like menstruation, made them appear more sinful in the eyes of their peers. In general, men, even at their most perverted, were superior to women.³¹

The Power of the Witch or “Sensory Witchcraft”

But a woman was not just a witch because she smelled especially bad. Witches were women whose innate feminine qualities overcame them completely, “Witches were women who let these qualities—links with nature, their emotions, and their bodily drives—come to dominate them completely.”³² Instead of repressing their lower senses or utilizing them to fulfill the domestic roles of wife and mother, the witch gave in to these senses and utilized them to fill her longings for “lust, greed, and a perverse desire for

²⁸ Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, 236-37.

²⁹ Merry E Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 59.

³⁰ Classen, “The Witch’s Senses: Sensory Ideologies and Transgressive Femininities from the Renaissance to Modernity,” 76.

³¹ Julie Sutherland, “‘What Beast is This Lies Wallowing in His Gore?’ The Indignity of Man and the Animal Nature of Love in *The Sea Voyage*” *The Modern Language Review* 107. 1 (January 2012), 89.

³² Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 262.

social dominion.”³³ The witch strove to manipulate the senses around her, not only her own associated senses of smell, touch, and taste, but also the masculine senses of hearing and sight. Witches were both innately disorderly and “actively bent on destroying order.”³⁴ The witch’s exercise of power over the senses or “sensory witchcraft” allowed her to act upon her own desires. This was why witches were so feared, because they transformed the tools meant to keep women at home into avenues for empowerment and self-gratification.³⁵

Constance Classen, a scholar in the field of sensory history, argues that fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth century witch hunters described witches as having “a diabolic sensorium in which each of the senses was perverted from its proper use and endowed with satanic powers.”³⁶ According to Classen, the senses were the foundation of the witch’s powers. In the famous witch hunting treatise, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, the devil is described as having the ability to pervert each of the senses, “This evil, which is of the devil, creeps in by all the sensual approaches; he places himself in figures, he adapts himself to colours, he attaches himself to sounds, he lurks in angry and wrongful conversation, he abides in smells, he impregnates with flavours and fills with certain exhalations all the channels of the understanding.”³⁷ The concept of sensory witchcraft was not unfamiliar to early modern writers. They knew that the senses could be tricked or

³³ Classen, “The Witch’s Senses: Sensory Ideologies and Transgressive Femininities from the Renaissance to Modernity,” 71.

³⁴ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 262.

³⁵ Classen, “The Witch’s Senses: Sensory Ideologies and Transgressive Femininities from the Renaissance to Modernity,” 71.

³⁶ Classen, “The Witch’s Senses: Sensory Ideologies and Transgressive Femininities from the Renaissance to Modernity,” 71.

³⁷ Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum of Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger*, trans. Montague Summers, (New York: Dover, 1971), 82.
<http://www.malleusmaleficarum.org/downloads/MalleusAcrobat.pdf>

manipulated. The manipulation of the senses was a powerful weapon that could cause severe consequences for the witch's victims. For instance, the character Alice in *The Arden of Faversham* plans to kill her husband by procuring a poisoned painting so that when he looks at it, he will die of poison.

A woman's touch was dangerous, the witch's touch even more so. The real danger of the witch was not her sexual desire, which was considered natural to woman, but how she acted on this sexual desire. The witch did not engage in sex for procreative purposes, but rather for her own pleasure. Witches were the instigators of touch instead of the reconcilers. Classen notes that the witch was "the seductress par excellence."³⁸ They actively seduced men to their beds. According to *The Malleus Maleficarum*, "All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable."³⁹ It was widely believed that witches had sex not only with men, but with the devil, their familiars, and other women. Especially threatening was the witch's broomstick, which was seen as a phallic tool used for solo sex acts.⁴⁰ Witches had powerful control of men's genitals. There are accounts of men losing their member's generative power so that they cannot perform and even accounts of men's members disappearing entirely as a result of a sexual encounter with a witch.⁴¹ Also associated with the sense of touch is the act of spinning or weaving. Spinning is one of the best representations of women's work and "symbolizes the archetypal feminine."⁴² Spiders, the original weavers, were the natural symbol of the

³⁸ Classen, "The Witch's Senses: Sensory Ideologies and Transgressive Femininities from the Renaissance to Modernity," 72.

³⁹ Kramer, *The Malleus Maleficarum of Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger*, 114.

⁴⁰ Kristen J. Sollee, "The Secret Sex Lives Of Witches," *Bust*, October/November 2017, <https://bust.com/sex/193723-secret-sex-lives-witches.html>.

⁴¹ Classen, "The Witch's Senses: Sensory Ideologies and Transgressive Femininities from the Renaissance to Modernity," 72.

⁴² Laura Shamas, *"We Three": The Mythology of Shakespeare's Weird Sisters*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 90.

sense of touch.⁴³ They represented both the feminine industriousness of good Christian women weaving their webs, and the deviousness of the evil seductress, trapping and killing its prey.⁴⁴

The witch's insatiable bodily desires did not stop there. The witch feasted and drank with abandon. She would drink malmsey wine for sexual stimulation and was often accused of sneaking into taverns or cellars and drinking all the wine from the casks and then replacing it with her own urine.⁴⁵ As part of their domestic responsibilities, women often brewed ale for the household and cooked the meals. The witch distorted the concept of the woman as the food-giver by brewing potions and poisons instead of ales and stews. The item used to prepare such potions was, of course, the cauldron. Like spinning, the cauldron is another symbol of "the archetypal feminine."⁴⁶ It was a necessary accessory to the domestic sphere. In *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, Reginald Scot writes that women were the first to practice the art of poisoning, "women in all ages have beene counted most apt to conceive witchcraft, and the divels special instruments therin, and the onelie or cheefe practisers therof : so also it appeareth, that they have been the first inventers, and the greatest practisers of poisoning."⁴⁷ The domestic sphere provided all the instruments necessary to brew poisons under the guise of performing womanly duties.

As we have mentioned, women gave off foul odors. The witch's odors were worse, but witches often disguised their smells with heavy sweet scents in order to attract

⁴³ Classen, "The Witch's Senses: Sensory Ideologies and Transgressive Femininities from the Renaissance to Modernity," 72.

⁴⁴ Classen, "The Witch's Senses: Sensory Ideologies and Transgressive Femininities from the Renaissance to Modernity," 72

⁴⁵ A. Lynn Martin, *Alcohol, Sex, and Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 107.

⁴⁶ Shamas, "We Three": *The Mythology of Shakespeare's Weird Sisters*, 57.

⁴⁷ Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, 112-3.

potential victims.⁴⁸ When the witch disguised herself like a beautiful temptress, the sweet smells acted like a drug on her victims. Sweet smells were associated with the divine and made the human being they were attached to more attractive. The use of perfume was integral to this process. The term perfume in the early modern period was defined as the scent released by the burning of any substance.⁴⁹ But perfumes existed in many forms such as incense, oils, powders, and instilled waters. Incense was widely used during religious ceremonies, the smoke often adding an element of mystery to the ceremony. Oils, powders, and waters were used either directly on the skin and hair or on clothing. Fresh flowers or herbs could also be utilized for their scents and were often used to cover nasty household smells. The most popular perfumes were floral fragrances, imported spices, and scents of animal origin such as musk, civet, and ambergris.⁵⁰

During the Renaissance, the use of perfume was almost as suspicious as the use of cosmetics. Both had the capacity to deceive the wearer and onlooker, or in this case the smeller, in the suggestion of moral worth.⁵¹ In other words, the use of perfume was seen as a form of trickery. The witch did not always have to resort to use of perfume. The witch could utilize the savory smells of her cooking. The use of herbs, spices, and even flowers like roses or violets was common in early modern European kitchens.⁵² Notions of how the function of smell operated also assisted the witch. According to Aristotle, smells “fed straight into the brain, and therefore were ideally placed to play upon the

⁴⁸ Constance Classen, David Howes, et al. *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell* (London; New York: Routledge, 2010), 37-8.

⁴⁹ David McInnis, “On Cleopatra’s ‘Strange Invisible Perfume,’” *Cahiers Élisabéthains: A Biannual Journal of English Renaissance Studies* 69 (Spring 2006), 51.

⁵⁰ Classen, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*, 71.

⁵¹ Danielle Nagler, “Towards the Smell of Mortality: Shakespeare and Ideas of Smell 1588-1625,” *Cambridge Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (1997 1997): 48.

⁵² Classen, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*, 66-67.

mind. . .If smells could lure man into prayer or love, their manipulation was almost magical and could be the source of much power.”⁵³ Smell was an integral tool in the witch’s arsenal of the senses.

Witches were not only dangerous because they perverted the feminine senses, but also because they utilized the masculine senses of sight and hearing. Women’s hearing was meant to be guarded because political and scholarly communication were considered above women’s cognitive abilities and because women were thought to be easily deluded. According to Classen, “The witch, however, was always listening in, eager for forbidden knowledge, and harkening to the words of the Devil.”⁵⁴ Women’s speech was also restricted. In Gervase Markham’s bestseller, *The English Housewife*, Markham describes the ideal English housewife and emphasizes her control over language, “though occasion mishaps or the misgovernment of his will may induce her to contrary thoughts, yet virtuously to suppress them, . . . calling into her mind that evil and uncomely language is deformed, . . . but most monstrous and ugly when it appears before the presence of a husband.”⁵⁵ Markham’s description emphasizes that women should be quiet and say nothing that would displease their husbands. Witches, however, used their voices for deceitful and seductive purposes. In *The Malleus Maleficarum* the reader is warned that the witch “is a liar by nature, so in her speech she stings while she delights us. Wherefore her voice is like the song of the Sirens, who with their sweet melody entice the passers-by and kill them.”⁵⁶

⁵³ Danielle Nagler, “Towards the Smell of Mortality: Shakespeare and Ideas of Smell 1588-1625,” *Cambridge Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (1997 1997): 49.

⁵⁴ Classen, “The Witch’s Senses: Sensory Ideologies and Transgressive Femininities from the Renaissance to Modernity,” 75.

⁵⁵ Gervase Markham, *The English Housewife*, in *Renaissance Woman: A Sourcebook: Constructions of Femininity in England* edited by Kate Aughterson (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 247.

⁵⁶ Kramer, *The Malleus Maleficarum of Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger*, 113.

As with hearing and speech, women were restricted in sight. Men were encouraged to seek visual mastery of the world while women were encouraged to keep their heads down and limit their visual scope to the home. When witches utilized the sense of sight, sight stopped functioning as a rational sense. Instead, sight functioned as both a seductive and destructive power. For example, in Thomas Heywood's play *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, Sir Francis Acton immediately falls in love with Susan Mountford, his enemy's sister, after a single glance, "Oh, what a look did fly / To strike my soul through with thy piercing eye?" (7.91-92). In this instance, the eye acts as a seductive force. Reginald Scot, however, pays particular attention to the destructiveness of the witch's gaze in his work *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*. Scot writes that witches can bewitch other just by staring at them, "they (like brute beasts) fix their furious eies upon the partie whom they bewitch."⁵⁷ For Scot, the witch uses the eye as a destructive force, cursing those they wish ill.

Perception of the five senses was drastically different in the early modern period. The gender division of the senses demonstrated the division between the worlds of men and women. The feminine senses of touch, taste, and smell were connected to the domestic sphere, while the masculine senses of sight and hearing were connected to the public sphere. The association of the senses, the humoral construction of female bodies, and the connection to first woman Eve made women more prone to witchcraft. The same tools used for domestic responsibilities meant to keep women home could also be used for witchcraft. Witches were known for their insatiable appetites for sex, food, and drink

⁵⁷ Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, 236.

and often used perfumes to cover their foul odors. The same characteristics that make a woman feminine are the same characteristics that make witches dangerous.

Circe: An Example of Sensory Witchcraft in Renaissance Literature

Having sufficiently created the foundation of sensory witchcraft, we can now move on to how sensory witchcraft was depicted in early modern popular literature. Mythological figures like the witch Circe from *The Odyssey* provided writers with a model of sensory witchcraft. Thus, the concept of sensory witchcraft had already been introduced before Shakespeare set to work on *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Macbeth*. The Renaissance was, after all, a “rebirth,” and scholars busied themselves with finding undiscovered ancient Greek and Roman texts and reexamining classical literature. Mythological figures like Medea and Cassandra captured popular interest, but none so much so as the infamous witch from *The Odyssey*: Circe. During the Renaissance, Circe was a well-known symbolic figure of degrading temptation.⁵⁸ She was associated with “sex, love and their transformative powers for both good and ill.”⁵⁹ Clifford Davison sums up Circe’s significance in his article “*Antony and Cleopatra*: Circe, Venus, and the Whore of Babylon,” “for the Renaissance, Circe is indeed the classical pattern that gives life to a whole host of fatal females in epic and in other literature.”⁶⁰

Early modern writers identified Circe as a witch in a variety of treatises on witchcraft. In Lambert Daneau’s 1575 treatise *A Dialogue of Witches*, Daneau writes, “such an one[witch] was *Circe*, of whom *Homer* writeth in the tenth booke of *Odissea*.”⁶¹

⁵⁸ Leonora L. Brodwin, “Milton and the Renaissance Circe,” *Milton Studies* 6 (1974): 22.

⁵⁹ Gibson, *Shakespeare’s Demonology: A Dictionary*, 42.

⁶⁰ Clifford Davidson, “Antony and Cleopatra: Circe, Venus, and the Whore of Babylon,” *Bucknell Review: A Scholarly Journal of Letters, Arts and Sciences* 25, no. 1 (1980): 39.

⁶¹ Lambert Daneau, *A Dialogue of Witches*, ([London]: Printed by [T. East? for] R. W[atkins], 1575, *Early English Books Online Text Creation Partnership*, 2004) <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A19798.0001.001>.

Reginald Scot brings up Circe multiple times in his texts, describing her as “that old transforming witch” and “that grand witch.”⁶² Circe’s power to tempt and transform was especially disconcerting to male writers, so much so that in *The Malleus Maleficarum* the authors wanted to reassure the reader that Circe transformed Odysseus’ men into beasts in appearance only, “Augustine relates that it is read in the books of the Gentiles that a certain sorceress named Circe changed the companions of Ulysses into beasts; but that this was due to some glamour or illusion, rather than an actual accomplishment, by altering the fancies of men.”⁶³ It was not only Circe’s powers of transformation that interested treatise writers. Writers viewed Circe’s offers of irresponsible pleasures as an act of witchcraft. The concept that men were transformed by pleasure was commonplace in the Renaissance.⁶⁴ It believed that, “the devil seduced witches, witches seduces men, witchcraft itself was a seduction to and of mankind.”⁶⁵

The terror of Circe’s ability to transform men into beasts and her sexual temptations was also depicted in early modern fiction. The first major poetic treatment of Circe’s temptations is featured in *Orlando Furioso* when Ruggiero is seduced by the sorceress Alcina and must escape from her palace of luxury.⁶⁶ Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queen* features several reinterpretations of Circe and dangers of giving into pleasure. Gareth Roberts observes in his article “The Descendants of Circe: Witches and Renaissance Fictions,” that Duessa, the personification of falsehood, and Acrasia, a

⁶² Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, 117, 311.

⁶³ Kramer, *The Malleus Maleficarum of Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger*, 139.

⁶⁴ Gareth Roberts, “The Descendants of Circe: Witches and Renaissance Fictions.” In *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief*. Edited by Barry, Jonathan, Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts, eds. Past and Present Publications. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 199.

⁶⁵ Roberts, “The Descendants of Circe: Witches and Renaissance Fictions,” 200.

⁶⁶ Brodwin, “Milton and the Renaissance Circe,” 26.

seductress of knights, “both offer pleasure and sex, and cause unmanning.”⁶⁷ John Milton was particularly invested in Circe throughout his career as a writer. In her article, “Milton and the Renaissance Circe,” Leonora Brodwin argues that, “the higher temptations of Circe inform, to a greater or lesser extent, all of his major poems and many of his minor works.”⁶⁸ But Milton’s 1634 masque *Comus* is his most significant treatment of Circe.⁶⁹ In the masque, a lady is separated from her brothers and lost in the woods. She is confronted by a Circean male figure, Comus, who takes her to his palace and offers her a drink from his magical cup. Clearly, early modern writers were obsessed with Circe, as both a witch and a temptress.

Circe’s actions and characteristics in *The Odyssey* fit into the description of sensory witchcraft that has been laid out in the previous sections. When Odysseus’ men reach her house, they see her singing and weaving, “They stood . . . and heard Circe inside singing in a sweet voice / as she went up and down a great design on a loom” (X, 220-222). Circe’s spinning may seem harmless, but like a spider she weaves a trap for her unwitting prey. Like the witch, Circe subverts the role of the food-giver by brewing potions. She offers the men drinks mixed with a special potion that turns them into literal beasts, “with barley and cheese and pale honey / added to Pramneian wine, but put into the mixture / malignant drugs, to make them forgetful of their own country” (X, 234-6). It is also notable that Circe uses a “long wand” for her enchantments, which, like the broomstick, can be seen as a phallic symbol (X, 293). Odysseus is able to overcome the traps Circe created with the help of Hermes. Using a special herb as protection, Circe

⁶⁷ Roberts, “The Descendants of Circe: Witches and Renaissance Fictions,” 200.

⁶⁸ Brodwin, “Milton and the Renaissance Circe,” 37.

⁶⁹ Brodwin, “Milton and the Renaissance Circe,” 37.

cannot turn him into a beast. Odysseus is also able to overcome Circe's planned seduction. He immediately instigates their sexual encounter, ensuring that he is the one who dominates her and not the other way around. Odysseus threatens Circe with his sword, agreeing to go to bed with her on the condition that he not be weakened or unmanned, "And now you have me here myself, you treacherously / ask me to go into your chamber, and go to bed with you, / so that when I am naked you can make me a weakling, unmanned. I would not be willing to go to bed with you unless / you can bring yourself, O goddess, to swear me a great oath / that there is no other evil hurt you devise against me" (X. 337-344).

Despite these initial victories over Circe, Odysseus soon falls under her spell. After agreeing to his terms, Odysseus is bathed with the water from a "great caldron" and drinks wine "kindly sweet and fragrant" (X, 356, 359). He is anointed with olive oil and given a "splendid mantle and a tunic" to wear (X, 365). After Circe transforms his men back to their original state, she presents them with a sumptuous feast. Circe manages to use touch, taste, and smell in ways that Odysseus won't suspect. As a fragrant seductress, Circe uses her potions, perfumes, and the fragrances of wine and food to lure Odysseus and his men in.⁷⁰ She stimulates the sense of touch when Odysseus is anointed in olive oil and given new clothes to wear, and spoils their taste buds with a delicious feast. Desiring only to fulfill their bodily desires, Odysseus and his men are compelled to stay for a full year on her island. It is only when his men confront Odysseus that he is persuaded to continue homeward, "Then my eager companions called me aside and said to me: /

⁷⁰ Classen, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*, 37. Classen identifies Circe as a fragrant seductress through her use of perfumes, but I have found no textual evidence that supports this claim within *The Odyssey*.

“What ails you now? It is time to think about our own country, / if truly it is ordained that you shall survive and come back / to your strong-founded house and to the land of your fathers.’ / So they spoke, and the proud heart in me was persuaded” (X, 471-475).

Circe successfully employs the senses of touch, taste, and smell to keep Odysseus and his men on her island. As mentioned earlier, Circe is seen as a figure of “degrading temptation.”⁷¹ Scholar Leonora Brodwin identifies three levels of temptation offered by Circe: bestial enslavement, degradation of masculinity, and carefree happiness.⁷² These three temptations reinterpret the different dangers of the feminine senses. Indulging in these senses provides immediate physical comfort and ease or “carefree happiness” as Brodwin puts it. Circe essentially offers Odysseus and his men a never-ending-all-expenses-paid vacation with “unlimited meat and sweet wine” (X, 477). But as mentioned previously, these “lower senses” were bestial in nature. By overindulging in them, Odysseus and his men are in danger of becoming beasts themselves, ruled only by emotion and instinctual need, otherwise known as “bestial enslavement.” In the case of Odysseus’ men, they are literally transformed into beasts. The power Circe holds over Odysseus and his men and their newfound reliance on the feminine senses brings us to the final temptation: degradation of masculinity. Circe controls the power of the feminine senses; thus, she controls Odysseus and his men, who have developed a reliance on touch, taste, and smell instead of sight and hearing. Karen Britland accurately describes the elements of domesticity and witchcraft associated with Circe in her article, “Circe’s Cup: Wine and Women in Early Modern Drama,” “Circe’s cup holds both nourishment

⁷¹ Brodwin, “Milton and the Renaissance Circe,” 22.

⁷² Brodwin, “Milton and the Renaissance Circe,” 23-25.

and poison, she is a health-giver and yet also closely associated with death.”⁷³ Circe’s nature and power is based on feminine senses and attributes, and provides us with a powerful example of sensory witchcraft. In the coming sections, we will see how Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth fit into the parameters of sensory witchcraft and how successfully they control their power over the senses.

⁷³ Karen Britland, “Circe’s Cup: Wine and Women in Early Modern Drama,” in *A Pleasing Sinne: Drink and Conviviality in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Adam Smyth, (Cambridge, England: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 125.

Section 2. “I put a smell on you”: Lady Macbeth’s Sensory Witchcraft in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*

Despite Macbeth’s bloodthirsty murders and tyrannical actions, Lady Macbeth is often the more vilified character in *Macbeth*. Lady Macbeth’s speech in Act 1 Scene 5, in which she commands the spirits to “unsex me here” and her speech in Act 1 Scene 7 in which she describes ripping a baby from her breast and dashing its brains out are both often cited as examples of Lady Macbeth’s masculinity and ambition for power (1.5.41). These same examples are also used to argue that Lady Macbeth is the fourth witch in *Macbeth*.⁷⁴ Lady Macbeth summons demons and offers to nurse them as familiars, “Come to my woman’s breasts / And take my milk for gall” (1.5.54-55). Her hypothetical act of infanticide in Act 1 Scene 7 is quite incriminating. Witches were thought to eat babies and use their blood for demonic rituals. In her article, “Shakespeare and the English Witch-Hunts: Enclosing the Maternal Body,” Deborah Willis discusses the concept of the witch as a “murdering mother,” “She[the witch] is a nurturing mother who feeds and cares for a brood of demonic imps, but a malevolent antimother to her neighbors and their children.”⁷⁵ Scholars interpretations of Lady Macbeth as a witch have always relied upon this concept of the “murdering mother.”

⁷⁴ Janet Adelman was one of the first scholars to interpret Lady Macbeth as a mother/witch in her essay “‘Born of Woman’: Fantasies of Maternal Power in *Macbeth*.” Many scholars have since followed suit: Stephanie Chamberlain, “Fantasizing Infanticide: Lady Macbeth and the Murdering Mother in Early Modern England” (2005), Diane Purkiss, “Body Crimes: The Witches, Lady Macbeth and the Relics” (2014) and her book *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (1996), Garry Wills, *Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare’s Macbeth*, Dymphna Callaghan “Wicked Women in *Macbeth*: A Study of Power, Ideology and the Production of Motherhood” (1992), Joanna Levin “Lady MacBeth and the Daemonologie of Hysteria” (2002), and Christopher Clary, “Familiar Creatures: Witchcraft, Female Bodies, and Early Modern Animals” (2016).

⁷⁵ Deborah Willis, “Shakespeare and the English Witch-Hunts: Enclosing the Maternal Body,” in *Enclosure Acts: Sexuality, Property, and Culture in Early Modern England*, ed. Richard Burt and John Michael Archer, (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994), 108.

When discussing Lady Macbeth's possible connections to the three witches or "weird sisters," scholars have examined the characters perceived masculinity (2.1.25). In her book *Fantasies of Female Evil*, Cristina León Alfar argues that in Shakespeare's tragedies power is defined as a masculine trait.⁷⁶ In her interpretation of *Macbeth*, she views Lady Macbeth's masculine brutality as an attempt to reflect the bloody desires of her husband.⁷⁷ Irene Dash similarly views power as a masculine trait, writing that, "Her[Lady Macbeth's] references to manhood suggest her perception of manliness as equaling power, and conversely of womanliness as equaling powerlessness because clearly the gender holding the power is male."⁷⁸ In the world of *Macbeth* masculinity is meant to be equated with power. Banquo describes the weird sisters as having beards, thus equating them with unwomanliness, "You should be women, / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret / That you are so" (1.3.48-49). Their beards symbolize the three sisters' masculinity and power. Lady Macbeth similarly desires to impede her reproductive capabilities, "unsex me here, / And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full / Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood. / Stop up th' access and passage to remorse" (1.5.48-51). Both Lady Macbeth and the three witches are perceived or desire to be perceived in masculine terms.

Traditional concepts of witchcraft define witchcraft through masculine characteristics and unmaternal actions. Lady Macbeth is threatening because she is too masculine and unmotherly. I want to offer a different perspective. As a witch, Lady

⁷⁶ Cristina León Alfar, *Fantasies of Female Evil: The Dynamics of Gender and Power in Shakespearean Tragedy*. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003), 22.

⁷⁷ Alfar, *Fantasies of Female Evil: The Dynamics of Gender and Power in Shakespearean Tragedy*, 113.

⁷⁸ Irene G. Dash, *Women's Worlds in Shakespeare's Plays* (Newark; London: University of Delaware Press; Associated University presses, 1997), 207.

Macbeth is threatening because of her femininity. She manipulates the feminine senses in the play to pursue her own ambitions and is able to enact those ambitions through bewitching her husband Macbeth. I see Lady Macbeth's desire to "unsex" herself as not necessarily a plea to become more masculine, but rather an invocation to be unburdened by reproductive responsibilities. In response to Stephen Greenblatt's essay on Shakespeare and witchcraft in early modern theater, "Shakespeare Bewitched," in which Greenblatt indicts Lady Macbeth of malicious witchcraft, Jonathan Crewe criticizes scholars' attention to Lady Macbeth's evilness and perceived masculinity. Greenblatt summarizes Crewe's response, which defends Lady Macbeth's desire to be barren, in a footnote, "Crewe suggests, because she has made an effort to repossess her body, to empower herself (by identifying with what she perceives as masculine strength, even as she intuitively understands that she herself has created masculine strength), to be something other than the figure of reproduction in the nuclear family."⁷⁹ Lady Macbeth identifies masculinity as power, but when we look at her actions within the play, we will see that she uses feminine senses to aid her ambitions. Furthermore, Lady Macbeth seems to recognize the practicality of barrenness which enables her to participate more actively in politics. In her book *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations*, Diane Purkiss confirms that witchcraft can be the most success path for women to participate in politics, "Witchcraft is the resort of women because it symbolizes the only way they can work politically; by stealth, in secret, rather than on the

⁷⁹ Stephen Greenblatt, "Shakespeare Bewitched," in *New Historical Literary Study: Essays on Reproducing Texts, Representing History*. ed. Jeffrey N. Cox and Larry J. Reynolds, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 134 fn. 40.

public field of battle or debate.”⁸⁰ In this section, we will examine how Lady Macbeth manipulates the feminine senses to fulfill her ambitions for political power. In the first half of the play, we will see how Lady Macbeth uses the senses to earn King Duncan’s trust and convince her husband Macbeth to act upon the weird sisters’ prophecy. At first, Lady Macbeth’s sensory witchcraft appears to be successful; she and Macbeth assassinate King Duncan and are crowned king and queen. In the second half of the play, however, things take a turn for the worse. Lady Macbeth is not the only witch in the play and has to contend with the effects of the weird sisters’ sensory manipulation as well as her own. Macbeth is driven mad by the conflicting charms of both his wife and the weird sisters. The weird sisters’ powerful control of smell and air eventually drive Lady Macbeth mad as well.

Although not all scholars interpret Lady Macbeth as a witch in the play, most scholars agree that Lady Macbeth is “palpably linked”⁸¹ to the weird sisters. Despite never meeting the weird sisters, Lady Macbeth is connected to them in her own way, “The Weird sisters meet with Macbeth, who communicates the prophesies to his wife, who then, in a sense, has her own relationship with the Sisters, although they never meet.”⁸² Both the weird sisters and Lady Macbeth practice sensory witchcraft, the weird sisters far less subtlety than Lady Macbeth. From the onset of the play, the weird sisters are associated with smell and air. As the weird sisters depart in the opening scene, they chant their famous line which happens to describe the air quality, “Fair is foul and foul is

⁸⁰ Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 191.

⁸¹ Greenblatt, “Shakespeare Bewitched,” 125.

⁸² Laura Shamas, *“We Three”: The Mythology of Shakespeare’s Weird Sisters*, (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2007), 39.

fair, / Hover through the fog and filthy air” (1.1.9-10). The dismal air quality is caused by the weird sisters’ stench. As the witches conspire to harm the sailor in Act 1 Scene 3, two of the witches offer their offended sister winds to cause a storm at sea, “Though his bark cannot be lost, / Yet it shall be tempest-tossed” (24-25). After the weird sisters deliver their prophecies, Banquo and Macbeth describe the sisters’ disappearance into the air:

MACBETH: The earth hath bubbles, as the water has, / And these are of them.

Whither are they vanished?

BANQUO: Into the air; and what seemed corporal, / Melted, as breath into the wind (1.3.79-82).

Macbeth associates the weird sisters with miasma or bad air. It was believed that miasma was produced by fissures in the earth and could spread disease and moral corruption. Hecate similarly shares a connection to the air, telling the weird sisters, “I am for th’ air” (3.5.20). The play’s emphasis on air and wind is directly tied to the witchcraft of the weird sisters and Lady Macbeth. The main difference between Lady Macbeth and the weird sisters is their use of smells. Like Cleopatra and Circe, Lady Macbeth uses fair smells to mask foul ones, and is able to successfully dupe most of the men in the play with her use of perfumes. The weird sisters, on the other hand, rely upon miasma and its infectious quality.

The first instance Lady Macbeth uses the sense of smell occurs in her first scene, Act 1 Scene 5. After reading her husband’s note about his encounter with the weird sisters, she laments that his empathetic nature will prevent him from acting on his “black and deep desires,” “Yet I do fear thy nature, / It is too full o’th’ milk of human kindness /

To catch the nearest way.” (1.4.51, 1.5.16-18). Her solution to this problem is to enchant Macbeth to her side by using perfumes or “spirits,” “Hie thee hither, / That I may pour my spirits in thine ear, / And chastise with the valour of my tongue / All that impedes thee from the golden round, / Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem / To have thee crowned withal.” (1.5.25-29). Greenblatt notes the uncanniness of Lady Macbeth’s influence over her husband after this moment, it is “as if, in other words, she had literally poured her spirits in his ear.”⁸³ According to the *OED*, one of the definitions of spirit is “A movement of the air; a wind; a breath (of wind or air).”⁸⁴ The affiliation between breath, spirit, and inspiration was well-known in the early seventeenth century.⁸⁵ In his work *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes relates the word spirit to the word inspiration:

On the signification of the word spirit dependeth that of the word inspiration; which must either be taken properly, and then it is nothing but the blowing into a man some thin and subtle air or wind in such manner as a man filleth a bladder with his breath; or if Spirits be not corporeall, but have their existence only in the fancy, it is nothing but the blowing in of a Phantoasme; which is impoer to say, and impossible; for Phantasmes are not, but only seem to be somewhat.⁸⁶

Spirits, then, are another form of odors and odors were commonly believed to go directly to the brain. Lady Macbeth urges Macbeth homeward so that she can pour her smells directly into Macbeth’s brain and inspire him towards her will. Lady Macbeth will not only rely upon her smells, but also “the valour of my tongue” (1.5.27). Lady Macbeth plans reprimand her husband, specifically about his failings as a man. The scene ends with Lady Macbeth summoning smoke from hell, “Come thick night, / And pall thee in

⁸³ Greenblatt, “Shakespeare Bewitched,” 124.

⁸⁴ “Spirit, n.,” in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed November 4, 2019, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/186867>.

⁸⁵ Greenblatt, “Shakespeare Bewitched,” 133.

⁸⁶ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan; Or, The Matter, Form and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1886), 184. https://www.google.com/books/edition/_/8-QtAAAAIAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1

the dunnest smoke of hell, / That my keen knife see not the wound it makes, / Nor heaven
peep through the blanket of the dark / To cry, 'Hold, hold'" (1.5.50-4). Again, Lady
Macbeth is calling upon the element of air and sense of smell to aid in her plan. Her
language here also demonstrates the dominant role she has in her marriage. She is the
penetrating force, the "keen knife" that will inflict the wound (1.5.52).

Lady's Macbeth manipulation of smell becomes an integral part in her plan to
murder Duncan. Smell, as we have discussed, has strong moral connotations. Even after
death, saints were believed to release fragrant and sweet odors instead of the odors of
decaying flesh, thus exhibiting their purity and goodness. Smell was an immediate
indicator of a person's worth. Lady Macbeth's illusion of sweet and wholesome air is
vital in luring Duncan into the castle.⁸⁷ When King Duncan arrives at Macbeth's castle in
Act 1 Scene 6, he remarks, "This castle hath a pleasant seat, the air / Nimble and sweetly
recommends itself / Unto our gentle senses" (1-3). As Jonathan Gil Harris notes in his
article, "The Smell of *Macbeth*," Duncan is not "an excellent smeller."⁸⁸ He easily
mistakes the sweet smell of Macbeth's castle as an indicator of Macbeth's moral worth.
Banquo foolishly agrees with King Duncan, commenting on the birds residing near the
castle, "This guest of summer, / The temple-haunting martlet, does approve, / By his
loved mansionry, that the heaven's breath / Smells wooingly here. No jutty frieze, /
Buttress, nor coin or vantage, but this bird / Hath made his pendent bed, and procreant
cradle: / Where they must breed and haunt, I have observed / The air is delicate" (1.6.4-
9). Banquo's comments further secure King Duncan's trust of the Macbeths. The practice

⁸⁷ Danielle Nagler, "Towards the Smell of Mortality: Shakespeare and Ideas of Smell 1588-1625,"
Cambridge Quarterly 26, no. 1 (1997), 52.

⁸⁸ Jonathan Gil Harris, "The Smell of *Macbeth*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (Winter 2007), 480.

of covering bad smells with good smells was common in the early modern period. In Danielle Nagler's article, "Towards the Smell of Mortality: Shakespeare and Ideas of Smell 1588-1625," Nagler observes that, "Such obfuscation of natural household smells was instinctive to the contemporary hostess, suggesting in this case covering of the stench beneath."⁸⁹ We can assume that Lady Macbeth, being a witch, must have provided some of this stench herself. Lady Macbeth covers the castle's stench with perfume and acts the part of a "honoured hostess" (1.6.10).

Lady Macbeth's chastisement of her husband begins almost immediately after King Duncan enters the castle. *Macbeth* is a play rife with anxieties about proper gender roles and expectations. Macbeth is meant to be the manly husband and Lady Macbeth his obedient and humble wife. That, of course, is not necessarily the case. Lady Macbeth is the more dominating partner in the relationship and constantly incites Macbeth's sexual desire for her while also degrading his masculinity. The price of Macbeth's sexual happiness is Lady Macbeth's degradation of his masculinity. In Act 1 Scene 7, she chides him for his refusal to keep his word, "Was the hope drunk / Wherein you dressed yourself? . . . When you durst do it, then you were a man" (35-36, 49). Lady Macbeth not only critiques his bravery and valor, but also his potency as a man. Before Macbeth tells his wife he no longer wants to be a part of her plan, he laments, "I have no spur / To prick the sides of my intent, but only / Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself / And falls on the other" (1.7.25-28). Macbeth essentially admits that he is impotent. His impotency is further underscored by his comparison to Banquo and his son Fleance, an obvious

⁸⁹ Nagler, "Towards the Smell of Mortality: Shakespeare and Ideas of Smell 1588-1625," 52.

product of Banquo's fertility. Lady Macbeth specifically targets this weakness of Macbeth's in her chastisement.

Having effectively cowed Macbeth, Lady Macbeth reassures her husband that she will make the chamberlains drunk so that they can murder Duncan, "His two chamberlains / Will I with wine and wassail so convince, / That memory, the warder of the brain, / Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason / A limbeck only" (1.7.64-68). Lady Macbeth knows the consequences of too much alcohol, and explains that the chamberlains will be dead asleep, "When in swinish sleep / Their drenched natures lies as in a death" (1.7.68-9). Lady Macbeth's use of odors is also demonstrated in this scene. She explains drunkenness in alchemical terms, describing how the drunken brain becomes a kind of distillery, producing vapors that clog the part of the brain that stores memory and acts as a guardian against the repetition of sinful acts previously committed.⁹⁰ Witches inverted the traditional concept of the woman as food-giver and preparer. Instead of looking out for her guests and providing nourishment, she is purposefully harming them.

Lady Macbeth's inverted role as the food-giver is again demonstrated during King Duncan's assassination. She reveals that she poisoned the chamberlains' drinks, "I have drugged their possets / That death and nature do contend about them, / Whether they live, or die" (2.2.7-9). Possets were warm drinks of spiced or sweetened milk curdled with alcohol. Joan Fitzpatrick comments in *Food in Shakespeare: Early Modern Dietaries and the Plays* that "it is fitting that Lady Macbeth, who wanted her own milk replaced with gall, should provide a milk-based beverage whose potentially health-giving properties are

⁹⁰ William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, The Arden Shakespeare. Third Series. (New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2015), 170 fn 66-8.

inverted.”⁹¹ As Lady Macbeth waits for her husband to kill King Duncan, she reveals her excitement, “That which hath made them drunk, hath made / me bold; / What hath quenched them, hath given me fire” (2.2.1-3). As mentioned in section one, witches drank alcohol as a sexual stimulant. Furthermore, witches were creatures of excess, both sexually and gustatorily. Lady Macbeth’s consumption of alcohol reveals her own gluttonous desires for drink and sex. After Macbeth returns, Lady Macbeth speeds their return to the bedchamber in order to wash the blood from their hands and put on their nightgowns, but given her sexual excitement and her emphasis on “bed” during her sleepwalking later in the play, it is likely she seduced Macbeth that very night, “To bed, to bed: there’s knocking at the gate. Come, / come, come, come, give me your hand. What’s done, / cannot be undone. To bed, to bed, to bed” (5.1.66-68). She leads Macbeth away from the scene of crime at the end of Act 2 Scene 2 claiming, “Retire we to our chamber; / A little water clears us of this deed. / How easy it is then” (66-68). Lady Macbeth is thrilled with their success and seduces her husband to celebrate.

At the end of Act 2, Lady Macbeth and her husband become king and queen. Despite fulfilling the weird sisters’ prophecy, however, neither of the Macbeths are particularly happy. Macbeth notably no longer uses terms of endearment when talking to his wife, such as, “my dearest partner of greatness,” “my dearest love,” “dear wife,” and “dearest chuck” (1.5.11,59; 3.2.38,46). Macbeth begins to distance himself from his wife. This desire is demonstrated by Macbeth’s use of the royal we to indicate himself, “we will keep ourself / Till supper time alone” (3.1.42-3). Macbeth’s distancing himself results in both emotional distance and sexual dissatisfaction. Lady Macbeth remarks on

⁹¹ Joan Fitzpatrick, *Food in Shakespeare: Early Modern Dietaries and the Plays* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 54.

their unsatisfying sexual congress at the beginning of Act 3 Scene 2, “Naught’s had, all’s spent, / Where our desire is got without content” (5-6). Of this passage scholar Dennis Biggins writes, “‘had’ includes the idea of satisfying carnal possession, ‘all’s spent’ suggests a useless discharge of sexual energy (literally, of semen), and ‘our desire is got without content’ further implies failure to achieve sexual satisfaction.”⁹² The initial sexual thrill of Duncan’s assassination is gone. Macbeth also seems to suspect Lady Macbeth’s corrupted food giving role. He laments, “But let the frame of things disjoint, both the / worlds suffer, / Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep / In the affliction of these terrible dreams” (3.2.17-20). He specifically refers to eating his food in fear, a common anxiety among men in the early modern period who feared their wives were poisoning or tampering with their food.

One of the Macbeths’ first acts as queen and king is throwing a sumptuous banquet. In the early modern period, banquets were more than just excuses to feast. They demonstrated a person’s wealth and power. Both Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth understand the political significance of banquets. The Macbeths choose to demonstrate their power as the new king and queen through the hosting of a banquet, “The newly crowned Macbeth is anxious to consolidate his power, privately by arranging the murder of Banquo and Fleance, and publicly by visibly defining it to his courtiers in terms of a formal banquet.”⁹³ At banquet in Act 3 Scene 4, Lady Macbeth tries to distract both her husband and the courtiers with good cheer and home cooked food, “To feed were best at home: / From thence, the sauce to meat is ceremony, / Meeting were bare without it”

⁹² Dennis Biggins, “Sexuality, Witchcraft, and Violence in Macbeth,” *Shakespeare Studies* 8 (1976), 260-1.

⁹³ Chris Meads, *Banquets Set Forth: Banqueting in English Renaissance Drama*, (New York: Manchester University Press 2001), 143-44.

(3.4.33-35). The banquet, however, is interrupted by Banquo's ghost and Macbeth's outbursts. Trying to reign Macbeth's behavior, Lady Macbeth furiously attacks his masculinity again, demanding, "Are you a man?" (3.4.54-55). Needless to say, the banquet ends disastrously. When Lady Macbeth bluntly comments, "You have displaced the mirth, broke the good meeting / With most admired disorder," she not only scolds Macbeth for ruining the merriment but also ruining the opportunity to showcase their power (3.4.107-8).

Lady Macbeth does not reappear until Act 5, at which point, it is revealed that she has gone mad and spends her hours sleepwalking and reliving King Duncan's murder. Lady Macbeth furiously scrubs her hands, desiring to rid herself of the "damned spot" (5.1.35). However, it is not the spot itself that troubles her, but rather the smell of blood. It is the smell of Duncan's blood that tortures Lady Macbeth, "Here's the smell of the blood still. All the / perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand" (5.1.50-51). Just as Macbeth was "cabined, cribbed, confined, bound in / To saucy doubts and fears," so is Lady Macbeth entrapped by smell (3.4.22-23). Lady Macbeth is not the only victim of the weird sisters' witchcraft. Macbeth too succumbs to the hellish smells in his brain, which he identifies as scorpions, "O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!" (3.2.59). It is also possible that Macbeth has ingested more than just the weird sisters' smells, but also their carnivorous cauldron concoction. The land of Scotland seems to be infected as well. Macbeth wonders if the doctor might be able to heal the land, "If thou couldst, doctor, cast / The water of my land, find her disease, / And purge it to a sound and pristine health" (5.3.50-52). In the first chapter of her book, *Imperfect Creatures: Vermin, Literature, and the Sciences of Life, 1600-1740*, Lucinda Cole observes that the language

of infection is present throughout the play, but especially connected to the air, “The language of infection, then, is of a piece with the filthy air.”⁹⁴ Infection is rampant within *Macbeth*, and the end of the play offers no real cure. Both Macbeths’ minds have been infected by the weird sisters, or as the doctor says, “infected” by things “unnatural” (5.2.61-63). Stuck in “an imagined smell hell . . . which she scrubs at but cannot erase,”⁹⁵ Lady Macbeth decides to end her life to escape the all-consuming odor.

Lady Macbeth is mentioned once more before the end of the play in Malcolm’s final speech, “Of this dead butcher, and his fiend-like queen, / Who, as ‘tis thought, by self and violent hands / Took off her life” (5.9.35-37). Malcolm’s summary is entirely inadequate but reflects many readers’ opinions concerning Lady Macbeth. She is undoubtedly judged more harshly for her actions because she is a female character. Her perceived masculinity is threatening to patriarchal gender norms. Lady Macbeth may perceive power in masculine terms but uses the feminine senses as her primary weapons. Scholars have interpreted Lady Macbeth’s appeal to “unsex” herself as a plea to be more masculine, but I do not agree with this (1.5.48). Lady Macbeth desires freedom from procreative responsibilities so that she can better pursue her ambitions. She might not be able to become king herself, but being queen comes with its own advantages. Lady Macbeth uses smell to influence her husband Macbeth, and later King Duncan and Banquo. She inverts the traditional feminine role of food-giver by poisoning the chamberlains’ drinks. The night of King Duncan’s murder, she overindulges in drink and sex. In the first half of the play, Lady Macbeth’s sensory witchcraft gets tangible results.

⁹⁴ Lucinda Cole, “Rats, Witches, Miasma, and Early Modern Theories of Contagion,” in *Imperfect Creatures, Vermin, Literature, and the Sciences of Life, 1600-1740* (University of Michigan Press, 2016), 37 <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1gk0873.5>.

⁹⁵ Nagler, “Towards the Smell of Mortality: Shakespeare and Ideas of Smell 1588-1625,” 52.

In the second half, however, she finds that is no longer able to control Macbeth's senses. He pulls away from her, and essentially forgets about her. Unfortunately, Lady Macbeth's manipulation of the senses is not as powerful as the weird sisters' control of air, specifically miasma. Lady Macbeth is infected by this miasma. The bad air entraps her within her own sensory smell hell. Lady Macbeth and Cleopatra share the same fate, suicide. But as we will see in the next section, the circumstances of Lady Macbeth's death are far different from Cleopatra's. Lady Macbeth, the "fiend-like queen," had some fiends of her own to contend with (5.9.35).

Section 3. "Smells Like Egyptian Spirit": Cleopatra and Sensory Witchcraft in *Antony and Cleopatra*

Cleopatra is often referred to as one of Shakespeare's greatest female characters. Scholarship on Shakespeare and witchcraft has included many of Shakespeare's most compelling female characters: Queen Margaret, Joan of Arc, and, of course, Lady Macbeth. Cleopatra, strangely, has not been included in discussions of witchcraft. This seems particularly odd considering both Cleopatra's status as a popular female character and the evidence within the play itself. Cleopatra is called a witch by Antony right before the end of Scene 12, "The witch shall die" (4.12.47). Desiring that Antony stay in Egypt, Pompey also refers to Cleopatra's "witchcraft," "Let witchcraft join with beauty, lust with both" (2.1.27). Scholars have commented on Cleopatra's "witchiness," but have never seriously argued for her identity as a witch. For instance, in his book *Witches and Jesuits*, Gary Wills compares Cleopatra and her "witch-like powers"⁹⁶ with Lady Macbeth's summoning of spirits and association with familiars to strengthen his argument that Lady Macbeth is a witch in *Macbeth*. Cleopatra has also been frequently compared with the witch Circe. In her book, *The Common Liar: Essays on Antony and Cleopatra*, Janet Adelman describes Cleopatra as, "one of the daughters of Circe: charming, and enchanting, but not safe company."⁹⁷ Clifford Davidson similarly writes in his article, "*Antony and Cleopatra*: Circe, Venus, and the Whore of Babylon," that "The Queen of Egypt is very like the enchantress Circe, who also holds out a cup to visiting kings and other strangers, who thereby are made to lose their rational human stance as

⁹⁶ Garry Wills, *Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare's Macbeth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 78.

⁹⁷ Janet Adelman, *The Common Liar: Essays on Antony and Cleopatra* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1973), p. 65 **quoted in** Karen Britland, "Circe's Cup: Wine and Women in Early Modern Drama," in *A Pleasing Sinne: Drink and Conviviality in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Adam Smyth, xxv, 214 pp. vols., *Studies in Renaissance Literature*: 14 (Cambridge, England: Brewer, 2004), 118.

they are transformed into beasts.”⁹⁸ Cleopatra’s frequent comparisons with Circe may be why scholars have shied away from including Cleopatra into scholarship on Shakespearean witchcraft. The geographic location of both *The Odyssey* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, the Mediterranean, is associated with a more ancient type of witchcraft, one that is less westernized and Christian. Traditional conceptions of witchcraft have not been able to include Cleopatra because of this, but my definition, which relies on the senses, can include Cleopatra. Using my definition, I will demonstrate that there is plenty of evidence in the play that points to an interpretation of Cleopatra as a witch. Cleopatra’s true powers as a witch lie in her manipulation of the senses. Her use of perfume, sex, and feasting ensnare Antony, causing him to forget his duty towards Rome and partake in bestial desires that emasculate him. Cleopatra is “like wine, she intoxicates and confounds the senses.”⁹⁹

From the very start of the play, the effects of Cleopatra’s witchcraft on Antony are apparent. Philo laments to Demetrius that Antony has forgotten his duty to Rome, “Those his goodly eyes, / That o’er the files and musters of the war / Have glowed like plated Mars, now bend, now turn / The office and devotion of their view / Upon a tawny front” (1.1.2-6). Antony’s focus has shifted from Rome and soldiering to Cleopatra and his love for her. Antony’s love for Cleopatra is so all-consuming that he refuses to hear the newly arrived Roman messengers. Antony proclaims to Cleopatra, “Now, for love of Love and her soft hours, / Let’s not confound the time with conference harsh. / There’s not a minute of our lives should stretch / Without some pleasure now” (2.1.45-48). Antony reaffirms his disinterest in performing his Roman duties, instead desiring time

⁹⁸ Davidson, “*Antony and Cleopatra*: Circe, Venus, and the Whore of Babylon,” 39.

⁹⁹ Britland, “Circe’s Cup: Wine and Women in Early Modern Drama,” 125.

with Cleopatra. It is only after Antony speaks to the Roman messengers that he feels guilty for not performing his duties. He suddenly becomes aware of Cleopatra's sensory enchantments on him, "These strong Egyptian fetters I must break, / Or lose myself in dotage" (1.2.123-4). In the footnotes to Garry Wills' chapter on Lady Macbeth, he comments on the language used to describe Cleopatra's witchcraft, "*Binding* and *tying* were the work of magic. Spells *chain* the enthralled."¹⁰⁰ Antony is chained by Cleopatra's witchcraft. Like a spider weaving its web, Cleopatra is ensnaring her prey.

The Romans are shocked by Antony's behavior because they are accustomed to living without material comforts. They do not indulge their senses. For example, in Act 2 Scene 7 Caesar refuses Antony's offer of wine, "But I had rather fast from all, four days, / Than drink so much in one" (102-103). Caesar and Lepidus are disgusted by the reports of Antony's behavior. In Act 1 Scene 4, Caesar shares the news of Antony's revels in Egypt and mourns Antony's transformation from a dutiful soldier to party animal, "From Alexandria / This is the news: he fishes, drinks, and wastes / The lamps of night in revel; is not more manlike / Than Cleopatra, nor the Queen of Ptolemy / More womanly than he; hardly gave audience, or / Vouchsafed to think he had partners. You shall find there / A man who is the abstract of all faults / That all men follow" (3-10). Antony's behavior is not only shocking, but also unmanly. By taking part in physical comforts like food, drink, and sex, he is indulging his feminine or primal senses, thus degrading his masculinity. The Romans are also threatened by the dynamic between Cleopatra and Antony. Antony is "not more manlike / Than Cleopatra," and Cleopatra is not "more womanly than he" (5-6). Antony is not the dominating masculine force in the relationship, and Cleopatra is

¹⁰⁰ Wills, *Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare's Macbeth*, 188 fn. 10.

the not the subservient female. They are on equal terms, which upsets the Romans. Moreover, when Antony is with Cleopatra time is disordered, “he[Antony] . . . wastes / The lamps of night in revel” (4-5). Antony’s obsession with physical comforts is further highlighted when Caesar confronts him about his past experiences with deprivation, “Thou didst drink / The stale of horses and the gilded puddle / Which beasts would cough at. Thy palate then did deign / The roughest berry on the rudest hedge” (1.4.62-65). In Caesar’s mind, the deprivation and asceticism Antony suffered while campaigning shows the true strength and masculinity of being a Roman. This passage informs us that Antony is capable of extreme self-control, but under Cleopatra’s influence, he succumbs to his every whim and desire. In his article, “‘Cloyless Sauce’: The Pleasurable Politics of Food in *Antony and Cleopatra*,” Peter Parolin writes that, “Rather than exercising self-control, Antony subjects himself to his appetites, a move that marks his feminization and Egyptianization, the undoing of his Roman masculinity.”¹⁰¹ Antony’s Roman brethren do not approve of his Egyptian lifestyle, but are not unfamiliar with Cleopatra’s temptations.

Antony and Cleopatra’s appetite for feasting is insatiable. Through the course of the play they throw several feasts. Indeed, scholar Chris Meads notes that both *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Macbeth* “feature more than the average number of food and drink images for Shakespeare’s plays.”¹⁰² After the disastrous naval battle in Act 3, Antony calls for food and drink to ease their failure, “Some wine / Within there and our viands! Fortune knows / We scorn her most when most she offers blows” (3.11.73-75). Later, before engaging in another battle with Caesar, Antony calls for another feast, “Call forth

¹⁰¹ Peter A. Parolin, “‘Cloyless Sauce’: The Pleasurable Politics of Food in *Antony and Cleopatra*,” in *Antony and Cleopatra: New Critical Essays*, ed. Sara Munson Deats, (New York: Routledge, 2005), 215.

¹⁰² Chris Meads, *Banquets Set Forth: Banqueting in English Renaissance Drama*, 146.

my household servants. / Let's tonight / Be bounteous at our meal" (4.2.9-10). Antony loves his feasts, but Egypt's reputation for feasting is well known in the play.

Historically, Egypt was the bread-basket of Rome for hundreds of years thanks to the Nile's fertile soil. Cleopatra's feasts are not only for pleasure, but also showcase the strength and power of Egypt. Surrounded by copious amounts of food with no threat of deprivation or limit, it is no wonder Antony gives in to gluttony, and he is not the only Roman to do so. During the Romans' feast in Act 2 Scene 6, Pompey speaks to Antony, commenting on Julius Caesar's weight gain thanks to Egyptian feasts, "Your fine Egyptian cookery shall have / The fame. I have heard that Julius Caesar / Grew fat with feasting there" (81-3). During the party, Enobarbus uses food to illustrate Antony's consumption of both Egyptian feasts and Cleopatra, "He will to his Egyptian dish again" (156). In Act 2 Scene 1 when Pompey is discussing his rivals and battle plans, he specifically mentions that Antony is too distracted by feasting to challenge him, "Mark Antony / In Egypt sits at dinner, and will make / No wars without doors" (11-13). Antony is undoubtedly captivated with Egyptian feasts and their hostess, Cleopatra.

One of the best examples of Cleopatra's witchcraft via food and drink occurs at the end of Act 2 Scene 1. Pompey hopes that Cleopatra will continue to distract Antony with food, drink, and sex, thus allowing him to wage war, "But all the charms of love, / Salt Cleopatra, soften thy wanned lip! / Let witchcraft join with beauty, lust with both; / Tie up the libertine in a field of feasts; / Keep his brain fuming. Epicurean cooks / Sharpen with cloyless sauce his appetite, / That sleep and feeding may prorogue his honor / Even till a Lethe'd dullness" (25-32). Pompey uses the language of food and drink to describe Cleopatra's charms. This passage also provides another example of

Cleopatra's binding and tying, "Tie up the libertine" (28). In line 26, Pompey asserts, "Salt Cleopatra, soften thy waned lip!" Salt was a highly sought-after substance. It not only aided in the preservation of foods, but also added to taste by cutting bitterness. The salt not only demonstrates Cleopatra's wealth, but also serves as a way to cut bitterness, or rather cover any characteristics of her witchiness. Pompey refers to Antony as a "libertine," or a ladies' man, and hopes Cleopatra will "tie [him] up in a field of feasts" (28). Pompey's usage of feasts here implies both food and flesh. Cleopatra is the provider of the feast and the consumable object. Pompey continues, adding, "Keep his brain fuming" (29). Like Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra is aware that drinking too much alcohol produces vapors in the brain, compromising Antony's sense of judgement. Antony will be further distracted with the food prepared by "Epicurean cooks" (29). An Epicurean is someone devoted to sensual pleasures such as eating and drinking. These cooks will intensify Antony's already insatiable appetite, "sharpen with cloyless sauce his appetite" (30). Pompey's final wish for Antony is that "sleep and feeding may prorogue his honor / Even till a Lethe'd dullness" (31-32). Distracted by feasting and sleeping, Antony's will put off or "prorogue" his duty as a Roman, until he succumbs to total forgetfulness and inactivity or "Lethe'd dullness" (31-32).

Cleopatra is very much aware of her dual roles as consumer and consumable object. Like Enobarbus and Pompey, she too figures herself in terms of food. In Act 1 Scene 5 Cleopatra tells her chambermaids that, "I was / A morsel for a monarch; and great Pompey / Would stand and make his eyes grow in my brow; / There would he anchor his aspect, and die / With looking on his life" (31-35). In this moment, Cleopatra is aware that she is an object to be consumed and those who consume her "die" or

languish away with desire. Enobarbus calls this quality of Cleopatra her “infinite variety,” “Age cannot wither with her, nor custom stale, / Her infinite variety: other women cloy / The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry, / Where most she satisfies” (2.2.245-8). Cleopatra’s sexual appeal is unending. The more Antony consumes Cleopatra, the hungrier he becomes for her. However, the more Antony gives in to Cleopatra, the more he is emasculated. Parolin argues that Cleopatra’s true role is that of the consumer:

She may start off as a dish to be eaten, but . . . she is a woman actively in control of her encounters with Roman men . . . Cleopatra easily shifts from being the morsel of food that Roman generals eat to being the devourer of those same generals, and if Cleopatra shifts in this way, then, Antony too, shifts from being the manly hero who consumes Cleopatra to being the effeminate Roman who is consumed by her.¹⁰³

Cleopatra may appear to be a simple sexual object, but she is really the consumer herself, reducing men into emasculated beasts who are intoxicated by her.¹⁰⁴ Karen Britland similarly discusses Cleopatra’s dual roles as consumer and consumable object, comparing Cleopatra with Circe and her poisoned cup, “She is both the active agent that is to encourage Antony’s feasting, and the passive object that he will consume; in other words, she is at once a daughter of Circe, *and* her cup of tainted wine.”¹⁰⁵

In Act 2 Scene 5, Cleopatra demonstrates her role as the consumer by alluding to herself as a fisherman, “I will betray / Tawny-finned fishes. My bended hook shall pierce / Their slimy jaws, and, as I draw them up, / I’ll think them every one an Antony, / And say, ‘Ah, ha! You’re caught!’” (11-15). Cleopatra’s use of language is indicative of her dominant role in her relationship with Antony. She is not just catching fish but piercing

¹⁰³ Parolin, “‘Cloyless Sauce’: The Pleasurable Politics of Food in Antony and Cleopatra,” 217.

¹⁰⁴ Britland, “Circe’s Cup: Wine and Women in Early Modern Drama,” 119.

¹⁰⁵ Britland, “Circe’s Cup: Wine and Women in Early Modern Drama,” 119.

“their slimy jaws” (12). She is openly victorious and smug concerning her success, “Ah, ha! You’re caught!” (15). She brags about getting Antony drunk and replacing his clothes for hers, “I drunk him to his bed, / Then put my tires and mantles on him, whilst / I wore his sword Philippan” (2.5.21-23). She, in essence, becomes the conqueror instead of Antony. Cleopatra’s consumptive and toxic power is also mentioned when she speculates on Antony’s whereabouts and actions, “He’s[Antony] speaking now, / Or murmuring ‘Where’s my serpent of old Nile?’ / For so he calls me. Now I feed myself / With most delicious poison. Think on me / That am with Phoebus’ amorous pinches black, / And wrinkled deep in time?” (1.5.29-30). Cleopatra associates herself with snakes and poison. If she feeds herself with poison, then those who feed off of her are themselves poisoned.

Throughout the play, Cleopatra shows herself to be a master manipulator. Early on, Cleopatra informs her maid Charmian to give Antony a message, “If you find him sad, / Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report / That I am sudden sick. Quick, and return” (1.3.4-6). Charmian immediately criticizes Cleopatra’s decision and offers another, to which Cleopatra scolds, “Thou teachest like a fool: the way to lose him” (1.3.11). But Cleopatra’s manipulation of Antony’s emotions is nothing compared with her ability to manipulate his sense of smell. Cleopatra manipulates smell in a variety of ways. Like Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra is aware of the potency of alcohol and its fumes. As Pompey said, “Keep his[Antony’s] brain fuming” (2.1.23). The smell of succulent “Epicurean” feasts would no doubt work upon him as well (2.1.24). But it is Cleopatra’s perfume that is the most potent smell. Constance Classen emphasizes the significance of Cleopatra’s perfume in her seduction of Antony, “The seductive, perfumed Cleopatra, . . . is

portrayed as ultimately leading Mark Antony to his downfall.”¹⁰⁶ Enobarbus’ lush description of Cleopatra’s barge and her first encounter with Antony best exemplify Cleopatra’s use of perfume. He begins by describing how Cleopatra’s perfume filled the air from the scented sails of her barge, “Purple the sails, and so perfumed that / The winds were love-sick with them” (2.2.203-4). He goes on to describe how the perfume attracted not only Antony, but also the Egyptians in the city, “From the barge / A strange invisible perfume hits the sense / Of the adjacent wharfs. The city cast / Her people out upon her; and Antony, / Enthroned i’ th’ market-place, did sit alone, / Whistling to the air, which, but for vacancy, / Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra” (2.2.221-7). Cleopatra’s perfume grabs Antony’s attention before he has even set his eyes upon her. The perfume plays upon his mind, influencing his decision to gaze upon Cleopatra and ask her to dine with him. Holly Dugan argues that Antony fell in love with Cleopatra “not at first sight but at first smell.”¹⁰⁷ Not only does her perfume attract Antony, but it also gets the attention of the entire city. Cleopatra’s perfume is very powerful, covering the stench of her witchiness by exploiting her Egyptian exoticism. Her use of perfume represents a queen and witch in control of her environment.¹⁰⁸

Cleopatra’s control of smell is further intensified by her association with the element of air. In Act 1 Scene 2 while speaking with Antony, Enobarbus compares Cleopatra’s passions with the elements, “We cannot / call her winds and waters sighs and tears; they are / greater storms and tempests than almanacs can report” (154-56). In his description of Cleopatra’s barge, Enobarbus describes the boys “like smiling cupids” who

¹⁰⁶ Classen, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*, 37.

¹⁰⁷ Dugan, *Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England*, 20.

¹⁰⁸ Dugan, *Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England*, 21.

are fanning Cleopatra, “With divers-coloured fans, whose wind did seem / To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool” (2.2.212-14). Towards the end of this speech, Enobarbus shares his amazement at Cleopatra’s breathlessness, “And, having lost her breath, she spoke and panted, / That she did make defect perfection, / And breathes, pour breath forth” (2.2.240-32). In Act 3 Scene 7, Antony, confuddled by Cleopatra’s perfume, agrees to fight by sea instead of land, a disastrous decision on his part. During the battle, Cleopatra abandons Antony, again recalling her association with air, “The breeze upon her, like a cow in June, / Hoists sails and flies” (3.10.14-15). Cleopatra’s manipulation of smell is her most powerful sensory weapon, with it she is able to control Antony, and later, control her the circumstances of her suicide.

With Antony dead and Cleopatra grieving, Caesar successfully makes it to the palace and demands Cleopatra’s surrender. Trapped inside her monument, Cleopatra is still able to maintain some control of her sensory witchcraft. When Proculeius wishes Cleopatra would nourish herself in order to better serve Caesar, Cleopatra responds by refusing to eat or drink, “Sir, I will eat no meat; I’ll not drink, sir” (5.2.48-49). Cleopatra has always controlled food and feasting. Her refusal to accept Caesar’s food and drink again puts her in control of the situation. Cleopatra fears being taken to Rome by Caesar. She explains what awaits in Rome to her maids Iras and Charmian, “Mechanic slaves / With greasy aprons, rules and hammers shall / Uplift us to the view. In their thick breaths, / Rank of gross diet, shall we be enclouded / And forced to drink their vapour” (5.2.208-12). Cleopatra describes the plebian masses in sensory terms. She is disgusted by the thought of being forced to smell the common people’s putrid breath from their meager diets. In Rome, Cleopatra will be forced to subject herself not only to Caesar but

also the common Romans, “For Cleopatra, feeding has here become force-feeding, a sign of her subjection not only to Caesar but also to common Romans whose ‘gross diet’ marks their social inferiority.”¹⁰⁹ Determined to avoid this fate, Cleopatra decides to commit suicide. Cleopatra has an asp, a source of poison, delivered to her in a basket of figs. The figs hide the poisonous asp under the guise of nourishing fruit, similar to how Lady Macbeth hid her poison in the possets of the chamberlains. Cleopatra’s poisonous nature continues through the scene. After Iras and Charmian help Cleopatra dress for her suicide, she bids farewell to both of them and kisses them. After her kiss, Iras falls down dead. Cleopatra alarmed asks, “Have I the aspic in my lips?” (5.2.292). Cleopatra’s kiss is indeed poison. Cleopatra then places the asp on her breast, in an action that echoes Lady Macbeth’s desire to turn her milk to gall, telling Charmian, “Dost thou not see my baby at my breast? / That sucks the nurse asleep?” (5.2.307-8). She invokes her power over smell and air to assist in her preparation for suicide, calling upon the element of the air to fortify her, “I am fire and air; my other elements / I give to baser life” (5.2.288-9). Cleopatra’s invocation of air is successful, as Charmian notes the change in the room, “Dissolve, thick cloud, and rain, that I may say / The god themselves do weep!” (5.2.298-99). After successfully applying the asp, Cleopatra again calls to the air, noting its sweetness, “As sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle” (5.2.310). While Lady Macbeth is stuck in smell hell, Cleopatra seems to be in smell heaven, surrounded by pleasant scents. Cleopatra is able to manipulate the senses until the very moment of her death.

Although scholars have brought up Cleopatra’s “witchiness” none have argued for an interpretation of Cleopatra as a witch. Cleopatra’s association with Circe was the

¹⁰⁹ Parolin, “‘Cloyless Sauce’: The Pleasurable Politics of Food in Antony and Cleopatra,” 226.

closest scholars had to come to this interpretation, until now. Cleopatra's manipulation of the senses is apparent when we look at Antony's behavior and actions in the play, as well as the Romans response to it. Antony neglects his duties as a Roman in favor of Cleopatra's company. He drinks and feasts to excess, which perplexes and angers his fellow Romans. By indulging in the feminine senses of touch, taste, and smell, Antony emasculates himself. Cleopatra, the consummate hostess, controls the feasting and drinking in Egypt. By doing so she is able to become a sort of paradox, the consumer and consumable. She uses these roles to her advantage, enabling her to be the dominant participant in the relationship. But food, drink, and sex are not the only weapons in her arsenal. She also uses smell and air to capture Antony's attention. When faced with a future in Rome being Caesar's war prize, Cleopatra fears her subjugation under the common Roman masses and their foul odors. In her suicide, she uses smell to fortify herself before being bitten by a poisonous asp. Cleopatra is also associated with tying or binding, acts similar to weaving. Finally, Cleopatra, as the hostess of most of the revels, creates disorder. When she runs the party, time and gender collapse. As both a witch and a female monarch, she is able to perpetuate this disorder in the patriarchal world. In his comparison between Cleopatra and Circe, Davidson writes that, "Cleopatra, to be sure, appeals powerfully to *all the senses*."¹¹⁰ Cleopatra appeals powerfully to the senses because she controls the senses. The references to charms, poisons, and sensory delights in the play are overwhelming, and emphatically point to something greater than Cleopatra's similarities to other mythological figures such as Circe or Venus. They illustrate that Cleopatra can be interpreted as a witch, and with this interpretation we can

¹¹⁰ Davidson, "Antony and Cleopatra: Circe, Venus, and the Whore of Babylon," 40.

finally include one of Shakespeare's greatest female characters into the scholarship of Shakespearean witchcraft.

Conclusion

The nature and power of the witch were hotly disputed topics in the early modern period. Unable to stomach the idea of female witches holding power in their own right or God sanctioning their power, writers like Heinrich Kramer, James Sprenger, George Gifford, and Reginald Scot argued that the witch's power must come from the devil, a masculine source. However, their discussions of the witch's power reveal a deep connection to the domestic sphere and the feminine senses. The feminine senses of touch, taste, and smell were already believed to have corruptive influence over women if not utilized properly for their wifely and motherly duties. The sensory witch simply utilized the feminine senses true potential for self-gratification and empowerment. Witches were feared because of their femininity. Early modern writers already had a model of sensory witchcraft in the figure of Circe from *The Odyssey*. The temptations offered by Circe reinterpreted the dangers of the feminine senses.

Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth are powerful women, able to assert their control over men through their use of sensory witchcraft. Both use perfumes to cover their witchy stench and grab the attention of others, host exquisite banquets to showcase their power and win over their guests, and use sex as a tool for control and pleasure. They are each descendants of Circe, the original manipulator of the senses and agent of sensory witchcraft. Despite their momentary successes, each inevitably loses in the end and takes her own life. Caesar demands Cleopatra's surrender so that he can take her back to Rome as a war prize. Refusing to leave Egypt, she uses an asp to kill herself. Lady Macbeth's sensory witchcraft proves to be no match against the combined power of the weird sisters. The miasma produced by the weird sisters drives Lady Macbeth insane and she

kills herself. Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth must fail at the end of their stories so as to keep the natural order. As female witches, they cannot ultimately win because they are disorderly and chaotic. Although they configure their power in masculine terms, they rely on their feminine senses, touch, taste, and smell, to enact their desires. The strength they find in femininity is dangerous. It cannot be controlled by men and therefore must be repressed.

This thesis has connected several strands of separate scholarship: witchcraft, Shakespeare, and sensory history, and found a way to integrate them to create something new. My work has sought to include a new character, Cleopatra, into the scholarship of Shakespearean witchcraft, connect separate scholarly ideas on the senses into one overall analysis of *Macbeth*, and pursued a new strategy of analysis, sensory witchcraft, to redefine the traditional perception of witchcraft and how female witches use power. The addition of masculine traits to female witches seems to be an attempt to cover up their true feminine power. Would the three witches from *Macbeth* be any less powerful if they did not have beards? Or are the beards merely a way to comprehend their power because masculinity is associated with power? What would happen if we started to associate femininity with power? By combining witchcraft and the senses, we access a new perspective that allows for a more empowered view of the witch, a view of a woman that is active, in control, and hosts a witchin' party.

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