

CRIMES OF CONSUMPTION:  
Polemical uses of Gluttony and Cannibalism  
in English Print, 1580-1625

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## Abstract

Attacks on excessive consumption are an enduring theme in Western biblical and Greco-Roman thought. This dissertation attempts to unravel the cultural and political context of two such critiques. The 'culture' of gluttony at the Court of King James still stands as a stereotype largely left unchanged by the recent revisionist historiography. This dissertation argues that James's Court was unexceptional when placed in the context of other English and European Courts. Polemical attacks on the culture of 'gluttony' at the Court of King James were motivated by political contest. Proximity to the King's person allowed for unrivalled privilege and reward. The attacks on James's new favourites came from the old nobility, once at the centre, and now relegated to the periphery, while those targeted, James's 'new men', came from the periphery. Competition for resources also informed the allegations of cannibalism made against New World peoples. Under the Spanish, attacks against the 'cannibals' at the periphery were designed to justify the appropriation of their resources. The English, when their opportunity came, could no longer convincingly accuse those at the periphery of cannibalism. New economic arguments and empirical science together promoted a new focus on 'culture', which suggested that Amerindians belonged at the periphery. At some stage in their 'development' and under proper Christian tutelage, and if they behaved themselves, they might be incorporated into the centre. In the meantime, English 'trade and friendship' would assist in their education. This dissertation makes an original contribution by demonstrating that bodily practices sit at the heart of enduring political contests.

## Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
List of Illustrations	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
Chapter 1     The Boundaries of Consumption	p.1
Chapter 2     Polemics of Cannibalism	p.27
Chapter 3     Polemics of Gluttony	p.78
Conclusion	p.129
Bibliography	p.135

## List of Illustrations

- |          |  |      |
|----------|--|------|
| Figure 1 | ‘Spanish Butcher-shop’ in Bartolomè de las Casas, <i>Narratio Regioncum Indicarum per Hispanos Devastatarum Quosdam verissima</i> , Frankfurt, 1598. | p.51 |
| Figure 2 | ‘Spanish Dogs’ in Bartolomè de las Casas, <i>Narratio Regioncum Indicarum per Hispanos Devastatarum Quosdam verissima</i> , Frankfurt, 1598.         | p.52 |
| Figure 3 | ‘Spanish cruelty’ in Bartolomè de las Casas, <i>Narratio Regioncum Indicarum per Hispanos Devastatarum Quosdam verissima</i> , Frankfurt, 1598.      | p.53 |
| Figure 4 | ‘Diabolical butchery’ in André Thevet, <i>Les Singularitez de la France Antarctique</i> , Paris, 1558, p.77.   | p.58 |
| Figure 5 | ‘Cannibal barbeque’ in Theodore de Bry, <i>Americae Tertia Pars</i> , Frankfurt, 1592.   | p.58 |
| Figure 6 | ‘Grilling fish’, XIII in Thomas Hariot, <i>A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia</i> , London, 1590.                             | p.69 |
| Figure 7 | ‘Cooking’, XV in Thomas Hariot, <i>A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia</i> , London, 1590.                                     | p.70 |
| Figure 8 | ‘Sitting down to eat’, XVI in Thomas Hariot, <i>A brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia</i> , London, 1590.                        | p.71 |

- Figure 9     ‘Adam and Eve’ and ‘Map of Virginia’, Plates I and II in  
Thomas Hariot, *A brief and True Report of the New Found  
Land of Virginia*, London, 1590. p.74
- Figure 10    ‘Pict warrior’, Plate 1 of the Pictes in Thomas Hariot,  
*A brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*,  
London, 1590. p.75
- Figure 11    ‘Glutton with horseleeches’ in Pierre Boaistuau,  
*Certaine Secrete Wonders of Nature*, London, 1569. p.99
- Figure 12    ‘Gluttony’: the drunk, in Stephen Batman,  
*A Christall Glasse of Christian Reformation*, London, 1569. p.103
- Figure 13    ‘Gluttony’: the priest, in Stephen Batman,  
*A Christall Glasse of Christian Reformation*, London, 1569. p.104
- Figure 14    ‘Gluttony’: the murderers, in Stephen Batman,  
*A Christall Glasse of Christian Reformation*, London, 1569. p.105
- Figure 15    ‘Covetousness’: the usurer, in Stephen Batman,  
*A Christall Glasse of Christian Reformation*, London, 1569. p.108
- Figure 16    ‘Covetousness’: the devil’s net, in Stephen Batman,  
*A Christall Glasse of Christian Reformation*, London, 1569. p.109

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## Chapter 1: The boundaries of consumption

Gourmet Brillat-Savarin's famous quip —'tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are'— suggests that food selection is an important measure and expression of social identity.<sup>1</sup> In the early modern period the variety of food one ate marked rank and occupation. Dietary guidelines suggested that the labouring poor should eat the moist, 'heavy' and cheap pork, while the 'light' and expensive fowl were best suited to the needs of the elite.<sup>2</sup> The amount of food allocated reflected social prestige rather than dietary needs. Within the households of James I and Elizabeth I the number of dishes of food per meal increased with the status of the office-holder.<sup>3</sup> Food sharing enhanced awareness of collective identity and 'hospitality' was a highly prized value. For Christians the sense of belonging engendered by a shared table was allegorised as Christ's last supper.<sup>4</sup> Food marked collectivity, but also expressed the differences between cultures, informing social prejudice.<sup>5</sup>

This intrinsic link between food and identity therefore held the potential for powerful negative associations. What others ate could be used to socially degrade or stigmatize an opponent. Labeling others by what they ate served as a common form of attack upon rival polities. Mostly the political motives behind such attacks were blatant. It

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste*, (trans.) Anne Drayton, London; New York, 1994, p.13. This was the fourth of his 'Aphorisms by the professor to serve as a prologue to his work and as an eternal foundation for his science'.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Butts, *Dyets Dry Dinner*, London, 1599. STC 407 [Pagination is out. Both quotes are from section 3, 'Flesh', see sig. K4].

<sup>3</sup> 'The booke of household of Queene Elizabeth' in Society of Antiquaries, *A collection of ordinance and regulations for the government of the Royal Household, made in divers reigns. From King Edward III to King William and Queen Mary*, London, 1790; 'Ordinances for the governing and ordering of the King's household, signed by King James' in Society of Antiquaries, *A collection of ordinance and regulations for the government of the Royal Household, made in divers reigns. From King Edward III to King William and Queen Mary*, London, 1790.

<sup>4</sup> Massimo Montanari, *The Culture of Food*, (trans.) Carl Ipsen, Oxford; Cambridge, MA, 1996.

<sup>5</sup> Debra Lupton, *Food, the Body, and the Self*, London, 1996, pp.25-26.



is therefore no surprise that when England declared war on the Dutch in 1665 a broadside, *The Dutch Boare dissected, or a description of Hoggs-land* labeled the Dutchman as ‘a Lusty, Fat, two legged cheese-worm’, ‘addicted to eating butter’ and ‘drinking fat drink’.<sup>6</sup> ‘The Dutch reputation as hearty trenchermen specializing in quantity rather than finesse was not wholly fanciful’ as Simon Schama says.<sup>7</sup> Of course the Netherlands were famous for their dairy products, including the round red-rimmed cheeses that produced such broad, tall bodies.<sup>8</sup> Jan de Vries has also shown that the Dutch had a relatively good standard of living compared to other European nations, suggesting they probably ate well, though this does not mean they were ‘gluttons’.<sup>9</sup> Broadside had been stereotyping the Dutch as butter-eaters or hogs for at least twenty-five years as tensions between the two nations escalated.<sup>10</sup>

Accusing others of abhorrent eating practices, ranging from eating food considered unfit for human consumption or cannibalism through to simply eating or drinking too much or too luxuriously, provided leverage in arguments on a surprisingly wide variety of subjects. The basic premise of this dissertation is that propaganda about outlandish eating habits reflected moments of heightened political tension. ‘Polemic’,

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<sup>6</sup> Anon, *The Dutch Boare dissected, or a description of Hoggs-land*. See also *Dutch damnified or the Butter-boxes boxed*, 1664-1674, Wing 2896B. Internal evidence suggests that it appeared after 20 August 1666 (during the second Anglo-Dutch war) because much mention is made of the ‘the Valliant knight’ Sir Robert Holmes, and his role in burning a town on the island of ‘Schelling’.

<sup>7</sup> Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An interpretation of Dutch culture in the Golden Age*, London, 1987, p.151.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.152.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.167.

<sup>10</sup> Anon, *A certaine Relation of the Hog-faced gentlewoman called Mistress Tanakin Skinker*, London, 1640, STC 22627; *The Dutch-man’s pedigree or A relation shewing how they were first bred, and descended from a horse-turd which was enclosed in a butter-box*, London, 1653, Wing F6. English resentment of the Dutch success in trade and shipping was already evident in the 1640 *A certaine Relation of the Hog-faced gentlewoman called Mistress Tanakin Skinker*.

from the Greek meaning war-like, originally referred to doctrinal arguments among Christians. The impassioned and controversial nature of these arguments still informs its contemporary meaning. According to Michel Foucault (whose experience in the technique makes him a reliable guide): ‘The polemicist...possesses rights authorizing him to wage war and making that struggle a just undertaking; the person he confronts is not a partner in the search for the truth but an adversary, an enemy who is wrong, who is harmful, and whose very existence constitutes a threat.’<sup>11</sup> Polemic, Foucault concluded, created ‘an obstacle to the search for the truth.’<sup>12</sup> But there is no reason why it might not guide research.

Few historians have focused on eating in the early modern period. This may be because the period between 1500 and 1700 has largely been seen as transitional between the medieval and the modern. However, the real reason is more prosaic. There are few discrete bodies of primary sources to examine. Most histories of the topic draw upon dietaries or cookbooks. These are useful for understanding the politics of food, but have their limitations. As E. P. Thompson pointed out, the best means to investigate common and mundane practices that often leave the fewest traces is by examining the extreme limits of those behaviours.<sup>13</sup> In the context of food consumption this suggests in quantitative terms, gluttony, and in qualitative terms, cannibalism. Accusations of transgressive eating behaviours such as cannibalism and gluttony, masked much larger contentious social issues, specific to time and place, which only come to light when

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<sup>11</sup> ‘Polemics, politics and problematizations’, Paul Rabinow interview with Michel Foucault, May 1984. Available from <http://foucault.info/foucault/interview.html>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> A. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, London, 1963.

examined in some depth, suggesting the need to carefully scrutinise sixteenth and seventeenth century authors' use of these ancient tropes. There is also benefit in examining these topics together, because the comparison highlights resemblances and disparities across different times, spaces and peoples. Using abhorrent eating practices as an organizational principle leads to new research questions and generates alternative readings from the current historiography. We shall discuss these general assertions in further depth throughout the chapter

## II

English historians, have, until recently, paid little attention to food, considering the topic most relevant to the methodology of economic history. From the 1980s to the 1990s, however, historians' growing interest in consumption rather than production inspired a new focus on food.<sup>14</sup> Initially historians focused on the commercialisation of food and the expansion of domestic markets, and the crucial role played by foods from the New World. The anthropologist Sidney Mintz's *Sweetness and Power: the place of sugar in modern history* (1985) inspired an approach that situated food as a motor of history.<sup>15</sup> Critics of the consumption literature make a fair point when they assert that that the consumption model, when superficially applied, seems little more than pro-capitalist rhetoric. By idealizing the commodity itself, the complex of social, economic

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<sup>14</sup> Neil Mc Kendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb, (eds.), *The Birth of a Consumer Society: the Commercialisation of Eighteenth-century England*, London, 1982; John Brewer, Roy Porter, (eds.) *Consumption and the world of goods*, London, New York, 1993.

<sup>15</sup> Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: the place of sugar in modern history*, New York, 1985.

and political processes at work in the production of those same commodities are buried, as is the labour of people.

These general criticisms of the consumption literature apply to many of the latest works on food. John Reader's *Propitious Esculent: the potato in world history* (2008) focuses on an individual food to organise his historical discussion, but do we want a history of food or a history of people? Felipe Fernández-Armesto's popular entertaining macro-history, *Near a thousand tables* (2002) makes broad claims for the global revolutionary role of food.<sup>16</sup> Recent books such as Ken Albala's *Eating Right in the Renaissance* emphasise the centrality of food in early modern medicine.<sup>17</sup> Renewed interest in the food, recipes and cooking of the past, is reflected in the translation and reproduction of classic renaissance cookbooks.<sup>18</sup> Joan Thirsk's earlier economically focused interests have turned to the examination of changing food fashions in early modern England.<sup>19</sup> Roy Strong's *Feast* focuses on the performance, social display and increasing ritualisation of the feasts of the European elite from the fourteenth century.<sup>20</sup> There is little in these historical works that challenges the reader to critically examine their past, or indeed, their present.

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<sup>16</sup> John Reader, *Propitious Esculent: the potato in world history*, New Haven, CT., 2009; Philippe Fernández-Armesto, *Near a Thousand Tables: a history of food*, London; New York, 2002. This work claims that the evolution of human culture is the product of the human need to feed. Fernández-Armesto argues for eight revolutions. These are the invention of cooking; the assignation of meaning to food; field agriculture; food and social status; food motivating exploration; food changing ecology; and food as a causal mechanism in the industrial revolution.

<sup>17</sup> Ken Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance*, Los Angeles, CA, 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Luigi Ballerini, (ed), *The Eminent Maestro Martino of Como, The art of Cooking: The First Modern Cookery Book*, (trans.) Jeremy Parzen, with fifty modernised recipes by Stefania Barzini, Los Angeles, 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Joan Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England: Phases, Fads, and Fashions, 1550-1760*, London, 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Roy Strong, *Feast: A History of Grand Eating*, London, 2002.

By contrast, French and Italian historians have, since the 1970s at least, foregrounded the social and cultural aspects of food consumption in their studies. This partly reflects their historical tradition of scholarship more closely associated with the social sciences. What appears to be an ‘interdisciplinary’ perspective from the point of view of English historians, and therefore needs to be either explicitly justified or defended, or touted as ‘new’, is almost taken for granted in the work of French and Italian historians. Influenced by the findings of psychology and anthropology, these historians have paid more attention to the symbolic aspects involved in food consumption, and how this has been manifested culturally in stories and imagery. Piero Camporesi’s 1989 *Bread of Dreams* brings to life the chronic hunger and malnutrition that kept the medieval poor dazed and debilitated.<sup>21</sup> Massimo Montanari’s 1996 *Culture of food*, a huge compendium offering a diversity of perspectives, highlights the religious and social associations of food.<sup>22</sup> The main conclusion that emerges from this work is that the role of hunger in history needs to be taken very seriously. In the face of gnawing hunger, food becomes an obsession. Although the hunger may pass, the experience of deprivation can be passed on, remaining the greatest fear generations later.<sup>23</sup> Even though English folk tales, like their Mediterranean counterparts, are dominated by images of food and cannibalism, this has attracted little attention from English historians. Just as the English are renowned for lacking a cuisine comparable to the French or Italian, English historians have similarly neglected the important role of hunger.

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<sup>21</sup> Piero Camporesi, *Bread of Dreams: Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe*, Chicago, 1989, p.137.

<sup>22</sup> Massimo Montanari, *Culture of Food*, (trans.) Carl Ipsen, Oxford; Cambridge, MA, 1996.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Mandrou, *Introduction to Modern France 1500- 1640: an essay in historical psychology*, (trans.) R. E. Hallmark, London, 1975.

Very recently, within the past two years, English and Atlantic historians have focused more attention on eating and its cultural associations. Highlighting ‘taste’ as one of the six bodily senses, focuses the attention on the consumer, rather than the consumed, and the ‘eating’, rather than the ‘food’. This use of the senses as an organising principle reflects the adoption of perspectives from psychology and anthropology. Influenced by Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology and Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of ‘taste’ as a marker of social identity, ‘embodiment’ perspectives place the body and its experiences as central to the understanding of culture.<sup>24</sup> Paul Freeman’s *Food: The History of Taste* takes a compendious approach to the role of food in history, in its cultural, religious and political aspects.<sup>25</sup> But it tells us a little about a lot, ranging widely in time and space. Perhaps reflecting more popular interest in the topic of cooking, Kate Colquhoun’s *Taste: the Story of Britain through its Cooking* — which one might imagine would be a short book— is social history largely told through an analysis of English seventeenth and eighteenth century cookbooks.<sup>26</sup> Attempting to cover prehistory and the present to less effect, the work again reflects the trend for macro historical approaches to the topic. Historical approaches to food and eating are still constrained by the limited number of approaches taken.

From the perspective of this dissertation, the main failing of this cornucopia of historical food literature is that it neglects to examine the polemical use of food and

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<sup>24</sup> George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: the embodied mind and its challenge to Western thought*, New York, 1999; Monika Langer, *Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology of Perception: A guide and commentary*, Hampshire, London, 1989; Pierre Bourdieu, *A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, (trans.) Richard Nice, Cambridge, MA, 1984; Thomas Csordas, ‘Embodiment as a paradigm for Anthropology’, *Ethos*, Vol.18, No.1, March 1990, pp.5-47.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Freeman, (ed.) *Food: The History of Taste*, London, 2007.

<sup>26</sup> Kate Colquhoun, *Taste: the Story of Britain through its Cooking*, London, 2007.

eating in broader political contexts. This absence is strange considering that food is the fundamental necessity for human life and is therefore inextricably bound to political contest. The term culture is also important. As Immanuel Wallerstein highlights, ‘culture’ is the ideological ground of the capitalist world system.<sup>27</sup> By failing to explore the interconnections between ‘culture’ writ small, which informs judgments of ‘taste’ within particular groups, and culture writ large, which defines the differences between nationally bounded peoples, we miss the opportunity to make links between macro and micro processes.

### III

Cannibalism and gluttony have been treated by literary historians but within quite separate historiographical contexts. The literary trope of ‘cannibalism’ associated with New World colonization sparked the interests of new historicists. Literary studies have highlighted the many references to gluttony in Jacobean masques and plays, attempting to explore their contemporary cultural meanings. However, studies to date have suffered from a lack of sufficient contextualization and historians have criticized the heavy reliance on literary sources without buttressing from a wider range of primary sources and the latest historiography.

Because of the sources and the nature of the issues raised by these historiographies, it is best to examine these two topics separately. Works about cannibalism have tended to draw on travellers’ accounts and fictional literature to

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<sup>27</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *Geopolitics and Geoculture: Essays on the changing world-system*, Cambridge, 1991.

examine cannibalism within the context of European exploration of the New World, while works concerning gluttony have usually drawn on literature and dietaries examined within a European context. To avoid temporal and geographical confusion therefore, it pays to examine these topics separately first, before discussing them together at the end of the chapter.

Gluttony is clearly associated with food consumption. Cannibalism, however, is rarely discussed in the historical food literature, except for the notable exception of the French and Italian historians. Cannibalism attracted anthropological interest early in the twentieth century because of its status as a universal dietary taboo. While we may disagree with those like Marvin Harris who explain customary cannibalism by the ‘protein deprivation’ thesis, it is important to remember that the word ‘cannibalism’ is — whether ‘real’ or ‘imagined’ — the act of eating human beings.<sup>28</sup> Often this basic fact is forgotten in the debate over whether cannibalism in particular times and places was a warlike act of revenge, a sacrificial act, a variety of mortuary ritual, a primarily symbolic form of incorporation, or even a myth. The ‘eating’ is often completely lost in these interpretations.

Nonetheless we can readily gain an intellectual grasp of the polemical uses of cannibalism because it has already been explored in a number of very good books. Approached from the perspective of its role in colonisation, the theme of ‘cannibalism and colonialism’ emerged out of literary historians’ engagement with the anthropological literature. Peter Hulme’s important *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native*

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<sup>28</sup> Marvin Harris, *Cannibals and Kings: The Origins of Cultures*, New York, 1977; Marvin Harris, *Good to Eat: Riddles of food and culture*, (ed.) Eric, B. Ross, Illinois, 1998.



*Caribbean, 1492- 1797* highlights the use of language for colonial purposes.<sup>29</sup> From the 1980s both historians and anthropologists became increasingly aware that early modern histories and ethnographies exploited literary devices. Hulme's first two chapters suggest that the cannibal was 'invented' in the fifteenth-century. The 'cannibal' marked the difference between the savage and the civilised and served to rationalise European rule. He argued that the 'cannibal' formed part of a colonialist discourse which attempted to justify European expansion into the Caribbean, roughly defined as the region from Virginia to North Brazil. Hulme traced depictions of the savage Amerindian cannibal from Columbus's log-book, which he argues provided the ideological underpinnings or 'discursive practices' of European colonialism. Columbus contrasted good submissive Arawaks with bad resistant Caribs, the name later corrupted to Cannibal. Hulme's argument that the 'cannibal' was primarily a European construction that buttressed colonialist claims is broadly convincing. The particular historical details of Hulme's case, however, are less convincing. He offered limited primary evidence and relied too much on the outdated findings of anthropologists and historians. The 'cannibal' was much longer in the making than Hulme suggests.

Frank Lestringant is more interested in the European construction of the cannibal than the role of the cannibal in European colonisation.<sup>30</sup> He distinguishes between real anthropography as a cultural practice and 'the cannibal', a European fashioning of abhorrent creatures which he believes was imposed on the peoples of the New World and

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<sup>29</sup> Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797*, London; New York, 1986; Francis Baker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen (eds.), *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*, Cambridge, 1998.

<sup>30</sup> Frank Lestringant, *Cannibals*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, CA, 1997.

then used for various political or moral purposes. Lestringant contends that as accounts of the New World became more ‘factual’, imaginary cannibals became more barbaric. The cannibal’, he suggests, expressed a pre-civilised human nature, which was by the nineteenth century represented in literature as a non-European savage who possessed a natural appetite for human flesh. Because most of his book traces the cannibal in European literature it largely overlooks the polemical purposes of cannibalism. I take particular issue with the idea that reports of cannibalism became more ‘factual’. As we shall see, Bernal Diaz’s first-hand account of the conquest of Mexico claimed to be factual, but when examined closely, reveals itself as a heavily loaded polemic.

My argument owes more to Gananath Obeyesekere’s *Cannibal Talk: The Man-eating myth and human sacrifice in the South Seas* (2005) an exercise in historical anthropology which examines the construction of a myth over time.<sup>31</sup> A number of Obeyesekere’s chapters focus our attention on the European obsession with cannibalism, turning the gaze back on the coloniser. Obeyesekere’s work, which explicitly engages with William Arens’s *The Man-eating Myth* (1979) also generated huge controversy among anthropologists. Many felt that their contemporary ethnographic findings were being attacked as gullible reproductions of information fed to them by their informants.<sup>32</sup> Obeyesekere follows Arens in making a distinction between ‘cannibalism’ and anthropophagy, primarily as a mortuary ritual, which is admittedly not entirely convincing. Like Arens, Obeyesekere has been accused of making a selective and

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<sup>31</sup> Gananath Obeyesekere, *Cannibal Talk: The Man-eating myth and human sacrifice in the South Seas*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, CA, 2005.

<sup>32</sup> See Borofsky, Robert; Kane, Herb, Kawainui; Obeyesekere, Gananath; and Sahlins, Marshall, ‘CA Forum on Theory in Anthropology: Cook, Lono, Obeyesekere and Sahlins [and Comments and Reply]’, *Current Anthropology*, Vol.38, No.2, April 1997, pp.255-282.

unrepresentative use of the evidence. For this dissertation, the value of Obeyesekere's account is that he does not mine the sources looking for evidence of indigenous customs in the South Seas, but interrogates the text as a European cultural artefact. Similarly, European explorers' accounts of the Americas actually tell us very little about Amerindians, but far more about the culture that produced the text. Obeyesekere, like Hulme and Lestringant, approaches the Europeans as if they were an 'other' that requires investigation. This dissertation approaches the evidence from the same perspective.

Rolena Adorno's findings are useful here because she also interrogates the Spanish polemic of 'possession', tracing this through to contemporary works of Spanish-American literature.<sup>33</sup> She does not focus on cannibalism, but her detailed analysis of the Las Casas-Sepúlveda debates shows just how important cannibalism was in arguments about Spanish entitlement. This dissertation takes her proposition further. If 'cannibalism' was such an effective device of Spanish colonialist discourse, why did early English colonial advocates fail to take it up?

Intellectual justifications were clearly of equal importance to English colonisers as they were to the Spanish. David Armitage and Andrew Fitzmaurice both spotlight the role of humanist thought in 'English', or as Armitage would have it 'British', colonialist thought.<sup>34</sup> Fitzmaurice, who unlike Armitage acknowledges the eclectic and often contradictory nature of early arguments promoting colonisation, nonetheless claims that new arguments based on 'natural law'—that ultimately derived from the arguments of the

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<sup>33</sup> Rolena Adorno, *Polemics of Possession*, London; New Haven CT, 2007, xi, p.12.

<sup>34</sup> David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, Cambridge, 2000; Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Humanism and America: An intellectual history of the English colonisation, 1500-1625*, Cambridge, 2003.

Spanish theologian Francisco de Vitoria— were crucial to English justifications.<sup>35</sup> Fitzmaurice particularly emphasises the importance of *Res nullius*, which defined land not under cultivation, as land not owned, leaving it available for the use of more ‘civilised’ others.<sup>36</sup> This dissertation has found that while early texts advocating the colonisation of Virginia did note ‘land use’, it was not central to their arguments for colonisation. Thomas Hariot’s account of Virginia took more notice of other ‘ethnographic’ criteria, especially the ‘idols’ they worshipped, and most importantly, how they prepared and ate their food.<sup>37</sup> In the absence of cannibalism, visual evidence suggests that for the colonists, the Virginians’ eating habits still provided an important guide to their social behaviour.

Because early would be colonists produced images to document their experiences we possess a remarkable visual record. These should be approached cautiously as evidence of actual customs, for as Charles Zika notes ‘Cultural representations of the other are as much presentations of the self’.<sup>38</sup> Visual materials often allow for different readings from texts. Because images rely on symbolic language, they not only help further textual analysis, but stand as important cultural artefacts in themselves. Chapter 2 emphasises the importance of the copper plate engravings of Theodore de Bry, produced in his 13 part series on America, as evidence of Protestant ideas about Amerindian cannibalism.

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<sup>35</sup> Fitzmaurice, *Humanism and America*, p.13.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p.140 ; See Andrew Fitzmaurice, ‘The Genealogy of Terra Nullius’, *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol.38, No.129, April, 2002, pp.1-15.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Hariot, *A brief and True Report of the new found land of Virginia*, London, 1590, STC 12786.

<sup>38</sup> Charles Zika, ‘Fashioning new worlds from old fathers: reflections on Saturn, Amerindians and witches in a sixteenth century print’ in (ed.) Donna Marwick, *Dangerous Liaisons: essays in honour of Greg Denning*, Melbourne, 1994, p.265.

Drawing significant parallels between the Amerindian cannibal and the European witch, Zika makes a convincing analysis of the late sixteenth century Dutch print by Crispin de Passe, *Saturn and his Children*.<sup>39</sup> In the engraving, abhorrent peoples, the witch, the magician, the Amerindian cannibal and miner, appeared below the astrological figure of the chariot-riding Saturn dominating the sky. Zika argues that this was an attempt to incorporate Amerindians into pre-existing European 'sociological, psychological and cosmological schemas', which from the fifteenth century, associated Saturn, an incarnation of the older Greek god Chronus, with evil and malevolence.<sup>40</sup> Prior to ethnographic models of development, these planetary schemas offered Europeans models of social inclusion or exclusion, but most importantly emphasised that such orders were natural.<sup>41</sup>

In chapter 2 we shall see how in the absence of cannibalism, early English observers newly attempted to map unfamiliar Virginian peoples. By studying food customs and food gathering, social order, burial rites and forms of worship, land use, and methods of production, this new attempt was also governed by the desire to fit Amerindians into a pre-existing European schema. The problem was that early English colonial promoters had a great deal of trouble deciding which historical schema to fit them into, and instead, slowly began to develop new 'ethnographic' theories.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p.252.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp.249-252.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p.274.

#### IV

There are two entry points into historical discussions of what is a small and recent historiography on gluttony. The first focuses on the cultural history of ‘fatness’, and the second on medical understandings of gluttony through an analysis of sixteenth and seventeenth century dietaries. Recent cultural histories of fatness explicitly search for the historical roots of the ‘obesity epidemic’, and do not extensively discuss the early modern period. Two historians of sixteenth and seventeenth century dietaries hint at polemical uses of gluttony but fail to fully exploit the sources.

In *Fat: A cultural History Of Obesity* (2008) Sander Gilman focuses on the ideological functions of ‘fat’.<sup>42</sup> Fiona and David Haslam’s *Fat, gluttony and sloth*, (2009) asks whether ‘fat’ people are the product of gluttony or sloth.<sup>43</sup> It rather peculiarly searches history for possible ‘answers’ to the modern obesity epidemic, apparently failing to find any. Because *Fat, gluttony and sloth* largely ignores the historical context prior to the eighteenth century, ‘fatness’ is shown as a perennial medical problem. The work does not even touch on the politics of obesity. Both books misrepresent the historical periods they cover. Overwhelmingly focused on the 1750s onwards, and giving special emphasis to Victorian England, both texts focus on body image, that is the ‘fat body’ rather than the excessive eating behaviour stigmatised as ‘gluttony’. It is clear from the content of these works that neglect of the early modern period impedes our understanding of long-term change. If these authors had looked more closely at the period before 1750 they

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<sup>42</sup> Sander L. Gilman, *Fat: A Cultural History of Obesity*, Cambridge, MA, 2008.

<sup>43</sup> David W. Haslam and Fiona Haslam, *Fat, Gluttony and Sloth: Obesity in Literature, Art and Medicine*, Liverpool, 2009.

would have discovered that the ‘fat body’ was not the focus of contention, instead most commentators highlighted the *social* consequences of ‘gluttonous’ behaviour.

Gilman’s work, however, does provide a useful starting point for a discussion of the polemical applications of gluttony. Gilman rightly recognises the ‘moral panic’ associated with the obesity epidemic, but most of his work reads as a cultural history of ‘fat’ fictional characters. Admittedly fictional characters might reflect cultural archetypes, but they are not as falsifiable as accounts of real people. Therefore it is hardly surprising that his most illuminating chapter focuses on obesity in late twentieth-century China. Drawing on the latest Chinese research, he contends that increasing child obesity in China does not reflect a shift to the consumption of ‘junk food’ associated with Americanisation, but the one child family policy. Less physically active and ‘pampered’, Chinese children snack on versions of traditional foods rather than American-style snacks. In China, Gilman argues, ‘McDonaldisation’ has a polemical role in demonizing ‘the West’ as a corrupting influence on the ‘developing world’.<sup>44</sup> He does not realise that polemical arguments associating gluttony with anxieties about increasing societal wealth have a long history. We return to this topic in chapter 3.

Ken Albala argues that before 1680 medical and moral concern focused on gluttony rather than fatness.<sup>45</sup> He even argues that ‘fatness’ was not ‘conceptually linked to gluttony’: eating too much might make you fat, but ‘fat itself was not a sin’.<sup>46</sup> What was a sin was the expression of greed and lust implied by eating too much while others

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<sup>44</sup> Gilman, pp.151-158.

<sup>45</sup> Ken Albala, ‘Weight Loss in the Age of Reason’ in (eds.), Christopher Forth and Ana Carden-Coyne, *Cultures of the Abdomen: Diet, Digestion, and Fat in the Modern World*, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, 2005, p.177.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.170.

went hungry, as the theologians had long held. The glutton in Luke (16.19-31) was condemned to fast in hell, less as a punishment for eating too much than for his failure to give to the poor. This moral relationship between excessive eating and the failure to share resources is crucial for our understanding of contemporary thought on gluttony. The proposition that gluttony was primarily perceived as an anti-social activity is more thoroughly explored in chapter 3, where I show that ‘gluttony’ was not confined to excessive consumption of food but encompassed excessive drinking and associated sins of the flesh, which were considered to disrupt and corrupt the community.

The early chapters of Albala’s *Eating Right in the Renaissance* suggest the role of reformed religion in producing more virulent attacks against gluttony in the period from 1530 to 1650.<sup>47</sup> He also notes the important role of classical literature, most importantly observing that almost every dietary claimed that the great empires were ruined by gluttony.<sup>48</sup> However, he takes these observations no further and proceeds to examine food and the individual, class, nation and medicine, ignoring religion. It may well be that the Galenic roots of dietary guidelines meant that European dietaries did not significantly diverge across religious lines, but Albala largely overlooks differences. This is a caution against the overly enthusiastic adoption of theoretical perspectives that might aide contemporary sociological analysis, but in their application to particular historical contexts, might actually distort our understanding of the past.<sup>49</sup> A narrower time frame and geographic focus is also necessary to properly contextualise these sources. Chapter 3

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<sup>47</sup> Albala, *Eating right in the renaissance*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, CA 2002, p.178.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.223.

<sup>49</sup> David Abulafia, *The Discovery of Mankind: Atlantic Encounters in the Age of Columbus*, New Haven, 2008, p.59.



highlights the important role of Protestantism, and humanist learning perceived through a Protestant lens, in shaping English polemical uses of ‘gluttony’.

Margaret Healey’s *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England* comes closest to the specific concerns of chapter 3.<sup>50</sup> Healey examines the intersection between ‘disease’ models, one of which is gluttony, in sixteenth and seventeenth century English dietaries and literature. Her main contention is that images of disease were projected on to other domains as explanatory devices for contemporary social and moral ills. When social systems were in ‘disarray’, she argues, ideas about the diseased body were called into play to generate a ‘cure’. Healey’s explanation draws on the structural anthropologist Mary Douglas’s idea that the body is a bounded system that stands in for other bounded systems; the body serving as a powerful social metaphor.<sup>51</sup> Healey explores gluttony and excess in the literary works of the 1620s and 1630s, which she suggests were closely associated with criticisms of the Jacobean court, and later directed at Buckingham in particular. Having ‘diagnosed’ the disease and the ‘cure’ of purging, the projection of the medical domain on to the political domain, Healey does not ask what purpose these accusations might have served, seemingly content with a synchronic explanation. Therefore she makes no critical analysis of the accusations against the Court of King James. She trots out the familiar ‘bad old’ James, selecting venerable quotations that do not appear to have been examined in context, and relies on outdated historiography. This suggests that important questions remain to be answered.

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<sup>50</sup> Margaret Healey, *Fictions of disease in Early Modern England*, London, 2001.

<sup>51</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: an Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, London, 1966; Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, Middlesex, 1973, p.115

For example, why was gluttony such a powerful metaphor? Why were attacks on James and his court couched in the language of gluttony and excess? Who had the opportunity to gain from such attacks? Is there any evidence that the court was in fact gluttonous? How did it compare to the courts of other European monarchs and the earlier Tudor courts? Were they also accused of gluttony? How was consumption at James' court different from Elizabeth's court, for example? Was gluttony conflated with other forms of excessive consumption?

## V

This dissertation focuses on two examples of how early modern Europeans used printed accusations of cannibalism or gluttony between 1580 and 1625 as powerful polemical attacks on their opponents. The evidence from English printed primary sources is complemented by appropriate image analysis. The chapter on cannibalism primarily draws on Spanish and English explorers' accounts of the Americas, but underscores the historical importance of Theodore de Bry's copperplate illustrations. Focusing on the 1580s and 1590s, I also discuss much older materials available in English translation at that time. The focal period is partly framed by the demise of the 'cannibal' within the English literature on colonization of North America from 1583. While the chapter on gluttony focuses on the reign of James I (1603 - 1625) it also situates the discourse of gluttony within late Elizabethan understandings. Rather than highlighting the well-established references to gluttony in literature of the period, including Ben Jonson and Thomas Middleton, this dissertation seeks to show that 'gluttony' was a polemical device

with a wider application and a broader circulation. My main focus is on exploring why ‘gluttony’ held such polemical potential during the Jacobean period in particular. Of necessity, the chapter on gluttony draws on a greater range of sources than the chapter on cannibalism. My sources include medical texts, religious commentaries, literary works, social commentary, royal household books, contemporary historical works, diaries, letters, and the State Papers Domestic. Like the earlier chapter, illustrations provide an important supplement to my interpretations, although in this case they are from works of popular print.

The questions that inform this dissertation mean that research was to some extent guided by the need to examine ‘absence’. The research questions therefore inherently suggest a comparative method. Examining gluttony and cannibalism together highlights resemblances and disparities that might otherwise be less apparent. Contemporary descriptions of these behaviours almost never mentioned the eating behaviour alone. It was always associated with other transgressions of ‘appetite’. Abhorrent eating behaviour was associated with transgressive sexual behaviour and inordinate greed for other bodily pleasures. The differences between the two appear to be differences of degree rather than kind. For example, cannibalism was associated with sodomy, whereas gluttony was associated with shameless sexual abandon. The behavioural associations made with these eating behaviours in turn contributed to broader patterns of social description. The sodomite cannibal was also incestuous, idolatrous and savage. The lustful prodigal glutton was a drunkard susceptible to corruption.

Gluttony and cannibalism were both portrayed as evils, but again it was a matter of degree. For Europeans eating a dead person was more sinful than murdering that same person.<sup>52</sup> A murderer, it was thought, was in all likelihood the end product of a dissolute lifestyle that originated in gluttony, defined as a corrupting immersion in the bodily senses including drunkenness, idleness and keeping bad company, whereas cannibalism was simply explained as 'lust for the taste of flesh'. No earlier deviant behaviour somehow led to cannibalism. Gluttony was listed among the deadly sins but cannibalism was not: it was simply the epitome of evil.

Notions of symbolic geography informed the kind of accusation made.<sup>53</sup> My research shows that because transgressors were 'imagined' as lying at the margins of societies, in-groups were accused of the lesser evil, gluttony, while out-groups were accused of the worst possible transgression, cannibalism. Crucially, the nature of the accusation depended on how the 'in-group' was defined, as well as the geographic boundaries of the discussion. In global terms, rival European nations were an in-group and accused of gluttony, whereas uncooperative Amerindians at the edge of the known world were an out-group and accused of cannibalism. Within Europe, witches accused of cannibalism could be classified as an out-group lying at the margins of society. During the 'Witch-craze' (to use Hugh Trevor-Roper's contested term) accusations began in mountainous inaccessible regions near the Alps, where these peripheral cultures diverged

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<sup>52</sup> Reay Tannahill, *Flesh and Blood: A History of the Cannibal Complex*, London, 1975.

<sup>53</sup> P.H.Liotta, 'Imagining Europe: Symbolic geography and the future', *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Summer 2005, pp.67-85; David Woodward, 'Reality, symbolism, time and space in medieval World Maps', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol.75, No.4, Dec. 1985, pp.510-521.

significantly from those at the metropolitan centre.<sup>54</sup> By contrast, at the centre, the Court of James was an ideal target for the in-group accusation of gluttony, even though the Scots could have been considered an out-group and were, incidentally, historically associated with cannibalism.

The political uses of accusations of gluttony and cannibalism were similar, but not the same. The cannibal was beyond redemption, so the behaviour could be used to justify the sacrifice of their lives in service to 'a greater cause' such as the Christianization of the Amerindians. In contrast, the glutton was habituated to corrupt behaviour, so the lesser punishment of banishment or expulsion from the community was sufficient. Accusations of gluttony simply aimed at removing an individual from the community, whereas accusations of cannibalism sought a more final solution.

The biblical story of the scapegoat illustrates both these ideas. The Old Testament description of the ritual *Yom Kippur*, or the 'Day of Atonement', begins with the community offering two goats to the priest as a purification sacrifice.<sup>55</sup> The Priest proceeded to throw lots, deciding which goat was placed in a sanctuary and intended for God, and which goat was left 'outside', and therefore meant for Azazel. Jahve's goat was sacrificed in an elaborate purifying blood ceremony. Azazels' goat was placed at the front of the tabernacle, before the priest laid hands on the goat's head and confessed the sins of Israel. The transfer complete, Azazel's goat was ceremoniously led away to the desert. In some versions of the account it had a red string tied around its neck.<sup>56</sup> The sacrificial

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<sup>54</sup> H. R. Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-craze of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, London, 1969, p.29.

<sup>55</sup> Walter Burkert, *Structure and history in Greek Mythology and History*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, CA, ca.1979.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p.64.

goat and the ‘scapegoat’ offer a useful analogy to the polemical purposes of cannibalism and gluttony. Cannibals were sacrificial goats, while gluttons were scapegoats.

Recalling Mary Douglas’s observations about the centrality of notions of bodily pollution and body boundaries cross-culturally, this dissertation shows that what ‘goes into’ the body was heavily laden with symbolism.<sup>57</sup> Descriptions of eating behaviours, just as much as sexual behaviours, informed assessments of other people. This project, therefore, elaborates on and provides some much-needed historical perspective, to Douglas’s more general propositions, in the process suggesting why cannibalism and gluttony held such polemical potential in specific times and spaces.

There are a few caveats for the non- early modernist. Few women appear in this dissertation. This absence, not due to a lack of interest on my part, reflects the fact that the materials informing the research seldom comment on women. On the few occasions where they do comment, they are seldom flattering. Modern conceptions of race have little explanatory value for our period. Early modern people perceived physical difference, but made judgements based on the science of their own day. People’s different physical characteristics were commonly explained by the Galenic four humors, their geographic location, and the astrological planet that ruled that location. Of course, some places were better than others. Rank and social order, rather than ‘class’ best describe the naturalistic hierarchical order of society they imagined.<sup>58</sup> Each member had a place and a role within the ‘imagined’ community which was not necessarily associated with their

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<sup>57</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, p.98. Also see Chapter 3 on food prohibitions in Leviticus, pp.41-57.

<sup>58</sup> Steven Wallech, “‘Class versus Rank’: the transformation of Eighteenth-Century English Social Terms and Theories of Production’ in (ed.) Maryanne Cline Horowitz, *Race, Gender, and Rank: Early Modern Ideas of Humanity*, New York, 1992, p.270.

occupation. This conservative ideal had, however, been subject to significant, although unintentional, attack since the Henrician reformation.<sup>59</sup> The other important caveat is my use of the term 'England' rather than 'Britain'. This is not to omit the Welsh or Scottish contribution to our period, but is a reflection of where my sources were published and the content and authorship of those texts.

Chapter 2, *Polemics of Cannibalism*, establishes the important role of cannibalism in justifying Spanish colonialism in North America before suggesting why this polemic disappeared from early English promotional materials. It opens by surveying European historical understandings of cannibalism in classical and biblical materials. Cannibals were defined in three main ways: as one of the monstrous races located at 'the edge of the world', as demonic practitioners of witchcraft, or as emerging only as an appalling consequence of severe famine. From 1492 select features of these earlier accounts became increasingly associated with peoples of the New World, forming a stereotyped pattern of negative social attributes. The chapter then establishes the importance of cannibalism as a justification for the Spanish conquest of Mexico, focusing on the work of Bernal Diaz, which is also revealed as in part a response to Las Casas' portrait of Spanish 'brutality'. Las Casas's arguments were in turn co-opted by English colonial promoters to demonize Spanish colonial activity. The Spanish 'black legend' vindicated early English colonial endeavor in North America, leading to the development of new arguments for colonization, some based on new cultural readings of the Amerindians.

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<sup>59</sup> W. Gordon Zeeveld, 'Social Equalitarianism in a Tudor Crisis' in (ed.) Maryanne Cline Horowitz, *Race, Gender, and Rank: Early Modern Ideas of Humanity*, New York, 1992, pp.229-249.

This nascent ethnography still highlighted food and eating, which writers saw as an accurate reflection of social development, and used as an encouragement to colonization.

Chapter 3 *Polemics of Gluttony* examines the purported gluttony at the Court of James I, emphasizing associated charges of greed and corruption. It opens by outlining the accusations contemporaries made against the gluttonous behaviour of James and his Court. Turning to examine the deep cultural roots of gluttony in biblical and classical materials, the chapter shows that proscriptions against gluttony reflected biblical notions of commensality and the strong reproval of indulgence in the bodily senses, as well as classical ideas associating increasing wealth with excessive consumption, corruption and decline. It then establishes that Elizabethan cultural understandings of gluttony already singled out the courtier, rising merchants and Catholics as targets for polemical attacks. The events of James' reign seem to support contemporaries' charges of gluttony and profligacy inevitably leading to corruption. However, corruption was a long-term problem, as the chapter shows by comparing the household books of James with Elizabeth I and Henry VIII. Charges of corruption were motivated by the rise of 'upstarts', another long-term consequence of the Henrican reformation. By examining the sources of allegations against members of James's Court, the chapter demonstrates that, in the main, charges of gluttony reflected factional politics at Court, rather than any exceptional level of corruption within James's Court. Historians have compounded the error over time in the service of arguments explaining the long-term origins of the civil war.



## Chapter 2: Polemics of Cannibalism

Neill Blomkamp's 2009 science fiction film *District 9* portrays the plight of a million 'aliens' labelled 'Prawns' living in refugee camps after their space-ship is stranded over Johannesburg. Denied the necessities of life by the 'Multi National United' (MNU) charged with their care, the 'Prawns' or 'bottom-feeders' are accused of barbarism. Marked out for their penchant for feeding on raw sheep heads and their predilection for cat food, their unsavoury dietary habits are central to the definition of 'Prawns' as 'aliens'. 'Prawns' live in squalor, with no notion of private property, and lack any discernible social hierarchy. Most are ugly, naked, and violent.

Evil Nigerians share the alien camp. They trade food and inter-species sex for the single 'Prawn' asset that humans covet: advanced weapons technology reliant on alien bio-power. Despite not having the capacity to use the technology, the superstitious Nigerians believe they can 'incorporate' prawn DNA by eating dead alien body parts. But their cannibal-like acts, shrouded in elaborate magical rites, consistently fail to produce results.

Instead, an agent of the MNU, accidentally infected with alien DNA, is empowered to use the weapons. As a hybrid— half human, half alien— he is a valuable commodity targeted by the MNU for biological research. Co-opting Nigerian rumour, an effective MNU smear campaign sees him charged with desecrating his body through interspecies sex. His capture sanctioned, his humanity denied, he turns to the 'Prawns'.

Jackson's film draws on long-standing Western food and bodily metaphors. Food marks identity. 'One is what one eats'. Food choices are, in turn, linked to other hierarchically ordered social behaviours. Consuming raw meat, or other food considered

unfit for human consumption', reflects membership of a 'savage' society lacking in 'civility' and with limited social organisation. Whereas cannibalism, a practice universally abhorred, marks the lowest point of barbarism, closely tied to the transgression of sexual taboos, magic and other 'crimes against nature', casting doubt on the 'humanity' of its exponents. The standard against which these 'others' are judged is rarely mentioned. In *District 9*, these familiar markers are revealed as discourses serving those with the most social power. In this case, the MNU— the true cannibal— justifies its own insatiable greed by projecting its own inhumanity on to the 'aliens'.

As the above example amply illustrates, accusations of cannibalism serve as a universal means of denigrating the 'other': 'We' are 'people' but 'they' are 'cannibals'. But much like sorcery, accusations outnumber incidences.<sup>1</sup> Because few have ever witnessed this supposed 'cultural universal', it makes sense to maintain a sceptical approach to cannibal reports, as anthropologist William Arens first noted in 1979.<sup>2</sup> As the previous chapter suggests, we should be aware that descriptions of people's eating practices were frequently used for polemical purposes, masking other highly contentious issues. Peter Hulme, among others, has argued that after 1492 Europeans portrayed cannibalism as an important element within a complex of primitive social behaviour in need of 'civilising', which justified the exploitation of native labour and resources.<sup>3</sup>

There are certainly sound reasons to question the reliability of sixteenth-century accounts of New World cannibalism. Sixteenth-century accounts pigeonholed the new

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<sup>1</sup> Gananath Obeyesekere, *Cannibal Talk: the man-eating myth and human sacrifice in the South Seas*, Berkeley, 2005, p.15.

<sup>2</sup> William Arens, *The Man-eating Myth: Anthropology and anthropophagy*, Oxford, 1979.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounter: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797*, New York, 1986.

peoples explorers encountered, slotting them into models of social hierarchy informed by Greco-Roman texts, recently translated and reinterpreted by humanists.<sup>4</sup> Sixteenth-century reporters did not understand 'Indian' languages, instead relying on interpreters whose motives remain unknown, making it easy for reporters to filter that information through their own interpretations. Reports of cannibalism frequently came from areas that Europeans sought to colonise. These accounts cannot be checked against indigenous accounts, which are few and far between. Where such evidence does exist, it is often conditioned by European prejudices. For example, the Nahuatl accounts of the Mexican conquest, Book 12 of the *Florentine codex* collated by Bernardino de Sahagùn, are laid out in the same narrative form as works by the Spanish conquistadors, indicating that Sahagùn set the agenda for discussion.<sup>5</sup> Sahagùn sought to define and locate idolatrous practices that had slipped through the net, seeing 'Indians' as only nominally Christian.<sup>6</sup> Because surviving accounts are mainly written by Europeans they best represent European points of view.

Europeans brought their intellectual and cultural baggage with them to the Americas. They expected to find cannibals at the edges of earth, a precedent established in early Greek texts.<sup>7</sup> They projected European culinary conventions and methods of

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<sup>4</sup> Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the origins of comparative ethnology*, Cambridge, 1982; Anthony Grafton, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: the power of tradition and the shock of discovery*, Cambridge, MA, 1992.

<sup>5</sup> Grafton, pp.145-146; James Lockhart, (ed and trans.), *We people here: Nahuatl Accounts of the conquest of Mexico*, Eugene, OR, 2004; Ross Hassig, *Mexico and the Spanish Conquest*, London, New York, 1994.

<sup>6</sup> Miguel León-portilla, *Bernardino de Sahagùn: First Anthropologist*, (trans.) Mauricio J. Mixco, Norman, 2002, p.5.

<sup>7</sup> Reay Tannahill, *Flesh and Blood: A History of the Cannibal Complex*, London, 1975; Merrall Llewelyn Price, *Consuming Passions: the Uses of Cannibalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, New York; London, 2003. Tannahill does not always cite evidence for assertions, while Price provides a detailed summary of instances.

animal husbandry. They associated the ‘cannibal’ with the European witch and the Catholic ritual of transubstantiation.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, European accounts of New World cannibalism quite clearly follow an established pattern. Cătălin Auramescu’s *Intellectual History of Cannibalism* compendiously demonstrates the depth and breadth of the European cannibal obsession found in major European thinkers between 1550 and 1750.<sup>9</sup> The European cannibal obsession is therefore best understood within its own intellectual context.

Cannibalism was central to early Spanish debates about the conquest of the Indies. The abhorrent nature of Indian customs, including cannibalism, served as the linchpin of Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda’s argument for ‘just war’ on the Indians. In contrast Bartolomé de las Casas maintained that such abhorrent cultural practices would recede with proper Christian tutelage, and did not justify war. Rolena Adorno argues that polemical arguments about possession, ideologically situated on either side of the Las Casas — Sepúlveda debates, informed all works of Spanish American literature.<sup>10</sup> However, these same polemical arguments informed the writings of other early European colonialist promoters. Because historians have seldom compared the discursive features of Spanish colonial enterprise with English endeavours, the co-option of Spanish polemical material

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<sup>8</sup> Frank Lestringant, *Cannibals*, Berkeley, CA, 1997, p.8.

<sup>9</sup> Cătălin Auramescu, *An Intellectual History of Cannibalism*, (trans.) Alistair Ian Blyth, Princeton, NJ, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Rolena Adorno, *Polemics of Possession in Spanish American Narrative*, New Haven; London, 2007, xi, p12.

by early English colonial promoters has attracted little attention.<sup>11</sup> Cannibalism provides an interesting case in point.

Spanish conquistadors such as Bernal Diaz used cannibalism as a polemical device to justify disputable actions taken during the conquest of Mexico. European Protestants took up Las Casas' material to demonise their Spanish rivals, as is well known, but cannibalism itself served as an important metaphor for Spanish 'brutality'. The celebrated Protestant engraver Theodore De Bry recast older German and French accounts of Brazilian Tupinamba cannibalism. De Bry's two-fold argument inflated the extent of cannibalism among the Tupinamba and, in turn, insinuated that cannibalism was exacerbated by Iberian colonial activity. English colonial promoters, such as Richard Hakluyt, benefited from both these portrayals, but refrained from making their own accusations of cannibalism in American regions they sought to colonise. This was a notable omission, considering that early modern English accounts of eating practices became increasingly repellent the further one travelled from European centres. This chapter seeks to explain why the English had little need for the leverage of 'cannibalism', but still relied heavily on Spanish materials to inform new arguments justifying English colonial activity in Virginia.

## I

Sixteenth-century European writers drew on three main strands of thinking about cannibalism, in sources dating as far back as classical Greece. The oldest interpretation

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<sup>11</sup> Jonathan Hart, *Representing the New World: The English and French Uses of the example of Spain*, New York; Hampshire, 2001, pp.3-4.

saw the man-eater as one of the monstrous races that inhabited the edges of the earth. With the coming of Christianity, cannibalism came to symbolise the inversion of Christian rites. And lastly cannibalism was closely associated with witchcraft and the diabolical.

The earliest known reference to man-eating or anthropophagy appeared in Herodotus's *History* (completed by 425 B.C.).<sup>12</sup> Herodotus thought that the Scythian man-eaters who roamed the northern shore of the Black Sea probably migrated from Asia, the edge of the known world.<sup>13</sup> Herodotus's interpretation was mirrored in early Greek maps that 'envisioned rings of progressively more primitive social development surrounding a Mediterranean hearth; in the furthest ring, at the banks of the ocean, social primitivism becomes absolute.'<sup>14</sup> Maps are not merely geographic depictions, but reflect an entire polemical cosmography. Greek cosmography depicted a universe with earth at its centre. The earth was central to a planetary system surrounded by successive rings that contained the other planets, each ruling a different astrological sign. Saturn lay in the outermost ring, most distant from the earth. Greek myth associated Saturn or Chronus with the God who devoured his own son, born every year in incestuous union with his sister Rhea. Because the macrocosm or universe was reflected in the human world or microcosm, monstrous races were located at the outer-most boundaries.

The Roman historian Pliny (23-79 A.D.) listed the anthropophagous and the dog-headed man-eater – the Cynocephalus, among his 'monstrous races' at the farthestmost

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<sup>12</sup> Herodotus, *History* 4.106 and 2.10.

<sup>13</sup> Grafton, p.38.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted from James S. Romm, *The edges of the earth in ancient thought: geography, exploration and fiction*, Princeton, 1992, p.47; Tannahill, p.42.

edge of the world.<sup>15</sup> St. Jerome (390-415 A.D.), described the Irish man-eaters called ‘Scotti’ who attacked shepherds and their wives, cutting off their buttocks and nipples, ‘regarding these alone as delicacies.’<sup>16</sup> These earlier accounts were in turn compiled and further publicised by St. Isadore of Seville in his *Etymologie*.<sup>17</sup> None of these man-eaters lived close to the writers who described them.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast, the Old Testament framed cannibalism as an evil consequence of famine accompanying siege warfare. The ‘siege of Samaria’ centred on the story told by a miserable woman to the King of the Israelites at the height of the famine: ‘This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: And I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son.’<sup>19</sup> Because her main complaint was that the other woman had reneged on her bargain, the King reached such depths of despair that he ‘rent his clothes’ and bore ‘sackcloth within upon his flesh’, for he could wait no longer for God’s deliverance from famine.<sup>20</sup> The ‘siege of Samaria’ was cited as historical precedent in chronicles of European famine cannibalism throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>21</sup>

The early Christians (30-350 A.D.), outside the predominately pagan religious culture, were frequently accused of anthropophagy. According to the pagans Christians

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<sup>15</sup> Pliny, *Natural History* 7.1.8-11.

<sup>16</sup> Saint Jerome, *Adversus jovianianum* 2.7.

<sup>17</sup> St. Isadore, *Etymologie* 9.2., 15.3.

<sup>18</sup> Pagden, p.81.

<sup>19</sup> II Kings 6:28-29.

<sup>20</sup> II Kings 6:30.

<sup>21</sup> Julia Marvin, “Cannibalism as an aspect of Famine in Two English Chronicles”, in Martha Carlin and Joel T. Rosenthal, *Food and Eating in Medieval Europe*, London; Riogrande, 1998, p.79.



sacrificed and ate humans, usually children, and then dipped ‘the host’ in their victim’s blood.<sup>22</sup> The Eucharist was central to this allegation, a distortion of Christian ‘incorporation’ of the bread as body, and the wine as blood, of Christ. In time, anthropophagy came to represent the inversion of Christian rites. Linking Eucharistic practice to witchcraft, the legend of a Christian Thystean feast was a prime example. Celebrants were said to worship at the head of a donkey or the genitals of the presiding priest, then slaughter and eat the body of a child and finally have sex with one another.<sup>23</sup> Descriptions of anthropophagy were very like the Roman historian Livy’s description of *Bacchanalia* in his *History*.<sup>24</sup> Sacrifices to placate Bacchic idols were linked to a drunken orgy of incest, infanticide, sodomy, and frenzied consumption of human flesh.

Similar accusations were levelled against Jews. The central element of these Christian stories, the accusation that Jews murdered Christian children and consumed their blood, known as the ‘blood libel cult’, was a commonplace means of attacking Jews throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>25</sup> The first serious allegation saw the entire Jewish community of Norwich charged with ritual murder after the discovery of the mutilated body of the twelve year old boy William in 1144.<sup>26</sup> Thomas of Monmouth claimed that William’s murder on the day of the Jewish Passover was because ‘it is written that the

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<sup>22</sup> Tannahill, p.93.

<sup>23</sup> Pagden, p.82.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.; Livy, *History*, 38.8-19.

<sup>25</sup> Alan Dundes, *The Blood libel legend: a case in anti-Semitic folklore*, Wisconsin, IL, 1991, p.337.

<sup>26</sup> Tannahill, p.95.

Jew, without the shedding of human blood could neither obtain their freedom, nor could they return to their fatherland.’<sup>27</sup>

The notion that a ‘nation’ of cannibals linked to the coming of the anti-Christ gained currency when the Letter of Prester John began circulating throughout Europe from 1165. The people were named but no specific geographic location was mentioned, although they were associated with the ‘North’.<sup>28</sup>

We have in our country still another kind of men who feed only on raw flesh of men and women and do not hesitate to die....This nation is cursed by God and it is called Gog and Magog and there are more of them than any other peoples. With the coming of the anti-Christ they will spread all over the whole world, for they are his allies and friends.<sup>29</sup>

Early medieval maps expressed similar politico-religious beliefs to the Greeks. ‘T-0’ maps showed Jerusalem at the centre of the three continents of Europe, Africa and Asia, which formed a circle trisected by the T-shaped Mediterranean Sea. In Christian teaching the three tribes of Noah populated each continent, separated by rivers, and surrounded by the circular ocean sea. Monstrous races lived at the outer rims, but no specific locations were identified.

In the fourteenth century story of John Mandeville’s travels we see more convergence of time and space.<sup>30</sup> Monstrous races, including man-eaters, were placed in increasingly precise geographic locations. Written by an unknown author and endlessly translated and adapted, ‘Mandeville’ drew heavily on Pliny’s account of monstrous races.

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<sup>27</sup> Thomas of Monmouth, *The Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich*, 1173 in Jacob Marcus, *The Jew in the Medieval World: A Sourcebook, 315-1791*, New York, 1938, pp. 121-127.

<sup>28</sup> Rodney Needham, *Right & Left: essays on dual symbolic classification*, Chicago, 1973.

Needham’s collection shows that symbolic body classification systems, across a significant number of twentieth century cultures, associate the left hand with the north and evil.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted from Vesessarev Slessarev, *Pester John: the letter and the legend*, Minneapolis, 1959, pp.69-70.

<sup>30</sup> John Mandeville, *Mandeville’s Travels*, (ed.), M. C. Seymour, London, 1967.

To a certain extent Mandeville's *Travels* is an imagined ethnography of peoples found in different geographic locations. The further one got from Europe, the more strange behaviour became.

Mandeville linked anthropophagy to other barbarous customs. Chapter 10, 'Of the euylle customs used in the yle of Lamary' describes Sumatra. It is unbearably hot. The inhabitants share wives and property. Despite living among natural abundance, they enjoy human flesh more than any other food. They have a market in children, purchased for eating straight away, or for fattening up and eating later. Mandeville associates cannibalism with a specific climate, place and people, which are linked to 'primitive' social organisation and the possession of valuable resources that natives waste through ignorance, preferring to indulge in transgressive behaviour.<sup>31</sup> Clearly uncivilised, they lived contrary to Roman law.

When Columbus reached Hispaniola in 1492 he expected to find man-eaters. After all, the classics of geography and travel accounts such as Mandeville's had prepared him for the encounter. He thought he had reached the farthest boundaries of Asia, and may very well have read Mandeville's passage on the Lamary. When he landed, the Arawak told Columbus about their traditional enemies the 'Caribs' 'who eat men'.<sup>32</sup> The word 'Carib' conflated the name of the ethnic group 'Carib' with the practice of eating men.<sup>33</sup> Cannibalism was soon a central means for justifying colonisation. From 1493, Queen Isabella's instructions to Columbus stated that 'Indians

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<sup>31</sup> Mandeville, p.131.

<sup>32</sup> Frank Lestringant, *Cannibals*, Berkeley; Los Angeles, CA, 1997, p.15.

<sup>33</sup> Hulme, p.34.

were free vassals of the Crown, and could not be enslaved except for those who refused to submit'.<sup>34</sup> Those that refused to submit included the 'Caribs', eaters of men's flesh.

Columbus made few references to cannibalism in his journals. His interests lay in documenting the potential of the vast natural resources available in the New World. The journals themselves contained such a wealth of Spanish Crown secrets, that they were not published until 1552 in an account by Bartolomè Las Casas. Instead, select details were publicised in the 1516 *De Orbo Novo* by Peter Martyr d'Anghiera, (Pietro Martire d'Anghiera) an Italian humanist who was well-connected at the Spanish court.<sup>35</sup>

Columbus's scant references to cannibalism are unrecognizable in Martyr's account. Perhaps influenced by Mandeville's more sensational descriptions, Martyr's description included a far more complete projection of European prejudices about food preparation. Techniques of animal husbandry, methods of butchery, and means of storing food are projected on to the cannibal Caribs. They take children which they 'geld to make them fat as we doe cocke chickings and young hogges'. Young women (as opposed to the old women 'they make their drudges'), are kept 'for increase, as we do hens to leye egges'. Once carcasses are dismembered they eat 'the intralles and extreme partes, as hands, feet, armes, neckes and head'. The other fleshy parts, 'they poulder for store, as we doe pestels of porke, and gammondes of bacon.'<sup>36</sup> No matter that in reality, Caribs did

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<sup>34</sup> Adorno, p.101.

<sup>35</sup> Lestringant, p.17; Michael, D Coe, *The Royal Fifth: Earliest notices of Maya Writing*, Centre for Maya Writing, Barnardsville, NC, 1989, p.9. The 1516 version published in Alcalá described the first, second and third decades up to 1516. The Basel 1521 edition included the fourth decade detailing Cortéz's expedition. The 1530 edition included all eight decades up to the year 1525.

<sup>36</sup> Pietro Martire d' Anghiera, *The Famous Historie of the Indies*, ['first set forth by Hakluyt', 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.], L. M .Gent, London, 1628, STC 652, p.10.

not salt their meat, but rather smoked it on the *boucan*.<sup>37</sup> Was this the beginning of the polemics of cannibalism?

## II

Hernán Cortez's mission to conquer Aztec Mexico (1519-21) presented the Spaniards with first-hand experience of large-scale human sacrifice, which they closely associated with cannibalism. Cortès's letters and notes, which formed the basis of Chaplain, Francisco López de Gómara's *Historia de las Indias y conquista de Mèxico* (1552-4), seldom mentioned sacrifice or cannibalism.<sup>38</sup> In distinct contrast, Bernal Diaz's *Conquest of New Spain*, completed in 1568, nearly fifty years after his experiences as a conquistador alongside Cortès, makes frequent references to sacrifice and cannibalism.<sup>39</sup> Diaz in fact claimed to have to hold himself back from mentioning the subject for fear of boring the reader.<sup>40</sup>

Images drawn from Greco-Roman and Biblical models litter Diaz's text gradually building up a picture of a cannibal complex. Aztec Gods recall the dog-like features of the old monstrous race the cynocephalus: 'Their idols were 'in the form of fearsome dragons as big as calves and others half-man half-dog and hideously ugly'.<sup>41</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>37</sup> Tannahill, pp.76-77.

<sup>38</sup> Francisco López de Gómara, *The conquest of the Weast Indes*, [1578], (intro.) Herbert Ingram Priestly, New York, 1940. This English translation excludes a number of passages on sacrifice present in the Spanish edition. However, even the Spanish edition focuses much less on sacrifice and cannibalism than Diaz's account.

<sup>39</sup> Bernal Diaz, *The conquest of New Spain*, (trans. and ed.) J. M. Cohen, Baltimore, 1963.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.104,106,109.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p.123.

‘These *papas* [priests] wore black cloaks like those of canons, and others smaller hoods like Dominicans’.<sup>42</sup> This resemblance extended only to appearance, as their vile practices showed, because ‘they also smelt of something worse: of decaying flesh....these *papas* were the sons of chiefs and had no wives, but indulged in the foul practice of sodomy’, thereby inverting yet another Christian value.<sup>43</sup> The Mexican court, at least superficially, resembled the European court. An abundance of food was presented to Montezuma: ‘For each meal his servants prepared him more than thirty dishes cooked in their native style’.<sup>44</sup> However, it was not so long ago that ‘they used to cook him the flesh of young boys’.<sup>45</sup> These descriptions appear throughout Diaz’s work, always suspiciously similar, seemingly moulded to appeal to the reader. One element seamlessly led on to another; cannibalism was linked in a chain to sodomy, gluttony and idolatry, all performed in ceremonies that were an exact mirror image of Christian rites, recalling the *Bacchanal*.

Diaz even summed up the cannibal complex in case the reader missed the point. In Diaz’ version of events, Cortès informed Olintecle, a Mexican noble, that ‘You must give up your sacrifices and cease to eat the flesh of your neighbours and practise sodomy and the other evil things you do. For such is the will of our lord God’.<sup>46</sup> However it is the immediately proceeding remark that hints at its polemical purpose: ‘The Emperor Charles has sent us to command your great prince Montezuma to give up sacrifices and kill no more Indians, and not rob his vassals, or seize any more lands, but obey our lord and

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p.124.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p.225.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p.225.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.136.

king'.<sup>47</sup> This was the first mention that Aztec sacrificial cannibalism was closely associated with the refusal to willingly submit to Europeans, paralleling Columbus's comments about the hostile Caribs. In addition, the remarks also suggest that the Aztecs did not easily fit the ancient European model of debased cannibals. After all, they had a king, a city state, and an elaborate tributary system, all ancient Greek signs of 'civilisation'.

Stronger arguments were called for. As Diaz's narrative builds, the influences of Peter Martyr become evident. The Aztecs, Diaz claimed, habitually captured, caged and fattened up their prisoners for later consumption. In Tlaxcala they 'found wooden cages made of lattice-work in which men and women were imprisoned and fed up until they were fat enough to be sacrificed and eaten ....these prison cages existed throughout the country'.<sup>48</sup> Martyr's gloss is most evident in discussions of sacrifice. Sacrificial bodies were treated like meat in a European butcher shop. 'The feet, the arms and legs of their victims were cut off and eaten, just as we eat beef from the butcher's in our country. I even believe they sold it in the *tianguetz* or market'.<sup>49</sup> Diaz emphasized the cutting, chopping, butchering and quartering associated with sacrifice.

They strike open the wretched Indian's chest with flint knives and hastily tear out the palpitating heart....they cut off the arms, thighs, and head, eating the arms and thighs at their ceremonial banquets. The head they hang up on a beam, and the body of the sacrificed man is not eaten but given to the beasts of prey.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.50.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.185.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p.122.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p.228.

The method of butchery suggests a European preoccupation with techniques of bodily punishment.<sup>51</sup> For Christians there could be few punishments worse than having the body dismembered and fed to beasts, denying the possibility of bodily resurrection. Diaz used the blood (as represented by the beating heart) and the body of the sacrificial victim, to represent Aztec rites as a parody of the incorporation of 'the Host' as Christ's body. Such sacrilegious rites reflected the depths of Indian depravity, forwarding Diaz's polemical argument.

Diaz began work on his *Conquest of New Spain* in 1551 partly to refute Gomara's earlier account.<sup>52</sup> Although it was finished by 1568, it remained unpublished until 1632, and no English translation appeared until 1800. Therefore any amplification of cannibalism in Diaz's text only served to justify Spanish actions to a Spanish audience. Spanish conquistadors needed to justify their actions because their rewards for conquest came under attack.

In 1552, Bartolomé de las Casas had released his stinging indictment of Spanish colonial activity in the Americas, *Brevisima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*, (henceforth referred to by its short English title, *Destruction of the Indies*).<sup>53</sup> His early experiences in the New World — as manager of the *encomienda* granted to his father by Columbus in 1502, as the first Dominican priest in the New World after ordination in 1507, and as witness to the conquistador Pánfilo de Narváez's massacre of the Tainos in

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<sup>51</sup> Obeyesekere, p.232.

<sup>52</sup> Adorno, p.151.

<sup>53</sup> Bartolomé de las Casas, *The devastation of the Indies: A brief account*, (trans.), Herma Briffault, (intro.), Bill, M., Donovan, Baltimore; London, 1992, pp.59-60.



Cuba in 1514— led him on a mission to protect the Indians.<sup>54</sup> *Destruction of the Indies*, published without a license, and addressed to Phillip II who had ignored his earlier account, clearly had a polemical purpose.<sup>55</sup> It was a risky strategy designed to prompt action.

Las Casas made his motives for attack quite plain. The bulk of his account detailed the many and varied Spanish atrocities in the New World. On the march to Mexico, for example, Cortès and his men responded to the warm welcome from the inhabitants of Cholula by making a pre-emptive strike, binding them up ‘like tame sheep’ and massacring them, so that ‘all those tame sheep were butchered, cut to pieces’.<sup>56</sup> His use of the same image twice in short succession, ‘the lamb of God’, highlighted the innocence of the Indians in comparison with the brutality of the Spaniards.

Near the end of the account the polemical purpose of *Destruction of the Indies* became even more apparent. Las Casas boldly stated that the King already knew about these atrocities, and how the conquistadors justified their actions: ‘Their aim, they said, was to subject the people to the King of Spain, who had commanded them to kill and to enslave. And their argument was set down in letters addressed to our lord the King’.<sup>57</sup> Finally Las Casas arrived at the main general point he wished to make. These atrocities could in no way be condoned on the basis of ‘just war’, an argument we will return to shortly, because : ‘in the King’s laws is expressed the following: that no one is or can be

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<sup>54</sup> Adorno, p.63.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., pp.76, 338, note 36.

<sup>56</sup> Bartolomé de las Casas, *The devastation of the Indies: A brief account*, (trans.), Herma Briffault, (intro.), Bill, M., Donovan, Baltimore; London, 1992, pp.59-60.

<sup>57</sup> Las Casas, p.64; Las Casas mentioned in his preface that he put this work before Phillip a second time, possibly because the Crown ignored it the first time.

called a rebel if, to begin with, he is not a subject of the King'.<sup>58</sup> Las Casas' argument was highly inflammatory, especially for a public document.

*Destruction of the Indies* also addressed a more specific goal. His argument was motivated by a desire to ensure that conquistadors did not continue to reap rewards for both past and present brutalities. To this end Las Casas rounded off his polemic by suggesting that hard labour may be a fate worse than death by a Spanish sword. For 'Indians' who 'do obey are placed in servitude where with incredible hard labor and torments even harder to endure and longer lasting than the torments of those who are put to the sword they are finally, with their wives and children and their entire generation exterminated.'<sup>59</sup> In 1542, Las Casas had brief success in modifying the *encomienda*, the grants of labour given to conquistadors in perpetuity as reward for their services to the Crown. These 'New Laws', however, were revoked within three years after pressure from local *encomenderos*.<sup>60</sup> *Destruction of the Indies* furthered these earlier attempts to abolish the *encomienda*.

The context of Las Casas' polemic must also be seen in the light of recent publications on the outcomes of the famous Las Casas - Sepúlveda debates at Valladolid in 1550-51. They emerged out of what had been largely a theological debate at the University of Salamanca about the case for 'just war', that is whether it was:

legitimate for his majesty to make war on those Indians before preaching the faith to them, in order to subject them to his rule, so that, once subjugated, they more

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Adorno, p. 75. He then wrote the twelve rules for confessors which declared the conquests illegal. *Encomenderos* were denied absolution unless they were penitent and gave restitution to the Indians.

easily may be instructed and enlightened by the evangelical doctrine of the knowledge of their errors and Christian truth.<sup>61</sup>

Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda both drew their arguments from different interpretations of Aristotelian philosophy, revolving around definitions of ‘natural slavery’ and causes for ‘just war’, arguments that need not be rehearsed in detail here. Sepúlveda’s argument is of most relevance to the present discussion.

A humanist, unskilled in theological discourse, but a skilful rhetorician, Sepúlveda listed four main causes for ‘just war’. Firstly, war was justified in order to impose guardianship over a people incapable of governing themselves. Secondly, that war was justified if it did away with cannibalism and other abhorrent customs. Thirdly, that it was acceptable if it punished those who committed crimes against innocent people including sacrificial victims. Fourthly, war was justified by the need to subdue peoples prior to teaching them the Christian faith.<sup>62</sup> Point two is central because it also justifies point one, in that abhorrent customs such as cannibalism prove that some people do not possess sufficient rationality to govern themselves, and it also justifies point three, because it protects individuals from such customs. Indeed without point two the case would be significantly weakened, leaving only the possibility of point four, subduing prior to teaching of the Christian faith, thus indicating the fundamental role of cultural practices as justification for conquest.

The polemical purpose of the cannibal imagery thus becomes more apparent if we return to Diaz. Indeed, if we examine his account of events at Cholula, the same example

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p.82, quoting Las Casas, *Aquí se tiene una dipsuta*, p.295.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p.114.

used to illustrate Las Casas's polemic, we can see the effort expended in building a case for 'just war', as Adorno suggests.<sup>63</sup> Diaz's narrative of events at Cholula was constructed to fulfil each of four criteria listed by Sepúlveda. The first barbaric act where the Cholulans were rounded up and massacred was justified because 'they were planning to kill and eat our flesh, and had already prepared the pot with salt, peppers and tomatoes.'<sup>64</sup> Spanish actions were here justified on the basis of cause two, doing away with abhorrent customs including cannibalism. They also fulfilled clause three by freeing 'Indians' caged as potential sacrifices. Diaz 'cannot omit to mention the cages of stout wooden bars that we found in the city, full of men and boys who were being fattened for the sacrifice at which they would be eaten.'<sup>65</sup> Diaz insisted that the Spaniards fulfilled clause four, that they did their Christian duty, because Cortez 'told them to give up sacrificing to idols, to stop sacrificing and eating human flesh, to give up robbery and their customary bestialities.'<sup>66</sup> Thus all four causes are cited. However, cannibalism and to a lesser extent sacrifice are the linchpins in this argument; without them Diaz's entire argument would fall apart.

After Diaz, Spaniards wrote little about cannibalism, reflecting a shift away from justifying war to celebrating conquest. Even if, as most commentators agree, the Valladolid debates produced no decisive outcome, the fact that there was no further Spanish edition of *Destruction of the Indies* until 1646 suggests that Spanish discussion

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p.158.

<sup>64</sup> Diaz, p.199.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p.203.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p.201.

died down.<sup>67</sup> Under the tutelage of Peter Martyr, Sepúlveda's early work, *Demócrates Segundo*, focused on Indian cannibalism, crimes against nature, and surrender to appetite instead of reason.<sup>68</sup> However, this interpretation disappeared from his later work where, influenced by Gomara, he portrayed 'Indians' as noble, warrior-like people, who now that they ceased to be a threat, showed capacity for civilisation.<sup>69</sup> This last interpretation of Indian society proved invaluable to early English colonial endeavours, as we shall see.

### III

Las Casas's *Destruction of the Indies* awakened Protestant Europe to Spanish atrocities, the work unwittingly contributing to the 'Spanish Black Legend'. Protestant Europe produced a staggering number of translations of the work throughout the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, suggesting it was widely read.<sup>70</sup> We might assume that its popularity was a product of genuine outrage, but two other more compelling reasons suggest themselves. The timing of translations of *Destruction of the Indies* suggests that the work served to bolster rising anti-Spanish sentiment in Northern Europe

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<sup>67</sup> Adorno, p.78.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p.130; Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda's *Demócrates Segundo* was written in 1545. No English translations of Sepúlveda's work have ever appeared.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p.130; Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda's *De rebus Hispanorum getis ad Novum Orbem Mexicumque* was written between 1553 and 1558.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p.78. By the end of the seventeenth century there were 29 editions in Dutch, 13 in French, 6 in English, 3 in Italian and 3 in Latin. The first French edition appeared in 1578, followed by a second French edition by Jacques de Migrode, published in Antwerp. This Migrode edition was translated into English in 1583 and entitled *The Spanish colonie* translated by 'MMS', and published in England.

associated with religious wars in the Low Countries, France and England from 1560.<sup>71</sup> Las Casas' portrayal of Spanish cruelty in the Americas provided an effective commentary on Spanish action in the Low Countries.<sup>72</sup> However, the work also had a more enduring polemical purpose. The first English translation of *Destruction of the Indies* appeared in 1583, just as the English took their first tentative steps to establish colonies in the Americas.<sup>73</sup> In late 1582, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, supported by Catholic gentry, was preparing an expedition to the region north of Florida.<sup>74</sup> And it was the English who were the most enthusiastic proponents of the Black Legend.

The careers of its two most effective polemicists did not come together until 1586. The talented engraver Theodore De Bry, in London to illustrate the Protestant hero Sir Philip Sydney's funeral, met Richard Hakluyt, geographer, translator and promoter of English New World colonisation.<sup>75</sup> Both were zealous Protestants. De Bry, a Protestant refugee settled in Strasburg, a Huguenot centre of the book trade. Hakluyt had trained for the English ministry. The full extent of their relationship remains unknown, as Hakluyt's most recent biographer emphasises.<sup>76</sup> In 1587 Hakluyt convinced De Bry to join him in a project describing the recent English attempt to establish the colony of Virginia.<sup>77</sup> At the same time Hakluyt continued to collect accounts of European voyages and discoveries in

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p.81.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p.78.

<sup>73</sup> Bartolomè de las Casas, *The Spanish Colonie, or the Briefe Chronicle of the Actes and gestes of the Spaniards in the West Indies, called the New World, for the space of IX yeere*, Translated by 'M.M.S', London, 1583, STC 4739.

<sup>74</sup> David Quinn, *Explorers and Colonies: America, 1550-1625*, London, Ronceverte, WV, 1990, p.207.

<sup>75</sup> Tom Conley, 'De Bry's Las Casas' in (eds.) Renè Jara and Nicholas Spadaccini, *Amerindian Images and the Legacy of Columbus*, Minnesota, 1992, p.205.

<sup>76</sup> Peter Mancall, *Hakluyt's Promise: an Elizabethan Obsession for an English America*, New Haven; London, 2007.

<sup>77</sup> Benjamin Keen, *The Aztec image in Western thought*, p.164.

various languages.<sup>78</sup> Hakluyt's expertise and assistance was integral to De Bry's *Americae* series of engravings, begun in 1590. These widely circulated, encyclopaedic volumes brought together and popularised older, previously published, accounts of New World travels.

The next section focuses on De Bry's New World illustrations published during the 1590s, examining his use of Brazilian cannibalism to discredit Catholic Europe and propagate the Black Legend. The final section returns to a detailed discussion of Hakluyt's work, backtracking a decade, in order to show the development of his arguments over the 1580s, before finally examining De Bry and Hakluyt's joint work on the Virginia project.

De Bry highlighted the polemical elements of earlier accounts of the Americas by using sophisticated illustrative techniques to further his Protestant agenda. Recent innovations in copper plate engraving allowed for far more detailed illustrations as well as extending the number of editions possible from a single plate. These techniques are best exemplified in De Bry's illustrations of Las Casas' *Destruction of the Indies*, published in 1598, the year he died.<sup>79</sup>

De Bry's contribution of seventeen plates to the 1598 Latin translation of *Destruction of the Indies* recast Las Casas' message. Following his established practice, De Bry used the original water-colour drawings of the French Migrode edition as a basis

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<sup>78</sup> Richard Hakluyt, *The principall nauigations, voyages and discoueries of the English nation*, George Bishop and Ralph Newberie, London, 1589, STC 12625.

<sup>79</sup> Bartolomè de las Casas, *Narratio Regionum indicarum per Hispanos Quosdam devastatarum verissima: prius quidem epis copium Bathholemaem Casaum, natione Hisparium Hispanice conscripta, & anno 1551. Hispali, Hisparicè, verò 1598*. Theodore de Bry and Johannes Sauri, Frankfurt, 1598.

of his own copper engravings.<sup>80</sup> The visual impact of De Bry's illustrations lay in his use of a circular design which promoted the illusion of movement, and the representation of stories from different places and times within a single frame.<sup>81</sup> These techniques allowed De Bry to amplify Spanish 'atrocities'.

Cannibalism was a central theme in two of the images, and a third image comments on the 'near' cannibalism of the Spanish. By conflating a number of different stories within the same frame De Bry exaggerated the extent of violence already inherent in Las Casas's account. 'Spanish butcher-shop' (Figure 1), for example, illustrates a passage where Las Casas had condemned the Spanish for failing to provide provisions for their Tlaxcalan allies. The Spaniards, Las Casas claimed, effectively condoned cannibalism by allowing the Tlaxcalan to eat the captives they took.<sup>82</sup> The image also shows the Indians bent over by the brutal labour they performed for the Spanish, one of Las Casas' recurrent themes, and not exaggerated to any great extent here. However, nowhere had Las Casas mentioned Spaniards selling human 'meat' from 'butcher-shops'. De Bry co-opted Peter Martyr's imagery for a new purpose which saw Las Casas' metaphors far extended.

'Spanish Dogs' (Figure 2) again conflated a number of stories. Las Casas told of an Indian woman who, in despair at Spanish cruelty, tied her child to her leg and hung herself, a story that was further sanctified by De Bry, who showed her hung, visually framed in a cloister.<sup>83</sup> Dogs, here depicted as 'Spaniels', attacked and ate a boy while he

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<sup>80</sup> Conley, p.106.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p.125.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p.116.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p.120.



was being baptised.<sup>84</sup> The image, true to Las Casas' text, suggested how far the Spaniards were removed from God. But De Bry went further, by symbolising the Spanish by their breed of dog (the spaniel), he insinuated that the Spaniards were the true cannibals. This same idea was again emphasised in another image 'Spanish Cruelty' (Figure 3). De Bry showed the Spaniards torturing one of their Indian victims by grilling him on the *boucan*. In the background another Indian, soon to lose his hand to a Spanish axe, begs for mercy, while three previous victims of the same punishment flee in terror. Las Casas mentioned no such event.<sup>85</sup> Instead the image recalls the 'Indian' cannibals depicted on Münster's 1544 map of Asia.<sup>86</sup> De Bry's *Destruction of the Indies* best exemplified the themes of the 'Spanish Black Legend'. Indian cannibalism had no role here, and instead it was the barbarity of the Spaniards and their near-cannibalism, that took centre stage.

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p.110.

<sup>86</sup> Sebastian Münster, *Cosmographia*, Basel, 1544.

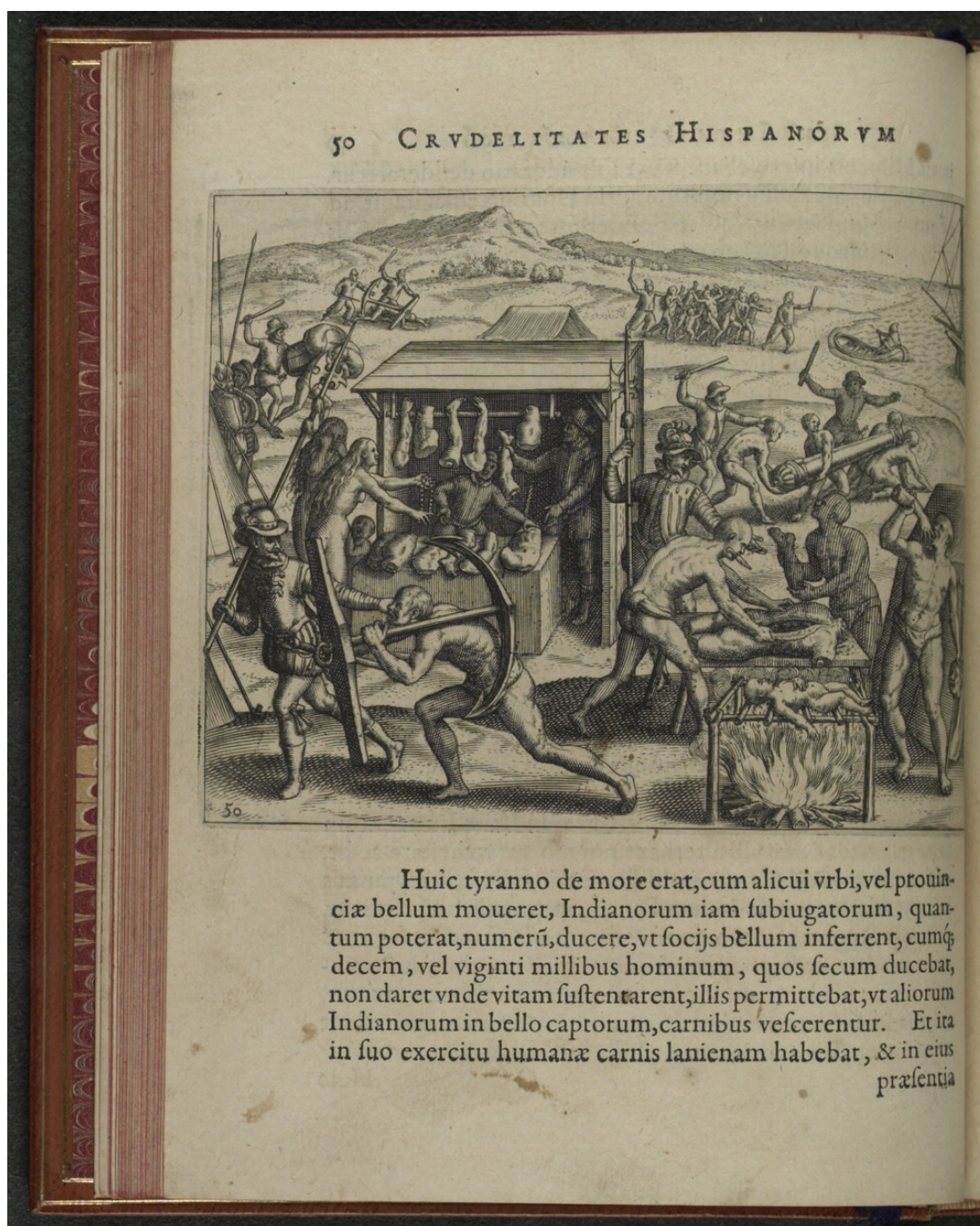


Figure 1. 'Spanish Butcher-shop' in Casas, Bartolomé, de, las, *Narratio Regionum Indicarum per Hispanos Quosdam devastatarum verissima*, 1598, Latiné excusa, Francoforti, sumptibus Theodori De Bry & Ioannis Saurii typis, 1598. Image taken from Jay I. Kislak Collection (Rare Book and Special Collections Reading Room), Library of Congress.



## IN INDIIS PATRATÆ.

59

aliquibus diebus, ad enormia facinora, latrocinia, incarcerationes, & maiores contra Deum offensas committendas reuerſi ſunt, neq; adhuc ceſſant, ita vt iam trecenta illa terræ milliaria, vt dixi, in quibus tanta erat populi frequentia, inculta, & omnino ferè deſerta cernantur.



Particulares, ſæuitiæ, & crudelitatis in illa regione patrata;  
narrationes, nullus credat. Duas tantùm, aut tres, quæ in mentē  
H 2 veniunt,

Figure 2. 'Spanish Dogs' in Casas, Bartolomè, de, las, *Narratio Regionum Indicarum per Hispanos Quosdam devastatarum verissima*, 1598, Latiné excusa, Francoforti, sumptibus Theodori De Bry & Ioannis Saurii typis, 1598. Image taken from Jay I. Kislak Collection (Rare Book and Special Collections Reading Room), Library of Congress.

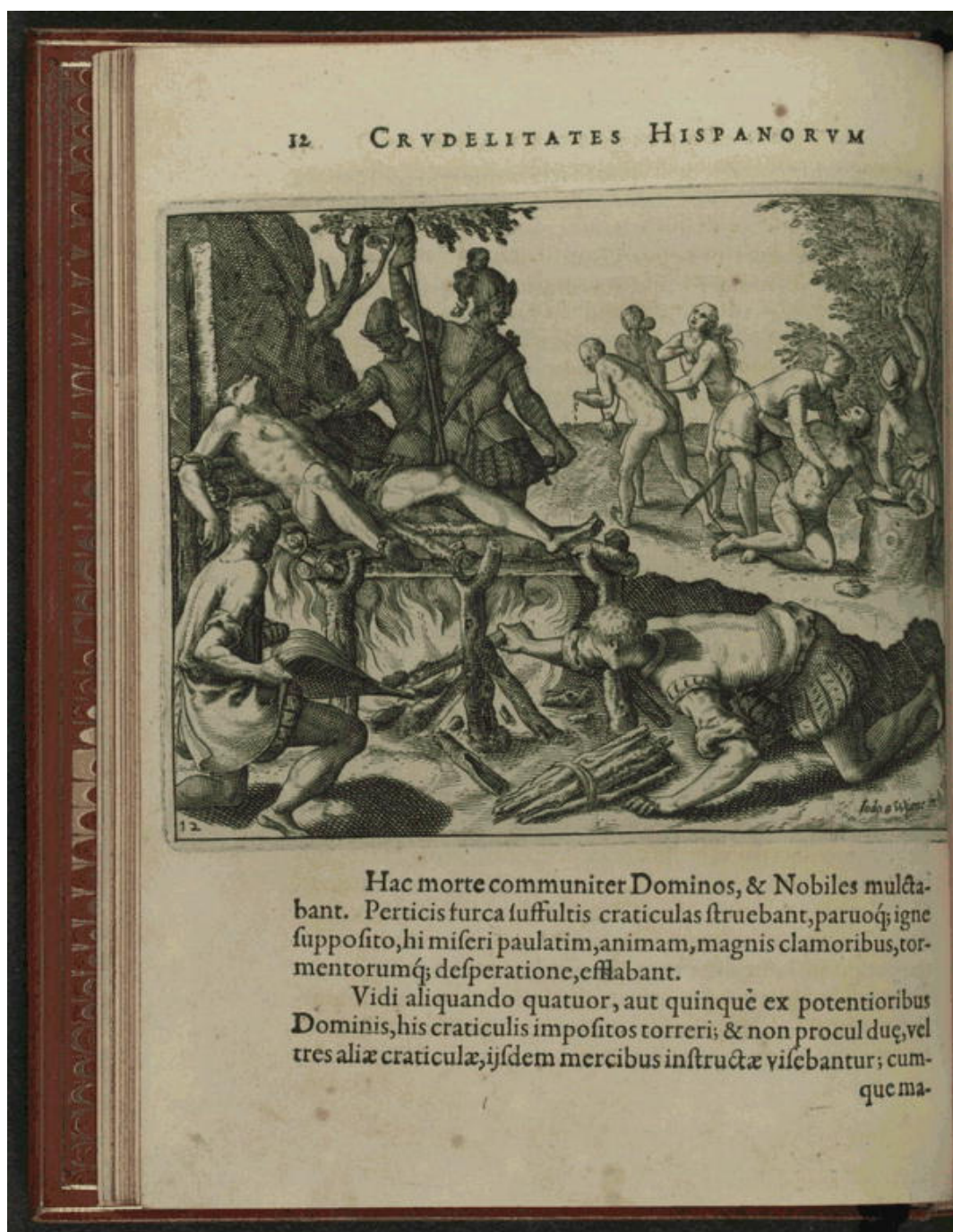


Figure 3. 'Spanish cruelty' in Casas, Bartolomé, de, las, *Narratio Regionum Indicarum per Hispanos Quosdam devastatarum verissima*, 1598, Latiné excusa, Francoforti, sumptibus Theodori De Bry & Ioannis Saurii typis, 1598. Image taken from Jay I. Kislak Collection (Rare Book and Special Collections Reading Room), Library of Congress.



De Bry's earlier work, *Americae tertia pars* (1592) also used the trope of cannibalism to comment on Catholic Iberian cruelty. He drew on two previously published accounts. The mercenary Hans Staden of Hesse's first-hand account of captivity among the Tupinamba (or Tupi), *Warhaftige historia... in der Newenwelt America gelege* (*True History of his captivity*) was illustrated with his own crude woodcuts and published in Marburg in 1557.<sup>87</sup> The Huguenot Jean de Lery's (1578) *Histoire d'un voyage en la terre du Brésil*, (*History of a voyage to the land of Brazil*) was written twenty years after his experiences observing the Tupinamba.<sup>88</sup> There were elements in both accounts that could be used to further De Bry's Protestant agenda.

Staden underscored the Tupinamba motive for cannibalism. They did not eat human flesh to satisfy their appetites, or as a sacrifice to idols, but out of a desire for revenge. Staden explains that : 'This they do, not from hunger, but from great hate and jealousy, and when they are fighting with each other one, filled with hate, will call out to his opponent: *Dete Immeraya, Schermiuramme, heiwoe*: — "Cursed be you my meat"'.<sup>89</sup> Tupinamba cannibalism was therefore portrayed as a rational rite of war and not a response to bestial urges.

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<sup>87</sup> Hans Staden, *Warhaftige historia und beschreibung eyner landtschafft der wilden, nacketen, grimmigen menschfresser lenthen in der Newenwelt America gelege*, Marburg, 1557.

<sup>88</sup> Jean de Léry, *Histoire d'un voyage en la terre du Brésil, autrement dite Amérique*, Chappin, 1578. De Léry's detailed ethnographic description was an important influence on anthropologist Claude Lévi- Strauss.

<sup>89</sup> Hans Staden, *True history of his captivity*, (ed. and trans.) Malcolm Letts, London, 2005, p.152.

Tupinamba aggression was in part explained as a product of Portuguese ill-treatment and enslavement.<sup>90</sup> The title of Staden's fifteenth chapter, 'How my captors made angry complaint that the Portuguese has slain their father, which deed they desired to avenge on me', suggested that Portuguese cruelty was in part responsible for Staden's own captivity. The chapter goes on to explain that the Portuguese not only enslave Tupi, but live among the Tupi's enemies who also practice cannibalism.<sup>91</sup> Staden implied that Tupi revenge cannibalism had escalated in the context of Portuguese slave raiding and alliance with Tupi enemies. Those enemies were not named but rather dehumanised as 'savages'. By association, the Portuguese and their cruel practices were therefore glossed as savage. At the end of the chapter, Staden indicated that he was only able to escape death, or at least prolong life, by claiming he 'was a kinsman and friend to the French.'<sup>92</sup>

Brazil had been claimed by the Portuguese in 1550, but the French traded in the region and Staden had worked both sides to his own advantage. However, Martell suggests that on his return to Hesse, Staden became embroiled in the battle for Protestant control of France and Germany, which may have influenced the European commentary in this account. Published after questioning by the Landgrave Philip of Hesse — who had long sought to promote a Protestant federation — Staden's work was possibly a strategic offering to an 'interested and politically powerful audience'.<sup>93</sup> This interpretation would explain why the 'good' French are contrasted with the 'bad' Portuguese, who by association are linked to good and bad cannibals throughout the account.

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<sup>90</sup> H. E. Martell, 'Hans Staden's captive soul: Identity, Imperialism, and Rumours of cannibalism in 16<sup>th</sup> century Brazil', *Journal of World History*, Vol.17, No.1, March 2006, p.58.

<sup>91</sup> Staden, p.75.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Martell, p.57.

De Léry also distinguished between good and bad cannibals, cannibals who cooked and cannibals who ate their meat raw. The Tupinamba enemy named by De Léry as *Outeca*, ate their own kin raw, while the Tupinamba took vengeance, barbecuing their enemies on the *boucan*.<sup>94</sup> It is indeed ‘the cooking’ as Frank Lestringant (following Lévi-Strauss) noted, that ‘banishes the spectre of the barbarian’: cooking is a product of culture requiring the use of human reason.<sup>95</sup> The Tupinamba, therefore, while misguided, at least showed some capacity for ‘enlightenment’. Significantly, De Léry wrote this account after becoming a preacher and was anxious to discount the earlier stereotypes. He abhorred the depictions on maps which ‘represented and painted the Brazilian savages roasting human flesh on a spit as we cook mutton legs and other meat’ and showing them ‘cutting it up with great iron knives on benches, and hanging up meat for display, as our beef butchers do over here’.<sup>96</sup> Indeed he was correct; these images of the cannibal who spit-roasted his victim clearly derived from older maps such as Sebastian Münster’s ‘Tabula Asiae’ in his 1544 *Cosmographia*. However, these maps also drew on the descriptions of Peter Martyr.<sup>97</sup> De Léry had a different polemical use in mind for Tupinamba cannibalism.

He likened the Tupinamba to the misguided Catholics of Europe. Cannibalism was a useful metaphor for discrediting the papist doctrine of transubstantiation. Tupinamba cannibalism was less heinous than the horrors committed by Catholics against Protestants on Bartholomew’s Day: ‘on the twenty-fourth of august 1572...The livers,

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<sup>94</sup> Lestringant, p.65.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., pp.69-70.

<sup>96</sup> Jean, De, Léry, *History of a voyage to the land of Brazil, otherwise called America*, (trans. and intro) Janet Whately, CA, 1992, pp.126-127.

<sup>97</sup> See ‘Tablula Asiae’ in Sebastian Münster’s 1544 *Cosmographia*.

hearts, and other parts of these bodies---were they not eaten by the furious murderers, of whom Hell itself stands in horror?<sup>98</sup> No one thought these were ordinary, but Catholics ate ‘God’ on a regular basis.<sup>99</sup> Further disparaging references to Catholic practices appeared throughout De Léry’s text. For example, the Tupinamba were as superstitious as the Catholics, keeping ‘the teeth’, ‘which they pull out and string like rosary beads’.<sup>100</sup> Tupinamba cannibalism was rich in polemical potential for critiquing Catholic Europe.

De Léry’s and Staden’s accounts of Tupinamba cannibalism offered ready-made interpretations that could serve De Bry’s Protestant purposes. A third account was also available to him, André Thevet’s *Les singularitez de la France Antarctique* (1557), although it was tainted by the Catholicism of its author.<sup>101</sup> None the less he made good use of Thevet’s imagery. Thevet’s image used swinging hatchets, dismembered bodies and entrails to emphasise the butchery, rather than the cooking or eating, associated with cannibalism (Figure 4). De Bry’s version clearly borrowed the basic format of Thevet’s image, but by bringing the *boucan* to the foreground, highlighted the cooking (Figure 5). In De Bry’s etching the Tupinamba are divided by sex, represented as displaying some basic signs that Europeans associated with social order. However this image amplified Brazilian cannibalism as much as Thevet’s. Playing up cannibalism in a region associated with the Portuguese served De Bry as a useful metaphor for Catholic aberrations.

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<sup>98</sup> De Léry, p.132.

<sup>99</sup> Lestringant, p.65.

<sup>100</sup> De Léry, p.127.

<sup>101</sup> An English translation in cheap blackletter form was also available. Andrè Trevet, *The new found worlde or antartike*, Henrie Bynnemen for Thomas Hacket, London, 1568, STC 23950.





Figure 4. 'Diabolical butchery' in André Thevet, *Les Singularitez de la France Antarctique*, Paris, 1558, p.77.



Figure 5. 'Cannibal barbeque' in De Bry, *Americae Tertia Pars*, Frankfurt, 1592.

Cannibalism undoubtedly remained a useful device of discourse. It could be used to discredit the Spanish and the Portuguese (linked by the Castilian Crown from 1580 to 1640) and attempt to undermine their established strongholds in the Americas. De Bry drew on reasonably recent material to construct new polemical arguments which he expressed through imagery. Building on Las Casas's polemic he used cannibalism as a metaphor to highlight Spanish cruelty in the Caribbean and New Spain. He used Protestant accounts of the Brazilian Tupinamba to play up 'Indian' cannibalism that was, at least in part, exacerbated by Portuguese, meaning 'Iberian', cruelty. However, it should be noted that De Bry only spotlighted cannibalism associated with the Iberian strongholds of South America.

#### IV

Considering that cannibalism was such a versatile trope, it is noteworthy that accounts of English voyages to the Americas are marked by the relative absence of references to cannibalism. The fact that the English did not adopt a polemical use of cannibalism in their arguments for colonisation does not separate them either culturally or ideologically from other European colonisers. The English did not use 'cannibalism' because, after Las Casas, it was no longer a convincing way to justify colonialism. English advocates of colonisation of North America, such as the Catholic Sir George Peckham, used cannibalism in their arguments for much the same purposes as the Spanish had, right up to 1583, the same year Las Casas' work was translated into English. They would also use 'cannibalism' again later in 1595 when Raleigh made his

explorations of Guinea. But it was not used in relation to the peoples of North America. From 1600, when the English mentioned cannibalism it was usually in relation to their own desperate cannibalism induced by hardship aboard ship or in nascent colonies such as Jamestown, very much reflecting the kind of message suggested by the biblical siege of Samaria.

The last extensive discussion of cannibalism appeared in George Best's account of the Frobisher voyages to Newfoundland between 1576 and 1578, *A True Reporte of the late voyages of discoverie...under the conduct of Martin Frobisher*.<sup>102</sup> The Europeans suspected that the inhabitants of Baffin Island were cannibals. Five of the Frobisher crew had disappeared in suspicious circumstances and the Baffin Islanders regularly ate food the Europeans considered unfit for human consumption, displaying a 'raveness and bloody disposition, in eating any kinde of raw flesche or carrion, heresoeuer stinkeing'.<sup>103</sup> Best deduced that these people,

be a kinde of Tartar, or rather....Samoveydes, which is as much to say in the Muscouy tong, as eaters of themselves, and so the Russians their borderers doe name them...for they are naturally borne children of the same couloure and complexiõ as all the Americans are, which dwell under the Equinoctiall line.<sup>104</sup>

Not only were the Inuit thereby associated with Herodotus' cannibals who once roamed Asia, but all Americans were assumed to share the same customs, linked by geo-medical theories of 'complexion' that categorised men according to their environment. There was little to distinguish Best's account from the old Spanish polemical use of 'cannibalism'.

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<sup>102</sup> George Best, *A true Discourse of the late voyages of discoverie...under the conduct of Martin Frobisher*, London, 1578, STC 1972.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p.61.

In order to understand this change of attitude toward the Amerindians, within a relatively short space of time, it is instructive to examine the last English work that mentioned cannibalism in connection to colonisation. Sir George Peckham's *A true reporte of the late discoveries , and possession, taken in the right of the Crowne of Englande, of the new-found landes*. (1583)<sup>105</sup> Peckham's *true reporte* sought to revive the idea of plantation promoted Sir Humphrey Gilbert whose missions ended in late 1583 when he was lost at sea.<sup>106</sup> As a Catholic, Peckham was inspired by Gilbert's idea of establishing a new society based on feudal precedents across the seas.<sup>107</sup>

From 1583 the idea of Christianising mission to lift the Indians out of barbarity began to be tied to a nascent economic discourse that rested on legal entitlement. Peckham set to establish to that England was the only nation that possessed written documents showing lawful title based on early voyages. Proof lay in an ancient Welsh chronicle, Peckham claimed. Madocke ap Owen Gwynth, 'a noble and worthy personage legally descended from the royall bloode', born in Wales, arrived in the Americas in 1170, planting a colony before he returned to England. His legacy could be detected in the names of islands and animals, such as the 'pengwyn' for example. No other nation, Peckham claimed, could find chronicled evidence of discoveries in North America before the time of Prince *Madoc*. Moreover, if further proof of English title was required, the Queen's grandfather King Henry VII had granted letters patent to John Cabot an Italian

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<sup>105</sup> Sir George Peckham, *A true reporte of the late discoveries , and possession, taken in the right of the Crowne of Englande, of the new-found landes*, Printed for Iohn Hinde, London, 1583, STC19523. Published after 12 November 1583 according to the 'Epistle'. Sir Humphrey Gilbert was not heard of after 9 September. (Biii).

<sup>106</sup> Quinn, p.237.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p.216.

and his sons to discover ‘remote, barbarous and heathen countries’. Peter Martyr’s work provided further proof that the English ‘firste discovered upon the Cape of Florida, as appeareth in the Decades.’<sup>108</sup>

The bulk of Peckham’s text, however, focused on demonstrating how the venture would profit the realm.<sup>109</sup> ‘Planting’ would ameliorate the problems of unemployment at home, promote the fishing industry, and in the process, strengthen the navy and shipping. Both colonists and natives would create new markets for English goods. ‘Planting’ was also an opportunity for the ‘Christian religion to take root’, but it was ‘trade’ and ‘traffic’ that were the best means to subdue the natives prior to ‘planting’.<sup>110</sup> Gifts of ‘pettie machaundizes and triffls’ were the best means of ingratiating themselves with the Indians.<sup>111</sup> A secondary means of acquiring influence was to provide military assistance to friendly Indians in their battles with their neighbours, especially ‘the Canniballs’.<sup>112</sup> If the Indians refused to submit ‘after these good and fair means used’ then ‘Christians’, were entitled to use force.<sup>113</sup>

Older arguments appeared alongside the new in Peckham’s account. He insisted that the natives would benefit from English colonisation because:

They shalbe reduced from unseemly customes, to honest maners, from disordered rioutous rowtes and companies, to a wel governed common wealth & with all shalbe taught mecanicall occupations, artes and liberal Sciences, and which standeth them most upon, they shalbe defended from the cruelty of their tyrannical

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<sup>108</sup> Peckham, Sig. E1r.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., Sig. E1r.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., Sig. C2r.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., Sig. C3.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., Sig. C4 v.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., Sig. C4.

& blood sucking neighbours, the *Canniballes*, wherby infinite number of their lives shalbe preserved.<sup>114</sup>

The idea that colonisation would help protect the Indians from cannibalism echoed Sepulveda's arguments for 'just war'; while raising the barbarians to civil society through the teaching of practical skills and education built on the Spanish idea that the natives would benefit from Christian tutelage, but the explicitly economic arguments were new.<sup>115</sup>

Peckham's legal and economic arguments were reinvigorated by an anti-Spanish polemic in Hakluyt's *Discourse on Western planting* (1584).<sup>116</sup> Never meant for publication, *Discourse on western planting* was solicited by Sir Francis Walsingham who sought to further convince the Queen of the benefits of planting.<sup>117</sup> The English also needed to move quickly. The Iberians' 'time', as Hakluyt first suggested in 1582, 'might be out of date', but there were other European contenders apart from the English.<sup>118</sup>

To a certain extent the 'Spanish Black Legend', born of Las Casas' polemic, provided as much leverage for the English as 'Indian cannibalism' had for the Spanish. Las Casas was mentioned by name twice in the text.<sup>119</sup> Hakluyt contrasted the Spaniards' greed for 'filthy lucre' with the English aspiration to implant 'our true and sincere

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., Sigs. F3-F4v.

<sup>115</sup> The major economic arguments supporting Gilberts' voyages were also effectively outlined by Curleill the same year. Christopher Carleill, *A breef and sommarie discourse vpon the entended voyage to the hethermoste partes of America*, [J. Kingson?], 1583, STC 4626.5.

<sup>116</sup> Richard Hakluyt, *Discourse concerning Western Planting, written in the year 1584 by Richard Hakluyt [now first printed from a contemporary manuscript]*, (ed.) Charles Dean, Cambridge, 1877. See pp.36,86,89.

<sup>117</sup> Mancall, pp.128-129.

<sup>118</sup> Richard Hakluyt, *Divers voyages touching the discoverie*, Thomas Dawson for Thomas Woodcoke, London, 1582, STC 12624., Epistle dedicatory, Sig. Qr ; Hakluyt, *Western Planting*, pp.108,102. *Discourse on western planting* urged that the English find and gain control of the North-West passage quickly, before the French returned and the Dutch launched colonising missions.

<sup>119</sup> Hakluyt, *Western Planting*, p.77.

religion', enlarge the number of Protestants, and bring millions of 'wretched people' 'from darkness to lighte.'<sup>120</sup> Spanish abominations exceeded those of the 'Turk', Hakluyt claimed.<sup>121</sup> The Spaniards were experts in torture, disembowelling, roasting and burning their victims, murdering in excess of twelve million Indians.<sup>122</sup> This was the leverage Hakluyt needed to suggest that the English could supplant the Spaniards. The Spaniards were not established in great numbers, and only kept control through the threat of mustering an army at short notice.<sup>123</sup> The English should establish themselves near Spanish Florida and gradually wrest control of the territory, he argued, because the Indians of Florida loathed the Spaniards and would welcome alliances with the English.<sup>124</sup>

Spanish atrocity also cast doubt on the truth of Spanish reports of Indian cannibalism. If the Indians were not cannibals as earlier Spanish works suggested, what indeed were their customs? What did they eat? What kind of housing did they have? What variety of marriage customs? What sort of technologies did they possess and could these be of any use to Europeans? How did they organise themselves politically, and were there any opportunities to exploit factional divides? Answers to all these questions were fundamental to effective colonisation.

Many of the answers Hakluyt sought were provided by Renè Goulaine de Laudonnière's *A notable history containing foure voyages made by certaine Frenchmen*

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., pp.7, 10.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p.71.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p.76; Mancall, p.145 The virulency of Hakluyt's attack is to some extent explained by suspicion that Phillip II was implicated in the assassination of William of Orange on 10 July 1584.

<sup>123</sup> Hakluyt, *Western Planting*, p.147.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., pp.46-47.

into *Florida* which Hakluyt read in manuscript in the autumn of 1585.<sup>125</sup> Laudonnière's account presented new information on the Florida Indians that could be used to add specificity to the arguments Hakluyt had made in *Discourse on Western Planting*. A notable history provided a wealth of information on the customs and intensely hierarchical social structure of the inhabitants, offering detailed information on the political relationships between various kings.<sup>126</sup> It gave constructive advice for future colonists in the region: the Indians had been courteous to the French, but hated the Spaniards suggesting they would readily make alliances with the English.<sup>127</sup> The work suggested reasons that the French had failed, and moreover, the English were the heroes of the account: John Hawkins had come to the rescue of the French.<sup>128</sup>

Laudonnière's Florida Indians posed little threat, and this was reflected in their eating habits, mentioned at the very beginning of the account. 'When we offered them meate to eate, but they refused it, and made us understand that they were accustomed to wash their face, and to starve until the sunne were set before they did eate, which is a ceremonie common to all the Indians of New France.'<sup>129</sup> While their customs were certainly unusual, the people proved highly adaptable and 'in the ende they were constrayned to forget their superstitions, and apply themselves to our nature, which was somewhat strange to them at first.'<sup>130</sup> These 'Indian superstitions' were merely that they

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<sup>125</sup> Renè Goulaine de Laudonnière, *A notable History containing foure voyages made by certayne French Captaynes vnto Florida...*, [translator R. Hakluyt], Thomas Dawson, London, 1587, STC 15316; Mancall, p.165.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., pp.11,45.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., pp.20,61.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., pp.60,50-51.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p.8.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.



ate at sundown rather than at noon as Europeans preferred. Significantly, they did not eat their enemies, but took trophies. ‘They took the heades of their enemies which they had slaine and cut of their heire round about with a piece of their skulls’.<sup>131</sup> The Florida Indians clearly demonstrated a capacity for improvement.

Hakluyt’s translation and publication of Laudonnière’s account in 1587, as well as his new edition of Peter Martyr’s *Novo Orbo* renewed the push for English colonisation of the Florida region.<sup>132</sup> By mid-1587 between 110 and 150 colonists had been sent to Roanoke in Virginia under the governorship of John White. Captain Philip Amadas and Master Arthur Barlowe had ‘discovered’ Virginia in 1584. Thomas Hariot’s 1588 first-hand account of the colony together with John White’s watercolours, offered a unique opportunity to produce promotional material that married image and text, and Hakluyt was able to convince De Bry to join him in this project.<sup>133</sup>

By 1590 cannibalism had well and truly disappeared from English accounts of the North Americas. However, what the ‘Indians’ ate was still seen as a significant guide to other social behaviour. Hakluyt and De Bry’s blockbuster edition of Hariot’s first hand account of the Roanoke colony in Virginia (published in 1590 in English and Latin editions) brought the first illustrations of the Americans to a broader audience.<sup>134</sup> These

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p.29

<sup>132</sup> Pietro Matire d’ Anghiera, *The Famous Historie of the Indies*, [‘first set forth by Hakluyt’], L. M .Gent, London, 1628, STC 625; Mancall, pp.176-177. Martyr’s account emphasised the wealth of the Americas and supported English claims to the Americas, justified by Cabot’s journey.

<sup>133</sup> Edward K. Chatterton, *English Seamen and the colonization of America*, Freeport, NY, 1971, p.89. Originally De Bry intended to produce an illustrated edition of Laudonnière’s account based on the watercolours of the Huguenot artist Jacques Le Moyne who had accompanied the Florida expedition.

<sup>134</sup> Thomas Hariot, *A brief and True Report of the new found land of Virginia*, [copperplates, Theodore de Bry], London, 1590, STC 12786. This work formed the first part of De Bry’s *Americae* volumes, entitled *Admiranda narratio, fida tamen, de commodis et incolarvm ritibvs Virginae*, Johann Wechel, Frankfurt, 1590. It was first published in 1588 without engravings.

images provided a pictorial ‘ethnography’ of the Virginians based on watercolours by an original member of the expedition, John White. A section entitled ‘the true pictures and fashions of the people in that parte of America now called Virginia’ included twenty-three copperplates by De Bry with annotations translated from the Latin by Hakluyt. Two plates described their cooking practices. Figure 6 shows the Virginians broiling fish on the *boucan* (not used for cooking people here). Figure 7 depicts the cooking of meat in a cauldron over an open fire. But it is Figure 8 which shows the Indians ‘sitting at their meat’ that most reveals the thinking behind the work.

The Indians were praised for their behaviour, especially their eating habits.

they are very moderate in their eating wher by they avoide sicknes. I would were God wee would followe their example. For we should be free from many kyndes of diseasyes which wee fall into by sumptuous and unseasonable banketts, continuallye devisinge new sawces, and provocation of gluttonnye to satisfy our unsatiabie appetite.<sup>135</sup>

An abstemious relationship with food was a good sign to Europeans, indicating that the Indians had not given in to ‘beast-like’ appetite. The following plate again emphasised that: ‘They are very sober in their eatinge, and drinkinge and consequentelye very long lived because they do not oppress nature.’<sup>136</sup> This statement sought to offer a more ‘tangible’ explanation for the great longevity of the Indians compared to the older accounts, from Mandeville onwards, who suggested the Indians possessed a wondrous secret: ‘the fountain of youth’. There were clearly features of these barbarian peoples that Europeans could admire.

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<sup>135</sup> Plate XV in Thomas Hariot, *Admiranda narratio, fida tamen, de commodis et incolarvm ritibvs Virginiae...Anglico scripta sermone á Thoma Hariot*, Johann Wechel, Frankfurt, 1590.

<sup>136</sup> Plate XVI in Thomas Hariot, *Admiranda narratio*.



**Figure 6. 'Grilling fish', XIII in Thomas Hariot, *A brief and True Report of the new found land of Virginia*, [copperplates, Theodore de Bry], London, 1590, STC 12786.** This image taken from *Admiranda narratio, fida tamen, de commodis et incolarum ritibus Virginiae... Anglico scripta sermone á Thoma Hariot, Johann Wechel, Frankfurt, 1590*. Joyner Library Digital Collections, East Carolina University.



**Figure 7. 'Cooking', XV in Thomas Hariot, *A brief and True Report of the new found land of Virginia*, [copperplates, Theodore de Bry], London, 1590, STC 12786.** This image taken from *Admiranda narratio, fida tamen, de commodis et incolarum ritibus Virginiae...* Anglico scripta sermone á Thoma Hariot, Johann Wechel, Frankfurt, 1590. Joyner Library Digital Collections, East Carolina University.



**Figure 8. 'Sitting to eat' XVI in Thomas Hariot, *A brief and True Report of the new found land of Virginia*, [copperplates, Theodore de Bry], London, 1590, STC 12786.** This image taken from *Admiranda narratio, fida tamen, de commodis et incolarvm ritibvs Virginiae...* Anglico scripta sermone á Thoma Hariot, Johann Wechel, Frankfurt, 1590. Joyner Library Digital Collections, East Carolina University.

The Virginians possessed other basic social and institutional structures familiar to Europeans. Beginning with the ‘great’ lords and ladies, and ending with an aged man, nine plates reassured a European audience that the Virginians possessed a distinct hierarchical social order whose members could be identified by their clothing. The Virginians had forms of ‘religious’ practice: five plates described their idols, conjurers, prayer with rattles, dances at feasts, and the manner in which they entombed their great lords. Even though it was true they worshiped strange idols, such as Kiwasa, these customs could be corrected because ‘these poore soules have non other knowledge of god’ but are ‘very Desirous to know the truthe.’<sup>137</sup> Their towns, Pomeioac and Secota, though basic, were fortified and orderly, marked by straight paths and mono-cultural crops grown in straight lines.<sup>138</sup> The Virginians also had novel technologies, one plate explained their fishing practices and another, their clever manner of using fire to hollow out a canoe made from an entire tree trunk. These images were certainly closer to actual cultural practices than the earlier depictions of ‘cannibal’ Indians, but, like earlier texts, blended elements of truth with fiction for a polemical purpose.

The increasingly influential notion that societies could progress from barbarism to civilisation, an outcome of the arguments at Valladolid, was clearly evident in this work. The idea that the Virginians sat somewhere between the beginnings of history (as Christians conceived it) and the European present, is suggested by the image of Adam and Eve which faces a map of Virginia, (Figure 9) opening the series of De Bry’s

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<sup>137</sup> Plate XXI in Thomas Hariot, *Admiranda narratio*.

<sup>138</sup> Monoculture was not a feature of Virginian agricultural practice.



engravings. This was a New Eden, the land of innocence before the fall, where one did not have to labour.

The closing section of plates following Hariot's 'ethnographic' material entitled 'Some pictvre of the Pictes which in the olde tyme dyd habite one part of the Great Bretainne' also suggests an attempt to fit the Virginians in to a historical schema. Compared to the Picts, the Virginians looked 'noble' and 'virtuous'. The first engraving of a Pict 'barbarian' man — naked and tattooed, and obviously a warrior, bearing shield, sword and spear, and proudly displaying his trophy heads— positively shocks after the images of the gentle Virginians (Figure 10). The title page of the section claimed that the images of the Picts had been included 'to shoue how the Inhabitants of Great Britannie have bin in times past as sauuage as those of Virginia'. Arguably, these representations of the Picts, who once lived in close proximity to the ancestors of the modern English, looked a lot more like barbarians than the Virginians. The Pict warrior with the simian-like face is, after all, entirely naked and surrounded by his bloody trophy heads. Here barbarism was represented as a 'relative' concept. These five plates reinforced the polemical message of the entire work. Because the Virginians were 'relatively' civilised they could make further advancements under English tutelage.



## Anglorum in Virginiam aduentus. II.



**V**IRGINIAE maritima Insulae abundant, qua difficilem admodum praebent in eam regionem aditum: nam licet frequentibus et laxis intervalis sint inter se discreta, qua commodum ingressum polliceri videntur, magno tamen nostro damno experisimus vadosa esse et undarum brevitatem infesta, nec unquam interiora penetrare potuimus, donec multum et variis locis minore naui periculum faceremus: aditum tandem inuenimus loco quodam nostris Anglis bene cognito. Ingressi igitur, et navigatione aliquamdiu continuata, magnum flumen obseruauimus, et regione praedictarum insularum se exonerant, quod tamen subire non licuit, ob angustias arenarum aitu replente eius ostium. Longius igitur navigationem profecturi, ad magnam insulam peruenimus, cuius incolae nobis conspectu immensum et horridum clamorem tollere coeperunt, vapores qui homines nobis similes nunquam antea conspexerant. Et in fugam se conuertentes, volatibus ferarum, vel furioforum ritu omnia complerunt: sed amice reuocati, propositisque nostris mercedibus, veluti speculati pulchritudinis, et alius quicquid, quas ipsis gratas futuri exoptauimus, substituerunt. Et obseruata nostra beniuolentia atque amicitia blanditi nobis, et de aduentu gratulati sunt deinde in suam urbem. **R**OA NOA nomine, atque adeo ad suum **W**ELLSI sue Regnum deduxerunt, qui satis humaniter nos excepit, nostro tamen conspectu attentus.

Talis fuit nos in eam **N**ORIBI partem, quam **V**IRGINIAM appellamus, aduentus: cuius incolarum staturam corporis et ornatum, victusque, rationem, secula, et conuiuia, figillatim vobis proponamus.

**Figure 9. 'Adam and Eve' and 'Map of Virginia', Plates 1 and II in Thomas Hariot, *A brief and True Report of the new found land of Virginia*, [copperplates, Theodore de Bry], London, 1590, STC 12786.** This image taken from *Admiranda narratio, fida tamen, de commodis et incolarum ritibus Virginae... Anglico scripta sermone á Thoma Hariot*, Johann Wechel, Frankfurt, 1590. Joyner Library Digital Collections, East Carolina University.





**Figure 10. 'Pict warrior', Plate 1 of the Pictes in Thomas Hariot, *A brief and True Report of the new found land of Virginia*, [copperplates, Theodore de Bry], London, 1590, STC 12786.** This image taken from *Admiranda narratio, fida tamen, de commodis et incolarvm ritibvs Virginiae... Anglico scripta sermone á Thoma Hariot*, Johann Wechel, Frankfurt, 1590. Joyner Library Digital Collections, East Carolina University.

Hariot's text had first attracted Hakluyt because it was a highly organised work designed around the needs of future colonists. It not only offered a comprehensive list of 'merchantable' goods, 'victuals' and building materials but, like Laudonnière's text, paid much attention to 'the nature and manners of the people'. Hariot's 'ethnographic' description, however, seems mainly designed to allay the fears of potential colonists. The Virginians only had basic weapons, small towns and even the greatest of chiefs could not muster an army beyond 800 men.<sup>139</sup> The people were so enchanted with European crafts and sciences that they suspected the Europeans of being gods, or at least taught by gods, he claimed.<sup>140</sup> Naturally, they would want to 'form friendships' with Europeans and 'obey them'.<sup>141</sup> Hariot emphasised that Virginians attributed great power to the Europeans, because wherever the Europeans went sickness followed, and thus many Virginians had died. The *Wirowan Wingina* (chiefs of Virginia) who observed this pattern, were 'persuaded that it was the work of God through our men punishing those who had offended the Europeans'.<sup>142</sup> Hariot insinuated that this was leverage that could be well used.

Hariot's work, while plainly expressing the primacy of the economic motive in colonisation, also demonstrated that 'knowledge' of the people and their customs made an important contribution to efficient colonisation *without* the use of undue force. This was not 'ethnography' for its own sake. This was early ethnography in service of the state. Hakluyt and De Bry's 1590 publication appeared just as Francis Bacon began to

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<sup>139</sup> Hariot, pp.24-25.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p.27.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., pp.25.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p.28.

focus on the reform of natural philosophy that was to take up so much of his later life. His emphasis on first hand observation and practical science in service of the crown was already evident here. Nor was this ‘ethnography’ an entirely new and uniquely English departure. The Jesuit Jose D’Acosta’s *Natural and Moral History* was published in Latin that very same year.<sup>143</sup>

Gone was the hostile barbarian who ate human flesh, and fornicated with men, women or kin without prejudice. It was true that the Virginians worshipped strange idols, and only scrounged out a living, despite living in abundance. They failed to make proper use of the land, they lacked letters, a history, crafts, arts or sciences. But these failings could be overcome with proper education. True, they warred with their neighbours, but they did not resist Europeans. They also possessed a basic social order, and were eager to trade, and quick to learn. The new stereotype was no more realistic than the old cannibal accounts but it was certainly more attractive to potential colonists.

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<sup>143</sup> The English translation appeared significantly later. See José, de, Acosta, *The Naturall and Morall historie of the East and West Indies*, Val: Sims for Edward Blout and William Aspley, London, 1604, STC 94.

### Chapter 3: Polemics of Gluttony

The King is too much under the sway of his 'favourite'.<sup>1</sup> He leads excessive feasting and drinking at Court: 'nor ever saw I a man more enamoured of drinke as both the King and Prince are of redd wyne'.<sup>2</sup> Distracted from affairs of state, he revels in watching blood sports.<sup>3</sup> Surrounded by corrupt courtiers, the King is wastefully profligate.<sup>4</sup> His Courtiers value gold and jewels as much as their greedy King, vying with one another in taking bribes and hoarding riches.<sup>5</sup> Corruption rules the Court and too many 'offices' are sold for profit. Profiteers milk the offices for all they are worth, to the great detriment of the poor, and the ruination of the Kingdom.<sup>6</sup>

This is not a description of James I and his Court. But the parallels are too striking to ignore. The portraits of Jahangir, the Mughal ruler who reigned from 1605 to 1627, and James I, are both based on the reports of disgruntled English Courtiers. William Hawkins and Sir Thomas Roe, who both tried and failed to establish trading privileges on behalf of the English East India Company with the Mughal ruler, brought English critiques of Court culture to bear on the unfamiliar Mughal court. Much of the evidence cited for Jahangir's historical reputation came from Sir Thomas Roe's journal, and Roe, moreover, had also read William Hawkins's earlier reports.<sup>7</sup> Like James, Jahangir followed in the wake of a popular ruler, Akbar, and until recent revisionist accounts, was portrayed as 'a weak ruler'. This example suggests that the discourse about excessive

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Thomas Roe, *The Embassy*, London, 1926, p.270.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.190.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Purchas, *Purchas his pilgrimage. Of Relations of yhe world and the religions observed in all ages and places discovered, from the creation vnto this present in foure parts*, Printed by William Stansby for Henrie Fetherston, London, 1613, STC 20505, Part I, Book 3, Chap 7, p.220.

<sup>4</sup> R. C. Prasad, *Early English Travellers in India*, Delhi; Patna; Varanasi, 1965, p.153.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.220.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.124. Prasad quoting De Laet.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.157.

consumption and corruption had deep cultural roots in England and we should, therefore, pay it some attention.

These attacks were both informed by familiar tropes about 'gluttony'. Never just about eating too much, the vice of gluttony encompassed almost every form of excessive consumption. Not too far removed from excessive eating, excessive drinking was almost conflated with gluttony in medieval theological writings.<sup>8</sup> However, notions of gluttony also included any form of excessive behaviour associated with 'greed' or 'lust' for bodily pleasure. The vice of gluttony often originated in pride and 'effeminate' vanity. It was particularly associated with debauchery and licentiousness which led on to prodigality, dissipation and waste. This hedonistic immersion in the corrupting bodily senses eventually led to the destruction of the body or even murder. Biblical and classical sources informed the features of 'gluttony' which were uniquely suited and sufficiently malleable enough to produce highly effective polemical assaults.

Here we examine one example of generic criticisms of gluttony. The focus of this chapter, therefore, is not on expanding our understanding of the Court of King James, but on examining how closely slurs on the character of the King and his Court reflected notions of gluttony. This example is pertinent because the stereotype of gluttony of the court of King James remains current and, as I will show, turns out to be based on scanty evidence.

The cultural reconstruction of a decadent Jacobean Court culture has primarily built on Jacobean literary sources. However, as Malcolm Smuts has shown, the

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<sup>8</sup> Stephen Mennell, *All manners of food: eating and taste in England and France from the Middle ages to the present*, Oxford, 1985, p.29.

classically educated generation emerging from the universities and Inns of Court from the 1580s wrote literary works that reflected their cyclical understandings of history, reinforcing the notion that wealth inevitably led to excessive consumption, corruption and decline.<sup>9</sup>

Hence comes that wild, and vast expense  
That hath enforced Rome's virtue thence  
Which simple poverty first made:  
And now ambition doth invade  
Her state, with eating avarice,  
Riot and every other vice.  
Decrees are bought and laws sold  
Honours and offices for gold...<sup>10</sup>

It might seem that Ben Jonson's critique of Rome in his *Catiline* was a veiled critique of the Jacobean regime. This is because it is all too easy to fall into the trap of accepting the truth of a decadent Jacobean Court culture, which in turn stands apart from a more chivalrous and virtuous Elizabethan Court. Jonson's use of the classical imagery of decadence and decline very likely reflected his education and his particular fascination with classical and medieval literature, which we know he regularly borrowed from Robert Cotton's extensive library.<sup>11</sup> 'Corruption' was, moreover, a perfectly acceptable and popular theme for plays and masques as long as no specific people or policies were named.<sup>12</sup> Nor is it surprising that Jonson, a man of nearly twenty stone, perhaps more than just a little obsessed with food, would habitually conjure up a cornucopia of food

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<sup>9</sup> Malcolm Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England*, Philadelphia, PA, 1987, p.76.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid; Ben Jonson, William Gifford, *The Alchemist, Catiline and Bartholomew Fair: The Works of Ben Jonson, Part 4*, London, 2004, [first published 1816], p.224.

<sup>11</sup> Kevin Sharp, *Sir Robert Cotton, 1586-1631: History and Politics in Early Modern England*, Oxford, 1979, p.76.

<sup>12</sup> Smuts, pp.80-81.

and feasting in his artist creations.<sup>13</sup> Jonson did not offer up a true depiction of the excessive consumption and corruption at the Jacobean Court. Instead his work reflected a long-standing entrenched European cultural motif.

In the main historians have been content to take the ‘dissipation of the Court’ as a given, dredging up familiar quotes from those who had an axe to grind with the Jacobean regime. The most frequently cited criticisms of James’ Court came from *The Court and Character of King James* attributed to Anthony Weldon, a critic of the Stuarts and supporter of the parliamentary cause during the Civil War.<sup>14</sup> He inherited both his uncle’s and father’s offices, in 1604 becoming Clerk of the Kitchen, and Clerk of the Greencloth in 1609. His father had been knighted in 1603. As reward for accompanying James on progress in Scotland, Weldon was knighted on May 11, 1611. Continuing to do well, he was granted the ownership of Rochester Castel in 1613. We can-not be sure, but he was possibly a victim of Lionel Cranfield’s reforms, but still maintained his position in the Royal household until October 1623. Once the anti-Jacobean tract, *The Court and Character of King James* was publicly attributed to him, Weldon was with hindsight accused of writing a bigoted portrait entitled ‘A Description of the People and Country of Scotland’ published in the Netherlands in 1626. Royalist writers such as William Sanderson sought to discredit Weldon as a disgruntled Courtier. However, whether or not Weldon wrote either of these works, he did join the Parliamentary cause during the Civil War.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Bruce Thomas Boehrer, ‘Renaissance Overeating: The Sad Case of Ben Jonson’, *PMLA*, Vol.105, No.5, October 1990, p.1071.

<sup>14</sup> Anthony Weldon, *The Court and Character of King James I*, London, 1650.

<sup>15</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ‘Sir Anthony Weldon’ (bap.1583, d.1648).



Francis Osborne was master of the horse for the third Earl of Pembroke, William Herbert, a popular Protestant at Court. It seems fairly clear that Osborne presented the views of his patron in his *Traditional Memoirs of Queen Elizabeth and King James I* (1658).<sup>16</sup> Pembroke had enjoyed the King's favour and had a particularly impressive pedigree. His uncle, Sir Phillip Sidney had died a hero, supporting the Dutch War of Independence fighting off the Spaniards. Initially, Pembroke did well under James, joining the Privy Council in 1611, but as a strong Protestant his main political and religious rival was the Catholic Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton, who labelled him a 'Welsh juggler'. Pembroke hated the Scots and was particularly hostile towards Carr whom he saw as usurping his own rightful rewards. During the power vacuum at Court on the death of Cecil and Northampton, Pembroke joined Archbishop Abbot in promoting a new favourite, George Villiers, but before long Pembroke had lost ground to Villiers who was then ennobled as Buckingham. Betrayed by Archbishop Abbot, Pembroke formed a reluctant truce with Buckingham. He undoubtedly felt he had much to be disgruntled about.<sup>17</sup>

Arthur Wilson, author of *The history of Great Britain, being the life and reign of King James I* (1653), another zealous Protestant and gentleman in waiting to the third Earl of Essex, Robert Devereaux, went to the Palatinate with Essex in support of the elector Frederick in 1620.<sup>18</sup> Later he joined the service of the Earl of Warwick, another

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<sup>16</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Francis Osborne, (1593-1659); Francis Osborne, *Traditional Memoirs of the Reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James I*, London, 1658.

<sup>17</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 'William Herbert', third earl of Pembroke, (1580-1630).

<sup>18</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Arthur Wilson, (bap.1595, d. 1652); Arthur Wilson, *The History of Great Britain, being the life and reign of King James I*, London, 1653.

proponent of the 'plain religion'. Wilson, as one of the leaders of the parliamentary cause during Civil War, focused on the Court as a source of corruption which impaired the judgement of the King in his history. He did not reveal his sources, and instead drew on Tactius in his preface as the model for the judicious censure of rulers manipulated by favourites and factions. His main charge against James was that he was not harsh enough with Catholics. James thus allowed Arminianism (which he saw as a distortion of Protestant values that included some elements of the old religion) to gain a foot-hold.

Their histories informed the stereotype of James as an uncouth, unwashed, physically unattractive, spendthrift Scotsman, who showered his favourites with privileges and probably slept with them as well. In their eyes he overindulged in hunting, neglecting his duties as ruler, and rewarded religious moderates (be they Catholic or Protestant) impeding further religious reformation and avoided war at all costs. James refrained from eating too much, but drank like a glutton. As 'head' of the body of England he demonstrably lacked control of his 'stomach'. His backbiting double-dealing Courtiers, most notably the 'upstarts', who also drank and ate to excess, frittered away their time in gambling and dissipation. Driven by greed, their corrupt practices threatened to ruin the kingdom and undermine the values of the common weal.

James' prodigality was cited as the main source of the realm's problems. James and his advisors made cutbacks, sold offices, titles and monopolies to fill the coffers, but these did little to improve matters. Apart from the problems of population growth, inflation, the influx of gentry to London, and the increasing numbers of urban poor, the realm lacked efficient taxation and banking systems and was constantly in debt. The idea

that the state could run on a deficit was not a realistic possibility during the period. Indeed many of these problems were the same ones faced by Elizabeth in 1590s when she also became less popular. As John Cramsie argues, when the issue of finance is looked at alongside the politics of governance, the case for James' financial mismanagement is not so straightforward.<sup>19</sup>

Until recent decades historians have emphasised the profligate corrupt Jacobean government because it provided a suitable long-term explanation for the problems of Caroline government and the inevitability of civil war. We have seen strong commonalities among the motives of the early historians, Weldon, Osborne, and Wilson, who have long been discredited as the source of 'the bad old James'. Recently James has been widely acknowledged as a better ruler, but his reputation for profligacy remains the sticking point, and therefore, the purported 'gluttony' of the court of King James has not been seriously questioned. No one seems to have considered that 'gluttony' was an exceedingly effective polemical devise.

## I

When James I came to the throne in 1603 his seedy reputation preceded him. A stereotype of James built up over the course of his reign, but was already evident before he became King of England, in the reports of M. de Fontenay, Envoy of Mary Stuart. James' manner of 'speaking and eating', his dress, his excessive love of hunting, and his 'crude and uncivil' manners toward women all betrayed a 'lack of proper instruction'.

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<sup>19</sup> John Cramsie, *Kingship and Crown Finance under James VI and I, 1603-1625*, Suffolk, New York, 2002.

His body was 'feeble'. James was spendthrift who did 'not estimate correctly his poverty'. And his 'love for his favourites', 'indiscreet and wilful', took 'no account of the wishes of his people'. He was self-indulgent, 'too lazy and indifferent about affairs, too given to pleasure, allowing all business to be conducted by others'. If these behaviours were not corrected, de Fontenay feared, they would, 'become habitual.'<sup>20</sup>

Suspiciously, the twenty odd years of James' kingship added little new material to this early portrait. Sir Anthony Weldon's *Court and Character of King James*, published in 1650, exaggerated the existing portrait.<sup>21</sup> 'The King's character is much easier to take than his Picture', he claimed, offering up a King who rolled his eyes, slobbered and dribbled into his food and drink, his tongue too big for his mouth.<sup>22</sup> His weak legs ensured that his walk was clumsy and circular; his dissoluteness complete as he habitually walked, 'fiddling about with his cod-piece'.<sup>23</sup>

The Aristotelian idea that a man's moral character could be judged from his physical appearance had a strong hold on early modern Europeans.<sup>24</sup> Virtue was reflected in a well-proportioned, straight-limbed and healthy body which was also associated with beauty and intelligence. This can be seen in the contrasts between accounts of James I and his son Henry, Prince of Wales. There may well have been some truth in the physical description of James. His difficulty with eating, drinking and his slurring of words, the tendency to walk crookedly and perhaps lean on his favourites is explained by Beasley's

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<sup>20</sup> D. H. Wilson, *King James VI and I*, London, 1956, p53. Wilson quoting M. de Fontenay Envoy of Mary Stuart sent this report on the king to Mary's secretary 15, August 1584.

<sup>21</sup> Sir Anthony Weldon, *The court and character of King James*, 1650.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.55.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Pagden, p.45.

hypothesis that James suffered from cerebral palsy.<sup>25</sup> If this was the case, this explains why James enjoyed horse riding so much, because it would have taken the weight off his legs.

According to Weldon, James was no great glutton for food. Usually very 'temperate in his exercises and in his dyet', it was only in old age at 'Buckingham's jovial suppers' that James would sometimes find himself 'overtaken' by the drink, then wake up full of remorse and 'tears'. James had three main character flaws. He 'spent much' being 'very liberall' with others money, and making 'much use of his subjects purse'.<sup>26</sup> However, his 'raising' of favourites 'was the worst', 'for he was ever abused in all Negotiation'.<sup>27</sup> Nor did James show the true 'martial' spirit of a King, 'preferring to procure peace with dishonour' than spend '10000*li.* on an army that would have forced peace with honour'.<sup>28</sup> Weldon acknowledged James' learning and wit, but characterised him as the 'wisest fool in Christendome' 'wise in small things, but a foole in weighty affaires'.<sup>29</sup> Weldon's account had an immense posthumous influence and is still the widely accepted caricature of James, but Weldon's interpretation was tainted by his bigotry towards the Scots and his loss of position at Court.<sup>30</sup>

The contemporary Venetian ambassador Piero Contarini offered a more favourable assessment of James' character in 1618. James had 'a good and healthy complexion' for someone of 52, even if he was 'a little heavy'. James had 'very worthy

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<sup>25</sup> A. W. Beasley, 'Disability of King James VI & I', *Seventeenth Century*, Vol.10, 1995, p.160.

<sup>26</sup> Weldon, p.57.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 'Sir Anthony Weldon' (bap.1583, d.1648).

qualities'. He insisted that justice 'prevail throughout his dominions', and refused to 'allow favours and privileges to stand in its way'. Contarini admired the 'greatness of his noble soul', 'his joyful, free and sincere nature' and his great knowledge and love of letters. Contarini lauded James' generosity. Significantly his only criticism of James probably says more about his own frustrations achieving an audience with the King, than James' character. He frowned on James' avoidance of 'the people', and his failure to hear private petitions. But James' greatest flaw, according to Contarini, was his obsession with hunting, which allowed him to escape 'as far away as possible from serious business'.<sup>31</sup>

Most of the accusations of gluttony were directed at the wider Court rather than James. It was, perhaps, less dangerous to critique the Court rather than the King directly, and the behaviour at Court and the choice of courtiers were, of course, thought to reflect on the character of the King himself.

English attacks naturally focused on James' Scottish courtiers. Francis Osborne characterised the Scottish courtiers as 'horsleeches' hanging off him 'till they could get no more'.<sup>32</sup> One amongst them 'the Earle of Carlisle [James Hay, his first favourite in Scotland]...bought in the vanity of ante-suppers, not heard of in our forefathers time, and ...unpracticed by the most luxurious tyrants'.<sup>33</sup> These feasts served merely as a wasteful display of excess. The guests entered to a spectacle of 'dishes, as high as a tall man could well reach, filled with the choicest and dearest viands sea or land could afford.' Once seen it 'was in a manner throwne away, and fresh set on to the same height, having only

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<sup>31</sup> CSP Venice Vol. 15, 1618, p.420.

<sup>32</sup> Francis Osborne, 'Traditionall Memoyres on the Raign of the King James the First', 1658, reproduced in Sir Walter Scott, ed, *Secret History of the Court of King James the First*, Vol.1, 1811, p.270.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp.270-271.

this advantage of the other, that it was hot.’<sup>34</sup> And all this before the huge banquet had even begun. Osbourne claimed that some of the King’s attendants were great gluttons. One ‘monster in excesse’ ate an entire pie, ‘reckoned to my lord at ten pounds’, being composed of amber-greece, magisteriall of perle, musk, &c.’<sup>35</sup> This greediness spread to the rest of the court, leading to habitual pilfering and great expense.<sup>36</sup> Osborne’s account was reproduced in Sir Walter Scott’s *Secret History of the Court of King James the First* (1811) contributing to the myth-making.

More often charges of gluttony centred on the excessive drinking and debauchery at Court. Courtier and writer Sir John Harington’s gossip letter to Secretary Barlow detailed the festivities accompanying the visit of the Danish King to the English court in 1606. Harington reported that he was ‘overwhelmed with carousal and sport of all kinds.’ The women, the wine, the feasts were ‘magnificent’. James and the Dane got on famously and ‘did most lovingly embrace each other at table’. Such was the Dane’s influence that even the more moderate nobles, who seldom drank, followed ‘the fashion’ and wallowed ‘in beastly delights’. The ladies joined in, rolling about ‘in intoxication’.<sup>37</sup> Festivities culminated in a great banquet followed by a masque, ‘a representation of Solomon his Temple and the coming of the Queen of Sheba’, exceeding all that had gone before.<sup>38</sup> The Lady who played the Queen fell in the Danish Kings’ lap, vomiting up the great feast of

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.271.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p.272.

<sup>37</sup> ‘Letter from Sir John Harington to Mr. Secretary Barlow, [from London,] 1606.’ in Sir John Harington, *Nugae Antiquae: being a miscellaneous collection of original papers*, (ed. Henry Harrington, and illustrative notes, Thomas Park), Vol. 1, London, 1804, p.349.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp.349-350.

‘wine, cream, jelly...and other good matters’ she had eaten all over him.<sup>39</sup> The other players followed in: ‘Hope and Faith’ were ‘both sick and spewing in the lower hall’, while ‘Victory’ did not ‘triumph long’, having to be led away to sleep it off in the ‘anti-chamber’.<sup>40</sup> All these ‘strange pageantries’ recalled to Harington ‘what passed of this sort in our Queens days’, but never did he see ‘such lack of good order, discretion, and sobriety’.<sup>41</sup> Ending on a moralising note, it is significant that Harington seems to suggest that there were significant parallels between the behaviours at the two Courts, and that this particular banquet was an exception to the rule.

The masque was the central metaphor for excess. Busino wrote on 16 January 1618 that ‘His Excellency was invited to see a representation and masque, which had been prepared with extraordinary pains’, the chief performer being the King’s own son and heir, the prince of Wales, [Charles] now seventeen years old, an agile youth, handsome and very graceful.<sup>42</sup> But it was only when the masque was over, and the King had departed, that the real debauchery began. The true colours of the Court were shown as the Courtiers ‘pounced upon the table like so many harpies’. The ‘repast was served upon glass plates or dishes and at the first assault they upset the table and the crash of glass platters reminded me precisely of a severe hailstorm at Midsummer smashing the window glass. The story ended at half past two and half disgusted we returned home.’<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p.350.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p.351.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p.352.

<sup>42</sup> CSP Venice Vol. 15, 1618, p.111.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p.113.



## II

These attacks on James and his courtiers reflected the influence of biblical texts. The close association between gluttony, wealth and corruption, the link between gluttony and associated vices, particularly drunkenness, and finally the problem of indulging in the bodily appetites, rather than pursuing more spiritual aims, all reference particular biblical passages.

The Bible instructed believers not to emulate the eating habits of the wealthy. 'When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee / And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat.' (Proverbs 23: 1-3) 'Fatness' was highlighted as a sign of the corrupting influence of wealth. 'Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than the heart could wish.' 'They are corrupt.' (Psalm 73:7-8) 'They are enclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly.' (Psalms 17:10).

The Bible made clear associations between gluttony and other vices. Ezekiel 16:49 described 'Sodom and her daughters': gluttony, pride, idleness and a lack of charity towards others. 'Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy'. Commonly references to gluttony and drunkenness appeared together. For example, Proverbs 23: 20-21 was frequently quoted by seventeenth-century writers. 'Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall

clothe a man with rags.’ The idea was that bad habits and bad company led one away from proper work which could only end in poverty.

The most frequently cited biblical passage about gluttony reminded readers that the lowly bodily appetites always impeded the higher spiritual development. ‘For their end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.’ (Philippians 3:19.) The passage also emphasized that it was ‘the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ’ who ‘shall change our vile body’ (Philippians 3: 20-21).

While it is clear that the Bible provided an important cultural source for understanding the criticisms made against James and his court, classical allusions also provided an important political sub-text. It is less easy to establish which particular classical authors held most sway. In part this is because ‘translations’ of the period are not simply transcriptions from Greek and Roman to Latin or English, but new works directed to the concerns of their own time and place. For example, a 1598 copy of *Aristotle’s politiques or Discourses of Gouvernement* that belonged to John Dee, is a more an encyclopedia of ideas formed around an Aristotelian core.<sup>44</sup> In this example, Aristotle’s ideas are offered, but then compared and contrasted with excerpts from Plato, Romans philosophers, historians and ancient medical practitioners. Relevant biblical commentary was included, and in turn, all these ideas were further annotated with later historical examples and examples from the author’s own experience. One has to dig deep to find the ideas contained in a modern translation of Aristotle. Because this eclectic practice was far from uncommon, we must exercise caution when discussing the

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<sup>44</sup> Loys le Roy, *Aristotles’ politiques or Discourses of Gouvernement...By Loys le Roy, called Regis. Translated out of French to English*, printed by Adam Islip, London, 1598, STC 760.

influence of particular Western philosophical thinkers on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English thought.

According to Christopher Berry, Aristotelian and Platonic thought was pivotal to long-standing political critiques of 'luxury' consumption. For these Greek thinkers 'luxury', defined as additional to the basic material needs of food, shelter and clothing, was 'effeminate' and 'corrupting'.<sup>45</sup> But Berry's goal is to explain modern Western consumer society by tracing how 'luxury' became decoupled from politics, removing proscriptions against excessive consumption. Applying his theory to late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century English thought suggests some important modifications. English texts seldom used the word 'luxury' to refer to the moral, social and political ills of their society, preferring the biblical term 'gluttony', suggesting the continuing importance of Christian thought in political critiques of excessive consumption. Moreover, contemporary discussions about gluttony most frequently cited the ideas of the Roman philosophers, particularly Cicero. English translations of Aristotle and Plato only began to appear in the late sixteenth century, whereas editions of Cicero and Seneca appeared in English from the 1530s. New translations throughout the Jacobean period suggest their popular dispersal.

The central features of Stoic thought, that overcoming or restraining bodily desire was necessary to lead the 'good life', was a common place of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts. For Seneca man should exist in 'well-being' not luxury, and nature only

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<sup>45</sup> Christopher Berry, *The idea of Luxury: a conceptual and historical investigation*, Cambridge, 1994, pp.7,19-20.

requires that the ‘belly be filled not flattered’.<sup>46</sup> Cicero maintained that ‘the good life’ was a ‘simple life’ characterized by frugality and control over the appetite.<sup>47</sup> Seneca noted that wherever prosperity spread, its citizens began by paying closer attention to their attire, then used more furniture and built larger houses, before finally ‘pleasure’ moved to the table’.<sup>48</sup> Reform, the Romans thought, should come through self-discipline, but authorities also had a duty to oversee the personal conduct of citizens.<sup>49</sup> Roman historians, including Livy and Tacitus, portrayed indulgence in the bodily senses as having corrupted the once virtuous republic.<sup>50</sup> Tacitus even explained how the Roman Empire had used luxury as a tactic of conquest, first to undermine, and then to subdue, the ‘warrior’ spirit of the barbarous Britons. Pliny explained that luxurious living ‘softened’ and ‘emasculated’ the martial man.<sup>51</sup> Luxury was thereby associated with corruption of the political and masculine body.

These Stoic ideas about ‘luxury’ were co-opted by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century authors to express primarily Christian messages about ‘gluttony’. Therefore we should not overemphasize the importance of Stoic thought during the period, which also suggests the importance of not exaggerating the significance of classical allusions in literary works of the Jacobean period. Biblical interpretations of gluttony dominate sixteenth-century works and these messages change little in early seventeenth century texts.

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<sup>46</sup> Berry, p.74.

<sup>47</sup> Cicero, *Tusc Disp*:5:35, 3:8.

<sup>48</sup> Seneca, *Epistle*, 114.

<sup>49</sup> Berry, p.73

<sup>50</sup> Livy, *History of Rome*, Preface; Tacitus *History*, 2:69, p.516.

<sup>51</sup> Pliny, *History*, 12:41.

### III

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of Thomas Aquinas' attempt to define and clarify the nature of the 'sin' of gluttony in his 'treatise on temperance and fortitude' in *Summa Theologica*. Produced in the last quarter of the twelfth century it built on the observations of Augustine of Hippo (354-430) and Pope Gregory I (540-604). Gregory's close analysis of gluttony isolated five ways in which the vice tempts us. 'Sometime it forestalls the hour of need; sometime it seeks costly meats; sometimes it requires the food to be daintily cooked; sometimes it exceeds the measure of refreshment by taking too much; sometimes we sin by the very heat of immoderate appetite.'<sup>52</sup> Gluttony was eating too much, too hastily, too sumptuously, too greedily, or even too daintily. But gluttony was far more than that.

Gluttony overturned the proper relationship between food and labour. 'All the labor of man is for his mouth', but the glutton looks to 'the pleasures of food rather than the food itself'.<sup>53</sup> Gluttony turned 'man away from his true end' leading him to 'disobey God's commandments, in order to obtain those pleasures': 'When the belly is distended by gluttony, the virtues of the soul are destroyed by lust.'<sup>54</sup> Gluttony was a most dangerous sin, because one could not simply avoid eating, one had to eat to live. Aquinas' notion of gluttony offered no firm distinguishing line between gluttony in food or drink, thereby conflating gluttony and drunkenness. His commentary also maintained the strong biblical association with other fleshly sins such as lust and idleness.

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<sup>52</sup> St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, (trans.) Fathers of the English Dominican Republic, 1947 ed, 'Treatise on temperance and fortitude', p.5.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.7.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p.3.

In distinct contrast, the other most important medieval cultural reference to gluttony was the thirteenth-century Middle English poem *The Land of Cokayne*.<sup>55</sup> Also popular in France and the Low Countries, it probably emerged with the recreational tradition of monks and inferior clergy writing humorous parodies on feast days such as the Feast of Fools. The poem rests on an inversion of all desirable Christian traits, and is dominated by an abundance of food and drink attained ‘Without care, anxiety, and labor’. The abbey itself was built of food: the walls made of pies, the shingles of cakes, and the ‘pegs are fat sausages’. If that were not enough, geese fly about ready to eat, crying ‘Geese, all hot, all hot’. No one chastises you for drinking too much here, ‘just take plenty’ and enjoy yourself. Even prayers take on a bodily form: the monks ‘teach the nuns a prayer with “raised leg” up and down’. All the bodily senses are pleased here. But to reach Cokayne, one must undertake a great penance, serving ‘Seven years in swine’s dung’.

This parody rested on the fulfillment of all the sensual appetites. All proper order is inverted, and all that is ‘high is made low’.<sup>56</sup> It is a ‘world turned upside down’. Gluttony, drunkenness, and licentiousness are celebrated. The stomach rules instead of the head. The fictional utopia of Cokayne held broad-based appeal in a society where most lived on a bare sufficiency of food and engaged in hard physical labour. The popularity of the poem, however, was not diametrically opposed to the high religious tradition. For as Herman Pleij observes, *The land of Cokayne* both commented on and

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<sup>55</sup> <http://www.unc.edu/~jwittig/51/cokayne.htm> Land of Cokayne [accessed 9/12].

<sup>56</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, (trans.), Helene Iswolsky, Massachusetts, 1968, pp.19-21.

supported the religious tradition by allowing a single day of inversion.<sup>57</sup> This kind of humor relied on an inversion of Christ's body which served as a central symbol of the social order.

For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? ... God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked. That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.<sup>58</sup>

Both vision of the individual and social body, each member had a proper, hierarchically dictated, role and should act in accord with the other members for the proper functioning of the entire body. The notion that the 'hands and feet' should act as servants to 'the head' symbolised the body politic. But what if, instead of a rebellion of the hands and feet, the King was not thought to have a control of his stomach?

Biblical interpretations of gluttony also dominated sixteenth-century works about the wonders of nature. The English translation of Pierre Boaistuau's *Certaines secretes wonders of nature* (1569) depicted the exceedingly fat Denis Heracleot as a 'wonder' to be counted alongside monstrous births and cannibals (Figure 11). It is the moral meaning of his indulgence in bodily desires that links Heracleot to other materials in the book. These tales of monsters and other 'oddities' were parables about sin, and God's punishment of sin manifested in a physical form. We are told that Heracleot:

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<sup>57</sup> Herman Pleij, *Dreaming of Cockaigne*, (trans) Dianne Webb, New York, 2001, p.421.

<sup>58</sup> King James Bible. 1 Corinthians 12: 14-27.

gave himself so over to the desire of meat and drink, and other fleshy delights, that he became so monstrous huge and fat and by continually keeping in close house, he became so gross and swelled thereon all parts of his body, that he was forced to apply continually to certain parts of his body both day and night a great quantitie of horsleaches to draw the humor that feed hys fatness: for otherwyse he hadde died.<sup>59</sup>

Hercleot perpetuated the evils of the ancient Greek and Roman gluttons. This wealthy man, as indicated by his elaborate clothing, brought himself to this sorry state by indulging himself rather than sharing his resources. Heracleot was so ashamed, we are told, that he ‘durst not shew himself to the people, for fear of contempt’. This was a Protestant comment on the problem of self interest as opposed to ideals of the shared common weal. Note that Osbourne used the image of horse-leeches as a metaphor for James’ Scottish courtiers.

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<sup>59</sup> Pierre Boaistuau, *Certaine secrete wonders of nature*, London, 1569, STC 3164.5.



## secretes in Nature.



The figure and portraict of Denis Heracleot, who became so grosse, that he was constrained to haue his blood drawn from him by horseleeches, as appeareth further in the lease 82. Galene reporteth the like historie of Nicomachus Smyrneus, who was so grosse and monstrous that he could not remoue.

## secretes in Nature.

82

of Rome, thence to him at last into Tyber, where his body was a prey to fishes, whereof his throat (whilest he liued) had murdered an infinite number. The Emperour Iouian and Septimus Seuerus, (as Baptista Ignatius witnesseth) died of the disease of drunkenness. There be also other kinds of banquetters, which albeit haue not died upon any surfeite of eating or drinking, yet they became so monstrous fat, that they were little better in effect, amongst whom the Emperour Maximyn, may challenge first place, as their chief patriarch, whome they affirme to haue such store of grease & kitchenstuffe within his paunch, that the breath that came from hym, seemed of force to turne aboute a windmill, hauing continually two men to beare by his belly, his hands, and other members by succession of time, being so greafe, and charged with fatnesse, that his wines & ale scarcely serued his syngers for kyngs, as the histories affirme. In lyke maner Denys Heracleot gaue hym selfe so ouer to the desire of meate and drinke, and other fleshy delites, that he became so monstrous huge and fat, that he durst not shewe himselfe to the people, for feare of contempt. By which meanes and continuall keeping in his close house, he became so grosse and swelled thow all the parts of his body, that he was forced to apply continually to certaine partes of his body bothe day and night, a great quantitie of horseleeches to drawe the humour that fedde his fatnesse: for otherwise he hadde died, as may appeare in this portraict adioynynge.

*I Certaine wonderfull discourses worthy of memorie, touching Visions, Figures and illusions appearing as well in the day as in the night, and sleeping as waking.*

CHAP. XXV.

340

Figure 11. 'Glutton with horseleeches' in Pierre Boaistuau, *Certaine Secrete Wonders of Nature*, London, 1569, STC 3164.5

Like Aquinas's reading of gluttony, sixteenth-century religious commentary often emphasised drunkenness as the worst form of gluttony. Stephen Batman's *A Christall glasse of Christian reformation* (1569) is organised around the seven sins of covetousness, wrath, lechery, gluttony, sloth, pride and envy. Unusually for an English book of the period it is copiously illustrated, probably inspired by European emblem books. Batman's work is one of the clearest examples of the sixteenth-century uses of classical imagery to express a primarily Christian message.

The female personification of the disease gout, 'Podagra' leads two dupes along by ropes attached to rings through their noses. (Figure 12) Forsaking 'true labour which is most fitte', these men are literally led by their noses, enslaved to their bodily senses, and enslaved to wine. The wreathes that encircle their heads, the grapes they bear in their hands, the ale tankard, and the tiny wine barrel that encircles the lower leg of the first naked figure all emphasise the association with Bacchus. It is notable that Podagra the Greek goddess who personified gout, was born of Dionysus (Bacchus) the god of wine, and the goddess Aphrodite (Venus) the goddess of love. For a sixteenth-century audience, these familiar classical references suggested that disease was a product of lust and gluttony. Contemporary dietaries also explained Gout as a surfeit of food, sex and strong drink. From antiquity gout was associated with the nobility and the intemperate lifestyle that only the wealthy could afford. William Bulleyn's *A newe booke entituled the government of healthe* (1558) asked 'how many noble men and worshipful personage

hath it [gout] slain in this realme’?<sup>60</sup> James was rumoured to have the gout, but he emphatically denied it.

Like other Protestant texts and imagery during the Reformation, Batman drew on the stereotype of the gluttony of the Roman Church. The Bacchus figure serves wine to a priest and a nun feeding the ‘insatiable desire’ that marked the corruption of the Roman Church. (Figure 13) A torn book, signifying their ignorance of biblical truth, lies at the priest’s feet, while the nun’s rosary beads represent hypocrisy.<sup>61</sup> Martin Luther’s attacks on the corruption of the Roman Church during the early decades of the sixteenth century saw the ‘gluttonous priest’ become a central Protestant symbol of the ‘corruption’ of the Roman Church. The association between gluttony, corruption and Catholicism provided an important cultural reference for later comments on the gluttony of the Court of King James.

The dissolute men depicted drinking in a tavern makes no reference to Bacchus. Instead it appears that Batman illustrated the biblical tenet that, ‘Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly’. (Philippians 3:19). Batman emphasises that gluttonous drinking leads on to violence and even murder. (Figure 14) Like Aquinas’s reading, man’s downfall begins in lust. Gluttonous drunkenness, idleness, keeping bad company with harlots and ‘inordinate livers’, finally ends in the destruction of the body.<sup>62</sup>

Batman’s commentary on gluttony was concerned with the social effects of excessive drinking, which he in turn associated with lust, corruption and murder. He did not explicitly single out a particular order of society for attack. It is likely that Podagra

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<sup>60</sup> Albala, p.35.

<sup>61</sup> Batman, Sig. Gii.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., Sig. Ciii v.

(Figure 12) is a direct comment on the gentry considering that gout is 'their disease'. From their clothing and the fact that they possess swords, we can surmise that the tavern drinkers (Figure 14) also represented members of the elite.

## Of Gluttony.

¶ When greedy gluttony seeketh his ease, forsaking true labour which is most fitte:  
Then followeth Podagra with her disease, to utter ruine she doth them knitte.



### ¶ The signification.

¶ The woman is *Podagra*: the naked man with the barrell on his legge is *Prodigus*: the other with the grapes in his hand is *rauin*: the cordes are force to destruction: and are led by *Podagra*, the gowte.

what

Figure 12. 'Gluttony': the drunk in Stephen Batman, *A Christall glasse of Christian Reformation*, London, 1569, STC 1581.

## Of Gluttony.

{ When prelates to wyne doth geue their delight,  
To vanquish the truth which shines so cleare:  
Then followeth death with all hys might,  
Them to present, and payes their hyre.



### The signification.

**T**He Priest signifieth *Newer*, neyther hoate nor colde: the man in the barrell vnſatiabſe deſire: the bookes torne vnwrittē verities: the Nunne light credence in beleuing the ſame.

*J. J.*

*How*

Figure 13. 'Gluttony: the priest' in Stephen Batman, *A Christall glasse of Christian Reformation*, London, 1569, STC 1581.

## Of Gluttonie.

Where murder is suffered not scene to in time,  
There mischief encreaseth and bringeth to woe:  
All such as to Bacchus doth honour diuine,  
Shall soone bee bereft their goods to fergoe.



### The signification.

These which are fightyng, signifieth incontinence : he which is slaine hazarde : and death : and the one which goeth out with hys sword in hys hand *audax*, one past grace, or a murtherer.

C.iii.

In

Figure 14. 'Gluttony: the murders' in Stephen Batman, *A Christall Glasse of Christian Reformation*, London, 1569, STC 1581.

Batman's commentary on the sin of covetousness reveals more about why the wealthy, never praised in the Bible, bore the brunt of attacks. This more selective social criticism highlighted the effect of greed on the social body of the common weal. The wealthy usurer is lead by 'deceit' (Figure 15). Like Podagra's victims (Figure 12) his elephant is led by the nose. Led down the wrong path by desire, his body is loaded down with money bags and worldly goods that represent the highest ideals of the usurer. Holding a banner that depicts a wolf devouring a lamb he displays the evidence of his inner nature. Like a 'beast', the wealthy usurer preys on the weak to sate his greed.

The 'Devil's net' as a trap for the 'worldly' made a more direct comment on the greed associated with particular members of the social order. (Figure 16) Three groups are at particular risk: the greedy nobility unsatisfied with their lot, the social climbing yeoman and wrongheaded Popish spiritualists. The Courtier was singled out as a threat to the social order because: 'There can be no greater mischief in a comúnwealth then unsatiable or dissembling iustice.' 'the couetous dissembler, will not be openly seene to receave anye rewarde: but with ypocriticall gloses, he will be sure, eyther eby countenance, or by some fayned friendship to bring his deceauable purpose to passé, unto such and of such there is no trauaile for him which meaneth truth, or for the poore, no peny'.<sup>63</sup> He only pretends to friendship but is governed by self-interest, taking bribes and caring for noone else's well being but his own.

Batman's commentary on gluttony emphasized the negative social effects of excessive drinking. His commentary on covetousness emphasized the negative impact of

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., Sig. Biii v.



greed on the social order. But both commentaries suggested these were vices were, at least in some measure, associated with wealthier members of the community.

## Of Couetousnes.

Themistocles. { It is better to haue men, hauing lacke of money,  
Then money hauing lacke of men.



### The signification.

**T**He Eliphant signifieth, force or strength: the mā on hys backe vsu-  
ry: the Flag or banner in hys hand, signifieth illusion, or vaine ho-  
ped time: the Wolfe deuouring the lambe, signifieth all such gredy op-  
pressours as do oppresse the poore and indigent: the cofer vnder hys  
arme Mammon: the purse destruction: and he which leadech the Eli-  
phant, is Nigardship: and the rope the which he is drawn withall, is  
deceate. Whē gredy death doth force assaile, and Nigardship begin to  
flie: the pitie shall hys place possesse, & laud the name of God most hie.

¶

Figure 15. 'Covetousness: the usurer' in Stephen Batman, *A Christall Glasse of Christian Reformation*, London, 1569, STC 1581.

## Of Couetousnes.

Aristippus. { Get such riches that when the net is broken,  
They may escape with thee.



### The signification.

**T**Hese three on horsebacke signifieth the states of me worldly minded : as Makehifte, Flattery, and Desire to haue . The foremost sheweth those persons of gentilitie that are not contented with sufficiencie, and those are Makehiftes : the second sheweth the Popish spirituality, those are Flattery: the third the yeomandry or francklin, who seeketh by the recovery of spirituall promotion from the dunghill to a gentleman, those are Desire to haue : the deuill is destruction : the net vnfatiable desire: and all these ride to the deuill their soueraigne for spirituall promotion.

C.j.      Like

Figure 16. 'Covetousness: the devil's net' in Stephen Batman, *A Christall glasse of Christian Reformation*, London, 1569, STC 1581.

By contrast, the Protestant minister William Harrison *seemed* to depict a reasonably well ordered, socially harmonious society where no one was excessively greedy in his *Description of England* published in *Holinshed's Chronicles* (1577, 1587).<sup>64</sup> The jovial and humorous section 'on the food and diet of the English' let the nobility off lightly. 'In the number of the dishes and change of meat, the nobility of England (whose cooks are for the most part musical headed Frenchmen or strangers) do most exceed, sith there is no day in manner that passeth over their heads wherein they have not only beef, mutton, veal, lamb, kid, pork, cony, capon, pig, or so many of these as the season provideth'.<sup>65</sup> However, it is clear these excesses are to some extent foreign imports. The French, for example, were known to favour elaborate 'made dishes' with lots of sauces, rather than plain roasts. None the less these excesses were not as bad as they first appeared. The guests seldom ate too much, and in many cases dined out of social obligation. Moreover the excess of food at the table was necessary because the nobility 'retain great numbers of servants' and therefore it was 'expedient for them to be somewhat plentiful in this regard'.<sup>66</sup>

Even the merchants, Harrison *seems* to suggest, were not as gluttonous as their great table spreads implied. It is true that when the merchants 'make their ordinary or voluntary feasts', 'it is a world to see what great provision is made of all manner of delicate meats from every quarter of the country'.<sup>67</sup> Luxurious items such as the sugar confections, in the form of 'representations of sundry flowers', and a great number of

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<sup>64</sup> William Harrison, *The Description of England: the classic account of Tudor Social life*, (ed.) Georges Edelen, Washington, D.C; New York, 1994.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p.127.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p.129.

‘suckets’, ‘marmalades’, leave the impression of excess. However, Harrison argues, usually gentlemen and merchants confined themselves to only one, two, or three dishes at the most, when they had no strangers accompanying them at their tables.<sup>68</sup>

Harrison’s *Description of England* may not be an accurate guide to what he actually thought about the society in which he lived. This is significant because *Description of England* is one of the most important sources for Elizabethan social history. Based on this source we may falsely assume that Elizabethan society was more socially harmonious than it actually was, which then provides a striking contrast with accounts from the Jacobean period. It seems likely, as Glyn Parry argues, that Harrison self-edited his ‘Protestant vision’ in *Description of England*.<sup>69</sup> Harrison, under pressure to write quickly for an elite audience, and placated by Holinshed’s offer to publish his manuscript *Great English Chronology* at a later date, simply left out his more radical social criticisms.<sup>70</sup> In Harrison’s *Chronology*, the self-interested Courtier was singled out as one of ‘Satan’s perennial tools against the Elect’.<sup>71</sup> The emperor Constantine, upheld as the ‘ideal prince’ during the Elizabethan period, was in Harrison’s reading too easily swayed by courtiers and put ‘worldly policy’ before the needs of the Church.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, so called reforming policy under Henry VIII, was in fact, manipulated by greedy courtiers who saw the opportunity to grab Church lands and possessions.<sup>73</sup> As Parry concludes, it

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p.128.

<sup>69</sup> Glyn Parry, ‘William Harrison’s Cultural Vision’, forthcoming in *The Holinshed Handbook*, OUP, 2010

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., pp.5-6; *Great English Chronology* traced the conflict of the ‘Two Churches’, the ‘True Church’ of the Elect and Satan’s ‘Church of Cain’ from 3966 BC to the Elizabethan period. See G. J. R. Parry, *A Protestant Vision*, Cambridge, 1987.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., pp.12-13.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., pp.20-21.

would indeed be interesting to see what contemporaries would have said if his *Chronology* had been published, filled as it was, with godless courtiers and fornicating clergy wives.<sup>74</sup> This argument is convincing in terms of the materials discussed in this section for the Courtier was consistently portrayed in other Protestant publications of the Elizabethan period as a self-interested glutton who shared little with his broader community.

Harrison's portrait of the gluttonous Scotsmen perhaps comes closer to his true vision. Harrison loathed the Scots. The Scots of his day were far worse than the English he argued; 'they far exceed us in overmuch and distemperate gourmandize, and so engross their bodies that divers of them do oft become unapt to any other purpose than to spend their times in large tabling and bellycheer.'<sup>75</sup> However there was an historical explanation for this vice. The Scots were once admired for their habits; in old times 'these North Britons did give themselves universally to great abstinence', especially the soldiers who sometimes only ate 'once or twice at the most in two or three days'.<sup>76</sup> He believed that the English nobility had corrupted the Scotsmen, for 'their vehement alteration from competent frugality to excessive gluttony' was 'brought out of England by James I' (of Scotland) while he was captive there under Henry IV and Henry V of England.<sup>77</sup> Harrison insinuated that gluttonous corruption came from the English nobility.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, p.20.

<sup>75</sup> Harrison, p.124.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p.125.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

In some ways Harrison might have agreed with the brash and witty Thomas Nashe, who thought the London elite were great hypocrites and gluttons.<sup>78</sup> In his *Pierce pennilesse* (1592) Nashe quipped: 'It is not for nothing that other countries whom we upbraid for drunkenness, call us bursten-bellied gluttons; for we make our greedy paunches powdering-tubs of beef, and eat more at one meal than the Italian or Spaniard in a month.'<sup>79</sup> Nashe, who also parodied one of the great Puritan controversialist texts of the period, Philip Stubbes' *Anatomy of Abuses* (1586), none the less agreed with some of Stubbes' sentiments about gluttony.<sup>80</sup>

Stubbes bordered on the hysteric when he expatiated on the evils of the 'monsterous doublets'. The 'monsterous doublets' which stood on their bellies 'like or bigger than a man's codpiece', however, revealed the true 'disposition of the wearer, how he is inclined, namely, to gluttonie, gourmandice, riotte, and excesse'.<sup>81</sup> Stubbes made a pointed social criticism against the flamboyant younger members of the nobility who, if illustrations are a reliable guide, wore the 'monsterous doublets'. The aspiring merchant class did not escape Stubbes' censure either. Massive table spreads were not a sign of good 'hospitality', he said, agreeing with Harrison. Once 'A good peece of beefe' was enough, but now it is thought 'too grosses for their tender stomackes', he scathingly pronounced.<sup>82</sup> No good came of it, Stubbes tells us, for in the past 'the forfathers lived on grain, corn, rootes and pulses' and 'yet liued longer than we, and much stronger than

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<sup>78</sup> Thomas Nashe, *Pierce pennilesse in the unfortunate traveller and other works*, (ed.) J. B. Sterne, Harmondsworth, First published 1592.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p.99.

<sup>80</sup> Phillip Stubbes, *The Anatomy of Abuses*, (Reprint of 1583 ed.), New York, 1972.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p.44.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p.108.

we in euery repect', repeating the traditional trope of ancient frugality.<sup>83</sup> 'Who is sicker than they that fare deliciously every day?' he asked, 'Who is corrupter?' and 'Who is weaker and feebler than they?' Stubbes drew on the classical notion that luxurious diet corrupted the health and the morals. Citing Luke 16, he asked his readers to remember that the rich glutton in the Bible was 'condemned to the fires of hell' for his 'riotous feastings and preposterous living'.<sup>84</sup> All this excessive spending could be put to better use and this is where true hospitality lay, he concluded, 'giving liberally to the poore and indigent members of Jesus Christ.'<sup>85</sup>

Stubbes determined that these three 'deuoring cankers', 'dainty fare', 'gorgious buildings' and 'sumptuous apparell', would 'eat up the whole common wealth of Anglia'.<sup>86</sup> Stubbes' somewhat frenzied attack, nevertheless, aptly summarised common understandings of the multi-variant strands of gluttony during the Elizabethan period. Gluttony closely associated with drunkenness, licentiousness, profligacy, effeminacy, and riotousness all led to 'corruption' sooner or later.

#### IV

Polemical attacks on gluttony in the late 1580s primarily associated excessive consumption with the corrupting influence of the greedy Courtier and rising new men who adopted these *foreign* Catholic practices. This very same critique was later associated with the Court of King James, but as we have seen the full force of the

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p.108.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p.110.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p.111.



polemic was already evident in the late Elizabethan period. Why then was the stereotype of profligacy and corruption so consistently applied to the court of King James? The main criticism directed against James focused on his 'prodigality', and despite some rehabilitation in the recent historiography, James' reputation as a spendthrift still stands firm.<sup>87</sup> There are, however, some reasonable grounds to doubt this characterisation. James had significant prior experience with the reform of crown finance in Scotland which saw him establish a working relationship with his future treasurer Robert Cecil prior to coming to the throne.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, as Diana Newton notes, Elizabeth left a debt of about £420,000, supposedly balanced by £300,000 from an outstanding parliamentary subsidy and £100,000 from forced loans, but the chances of this money coming in may have been slim.<sup>89</sup> James was certainly aware of his precarious financial position when he wrote to Cecil in December 1605 that: 'it is a horror to me to think upon the height of my place, the greatness of my debts, and the smallness of my means'.<sup>90</sup>

James' lavish spending is to some extent explained by contemporary cultural expectations of the monarch. The King was expected to be 'bountiful', and it was politically expedient to express his generosity through gifts to servants who were not paid a regular wage.<sup>91</sup> In contrast to Elizabeth, as a married monarch, James supported more than one household. The cost of maintaining an heir was high. Prince Henry's costs rose

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<sup>87</sup> Diana Newton, *The making of the Jacobean Regime: James VI and I and the government of England, 1603-1605*, Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, NY, 2005, p.119.

<sup>88</sup> Houston, p.7; Cramsie, p.73.

<sup>89</sup> Newton, p.35.

<sup>90</sup> G. P.V. Akrigg, *Letters of King James VI and I*, London, 1962, p.261.

<sup>91</sup> Houston, p.15.

from £3,600 in 1604-5 to £35,765 in 1610-11 when he came of age.<sup>92</sup> The King's 'magnificence' was propagated through displays at Court including tournaments and masques. These were expensive. The exchequer allocated £3,000 for one masque in 1605.<sup>93</sup> Like other European monarchs, James embarked on extensive building projects, for which the budget expanded from £4,000 a year to a peak of £20,000, not including the £15,000 for the Whitehall banqueting hall.<sup>94</sup> It is therefore not surprising that while even the notoriously parsimonious Elizabeth spent £300,000 a year, James spent closer to £500,000.<sup>95</sup>

James undoubtedly spent more than Elizabeth, but to label this spending 'prodigality' is another matter. To portray 'prodigality' as a precursor to, and root cause of, 'corruption' is one stage further still. How realistic, therefore, was the portrait of greater corruption during the Jacobean period? A comparison of the household books of James I, Elizabeth I and Henry VIII demonstrates that corruption was not a new problem. Like his predecessors, James was genuinely committed to reform. Accordingly in 1604, James instructed his treasurer Cecil to bring the Royal household spending into line with the figures reported in Elizabeth's *Booke of household*.<sup>96</sup>

Elizabeth's substantial *Booke* set the benchmark for Jacobean reforms. It had provided a detailed breakdown of spending, hierarchically listing the offices of the

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<sup>92</sup> Houston, p.15; 'summe total for the Prince', the establishment of Prince Henry from MS 642 Harleian Library fol.239, p.315 Henry was allocated £19,322 for his support.

<sup>93</sup> Houston, p.16; Cramsie p.69 Cramsie citing evidence in HH MS Salisbury 109, fos 89r-91v. claims that James in fact wanted to request his couturiers supply £4,000 to cover the cost of a masque in 1604, but Cecil discouraged him, saying it would not do for the Crown to be seen in such dire straits.

<sup>94</sup> Smuts, p.127.

<sup>95</sup> Houston, p.15.

<sup>96</sup> 'The booke of household of Queene Elizabeth' in Society of Antiquaries, *A collection of ordinance and regulations for the government of the Royal Household, made in divers reigns. From King Edward III to King William and Queen Mary*, London, 1790.

household, the staff in each office, their wages, details of their diet, and any extra privileges due to the office-holder. The fact that diet was such an important inclusion reflected the fact that food was expensive. The status of the office-holder was therefore reflected in dietary rations. For example, ‘the clerke of the Kitchen was allocated eight dishes of meate every meale for him and his two fellowes’, while the ‘The yeomen and the groomes received five messes of meate of three dishes a meale’, and children, apart from an annual payment, simply received 6d a day ‘boardwages’.<sup>97</sup> The idea that a higher office should be reflected in a greater allocation of food was analogous to the sumptuary legislation of clothing seen during the period.<sup>98</sup>

The *Ordinances of the household of King James I*, was a similar exercise cost-cutting from the top down.<sup>99</sup> Food and drink, as major costs, were prime targets, and even the monarch was not exempt from these measures.<sup>100</sup> James was determined to bring spending back down to the levels suggested by Elizabeth’s precedent.<sup>101</sup> For example, ‘the Master of the Jewell-house’ was upbraided for tucking into seven dishes of meat at a meal, ‘not warranted by the queen’s books’.<sup>102</sup> Limits were placed on the consumption of the ‘Spanish wines, called Sacke’, which had become the ‘common drinke’; ‘served at

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., pp.287-288.

<sup>98</sup> See for example, *A declaration of the Queens Maiesties will and commaundement, to have certaine Lawes and orders put in execution against the excesse of Apparell*, 13 Feb 1588, STC 8168. Elizabeth insisted on enforcing sumptuary laws from the reign of Henry VIII. For example: ‘no man under the degree of a baron’s sonne or a knight, except he may expend two hundred pounds by yeere, for terme of life, over all charges, shall weare any manner of Velvet in his Gowne, Coate or other his uppermost garment’. Next down the hierarchy, no man spending less than ‘one hundred pounds’ shall wear any Satten, Damaske, Silke Chabiet, or taffeta in his Gowne, Coate or other his uppermost garment’.

<sup>99</sup> ‘Ordinances for the governing and ordering of the King’s household, signed by King James’ in Society of Antiquaries, *A collection of ordinance and regulations for the government of the Royal Household, made in divers reigns. From King Edward III to King William and Queen Mary*, London, 1790.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p.299 James would be served with 24 dishes of meat rather than the 30 served during Elizabeth’s reign, except for affair of states.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

meales, as an Ordinary to every meane Officer, contrary to all order, using it rather for wantonnesse and surfeiting, than for necessity, to a great wasteful expense'. This claim was no exaggeration considering that the reform allowed the sergeant '12 gallone of sacke a day', 'and no more than the same to bee spent or delivered by him to any person whatsoever at meales as an ordinary allowance'.<sup>103</sup> It might therefore appear there was some truth in the charge of a gluttonous Jacobean Court.

On further 'investigation', however, Cecil discovered that Elizabeth's *Booke* was not an accurate reflection of consumption at Court during her reign. On coming to the throne Elizabeth, like James, had laid down rules for the household which were then promptly ignored, suggesting the entrenched nature of 'corruption' at Court. The *Ordinances of the household of King James I*, clearly reflects a solid effort to implement reform of the King's household, and showed that problems were to a great extent, inherited from Elizabeth. Cecil's subsequent reforms therefore focused on stopping excessive 'purloining or imbeseling' and waste in 'bread, beere and wine'. Servants and visitors were to be monitored more closely, and most importantly, closer attention was to be paid to the management of accounts, which henceforth were to be reconciled on a daily basis.<sup>104</sup>

These problems of corruption within the royal household were not new. Henry VIII's *Royal Household* from January 1526 used the same policies, to address the same

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> 'A declaration of the bouge of the court, of every particular thing, to be observed by every particular person, being of the ordinary of the Kinge's most Honourable House', in Society of Antiquaries, *A collection of ordinance and regulations for the government of the Royal Household, made in divers reigns. From King Edward III to King William and Queen Mary*, London, 1790, pp.304, 305, 306, 309, 310-12.

issues, brought to light by Cecil.<sup>105</sup> The most important concern was to weed out corruption: to allay pilfering, regulate the control of purchases, ensure that accounts were up to date and that bills were paid on time, and finally to monitor the movements of strangers and office-holders within the court. Particular emphasis was laid on expunging servants' corrupt practices. However, the Henrician documents provide more detail about specific charges of corruption. For example, servants were instructed to refrain from withholding payments that already been allocated to pay a provisioner. Officer-holders were informed that they must not hire in cheap boys to do their work for them, which also seems to have a normal practice.<sup>106</sup> Servants were instructed to stop feeding guests who did not reside in the Court, and to pay more attention to ejecting the vagabonds who lurked within the precincts of the court. Because this 1526 document provides a detailed list of officer-holders by names and wages, the inordinate cost of running a royal household is made abundantly clear. The sheer numbers of people residing at Court, and the difficulty of monitoring servants' activities, together with the vast sums necessary to support the royal household, suggest that corruption was an intractable structural problem.

Elizabeth and James attempted to increasingly regulate the Court by laying down elaborate rules which were apparently largely ignored. In fact the complaints in the two books were almost the same as in Henry's household documents. Habitual pilfering riddled Elizabeth's household. Therefore the weights of loaves of bread, for example, had

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<sup>105</sup> 1939(4-14). Jan 1526. R.O. 'The Royal Household'. *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, Vol.4: Part I: 15-24-26. SP 1/37 f.53.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

to be noted down to stop ‘filching of flower or meale’.<sup>107</sup> The extra entitlements of an office had to be specified in detail. The yeomen of the kitchen, for example, were ‘to have all the legges of beefe and all the hinde knuckle, rumpes, and necks of the muttuns and veales spent in the house.’<sup>108</sup> A more general regulation listed in Elizabeth’s *Booke* was elaborated on by Cecil, not it seems, reflecting more corruption in James’s Court, but merely the implementation of yet another, frustratingly, ineffective policy. The main contentious issue that appeared in both books was concern about the cost of food and the regulation of payments, also mentioned in Henry’s household documents. Since the mid-1500s systems of purveyance were regulated by a fixed contract made in advance of supply, known as ‘composition’.<sup>109</sup> The cart-takers, considered a socially disreputable lot, had much opportunity to swap bad provisions for good, and perhaps split the extra profit with the provisioner. The insistence in both books, that the quality of incoming goods be noted down, and that payment should proceed quickly, reflected yet another attempt to reform these practices.

Henry’s documents, however, provide another window onto the problem. The King’s upper servants or Courtiers, rather than the King, dictated the daily patterns of life at Court. The King’s ‘pages’ had to be told to get out of bed at seven to set the fire, ‘and warn the esquires of the Body to arise’, so that they could be ready to dress the King at eight by the latest.<sup>110</sup> The reason his esquires were not up before eight in the morning is suggested by the King’s additional order that all gambling, dice and cards cease once he

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<sup>107</sup> ‘The Booke of the household of Queen Elizabeth’, pp.291,294.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p.287.

<sup>109</sup> Allegra Woodward, ‘Purveyance for the Royal Household in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth’, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol.35, No.1 Dec. 1945, pp.1-89.

<sup>110</sup> 1939(4-14). Jan 1526. R.O. ‘The Royal Household’.

had personally 'been served for the night'.<sup>111</sup> The gentlemen of his Privy Chamber were probably staying up late, noisily gambling, carousing and boozing and therefore disturbing the King's rest. Habitual gossip, infighting and backbiting also seem to have been a perennial problem, for the King had to request that the 'persons of the privy chamber to be friendly to each other, and keep secret all things done there; not to inquire in the King's absence where he is going, or talk about his pastimes; and if any one uses unfitting language of the King, is to be immediately reported'.<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, his Courtiers were not behaving as proper intermediaries for the King's patronage. We can surmise that after receiving a 'kick-back', they allowed all sorts of people to enter the Kings' chamber and press 'suits upon him', day or night.<sup>113</sup>

Henry's household documents therefore suggest that the King thought there was some truth to the negative stereotype of the gluttonous corrupt Courtier. Neither James' financial problems, nor the problem of corrupt Courtiers was new or particular to the Jacobean regime. Indeed they originated in Henrician reforms. Henry's 'personal monarchy' meant that those who inhabited the private chambers of the King, or had some access to the privy chamber, increasingly monopolised patronage. Two of his gentlemen for example slept on a pallet in his chamber every night, and we can imagine that this access to the King's person became newly important politically, as David Starkey pointed out in his early studies on the Privy Chamber.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> David Starkey, 'Introduction: Court History in Perspective', in David Starkey et al (ed.), *The English Court: From the War of the Roses to the Civil War*, London; New York, 1987, pp.1-24; David Starkey,

Starkey highlighted that periodisation is the critical factor when making assessments about politics at the English Court. If we only examine the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods there seems to be a great contrast between the Courts, which seems to indicate a Jacobean change. But if we broaden the period, examining the features of the courts of Henry VII through to James II, a different picture emerges. Starkey has a point when he claims that under a 'personal monarch', the personality of that monarch becomes far more influential, dictating either a political style that is somewhat 'distant', like those of Henry VII and Elizabeth I, or a more 'intimate' and open style like the Court of Henry VIII and James I.<sup>115</sup> More open access to the monarch naturally meant that gentlemen had more influence on the monarch's decisions which would, in turn, create rivalry along factional lines. In-groups and out-groups jostled for the King's favour, in the process creating a tensely jealous atmosphere at Court. The King could of course use these tensions between factions to his own political advantage.

Social critics singled out individual Courtiers and their policies, rather than directing their attacks at the King, who was after all, responsible for their appointments.<sup>116</sup> During the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536, Northern nobles and peasants, primarily conservative and Catholic, famously protested against greed and corruption at Court which they associated with the 'upstart' Cromwell and his 'taxation' policies.<sup>117</sup>

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'Intimacy and innovation: the rise of the Privy Chamber, 1547-1558', in David Starkey et al (ed.), *The English Court: From the War of the Roses to the Civil War*, London; New York, 1987, pp.71-118.

<sup>115</sup> Starkey, 'Introduction', p.8.

<sup>116</sup> W. Gordon Zeeveld, 'Social Equalitarianism in a Tudor Crisis' in (ed.) Maryanne Cline Horowitz, *Race, Gender, and Rank: Early Modern Ideas of Humanity*, New York, 1992, pp.229-249.

<sup>117</sup> Susan Bridgen, 'Popular disturbance and the fall of Thomas Cromwell and the Reformers', *The Historical Journal*, Vol.42, No.2, 1981, pp.257-278; G. L. Harriss, 'Thomas Cromwell's 'New Principle' of Taxation', *The Historical Review*, Vol.93, No.369, October 1978, pp.721-738.



Henry and his government, now openly forced to defend the policy of raising new men, looked to biblical, Aristotelian and Ciceronian arguments in their defence.<sup>118</sup> ‘Virtue and talent’, they proclaimed, should allow for upward social mobility. At same time, it should be noted, the very means of attacking these ‘upstarts’ was also established: ‘virtue’ was easily undermined by accusations of greed and corruption.

A new literature promoting the virtuous self-made ‘public servant’ appeared in the 1530s. The popular etiquette guide for those who sought a place at Court, Baldassare Castiglione’s *Cortegiano* (1528) inspired an English imitator within only three years, Sir Thomas Elyot’s *Book of the Govenor*.<sup>119</sup> Not long after, and within two years of the Pilgrimage of Grace, the first English critique of the Courtier appeared, Sir Thomas Wyatt’s *Satire addressed to Sir Francis Bryan* (1538).<sup>120</sup> Castiglione’s account only appeared in English as *The Covrtyer of Covnt Baldessar*, in 1561, inspiring new English works.<sup>121</sup> The less celebratory tradition of Wyatt’s *Satire* was continued, however. Robert Greene’s *A quip for an upstart courtier: Or, a quaint dispute between Velvet breeches and Cloth-breeches*, (1592), lamented social change in a manner reminiscent of

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<sup>118</sup> Zeeveld, ‘Social Equalitarianism in a Tudor Crisis’, pp.230, 240-241.

<sup>119</sup> Thomas Elyot, *Book of the Govenor*, London, 1531.

<sup>120</sup> David Starkey, The Court: Castiglione’s ideal and Tudor reality: Being a discussion of Sir Thomas Wyatt’s *Satire addressed to Sir Francis Bryan*, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute*, Vol.45, 1982, pp.232-239.

<sup>121</sup> *The Covrtyer of Covnt Baldessar*, London, 1561, STC 4778; Sir David Lindsay, *A dialogue between experience and a courtier*, 1575, STC15677. Addressed to all estates but chiefly for gentlemen, it spoke of how the Courtier should not seek to benefit himself or his friends, but serve the common wealth and the country, looking to ‘the wealth of many rather than the ease and pleasure of one.’; The anonymous *The English courtier and the cūtrei gentleman*, 1586, STC15590. Although dedicated to Sir Francis Walsingham it specifically addressed all nobilie and gentlemen whom he sought ‘a fyttre person for the public service of his Prince and Countrey’.

Stubbes.<sup>122</sup> Singling out the upstart, he honed in on the ‘abuses of pride’ and the ‘aspiring envy’ of the Court which he linked to the lack of ‘hospitality’ that left ‘charity’ to ‘lay frozen in the streets’. Meanwhile ‘upstart gentlemen’ raised their rents, racked their tenants and imposed great fines.<sup>123</sup> In contrast, Green emphasized the biblical ideals of social equalitarianism, approving of the sense in the ‘old wives’ logic’ that: ‘*when Adam Delved and Eve span who was then a gentleman.*’ [Green’s italics]. Green was not opposed to upward social mobility *per se*, but instead, insisted on promotion based on ‘talent’ and ‘virtue’ rather than nobility. A ‘Perfection of qualities’ and not the ‘propagation of nature’ conferred gentility, ‘cloth breeches’ opined. The target of attack then, was not the ‘virtuous’ Courtier, but those who achieved worldly success by fawning, dissimulation, and corrupt practices.

## V

This longer historical context puts the charges of corruption against particular members of James’ Court in a different light. James’ newly risen men, including his favourites, had in turn shored up their positions by appointing ‘men of talent’, rather than older nobles who in many cases posed more of a political threat. Robert Cecil continued the policies of the late Elizabethan period, but after his death the Catholic Howards, especially Northampton, Lord Privy Seal, gained increasing influence. As James fell for

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<sup>122</sup> Robert Green, *A quip for an upstart courtier: Or, a quaint dispute between Velvet breeches and Cloth-breeches. Wherein is plainely set down the disorders in all estates and trades*, 1592. Green was not a Puritan, and had in fact, written anonymous pamphlets in response to invectives against the Anglican Church written by ‘Martin Prelate’.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, dedicatory epistle.

influential favourites, first Carr, then Villiers, new men of business were bought in to implement 'policy' rather than the traditional noble office holders. This practice generated stronger allegiances along factional lines.<sup>124</sup> Polemical attacks made effective use of the by now culturally entrenched accusation of gluttony inevitably leading to corruption.

The works of Weldon, Osbourne and Wilson invented the features of the Jacobean court. As the Scots made their way to England, drinking and feasting along the way, it was not long before 'Many of the gentry that came out of Scotland with the King were advanced to Honours....to shew the Northern soil as fruitful that way as the Southern: the Scots, naturally, by long converse, affecting the French vanity, drew on a garb of Gallantry, meeting with plentiful soil and an open-handed prince.'<sup>125</sup> In Wilson's account the prodigal King allowed dissimulating, greedy, effeminate Scottish Courtiers to acquire undeserved honours.

Rather than making a choice of Courtier based on 'virtue' and suitability for office, the King instead chose 'handsomnesse'. It was 'as if', Osbourne said, 'he had mistaken their sex, and thought them ladies... which I have seen Sommerset and Buckingham labour to resemble, in the effeminateness of their dressings;...Lookes and wanton gestures.'<sup>126</sup> The King allowed his appetite to rule his head as well as his bed, Osbourne implied.

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<sup>124</sup> See Kevin Sharp, (ed.), *Faction & Parliament: Essays on Early Stuart History*, Oxford, 1978; Linda Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England*, London: New York, 1993.

<sup>125</sup> Arthur Wilson, *The History of Great Britain, being the life and reign of King James the first*, London, 1653, Wing 2888, pp.664-5.

<sup>126</sup> Osbourne in Robert Aston, *James I by his Contemporaries*, London, 1969, p.114.

These same Scotsmen now held significant sway over the King's policy. Playing on fears about the stability of the social order, Osbourne pronounced against the *supposedly* new sales of offices and titles that saw the 'honour of knighthood, which antiquity reserved sacred...promiscuously laid on any head belonging to the yeomandry'.<sup>127</sup> Osbourne went on to attack the Scots for keeping the King from his 'people'; 'his favourites or minions ...like burning-glasses were daily interposed between him and the subject, multiplying the heat of oppression in the general opinion'.<sup>128</sup> The Scots monopolized the King's patronage leaving resentful older nobles with less access to the King's person and the privileges that accompanied it. Finally his polemic finished by suggesting that the sins of the father were visited on the son. Osbourne uses James' gluttonously prodigal behaviour to explain Charles's later political problems. James, Osbourne claimed, was so taken up with his favourites that 'they screened him from reflecting on the crowne: Through the fallacy of which maxime his son came to be ruined.'<sup>129</sup>

Wilson made the same point, but elaborated further, summing up the gluttonous excess of King James' reign. Writing in 1656, but referring to the year 1620, he opined that the 'Kings' excess in gifts, will find followers excessive in demands; *for prodigality in a soveraigne, ends in the rapine and spoil of the subject.*' [Wilson's italics]. He goes on to explain that, 'To help himself therefore and those that drained from him, he granted several *Patents* to undertakers and *Monopolizers*, whereby they preyed upon the people by suits and exactions, milkt the kingdom, and kept it poor, the King taking his ease, and

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<sup>127</sup> Osborne, p.255.

<sup>128</sup> Osbourne in 'Ashton', pp.113-4.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

giving way to informers; the gentry grown debauched, and fashion-mongers, and the commons, sopt, and besotted with quiet and restiness, drunk in so much disability'.<sup>130</sup>

In these 'histories' the King's gluttonous and self-indulgent 'prodigality' saw him unduly influenced by favourites, leaving the kingdom vulnerable to the corrupt practices of newly risen men and their socially detrimental policies. Here we begin to see how a negative stereotype of the gluttony of the Jacobean culture was retrospectively constructed after the Civil War. In the sixteenth century 'gluttony' was newly reinvigorated by radical Protestants because it provided effective ammunition for attacks on those who failed to make proper contributions to the shared ideals of the Christian Common weal. However this polemical device was co-opted by Courtiers who used it as an effective means to target their factional opponents. In this case accusations of excessive consumption were not made against those who had inherited wealth and title, but the newly wealthy. This was less a comment on wealth as such, and more about competition for a scarce resource, access to the King's person and the privileges that accompanied it.

And yet there is little evidence to suggest that James' Court was significantly different from those of his predecessors or other European courts. These polemical uses of gluttony build on the long-established associations. Indulgence in bodily pleasure, overeating and drunkenness, licentiousness and prodigality all led to corruption. It was the Roman model, but biblically read. In outline, it is little different from the history of Jahangir. And that is another story that deserves telling. The gluttony of the court of King

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<sup>130</sup> Wilson, p.150.

James is merely one example that shows the highly effective and politically charged nature of accusations based on excessive bodily consumption.

## Conclusion

There are few tangible means to attack the rich and powerful. The best means of attacking the rich is to disparage their consumption, and bodily habits provide the most effective target. Therefore, they are accused of indulging in strange sexual practices, of drinking too much, of vanity and excessive attention to apparel. Last but not least, they are accused of spending a fortune on the food with which they incessantly stuff themselves. This is an enduring and effective means of targeting someone within the community. It means little to accuse an outsider of such practices, because as everyone knows and scathingly says, ‘they do things differently there.’ We know the targets of these accusations are insiders because they are not accused of evil. Accusations may lead to their ruin, but seldom lead to death.

In order to acquire someone else’s property allegations must be more serious. To appropriate another’s property — a value that forms a fundamental right in modern political thinking — there must be legal as well as moral grounds. Cannibalism was the worst conceivable crime. This was not due to the ‘sanctity’ of the body, for early modern European regularly tortured individuals to the death. The conundrum that cannibalism was considered a crime worse than the most heinous form of torture or murder makes little sense unless we consider that cannibalism was a travesty of transubstantiation, the literal incorporation of the ‘bread’ as body and ‘wine’ as blood of Christ. Protestants did not believe in transubstantiation, but it seems that popish spiritual values still had some hold over them, or at the very least they recognized its polemical potential.

If early English colonial advocates refrained from making accusations of cannibalism in Virginia we know that later English enterprises in the Pacific would bring



the cannibalism of the ‘natives’ into the spotlight again. Therefore, we cannot properly explain the lack of accusations of cannibalism by suggesting the advance of empirically based science or a less ‘superstitious’ Protestant sensibility. True, the English naturalist, William Dampier, writing in the late 1600s, did question the validity of accounts of Aztec cannibalism. After all, he sensibly said, they have plenty to eat. Sacrifice is not the same thing as cannibalism. And, yes, he had heard the early reports, but he was not prepared to believe them unless he witnessed those events himself.<sup>1</sup> Cannibalism in North America was largely discredited. It was of no polemical value. And this is the critical factor, for the early English as for the Spanish; ‘cannibalism’ was only useful in the process of conquest, not settlement.

By contrast the writer of the nineteenth century *Australia Felix* said that ‘for some time it was a matter of doubt whether these people were cannibals’ but ‘I have seen flesh in their possession, and have been told by them ... that they always make a point of eating certain portions of their enemies killed in battle or by treachery, under a feeling of revenge.’<sup>2</sup> His account then begins to sound remarkably similar to Staden’s account of Tupinamba cannibalism: ‘when the two tribes are about having a fair open fight, the head men of each challenge the others in these words— “let us fight, we are not afraid, my warriors will kill you all, and eat you up”’.<sup>3</sup> However, we should note he is talking about

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<sup>1</sup> William Dampier, *A new voyage around the world describing particularly the isthmus of America, several coasts and island in the West Indies*, the 5<sup>th</sup> edition corrected, London, 1703, p.485.

<sup>2</sup> G. H. Haydon, *Five years’ experience in Australia Felix: Comprising a short account of its early settlement and its present position, with many particulars interesting to intending emigrants*, London, 1846, p.105.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

remote aboriginal communities, not the ‘good looking’ tribes near Sydney.<sup>4</sup> Significantly, the account talked far more often about how desperately hungry he was during his travels. References to the dearth of food, the supply of food, the scanty food, the unfit food, the small quantities of food appeared incessantly throughout his account. This connection between accusations of cannibalism and the experience of hunger is of central importance.

Cannibalistic imagery fills the European folk tales collected by the Brothers Grimm in the nineteenth century. Hansel and Gretel, the children who waste the scanty bread they have by leaving a trail for their parents, are tempted by the gingerbread house, the Cokayne-like abundance of food that overwhelms the senses of the desperately hungry. But they are punished for their greed by the old witch who cages and fattens them up in anticipation of a great cannibal feast. The fantastic abundance of food and the fear of being cooked and eaten only make sense in a society that knows periods of extreme hunger. This crucial role of hunger must be taken into account when examining notions of gluttony as well.

Unfortunately the questions that have inspired histories of gluttony to date have confined analysis to questions dictated by present concerns about body image or medicine. As we have seen, it is not that these concerns were entirely absent. Physiognomic interpretations did consider the physical appearance as somehow a reflection of the moral and intellectual capacity of the individual. Medical understandings of health took diet and food very seriously. However, prescriptions against excessive

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.102.

consumption were far more often dictated by Christian moral concern for the health of the community. Consequently these beliefs held extraordinary potential for the purposes of propaganda, and could be co-opted to serve a variety of political ends.

Ironically, exploring the polemical potential of ‘gluttony’ by focusing on the specific example of James I may suggest an avenue of research little explored in the contemporary literature on the obesity epidemic. The best of the prolific literature on the contemporary ‘obesity epidemic’ does examine the broader political and economic context of ‘fatness’. It explores the developments of modern agribusiness based on non-nutrient rich foods. It examines the seemingly contradictory relationship between poverty and obesity in advanced economies. It highlights changing definitions of ‘obesity’ in relation to the development of specialist medical market places and the diet industry. However, no one, to my knowledge, has extensively examined the link between the contemporary social critique of ‘fatness’ and the cultural inheritance of Christian teachings about gluttony, although it is usually briefly alluded to in the literature. Present day preoccupation or ‘moral panic’ about the ‘fat’ body may well reflect historically and culturally entrenched social anxieties about the uneven distribution of wealth and food cross-culturally and fears for ‘the health of the planet’, in some manner analogous, to the values of late sixteenth-century radical Protestants. Like the example of James and his Court that we have explored in this dissertation, deeply held moral beliefs and values can be co-opted to serve the interests of a variety of factional groups who may more often than not have their own interests at heart.

The word 'glutton' now informs humorous gibes rather than serious critiques of greed and corruption. And words now change relatively quickly. In 1920s America, the greedy corrupt capitalists who bribed politicians were described as 'fat cats'. In the 1980s, British anarchists instead suggested that we 'Eat the rich', presumably because they 'eat us'. By the early 2000s those accused of being greedy and corrupt were known as 'cannibals'. The old gluttons were now cannibals. These new 'cannibals', however, are now insiders because the geographic boundaries of the discussion have changed. We can no longer see them as living at the edge of the known world. The term has also been sanitised. Corporate conglomerates are now regularly involved in orchestrating 'cannibalising' company takeovers, for example. Here, deprived of its earlier moral meaning, cannibalism serves as an empty analogy for the 'incorporation' of another body. However, despite the appropriation of the term, it seems the entire community is not convinced. The idea that gluttony is the first step on the slippery path that inevitably leads to destruction still appears to have a powerful cultural hold. For that very reason it holds enduring polemical value, although the 'words' seems to have changed.

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