

## Food in Shakespeare: Early Modern Dietaries and the Plays

This book is dedicated to my sister, Elizabeth Mason, for her hospitality.

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# Introduction

This book is the first detailed study of food and feeding in Shakespeare's plays. Its purpose is to provide modern readers and audiences of Shakespeare with an historically accurate account of the range of, and conflicts between, contemporary views that informed the representations of food and feeding in the plays, in particular views about diet. It is not an exhaustive study of the plays nor is it a definitive study of food and feeding in the early modern period. It would be neither possible nor desirable in a book-length study to provide the reader with a roller-coaster ride through Shakespeare's treatment of food and feeding and so my aim has been to consider those plays I think most clearly signal Shakespeare's interest in food, specifically the sliding scale from the most ordinary to the most exotic manifestations of food and feeding, and most clearly engage with some of the other things being written about the subject prior to and during the early modern period. The book began life as a study of food in Shakespeare and Elizabethan culinary culture but it soon became clear that this was too large a topic for one book and so the main, though by no means exclusive, focus is on Shakespeare and early modern dietaries, outlined below. Also outlined below is the early modern perception of Galen's model of humoral theory which dominated early modern thinking about how the body works and the role of diet. While it is crucial to understand the early modern view of the body and humoral theory, and reference will be made to this throughout the book's main chapters, this is not a study of the humours or medicine *per se*. Readers who desire more detailed analyses of the humours are advised to consult studies by Gail Kern Paster and Jonathan Sawday who, amongst others, have located early modern ideas of selfhood in the context of that period's understanding of the body (Paster 2004; Sawday 1995). While these studies have served to advance our understanding of the complex relationship between subjectivity, the body, and social structures regulating consumption in the Renaissance they have not attended to contemporary dietary literature, an immensely popular and influential genre. Ken Albala's study provides an important introduction to the genre (Albala 2002) but this book is the first to explore early modern dietaries to better understand the uses of food and feeding in Shakespeare's drama.

In ancient physiological theory, still current in the early modern period, it was believed that human personalities could be divided into four essential types (sanguine, choleric, melancholic, and phlegmatic) derived from the four cardinal humours. These were blood, phlegm, choler (yellow bile), and melancholy (black

bile); the variant mixtures of these humours in different persons determined their ‘complexions’, or ‘temperaments’, their physical and mental qualities, and their dispositions. The ideal person had the ideally proportioned mixture of the four; a predominance of one produced a person who was sanguine (Latin *sanguis*, ‘blood’), phlegmatic, choleric, or melancholic. In the early modern period Galen’s model of humoral theory dominated. As late as 1653 Nicholas Culpepper’s translation of, and commentary upon, Galen’s *Art of physick* outlined the specific characteristics of each complexion, characteristics broadly typical of those outlined in dietaries. The sanguine man or woman is considered one

in whose body heat and moisture abounds ... such are usually of a middle Stature, strong composed Bodies, Fleшы but not Fat, great veins, smooth Skins, hot and moist in feeling, their Body is Hairy, if they be Men they have soon Beards ... there is a redness intermingled with white in their Cheeks, their hair is usually of a blackish brown, yet sometimes flaxed, their Appetite is good, their Digestion quick. ... As for their Conditions they are merry cheerful Creatures, bounteful, pitiful, merciful, courteous, bold, trusty, given much to the games of Venus ... . (Galen & Culpepper 1653, F2v–F3r)

What the sanguine man should eat and drink and, perhaps more importantly, what he should avoid eating and drinking, is also outlined:

They need not be very scrupulous in the quality of their Diet, provided they exceed not in quantity, because the Digestive Vertue is so strong. Excess in small Beer engendreth clammy and sweet Flegm in such Complexions, which by stopping the pores of the Body, engenders Quotidian Agues, the Chollick and stone, and pains in the Back. Inordinate drinking of strong Beer, Ale and Wine, breeds hot Rhewms Scabs and Itch, St. Antonies fire ... Inflammations, Feavers, and red pimples. Violent Exercise is to be avoided because it inflames the Blood, and breeds one–day Feavers. (Galen & Culpepper 1653, F2v–F3r)

The choleric man or woman is considered hot and dry, usually short, also hairy (at least the men were), not fat, and with yellow, red, or blonde curly hair and tawny skin; they also have a nasty disposition: “they dream of fighting, quarelling, fire, and burning”, not especially surprising perhaps given that “they are usually costive”, that is, constipated (Galen & Culpepper 1653, F3v). Such individuals are advised to avoid fasting: “let such eat meates hard of Digestion, as Beef, Pork, &c. and leave Danties for weaker Stomachs” (Galen & Culpepper 1653, F3v). The moderate consumption of small, that is weak, beer “cools the fiery heat of his Nature” but such a person should avoid wine and strong beer “for they inflame the liver and breed burning and hectick feavers, Choller and hot Dropsies, and bring a man to his Grave in the prime of his Age”. As with the sanguine person, too much exercise is thought to be harmful. The melancholy person is considered cold and dry “usually slender and not very tall” with little hair on their bodies and the hair on their heads usually “dusky brown” in colour. They are prone to bad dreams and “Covetous, self–lovers, cowards . . . fearful, careful, solitary . . . stubborn,

ambitious, envious". They are advised to avoid excessive food and drink, especially "meats hard of digestion" and it is recommended that they take much exercise, partly because it helps their sluggish digestion (Galen & Culpepper 1653, F4r–Frv). So too exercise is recommended for the phlegmatic man or woman "in whom coldness with moisture abounds" and who is considered fat since although their appetite is weak so is their digestion, a consequence of their slothfulness. The hair on their head is usually "flaxen or light brown", although their body is hairless, and their skin pale and moist. They are advised "to use a very slender diet" so their body might be cleansed of gross humours (Galen & Culpepper 1653, F4v–F5r). But the model is by no means simplistic, also outlined in Culpepper's translation of Galen is what is termed the "commixture" of the humours and eight are listed: chollerick–melancholy, melancholy–chollerick, melancholy–sanguine, sanguine–melancholy, sanguine–Flegmatick, Flegmatick–sanguine, Flegmatick–chollerick, chollerick–flegmatick (Galen & Culpepper 1653, F5v).

It is clear from the above that the early moderns believed the consumption of specific food and drink capable of modifying one's 'type' and, perhaps surprisingly, that exercise as well as diet played an important part. Crucially, it is clear that the early moderns had a materialist view of the body and mind: for them the brain was merely another organ and its thought processes and the development of character and emotions were materialist phenomena; they did not perceive a body/mind divide. The Cartesian division of mind and body dominates post seventeenth century Western philosophy but seems not to have occurred to the early moderns who treated what we consider to be states of mind (emotions, passions, desires) as purely hydraulic phenomena. As Charles Taylor pointed out:

Melancholia is black bile. That's what it means. Today we might think of the relationship expressed in this term as a psycho–physical causal one. An excess of the substance, black bile, in our system tends to bring on melancholy. We acknowledge a host of such relationships, so that this one is easily understandable to us, even though our notions of organic chemistry are very different from those of our ancestors.

But in fact there is an important difference between this account and the traditional theory of humours. On the earlier view, black bile doesn't just cause melancholy; melancholy somehow resides in it. The substance embodies this significance. (Taylor 1989, 188–9)

As we shall see in the book's main chapters, early modern dietaries make clear the view that food and drink are not mere necessities but also indices of one's position in relation to complex ideas about rank, nationality, and spiritual well-being; careful consumption might correct moral as well as physical shortcomings. Anxiety surrounding consumption was reinforced by tirades against excess in dietary literature, a phenomenon that undoubtedly reflected the stance taken by religious texts such as the *Homily Against Gluttony and Drunkenness*. Yet asceticism was also denounced since, as we shall see, excessive fasting was associated with the monastic life and was by some considered as indulgent as gluttony. The dietaries are an eclectic genre: some contain recipes for the reader to

try (for example Partridge 1573), others will give tips on more general lifestyle choices, such as which is the best location to build a house (for example Boorde 1547), or focus on a particular body part or dietary failing (for example Baley 1602 and Gascoigne 1576) but all offer advice on how to maintain good health via diet. Although some are more stern and humourless than others, the overwhelming impression is that of food as an ally in the battle against disease and ill-health as well as a potential enemy.

Unlike Chris Meads's study of banquets (Meads 2002)—a fascinating examination of the historical and literary context of banqueting with a particular focus on plays by Thomas Heywood, Thomas Middleton, John Fletcher and others—this book will focus on the social and moral implications of familiar and strange food (solid and liquid) and feeding in Shakespeare specifically. I have used the term 'early modern' because some of the dietaries considered were published before the reign of Elizabeth and some after the reign of James. Among the dietaries considered will be Boorde 1547; Langton 1545; Gabelkover 1599; Ruscelli 1558; Elyot 1595; Bullein 1595; Cogan 1636; Moffett 1655, many of which were revised and reprinted in the period (indicating their popularity) and all of which typify the genre's condemnation of surfeit and the tendency to blame human disease on feeding practices. Most of the dietaries consulted were written in English but some were translated out of European languages and so made available to an English audience (for example Gabelkover 1599 and Ruscelli 1558). Although distinct in many ways there is some tendency toward repetition in later dietaries of earlier advice; what we might term plagiarism they appear to have regarded as building upon earlier authorities. The dietaries provide clear evidence of the increasing availability of imported, exotic foods, such as rice, as well as the continued importance of staple foods, such as bread, and although there is often consensus they differ at times on whether a particular food is harmful to human health. Some odd beliefs emerge, in particular that vegetables and especially fruit should be treated with caution (regarded as an indulgence, as it were) and that animal flesh (they tend to use the term 'meat' to signify food in general) was especially good for the body. In general, the earliest edition available in English is used as evidence here although where a subsequent edition adds substantially to the dietary it is preferred. Also, a later edition is preferred over an earlier if it is available as electronic text from the Text Creation Partnership (TCP) at the University of Michigan. Research on the dietaries has been hindered by their frequent use of black-letter typefaces that are hard to read, especially on over-inked leaves with show-through from the previous page, and I was fortunate to be able to use accurately keyed electronic texts of more than a dozen such books from TCP. Not only were these texts easier to read, but being electronic it was possible to rapidly search across them to see how a particular food (say, mint) was represented in each. Some dietaries have indices, but these searches revealed detail easily missed even by the most careful reader, and the Text Creation Partnership is to be applauded for providing scholars with new ways to work on these old books. In the spirit of using a relatively new technology to read and search old books all

quotations of Shakespeare's plays, with the exception of *Sir Thomas More*, are from Wells et al. 1989.

Early modern dietaries' role in wider culture and how this intersected with dramatic art have received insufficient attention. It was not unusual for theatre practitioners of the period to form connections with food-related industries, for example they were often freemen of the Vintners or Grocers companies and frequently had sidelines in catering, as with Richard Tarlton running an ordinary in Gracechurch Street and John Heminges a taphouse attached to the Globe playhouse. Food and drink were part of the theatre experience and it seems that the "nutcracking Elizabethans", as William J. Lawrence termed them (Lawrence 1935), ate and drank during performances; jokes about actors mistaking the hiss of ale-bottles being opened for audience disapproval are common. The consumption of food and drink was also subject matter for the plays, and this study will focus especially on how depictions of ordinary and exotic food and feeding in particular Shakespeare plays relates to the preoccupation with moderation evident in the dietaries. It is, of course, important to respect genre: although the dietaries gave an authoritative view of the kinds of foodstuffs self-appointed experts considered beneficial or dangerous we must not assume that they reflect in any simplistic way the eating habits of any specific group of people; like the drama considered in the main chapters of this book, dietaries were constructed (indeed, literary) engagements with reality and thus constitute an effort to shape as much as reflect reality.

Chapter 1 is entitled 'Familiar Extremes: What Eating Too Much Meant to the Elizabethans and the Case of Sir John Oldcastle (*1 Henry 4*, *2 Henry 4*, *Henry 5* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*)'. It considers Sir John Oldcastle, commonly known as Falstaff, Shakespeare's most vivid depiction of gluttony, and how he relates to other depictions of excessive consumption in Shakespeare. In *1 Henry 4*, *2 Henry 4*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* Sir John eats the kind of foodstuff that would have been familiar to most playgoers but in quantities that set him apart from the majority who could not afford to consume so much. An inordinate appetite was routinely denounced by early modern dietaries, which echoed the Elizabethan *Homily against Gluttony and Drunkenness* in urging Christians to avoid intemperance. Sir John's gluttony is a visible way of asserting his concern with feeding his body with sack and capons rather than feeding his soul with the Eucharist, and in itself typifies a deprecated imbalance: 'one halfpennyworth of bread to this intolerable deal of sack'. Throughout Shakespeare's plays excessive consumption of alcohol and food promotes sexual excess, as indeed it does in the dietaries. In *Measure for Measure* Mistress Overdone, the brothel keeper, is served by Pompey, a bawd who pretends to be a tapster (1.2), and fun is had at the expense of Elbow's wife who, looking for more than the two stewed prunes in her possession ('stewed prunes' being a favourite dish at Elizabethan brothels and also a synonym for prostitutes), enters the brothel. Throughout the play, liberty and surfeit provoke disease and, as in the early modern dietaries, excessive consumption is thought to cause putrefaction within the soul as well as the body.

Overeating was condemned by the dietaries but so too was abstinence which was associated with monastic orders and thus England's Catholic past. Throughout the plays there is a distinct suspicion of those who do not enjoy eating and drinking. In *Measure for Measure* and *Love's Labour's Lost* women undermine male attempts at abstinence and show the monastic way of life to be unworkable. Nancy Gutierrez's important study of anorexia (Gutierrez 2003) is a timely consideration of abstinence in the period, but its focus is specifically female and more analysis is required of how the phenomenon was represented by Shakespeare and the dietary writers who were his contemporaries. Malvolio's affectations in *Twelfth Night* are in keeping with the general suspicion towards abstemious thin-men in Shakespeare's comedies, amongst them the foolish Slender from *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, who repeatedly refuses Master Ford's requests to eat and, like Malvolio, is unsuccessful in love. That a single actor in the Chamberlain's/King's men appears to have taken Shakespeare's 'thin man' roles suggests dramatic exploitation of a recognizable stereotype. Romantic love is characterized throughout the comedies as a kind of alien, inadequate feeding: in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* Valentine is willing to "feed upon the shadow" of Sylvia's perfection (3.1.177) but Speed has a more literal, indeed pragmatic, approach which would have appealed to Shakespeare's audience: "Though the chameleon love can feed on the air, I am one that am nourished by my victuals, and would fain have meat" (2.1.162–164).

These plays dramatize a range of behaviours regarding food, some of which are familiar to us and some of which seem strange. By considering the drama alongside early modern sources, in particular the dietaries, noting what was eaten and what was recommended for consumption by a range of physical types, it is possible to historicize their sense of what was usual and what would have been considered strange or exotic.

Chapter 2, entitled 'Celtic Acquaintance and Alterity: *Henry 5* and *Macbeth*' is concerned with that which was not entirely unfamiliar and yet at the same time would have been considered strange: foodstuffs relating to England's Celtic neighbours. The earliest English cookbooks, such as Gervase Markham's *The English Huswive* (Markham 1615), located domesticity at the core of national identity, as noted by Wendy Wall (Wall 2002). The dietaries, however, were not aimed at an exclusively female readership, nor did they promote a consistently nationalist agenda. In *Henry 5* the French war brings together Britain's different national groups and their food. Fluellen might be seen as uniting the English and Welsh via his leek but this is not the case and its use in the punishment of the English Pistol may have provoked unease among early-modern theatre goers at London's Globe; surprisingly, it is not the vegetable's association with the Welsh which is the primary focus of its discussion amongst the dietary authors.

A tension between familiarity and alterity is evident in *Macbeth*. Although England had a Scottish king when *Macbeth* was first performed, Scotland remained an exotic place for most early modern playgoers. Edmund Spenser claimed that the Scots and Irish were descended from the cannibalistic Scythians and the dietary

writer Thomas Cogan that the Scots practiced cannibalism. The witches in *Macbeth* represent a curious fusion of the familiar and the exotic: the cauldron, though synonymous with witchcraft for a modern audience, was a familiar cooking vessel in early modern England and it is striking that the most exotic creatures in the play should be shown gathered around a cooking pot when their power over Macbeth is strongest, in act 4. Most of the ingredients used by the witches in their brew were familiar and there is a probable reference to contemporary brewing practices in “Double, double, toil and trouble” (4.1.10). The play’s exploration of poisoned nutrients extends from Lady Macbeth’s breasts (human milk being a common adult foodstuff) to her husband’s failure to live up to the monarch’s obligation to feast his thanes.

Chapter 3, entitled ‘Strange Diets: Vegetarianism and the Melancholic’ (on *As You Like It* and *The Winter’s Tale*), considers vegetarianism from the early modern perspective and the links between specific diets and melancholy. In *As You Like It* Jacques thinks his fellow-courtiers “tyrants” because they kill venison, but his sensitivity to animal sensibilities, considered a serious political virtue by many today, would have produced quite a different response in the early modern period. Although Pythagoras stressed the importance of a vegetarian diet for maintaining physical and mental health, early modern physicians considered the avoidance of meat as positively unhealthy (a view propagated by the dietaries) and, since God had ordained animal flesh as fit for human consumption after the flood, heretical. Vegetarian religious orders, such as the Adamites, were condemned in some early modern dietaries and it is fitting that Jacques should join Duke Frederick in a monastery at the play’s conclusion. As we shall see, an early modern audience might be expected to make connections between Jaques’s melancholy and his diet and such a connection would encourage the view that Jaques is a hypocrite.

In *The Winter’s Tale* Perdita is queen of the sheep-shearing festival and the Clown’s shopping list suggests that the feast will be vegetarian (4.3.35–48). It seems that only those courtiers who misunderstand the essence of pastoral life eat meat, suggesting perhaps that Shakespeare had what his contemporaries would have considered a strange sympathy for vegetarianism. Much has been written about the probable cause of Leontes’s sudden and extreme jealousy, but little has been made of the role of diet in its provocation. As this chapter will show, the cause of and cure for Leontes’s condition, which is probably a form of melancholy, is suggested by one of Shakespeare’s most famous stage directions ‘Exit, pursued by a bear’: it seems that Bohemia contains the potential to restore Leontes to his former health, an ironic state of affairs since Leontes has been wholly responsible for banishing that which will benefit him.

Chapter 4, entitled ‘Famine and Abstinence, Class War, and Foreign Foodstuff’ (on *Sir Thomas More*, *Coriolanus*, and *Pericles*), considers a play that has received its fair share of bibliographical analysis but has otherwise been largely neglected by the critics. *Sir Thomas More* by Anthony Munday, Thomas Heywood, Henry Chettle, William Shakespeare, and others, is set in London, an utterly familiar place made strange by the presence of resident foreigners. The play’s interrelation

of food and civil disorder can be contextualized within food shortages in the sixteenth century that gave rise to real riots and within contemporary accounts of the Irish diet in colonial prose writings. The play's rioting Londoners claim that foreigners harm the economy (specifically causing inflation), have strange culinary practices, and that their "strange roots" import disease, a belief reinforced by the dietaries. The body's consumption of foreign, infected vegetables becomes a powerful symbol for what the rioters believe to be the effect of London's absorption of aliens: a diseased London incorporates the seeds of its own destruction. As a body should purge itself so violence is considered necessary by the rioters to ensure the safety of the city. More's appeasement of the rioters warns against a future where men "feed on one another", not the only time that cannibalistic imagery is used in the context of violence provoked by hunger or the fear of hunger. This collaborative work is an inherently interesting text since part of it probably represents the only creative writing by Shakespeare that has survived in his own handwriting and those sections authored by Shakespeare demonstrate a marked preoccupation with food and feeding.

In *Coriolanus* the exploration of cultural difference, as witnessed in food, extends beyond the time and place of early modern Britain but the complaints made by Rome's citizens about alleged grain-hoarding would have struck a cord with early modern playgoers in London since crop failures in 1607 and 1608 provoked widespread hunger and caused civil disturbances; it is at once a very unfamiliar culture and yet its problems are entirely familiar. Menenius seeks to appease the mob using his Fable of the Belly and Coriolanus warns against the desire to feed: like Antony (before his life in Egypt) he denies his bodily needs, caring little for physical comfort when honour is at stake. Coriolanus's abstinence, indeed abhorrence, of food, would have seemed strange to an early modern audience, but they would have understood it as characteristically Roman. Coriolanus's sense of self is located in his stoicism, a philosophy that aimed to decouple the human mind from the body, something he shares with Shakespeare's More, but whereas More's detachment is heroic, in *Coriolanus* Shakespeare suggests that a man out of touch with his body can become out of touch with ordinary (hungry) people, ending up with so little sense of cultural identity that his country's arch-enemy, Aufidius, becomes his friend. In *Pericles*, as in Coriolanus's Rome, famine threatens social disorder with the prospect of the most exotic consumption of all: cannibalism, with mothers ready to eat their children and couples each other. Unlike Coriolanus, whose contempt for the citizens and their appetites brings about his downfall, Pericles's benevolent feeding of the starving triggers divinely ordained retribution when his enemies are punished by the very citizens whose lives he saved with food.

When Shakespeare takes his audience to new times and places (Thomas More's London, Coriolanus's Rome, Pericles's Greece) he uses food to explore that which does not change (hunger, xenophobia), along with that which does. Shakespeare's treatment of his source material—developing Holinshed's references to food in his report of the Londoners' riot and down-playing the complaints that Roman citizens

have about usury—tells us that he regarded food and feeding to be a social phenomenon worthy of dramatic comment. How the English cope with that which is culturally alien is an abiding concern of the drama.

Chapter 5 is entitled ‘Beyond the Pale: Profane Consumption’ (on *Hamlet*, *Timon of Athens*, and *Titus Andronicus*) and considers Shakespeare’s treatment of revenge in the context of feeding that is utterly exotic. Hamlet, a student and learner of new ways at Calvinist Wittenberg, is very much the radical sceptic, questioning what are essentially religious issues but still subject to an old injunction, revenge. David Hillman finds Shakespeare’s preoccupation with human entrails throughout his writing as evidence of the playwright’s “corporeal inwardness”; the idea that access to the viscera will allow access to truth, imagined to be located within the body, is a recurring motif (Hillman 1997, 81–2). Hamlet is preoccupied by what happens to the body after death, but rather than focusing on spiritual solutions, he plays with materialist answers and the whole cycle of living, eating, and dying: the body is re-born as clay (a holder of food and drink) or bait (a catcher of food). Moreover, Hamlet is alert to the cannibalistic aspects of interment (“a king may progress through the guts of a beggar”) and the ordinary process of bodily decomposition (man’s flesh eaten by worms and the earth) is made strange just as the once familiar sacrament of transubstantiation, eating the body of Christ, was made strange by Protestantism.

The philosophical Hamlet muses on what it means to be human and sees his fellow-men and women as a mix of the angelic and the beastly. So too in *Timon of Athens* the nature of humankind is interrogated and dichotomized: Timon’s initial belief that humankind is benevolent giving way to the equally extreme notion that they are all utterly beastly. In *Timon of Athens*, as in many of the plays, there is conspicuous consumption in feasting, but here food becomes a vehicle for punishment. The meal of steaming water and stones prepared by Timon against his false friends parodies his previous feasts by presenting that which we cannot consume (stones) with that which the early moderns believed we should consume with care (not all water was fit for drinking). Throughout the play feeding metaphors are used by Timon to denounce his false friends and he ultimately rejects all feasts which he comes to believe represent the greed and hypocrisy of humanity; in effect, he is himself eaten up with misanthropy. In his life as a hermit Timon fantasizes about consuming the whole of Athens; regret, hunger for revenge, and diseases which ravage the body preoccupy Timon’s ascetic (and hence, by early modern standards, exotic) existence, his previous magnanimity and desire to feed replaced by the desire to poison others and seek out death for himself.

In *Titus Andronicus* Tamora participates in the ultimate exotic consumption, cannibalism, but, crucially, she eats with ignorant innocence. Titus is keen to distance the Andronici from Gothic gluttony and limits their diet to just enough for survival when planning his vengeance. The early modern contrast between Rome’s glorious past and its present moral decay as the centre of Papal power suggests anachronistic criticism of Roman savagery via allusion to the Roman Catholic

belief that they eat the body of Christ. Although, as Michael Schoenfeldt noted, George Herbert identified consumption of the Eucharist as a the ultimate nutritive act (Schoenfeldt 1999, 99), in *Titus Andronicus* it indicates barbarity and excess. Those who defy Rome are forced to suffer extremes of consumption: Tamora feeds upon that which is exotic, and is, in turn, fed upon by birds of prey, while Aaron is left in the ground to starve. We end at the beginning—*Titus* is thought to be one of Shakespeare's earliest plays—because here at the start of his career he dramatized the most extreme kind of eating, apparently becoming more subtle in his explorations of food and feeding as his writing developed.

Food is, of course, a dramatist's short hand way of delineating character (the ascetic, Stoic, and glutton) and rank (the hungry poor, feasting aristocrats, and lean soldiers), but in Shakespeare's hands it is exploited in a particularly subtle way, being used to engage with debates about cosmopolitanism, expanding international trade, religion, and philosophy. Two seventeenth-century stories—that Shakespeare's detractor Robert Greene died eating fish, and that Shakespeare died from drinking with Ben Jonson—indicate the popular association of drama and food. Whether true or not, these were the kinds of things people liked to repeat about the dramatists. Seventeenth-century readers were perhaps more alert to the significance of food in Shakespeare's plays than are we, but this study can perhaps recover something of that historical alertness. The preoccupation shown by modern consumers with the medically functional aspects of food and drink (efforts to lower cholesterol, increase gut flora, or reduce the risk of heart disease) is something most early moderns would recognize in their intents, if not their means.

Then, as now, theories of food and drink and choices about eating and drinking encode economic circumstances, social aspirations, national identity, physical health, and self worth. The readings offered in this book use historical data and literary analysis to illuminate the contemporary relevance of Shakespeare's engagement with the range of meanings attached to food and feeding throughout the plays. The study focuses on a sliding scale of strangeness, from the common foodstuffs associated with Sir John Oldcastle to the ultra-exotic cannibalism of Tamora and, along the way, varying degrees of that which was considered familiar or strange. The early modern preoccupation with moderation is familiar to us, and although their anxieties were formed within a specifically Christian context, the tirades against excess in dietary literature and their denunciation of asceticism find modern analogues in our preoccupation with controlling what we eat and our fascination with body shape. Like the early moderns, we tend to view food as a potential enemy, making moral and social judgments about those who over-indulge and those who would ban all cakes and ale.

## Chapter 1

# Familiar Extremes: The Case of Sir John Oldcastle

## *1 Henry 4, 2 Henry 4, Henry 5 and The Merry Wives of Windsor*

In *1 Henry 4*, *2 Henry 4*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* Shakespeare's fat knight, Sir John Oldcastle, commonly known as Falstaff, eats the kind of foodstuff that would have been familiar to most playgoers but in quantities setting him apart from the majority who could not afford to consume so much.<sup>1</sup> Excessive consumption was denounced by early modern dietaries which focused on the harm over-eating did to the body, a tactic also often used by religious texts where the physical as well as the spiritual consequences of gluttony were outlined in an effort to encourage good Christians to avoid intemperance. As we shall see, excessive consumption of alcohol and food was often aligned with sexual excess, a phenomenon most fully developed in *2 Henry 4*. Just as overeating was condemned, so too abstinence was considered harmful to the body and the soul: moderation in all things was a recurring focus. By considering what eating too much, and eating too little, meant to the Elizabethans in the context of early modern literature's most infamous glutton we can perhaps uncover some of the conflicting attitudes toward the enjoyment of food and drink in the period. *1 Henry 4*, *2 Henry 4* and, briefly, *Henry 5* are here considered together and as a group, with each play distinct yet building upon the last. The view held by Nicholas Grene that "each sequent play is written with a full consciousness of what has gone before, and this awareness of previous history shared by characters and audience becomes a part of the substance of the drama" (Grene 2002, 164), seems especially convincing when considering Sir John since knowledge of this figure from *1 Henry 4* encourages specific audience expectations in his subsequent appearance. This chapter will trace Sir John as an historical figure and compare this with his role in the comedy *The Merry Wives of Windsor* as part of the contention that genre plays a part in the presentation of this important figure.<sup>2</sup>

Gregory the Great, the sixth century saint and Pope, formulated the seven deadly sins and listed the five ways by which one might commit the sin of gluttony: *prae-propere*: by eating too soon; *laute*: by eating too expensively; *Nimis*: by eating too much; *Ardente*: by eating too eagerly; *Studiose*: by eating too

daintily (Delany 1909). The last meal enjoyed by Françoise Mitterrand, the former President of France, might be considered, even by those not particularly ascetic, as especially indulgent. In France it is illegal to hunt, buy, or eat ortolans (tiny birds, each around the size of a thumb) but Mitterrand, in the final stages of cancer, had arranged for three of the birds to be served at a New Year's Eve dinner prepared for friends and family. The means of preparing and eating ortolan is at best exotic and at worst disgusting: the birds are over-fed, drowned in Armagnac, and eaten whole.<sup>3</sup> Inspiration for the dish might lie with the nation's long-standing relationship to decidedly visceral consumption. The food historian T. Sarah Peterson noted how, during the sixteenth century, the French, in an effort to emphasize their continuity with the culinary culture of classical antiquity consumed those parts of animals hitherto not commonly eaten and prepared 'high' or gamy meat cooked very rare: "Fashion setters crunched on ears; blood from meat nearly oozed from the mouth; livers silken with fat melted on the tongue; and the taste for pronouncedly high meat, decomposed to the fine point just this side of maggoty . . . was cultivated . . ." (Peterson 1994, 96). Yet a distinct lack of squeamishness when it came to food was not exclusive to the French in this period since, as Joan Thirsk pointed out, the English "ate every part of the animals that came their way: eyes, snouts, brains lungs, and feet, the noses, lips, and palates of calves and steers, ox cheeks, the udders and tongues of young cattle, and lambs' stones" (Thirsk 1999, 13). In Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* Tamora is informed by Titus that she "daintily hath fed" upon the flesh of her two sons, Demetrius and Chiron, which he has baked in a pie (5.3.60), an example of what I have termed profane consumption and which will be considered in detail in chapter 6. Sir John is never guilty of eating the exotic, be it the flesh of minute and rare birds or human flesh, but he is certainly guilty of *Nimis*, eating too much, and most likely guilty also of *Praepropere*, eating too soon, and *Ardente*, eating too eagerly.

### What Eating Too Much Meant to the Elizabethans

In William Langland's *The Vision of Piers Plowman* Gula, or Gluttony, enters an alehouse on his way to attend confession. Here he drinks more than a gallon of ale before urinating and vomiting, a recurring feature of his sinful life which he later repents (5.304–391). Langland's glutton is also an oath-maker, both "sin[s] of the mouth", as J. A. W. Bennett pointed out (Langland 1976, 173n314). In Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, the Pardoner, himself a vain and corrupt figure, describes the drunken antics of three young revellers who frequent taverns and prostitutes and, in an allusion to the forbidden fruit of *Genesis* (2:16), warns "O glotonye, ful of cursednesse! / O cause first of oure confusioun! / O original of oure dampnacioun" (Chaucer 1988, lines 498–500). He laments the pervasiveness of the sin, claiming that if a man knew how many miseries followed from excess and gluttony, he would be more moderate in his diet, and he describes the typical drunkard as ugly, with sour breath (512–20, 551–2). Readers of the Latin emblems of Andreas

Alciatus would have found the sin represented by the guzzling pelican that feeds upon its own parent (Daly, Callahan & Cuttler 1985, no. 91, 96) while theatre audiences would have been familiar with the allegorical figure of gluttony from the morality tradition since the sin made an appearance in a range of plays including the anonymous *Mary Magdalene*, Henry Medwall's *Nature* John Skelton's *Good Order* and Thomas Lupton's *All for Money* (Houle 1972). In the mid-1590s, playgoers at the Rose theatre could see Christopher Marlowe's personification of the sin in *Doctor Faustus*:

GLUTTONY. Who, I, sir? I am Gluttony. My parents are all dead, and the devil a penny they have left me but a bare pension, and that is thirty meals a day, and ten bevers—a small trifle to suffice nature. O, I come of a royal parentage. My grandfather was a gammon of bacon, my grandmother a hogshead of claret wine. My godfathers were these: Peter Pickle—herring and Martin Martlemas—beef. O, but my godmother, she was a jolly gentlewoman, and well beloved in every good town and city; her name was Mistress Margery March—beer. Now, Faustus, thou hast heard all my progeny, wilt thou bid me to supper?

FAUSTUS. No, I'll see thee hanged. Thou wilt eat up all my victuals.

GLUTTONY. Then the devil choke thee!

FAUSTUS. Choke thyself, glutton!

(Marlowe 1993, 'A-Text' 2.3.140–154)

But nowhere is the figure of Gluttony delineated with such characteristic attention to detail and liveliness than in Edmund Spenser's epic poem *The Faerie Queene* when the seven deadly sins parade through Lucifer's court (1.4.18–37). Lucifer is a demonic queen who resides in the House of Pride and herself embodies that particular sin, the others represented by her six counsellors. The first of these is Idleness and after him comes Gluttony:

Deformed creature, on a filthie swyne,  
 His belly was vp—blowne with luxury,  
 And eke with fatnesse swollen were his eyne,  
 And like a Crane his necke was long and fyne,  
 With which he swallowd vp excessiue feast,  
 For want whereof poore people oft did pyne;  
 And all the way, most like a brutish beast,  
 He spued vp his gorge, that all did him deteast.  
 (1.4.21.2–9)

'Gluttony' derives from the Latin *gluttio*, to swallow or gulp down (Glare 1968, 'gluttio'), but pleasure can be just as important to the glutton as rapid consumption and Spenser alludes to Philoxenus from Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics* who longed to have the neck of a crane so that he might enjoy his food for longer before it entered his stomach (Aristotle 1952, 331). In Spenser's figure the focus appears to be on *nimis*, eating too much, but the other features of gluttony are implied also. Gluttony included excessive drinking as well as an excessive interest in food and so it is

fitting that Spenser's Gluttony, "In greene vine leaues ... right fitly clad" (1.4.22.1), should resemble Dionysus, the ivy-wreathed Greek god of wine and intoxication. Spenser's Gluttony suffers a swollen belly, swollen eyes (an allusion to the psalm "Their eyes stand out with fatness", 73.7), and excessive sweating. Yet gluttony causes more than mere discomfort:

Full of diseases was his carcas blew,  
And a dry dropsie through his flesh did flow:  
Which by misdiet daily greater grew:  
(1. 4.23.6–8)

As we saw in the introduction, Galenic theory argued that disease was a consequence of humoral disruption and although dropsy was a rather loosely used term in the period (Forbes 1979, 139), the condition—an accumulation of watery fluid in the serous cavities or the connective tissue of the body (OED dropsy *n.* 1. a)—was generally understood to be provoked by excessive drinking which, ironically, caused an insatiable thirst as well as a distended stomach. In "The Discovery of the Little World" from *Microcosmos* John Davies referred to the "many dropsy-drie [who] forbear to drincke / Because they know their *ill* 'twould aggravate" (Davies 1603, H2v) and in Thomas Dekker's *If This be not a Good Play, the Diuell is in It*, the devil Lurchall says that a lake "cannot slake" the thirst of one of his victims, nor the seas "quench his dropsie" (5.4.255–258). In Dante's *Inferno* Master Adam is described as

one shaped like a lute, if only he had been cut short at the groin from the part where a man is forked. The heavy dropsy which, with its ill-digested humor, so unmates the members that the face does not answer to the paunch, made him hold his lips apart, like the hectic who, for thirst, curls the one lip toward the chin and the other upwards. (Alighieri 1971, 30.49)

Like Adam who cannot "move one inch in a hundred years" (Alighieri 1971, 30.79), Spenser's Gluttony is physically disabled by his indulgence: "Vnfit he was for any worldly thing, / And eke vnhable once to stirre or go" (1.4.23.1–2): he is too fat to walk.<sup>4</sup>

The early moderns would have been familiar with stories about ancient Roman gluttony at banquets, described by, amongst others, Pliny the Elder and Seneca the Younger, and severely condemned by the satirist Marcus Varro although, as Ludwig Friedlander pointed out, we should bear in mind that there may have been some exaggeration about the extent and profligacy of Roman feasting (Friedlander 1908, 150). Petronius's *Satyricon* describes a seemingly never-ending feast with numerous courses, all of them described in great detail, for example:

first we had a pig crowned with a wine-cup, garnished with honey cakes, and liver very well done, and beetroot of course, and pure wholemeal bread ... . The next dish was a cold tart, with excellent Spanish wine poured over warm honey. Indeed I ate a lot of the

tart, and gave myself such a soaking of honey. ... There was a piece of bear on a side dish. Scintilla was rash enough to taste it, and nearly brought up her own inside. I ate over a pound myself, for it tasted like proper wild boar. ... To finish up with we had cheese mellowed in new wine, and snails all round, and pieces of tripe, and liver in little dishes, and eggs in caps, and turnip, and mustard, and a dish of forcemeat. (Petronius 1930, 126–7)

Petronius is criticizing the excess of his fellow-Romans, and so too the stoic Seneca warns against those who misunderstand “how sober and abstemious the ‘pleasure’ of Epicurus really is” and indulge in excessive eating and drinking:

The man who has plunged into pleasures, in the midst of his constant belching and drunkenness, because he knows that he is living with pleasure, believes that he is living with virtue as well; for he hears first that pleasure cannot be separated from virtue, then dubs his vices wisdom, and parades what ought to be concealed. (Seneca 1935, 129; 12.1–4)

References to the regular use of emetics by Roman authors and the belief that Romans used vomitoriums at their feasts suggests a people who had given utter abandonment to sensual pleasure.<sup>5</sup> Even if we take into account Freidlander’s view that the use of emetics after meals “was then a usual dietetic, like bleeding and purging with our forbears” (Friedlander 1908, 154), the belief that Romans ate so much at a feast that they had to vomit in order to make room for more food and drink would have made a strong impression upon those Christians who followed the teachings of Thomas Aquinas and thought gluttony “the gravest of sins” (Aquinas 1968, 125). Perhaps with the Roman use of emetics in mind, Aquinas noted: “Though vomiting is good when we have eaten overmuch, yet it is sinful to subject oneself to the necessity by lack of moderation” (Aquinas 1968, 133).

The sin of gluttony was regularly condemned from the pulpit in the medieval and early modern period. In the *Epistle to the Romans* Saint Paul warns: “For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (16:18). Similarly *Proverbs* advises “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” (23:20–21). One should avoid the example of Noah, the first man allowed viticulture, who gets drunk and naked in *Genesis* (9:20): human consumption of wine has divine approval after the Flood (as does human consumption of animal flesh), but Noah overdoes it. *Ecclesiastes* states “Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!” (10: 17) and when the same book advises “There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour” (2: 24), the suggestion is that the immoderate consumption of food and drink should be avoided, not consumption *per se*, and that industry guards against any inclination to over-indulgence.

The Elizabethan *Homily against Gluttonie and Dronkennes* echoes these biblical admonitions and cites many more but makes a specific link between gluttony and other kinds of excess, warning that God

greuously . . . punisheth the immoderate abuse of those his creatures whiche he ordeyned to the mayntenauced of this our needy lyfe, as meates, drynkes, and apparell. And agayne, to shewe the noysome diseases and great mischiefes that commonly doe folowe them that inordinately geue vp them selues to be caryed headlong with suche pleasures as are ioyned eyther with daintie and ouerlarge fare, or else with costly and sumptuous apparell. (Church of England 1563, Oo2r)

The reference to apparel is problematic since what was appropriate in dress was dictated by rank and reinforced by sumptuary laws: those higher up the social scale were permitted to dress more sumptuously than their social inferiors. The message of the homily apparently conflicts with such laws by claiming that, regardless of rank, one should avoid excessive interest in all worldly things, something later made clear: “Saint Paule teacheth vs, whether wee eate or drynke, or whatsoever we do, to do all to the glorie of God” (Church of England 1563, Oo6r). The belief seems to be that one sin will lead to another: “If the Israelites had not geuen themselues to belly cheare, they had neuer so often fallen to Idolatrie” (Church of England 1563, Oo5r) and there is, moreover, a sense that inordinate desire for food and drink can lead one to neglect the compassion owed to one’s fellow-man:

Had not the ryche glutton ben so greedely geuen to the pamperynge of his belly, he woulde neuer haue ben so vnmercyfull to the poore Lazarus, neyther had he felt the tormentes of the vnquencheable fyre. What was the cause that GOD so horriblye punyshed Sodome and Gomorra? was it not theyr proude banquettyng and continuall idlenesse, which caused them to bee so lewde of lyfe, and so vnmercyfull towards the poore? What shall we now thynke of the horrible excesse, whereby so manye haue peryshed, and ben brought to destruction? (Church of England 1563, Oo5v)

The sermon then appeals to those not convinced by the argument that gluttony is a sin against God by focusing on its physical effects:

It hurteth the body, it infecteth the mynde, it wasteth the substaunce, and is noyfull to the neyghbours. . . . Oft commeth sodayne death by banquettyng, sometyme the membres are dissolued, and so the whole body is brought into a miserable state. He that eateth and drynketh vnmeasurablye, kyndleth oft tymes suche an vnnaturall heate in his body, that his appetite is prouoked thereby to desyre more than it shoulde, or els it ouercommeth his stomacke, and fylleth all the bodye full of sluggyshnes, makes it vnlustye and vnfytted to serue either God or man, not nourshyng the body, but hurting it, and laste of all, bryngeth many kyndes of incurable diseases, whereof ensueth sometymes desperate death. (Church of England 1563, Oo6v)

The sin of gluttony will inevitably lead to lust: “So surfettyng and dronkennes bytes by the belly, and causeth continuall gnawynge in the stomacke, brynges men

to whoredome and lewdenesse of harte, with daungers vnspeakable . . .” (Church of England 1563, Oo7v). Too much drinking also harms the mind, causing men to be “strycken with fransie” [frenzie], driven to “nere madnesse” or to become “brutyshe and blockyshe” (Church of England 1563, Oo7v). There is a specific warning that “amonge all sortes of men, excessiue drynkyng is more intollerable in a magistrate or man of auctoritie” for he cannot “be a guide vnto other men, standyng in nede of a gouernour himselfe” (Church of England 1563, Oo8r–8v). The man of authority can afford to eat and drink more than his social inferior (just as he is legally permitted to wear more sumptuous clothing) but he has a more pressing moral duty than those beneath him in rank to practise moderation.

Overeating was also considered harmful to health and moral fibre by the authors of the dietaries. Andrew Boorde in his *Compendyous regyment or a dyetary of helth* notes “Galen, declaring Hypocrates’ sentence upon eating too much meat, saith: ‘More meate than accordeth with nature, is named repletion, or a surfete’” (‘meat’ used in the archaic sense of food in general and solid food specifically). Boorde continues:

repletion or a surfyt is when the stomacke is farced [forced] or stuft, or repleted with to moche drynke and meate, that the lyuer [liver], which is the fyre under the potte, is subpressed, that he can nat naturally nor truely decoct, defye, ne dygest, the superabundance of meate and drynke the which is in the pot or stomach; wherefore dyuers tymes these impedymentes doth folow, the tongue is depryued of his offyce to speke, the wytes or sensys be dull and obnebulated from reason. Slouth and slugy [sluggishness] thene consequently foloweth; the appetyde is withdrawn. The heade is lyght & doth ake [ache] . . . both the pryncipall membres and the offyeyal [official?] membres dothe fayle of their strength, yet the pulsys [pulse is] full of agylyte [agility]. (Boorde 1547, C2v)

Boorde suggests that any man of leisure who eats more than two meals a day, or any labourer more than three, “lyueth a beastly lyfe” (Boorde 1547, C3r). Similarly Henry Wingfield introduces his dietary by lamenting that “by suche reuell, gourmandise, and daily surfetyng, many cruellye are putte to deathe, oftentimes in floryshynge youth, in the most pleasaunt tyme of their lyfe” (Wingfield 1551, A6r). William Bullein also warns against the “greedie gluttons” who are responsible for “wasting their substance, disforming their bodies, shortning their pleasant daies” and details the physical ailments likely to result from “delight in plentie of banquets”, namely “stinking vomits, sausy faces, dropsies, vertigo, palsies, obstructions, blindnes, flixes, apoplexis, caters, and rheumes, &c” (Bullein 1595, B2r). He also denounces excessive wine-drinking:

almightie God did ordaine it for the great comfort of mankind, to bee taken moderatly, but to be drunken with excesse, it is a poyson most venemous, it relaxeth the sinewes, bringeth palsey, falling sicknesse in cold persons, hote feuers, fransies, fighting, lecherie, and a consuming of the liuer, to cholerycke persons. And generally there is no credence to be giuen to drunkards, although they be mightie men. It maketh men like to

monsters, with countinaunces, like vnto burning coales: It dishonoureth nobel men, and beggereth poore men: and generally killeth as many as be slaine in cruell battelles, the more it is to be lamented. (Bullein 1595, L3v)

Drunkenness is specifically targeted by George Gascoigne's *A delicate diet, for daintiemouthde droonkardes* (Gascoigne 1576) and in the anonymous *Inuectiue ageinst glotony and dronkennes* (Anon 1545). The former notes that all sin, but drunkenness specifically "hardneth the hart, blindeth the eyes, amaseth the understanding, bewitcheth the sences, benoometh the members, dulleth the wyte, prouoketh vnto beastlynesse, discourageth from vertuous exercise, maketh louely to seeme lothsome, hasteneth crooked age, fostereth infirmities, defyleth the body openly, & wou~deth the soule vnseen." (Gascoigne 1576, B6r) while the latter concludes that drunkenness "condemneth the soule" and "imbecilleth the naturall strength of the Bodye" (Anon 1545, C2v).

Overeating then, and excessive drinking, were denounced for their negative effects upon physical health, causing the glutton to vomit, lose control of his bladder, have foul breath and, more seriously, develop a deformed and diseased body but the moral effects of the practice upon the Christian soul were also emphasized. The glutton is primarily a sinner and his intemperance regarding food and drink (the glutton is usually represented as male) leave him more vulnerable than his fellow-man to other sins such as lust and idolatry. One's rank had an important part to play since a man of authority, who was also usually a man of means, was considered more culpable than his social inferiors, even though the latter had less access to excessive food and drink. As we shall see, all of these factors have an important part to play in the characterization of Sir John.

### Shakespeare's Belly God: *1 Henry 4*

In his delineation of Sir John, Shakespeare's debt to the morality tradition is clear although, as David Bevington put it, "the moral stridency has disappeared" (Shakespeare 1987b, 25). Hal refers to Sir John as a "Manningtree ox" (1:2.5.457), describing his girth but also alluding to the town in Essex famous for its plays including moralities and he is characterized by the prince as "that reverend Vice, that grey Iniquity, that father Ruffian, that Vanity in Years" (1:2.5.458–459), an ironic comment on the incongruity of Sir John's behaviour and his age.<sup>6</sup> Although the spiritual dimension of Sir John's gluttony is evident in these allusions to the morality tradition, he shares with Spenser's Gluttony a focus on the physical consequences of his behaviour, especially in the first half of *1 Henry 4*. Shakespeare appears to revel in a myriad list of words and phrases to describe obesity: Sir John is defined by his huge waistline and the food that has produced it, with humorous abuse usually coming from Hal who calls him a "fat-kidneyed rascal" (1:2.2.6), and a "fat-guts" (1:2.2.31), claims that he "sweats to death, / And lards the lean earth as he walks along" (1:2.3.102–3), he is "Ribs" and "Tallow"

(1:2.5.111–2) and like “Titan kiss[ing] a dish of butter” (1:2.5.119–20), an “obscene greasy tallow–catch” (1:2.5.232)<sup>7</sup>. Sir John is “an old fat man; a tun of man . . . that bolting–hutch of beastliness”,<sup>8</sup> as well as “that huge bombard of sack, that stuffed cloak–bag of guts”, an ox with “pudding in his belly” (1:2.5.453–8), and “my sweet beef” (1:3.3.178). As we might expect, there is a reference also to the physical condition associated with Gluttony: Sir John is “that swollen parcel of dropsies” (1:2.5.455–6). When Falstaff mentions his size, and indeed the size of others, it is in comic contrast to his vastness, ironically comparing himself to “a shotten herring” (1:2.5.129) and “a bunch of radish” (1:2.5.187), the former being especially lean because it is a fish that has spawned (OED *shotten ppl. a.* 3.), and the root of the radish thought by the dietary author Thomas Elyot “to extenuate, or make thyn” (Elyot 1539, G1). Sir John denounces Hal: “you starveling, you elf–skin, you dried neat’s tongue, you bull’s pizzle, you stockfish . . .” (1:2.5.248–9), all but the first of which are foods emphasizing dryness. (For “elf–skin” the first two quartos have the word “elsskin” that Thomas Hanmer emended to “eel–skin”, so matching the others in being culinary.) As Bevington indicated, the foods referred to by Sir John produce “not only emaciation but a temperament opposite to sanguinity with its heat and moisture—the qualities of youth” (Shakespeare 1987b, 190n238).

As noted by J. Dover Wilson, the foodstuffs mentioned by Hal to describe Sir John’s body would have been found in the butchers’ stalls and cook shops of Eastcheap market (Wilson 1943, 26). This makes him a familiar figure and arguably contributes to the fact that he was and is an especially popular one with playgoers, as David Scott Kastan put it, he “almost never fails to delight an audience” (Shakespeare 2002a, 48). Yet, although Sir John eats the kind of foodstuff that would have been familiar to most playgoers, bread, capons, sack, he does so in quantities that set him apart from the majority who could not afford to consume so much. He is, at one and the same time, familiar and extreme. Sir John’s gluttony is a visible way of asserting his concern with feeding his body with sack and capons rather than feeding his soul with the Eucharist, and in itself typifies a deprecated imbalance: the receipts found in his pockets for a capon, sauce, two gallons of sack, anchovies and bread, provoke Prince Hal to remark “O monstrous! But one halfpennyworth of bread to this intolerable deal of sack” (1:2.5.543–4). There is, then, an evident tension between the affection with which Sir John is regarded by audiences and his role as a figure of vice who must be rejected by Hal if he is to become an effective leader.

The religious rhetoric which denounced gluttony provides an important context to Falstaff’s origin. As the editors of the Oxford Shakespeare noted:

the character subsequently known as Sir John Falstaff was originally a scurrilous portrayal of Sir John Oldcastle, a historical figure of Henry IV’s reign who was often regarded as a proto–Protestant martyr. As a result of ‘offence beinge worthily taken by Personages descended from his title’ (by whom are implied members of the Cobham family) the name Oldcastle was emended to Falstaff . . . (Wells et al. 1987, 330)<sup>9</sup>

For the Oxford editors, replacing Oldcastle with Falstaff “eliminated ... a scurrilously satirical representation of a revered historical figure” (Wells et al. 1987, 330). But how Shakespeare got from the proto-Protestant martyr to the indulgent and comedic figure in the second tetralogy has long bothered critics: in 1752 one identified only as ‘P.T.’ asked “could Shakespeare make a pampered glutton, a debauched monster, of a noble personage, who stood foremost on the list of English reformers and Protestant martyrs, and that too at a time when reformation was the Queen’s chief study” and concluded “Tis absurd to suppose, ‘tis impossible for any man to imagine” (P.T. 1752, 459–61). Geoffrey Bullough also thought it “not easy to see why Sir John Oldcastle became a comic character, for he was a tragic rather than a humorous figure” and, outlining the circumstances surrounding the charges of heresy laid against him and his violent death at the hands of Henry 5, wondered “How could such a person become the ‘fat Sir John Oldcastle’ of comedy?” (Bullough 1973c, 168–9). Bullough referred to John Bale’s study of Oldcastle’s life and noted that although Bale “found no flaw in his Christian hero” he reported Oldcastle’s confession before the Archbishop where Oldcastle stated “I shrive me here unto thee, my eternal loving God, that in my frail youth I offended the Lord, most grievously in pride, wrath and gluttony, in covetousness and in lechery. Many men have I hurt in mine anger, and done many other horrible sins; good Lord I ask thee mercy” (Bullough 1973c, 169–70).

Gary Taylor argued that Shakespeare’s lampooning of Oldcastle is an indication of the playwright’s Catholic sympathies (Taylor 1985, 99) but as David Scott Kastan pointed out, the case is “arguably more complex than Taylor allows” since it might constitute a criticism of non-conforming Protestants as much as pro-Catholic propaganda (Shakespeare 2002a, 59–61). As Kristen Poole indicated, “although the dour (and most often hypocritical) moralist was one species of puritan representation, the carnal and grotesque figure was far more prevalent. Falstaff, more so than Malvolio, epitomizes the predominant late Elizabethan expectations for a stage puritan” (Poole 2000, 37). Poole argued that in his delineation of Sir John, Shakespeare is indebted to the Marprelate controversy—where under the name of ‘Martin Marprelate’ non-conformist Protestants attacked the episcopacy—and noted that he “followed the pattern that the anti-Martinists had established for representing religious dissent” (Poole 2000, 21); like the Martinists, Sir John is caricatured as a gluttonous and riotous lord of misrule. Whether Sir John represents a parody of Catholic or Puritan beliefs is unclear but Bullough’s reference to Oldcastle’s confession of gluttony suggests that Shakespeare picked up on this flaw and ran with it. Perhaps more important than which side of the sectarian divide Shakespeare stood, if any, is his development of a gluttonous figure and his perspective on the moral consequences of excessive culinary indulgence.

As we have seen, Spenser’s focus was on the physical consequences of Gluttony but before he turns his attention from Gluttony to Lechery (“Who rough, and blacke, and filthy did appeare”, 1.4.24.5), he notes that Gluttony is also spiritually bankrupt: “Not meet to be of counsell to a king” (1.4.23.3). Although

Shakespeare, like Spenser, concentrated on the body of his gluttonous creation it seems likely that Spenser's parting shot, the notion that this figure would be an unsuitable advisor to a monarch, influenced the playwright in his depiction of the developing relationship between "plump Jack" and the future king of England. The focus on Sir John's gargantuan proportions, and the foodstuffs that have contributed to his belly, occur against the backdrop of the robbery at Gad's Hill. Sir John and his cohorts bind and rob travellers and are in turn robbed of their booty by Hal and Poins, which sets up Sir John's subsequent brag that he was "at half-sword with a dozen of them, two hours together" (1:2.5.164-5). That the travellers are not injured or killed makes the episode broadly comedic. Sir John is a liar but his lies deceive no one, as Hal notes "These lies are like their father that begets them—gross as a mountain, open, palpable" (1:2.5.229-30); there is no sense that Sir John can do any harm by his exaggerations and that he is lacking in honour contributes to the humour that is an integral part of his characterization. Shortly after the Gad's Hill robbery things change and Sir John becomes a more consequential figure. The scene between Hal and his father, King Henry 4, is a turning point. King Henry draws comparison between his son and the ineffectual and recently deposed Richard 2:

The skipping King, he ambled up and down  
With shallow jesters and rash bavin wits,  
Soon kindled and soon burnt, carded his state,  
Mingled his royalty with cap'ring fools,  
Had his great name profanèd with their scorns,  
And gave his countenance, against his name,  
To laugh at gibing boys, and stand the push  
Of every beardless vain comparative;  
Grew a companion to the common streets,  
Enfeoffed himself to popularity,  
That, being daily swallowed by men's eyes,  
They surfeited with honey, and began  
To loathe the taste of sweetness, whereof a little  
More than a little is by much too much.  
(1:3.2.60-73)

The connection between Richard's susceptibility to corrupt influence and Hal's relationship with Sir John is painfully clear and it seems appropriate that this comparison should involve a further one between inappropriate behaviour and food, in particular overeating; where Sir John is synonymous with foodstuff throughout the early part of the play here Richard, and by association Hal, are compared to honey. The Prince's response is to reassure his father: "I shall hereafter, my thrice gracious lord, / Be more myself" (1:3.2.92-3), adding later "And God forgive them that so much have swayed / Your majesty's good thoughts away from me" (1:3.2.130-31). When we next encounter Sir John, Hal's promise to his father and the preparations for war make dishonesty and indulgence a more

serious issue. In the next tavern scene Hal's characterization of Sir John as all belly—"there's no room for faith, truth, nor honesty . . . it is all filled up with guts and midriff" (1:3.3.154–156)—rings especially true when his response to Hal's rousing call to arms against rebellion—"The land is burning, Percy stands on high, / And either we or they must lower lie" — is to call for his breakfast (1:3.3.205–7).

Although Shakespeare is more subtle than his predecessors in assessing the consequences of gluttony, Sir John does suffer punishment for his behaviour, as Bernard Spivack pointed out:

Falstaff succumbs to the moral severity which is always present in the traditional stage image of the Vice, no matter how comic his performance. His banishment and imprisonment are regular punishments for the Vice, who, we must remember, is at bottom a personification and incorrigible; and we are in debt to Shakespeare's clemency that the fat knight escapes the even more common punishment of the gallows. (Spivack 1958, 204)

The co-existence of comedy and seriousness was something that seemed to come quite naturally to the early moderns, as Spivack put it, they were "completely at home with the double image and the double sentiment" Sir John represents (Spivack 1958, 204). The playful references to Sir John's huge girth that dominate the early part of *I Henry 4* give way to the figure's darker side, and Sir John's casual lack of regard for the welfare of his fellow-man, an effect of gluttony mentioned in the Elizabethan *Homily against Gluttonie and Drunkennes*, referred to above, causes him to be judged morally wanting by the playgoer. Notably, Sir John uses metaphors of food and feeding to express his disdain for the poor men he has pressed into service in the war:

and now my whole charge consists of ensigns, corporals, lieutenants, gentlemen of companies—slaves as ragged as Lazarus in the painted cloth, where the glutton's dogs licked his sores—and such as indeed were never soldiers, but discarded unjust servingmen, younger sons to younger brothers, revolted tapsters, and ostlers trade-fallen, the cankers of a calm world and a long peace, ten times more dishonourable—ragged than an old feazed ensign . . . (1:4.2.23–31)

The men pressed by Sir John have worked in the service-industry, they are the kind of men he would have encountered in the taverns and markets he frequented. All are callously described by Sir John as "food for powder" (1:4.2.65): in his view they are fit only to feed the canon. It is ironic that Sir John should mention Lazarus—the rich man from Luke's gospel who is told by Abraham "remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented" (16: 25), and mentioned in the homily against gluttony—since an audience might well think there is a lesson here for the fat knight also.<sup>10</sup> Just as his first thought upon hearing about the Northern Rebellion is of his breakfast, so Sir John privileges sack above his duties as a leader of men: "Russell, get thee before to Coventry; fill me a bottle of sack.

Our soldiers shall march through. We'll to Sutton Coldfield tonight" (1:4.2.1–3). Food and feeding dominate Sir John's view of the world and it is an especially inappropriate obsession given the current call for action in war: he pretends to Westmorland, who urges joining the king's powers at Shrewsbury, that he is "as vigilant as a cat to steal cream" (1:4.2.58–9) and speaks of his desire to attend "the latter end of a fray" as he would "the beginning of a feast" (4.2.79–80).<sup>11</sup> The come-uppance that awaits Sir John, unwittingly alluded to by Sir John himself in the reference to Lazarus and the rich man, apparently occurs at the hands of Douglas when the two fight and Sir John falls down as though dead (1:5.4.75). It is not clear to an audience watching the play for the first time that he is merely counterfeiting death and upon hearing that Hal will have him embowelled Sir John springs up (after Hal has exited) uttering "Embowelled? If thou embowel me today, I'll give you leave to powder me, and eat me too, tomorrow" (1:5.4.110–11). Sir John here alludes to *mumia*, or mummy (the remains of an embalmed corpse often consumed for therapeutic purposes), his obsession with consuming foodstuff extending, it seems, even to pondering the consumption of his own body by others. More importantly however, and unlike the men he has pressed into service, Sir John will not become a source of food. Sir John is indeed like Lazarus, not Lazarus the glutton who receives divine punishment for his sin in the gospel of Saint Luke, but rather the Lazarus raised from the dead by Christ in the gospel of Saint John (11:1–44).

### Foils to Sir John: 2 Henry 4

Overeating was condemned by the dietaries but so was excessive abstinence which was associated with monastic orders and thus England's Catholic past. The Elizabethan *Homyly against Gluttonie and Dronkennes* refers to the prophet Isaiah who warned that fasting as well as banqueting "maketh men forgetfull of theyr duetie towards God, when they geue them selues to all kyndes of pleasure, not consideryng nor regardyng the workes of the Lorde, who hath created meates and dringes, as Saint Paule sayeth, to be receaued thankfully of them that beleue & know the trueth" (Church of England 1563, Oo2v–Oo3r). The seemingly masochistic pleasure to be had in depriving the body of sustenance must, it seems, be avoided as much as the pleasure to be had by gorging on food and drink. The *Homyly of Good Workes. And Fyrst of Fastyng* similarly approves of fasting only in moderation, noting that Christ, whose own disciples did not fast, admonished the Pharisees "because they put a religion in theyr doynge and ascribed holynes to the outwarde worke wrought, not regardyng to what ende fastyng is ordeyned" (Church of England 1563, Mm6v). Throughout Shakespeare's plays there is a distinct suspicion of those who do not enjoy eating and drinking. In *Measure for Measure* and *Love's Labour's Lost* women undermine male attempts at abstinence and show the monastic way of life to be unworkable: Angelo's efforts to suppress sexuality in Vienna provokes a visit by the chaste Isabella which causes him to

acknowledge his own sexual desires, while the oath made by the king of Navarre and his companions to make their court “a little academe” (1.1.13)—with lives devoted to study, the exclusion of women and “one day in a week to touch no food, / And but one meal on every day beside” (1.1.39–40)—falls apart with the arrival of the Princess of France and her ladies-in-waiting. Malvolio’s affectations in *Twelfth Night* are in keeping with the general suspicion towards abstemious thin men in Shakespeare’s comedies, amongst them the foolish Slender from *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, who repeatedly refuses Master Ford’s requests to eat and, like Malvolio, is unsuccessful in love. Indeed Shakespeare may have had a specific actor in mind to take the role of the ‘thin man’ in his plays since he repeatedly exploits this recognizable stereotype. Romantic love is characterized throughout the comedies as a kind of alien, inadequate feeding: in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* Valentine is willing to “feed upon the shadow” of Sylvia’s “perfection” (3.1.177) but the Clown, Speed, has a more literal, indeed pragmatic, approach which would have appealed to Shakespeare’s audience: “Though the chameleon love can feed on the air, I am one that am nourished by my victuals, and would fain have meat” (2.1.162–4).<sup>12</sup>

Hal’s curt statement that Sir John “owest God a death” (1:5.1.126) is echoed in *2 Henry 4* by one of the unfortunate men selected by Sir John to go to war. Although Peter Bullcalf and Ralph Mouldy are willing to offer bribes in order to avoid fighting, Francis Feeble is stoical:

A man can die but once. We owe God a death. I’ll ne’er bear a base mind. An ’t be my destiny, so; an ’t be not, so. No man’s too good to serve’s prince. And let it go which way it will, he that dies this year is quit for the next. (2:3.2.232–6)

Feeble would presumably have been played by a slight and physically weak actor, which would allow him to act as a comic foil to Sir John. Ordinarily there is a general suspicion towards abstemious thin men in Shakespeare’s drama but Feeble is an exception. He apparently contrasts physically with the fat knight and so too his fatalism contrasts with Sir John’s cowardice. Of course for Feeble it is weariness with the world that makes for his ersatz heroism: he does not care whether he lives or dies, indeed the latter saves on the rent so he is not presented in any straightforward manner as providing a moral comment Sir John could learn from.<sup>13</sup> Another minor role calling for an actor of slender proportions is that of the First Beadle who comes to arrest Doll Tearsheet, because “There hath been a man or two killed about her” (2:5.4.6). The 1600 quarto’s stage direction reading ‘Enter Sincklo and three or foure officers’ (Shakespeare 1600, K3v) indicates that Shakespeare had the actor John Sincklo in mind for this part and it seems clear from the context that Sincklo was exceptionally thin (Nungezer 1929, ‘Sincler, John; Eccles 1993, 168). Doll calls the Beadle “you thin man in a censer” (2:5.4.18), probably referring to a vessel used for holding incense, a thurible, and suggesting a connection between the Beadle and Catholic ritual as well as monastic fasting.<sup>14</sup> Crucially, from the perspective of Mistress Quickly and Doll, the Beadle

represents a tyrannous authority and Doll condemns him as a “filthy famished correctioner” (2:5.4.20), one who brings her “to a justice” (2:5.4.25–6), in contrast to Sir John, the gluttonous law-breaker.

The abstemious tyrant is a role more fully developed in the figure of Angelo in *Measure for Measure* whose apparently punctilious behaviour is tested by the Duke:

Lord Angelo is precise,  
 Stands at a guard with envy, scarce confesses  
 That his blood flows, or that his appetite  
 Is more to bread than stone. Hence shall we see  
 If power change purpose, what our seemers be.  
 (1.3.50–54)

Angelo is indeed a ‘seemer’ and although his appetite, which he publicly denies, is for flesh in the form of sex not food, his demands are expressed in culinary terms: “I have begun, / And now I give my sensual race the rein. / Fit thy consent to my sharp appetite” (2.4.159–61). Angelo’s lust for the virginal Isabella is in keeping with the appetite for female flesh that dominates the play’s brothel scenes, where sexual activity is figured in terms of consumption: Mistress Overdone, the brothel keeper (whose very name suggests excess), is referred to as a “morsel” (3.1.321) and the prostitutes she controls as “beef” (3.1.323) and “mutton” (3.1.440). As in 2 *Henry 4*, liberty and surfeit provoke disease: Lucio, referring to Mistress Overdone, claims to have “purchased . . . many diseases under her roof” (1.2.44) and asserts that the gentleman with whom he converses has “hollow” bones (venereal disease affects the bones), concluding “impiety has made a feast of thee” (1.2.54–5). Pompey, a bawd who pretends to be a tapster (again sex and food are conflated), notes that Mistress Overdone “hath eaten up all her beef, and she is herself in the tub” (3.1.323–4), a reference to the sweating tub used in the treatment of venereal disease (Williams 1994b, ‘tub’). Moreover, worldly desires are twice referred to as provoking fever: Isabella expresses concern to Claudio “Lest thou a feverous life shouldst entertain, / And six or seven winters more respect / Than a perpetual honour. (3.1.73–5) and the Duke responds to Escalus’s query “What news abroad i’ th’ world?” with “None, but that there is so great a fever on goodness that the dissolution of it must cure it” (3.1.479–81). As in much of the literary and religious texts considered toward the beginning of this chapter, excessive consumption is thought to cause putrefaction within the soul as well as the body but a professed lack of appetite suggests hypocrisy.

Justice Shallow, another apparently thin man in 2 *Henry 4*, is a more problematic figure than the Beadle because we have only Sir John’s word for it that Shallow is misrepresenting his past:

This same starved justice hath done nothing but prate to me of the wildness of his youth and the feats he hath done about Turnbull Street; and every third word a lie . . . I do remember him at Clement’s Inn, like a man made after supper of a cheese paring. When

a was naked, he was for all the world like a forked radish, with a head fantastically carved upon it with a knife. A was so forlorn that his dimensions, to any thick sight, were invisible. A was the very genius of famine. (2:3.2.299–309)

Similarly we only have Sir John's word for it that Shallow is thin and it could well be argued that Sir John's own predilections colour his descriptions and understanding of others; as with Feeble and other characters described as having specific physical characteristics, there is a potential for casting which undermines the perceptions of one or more of the characters involved. Sir John is irritated by what he describes as Shallow's lack of, or suppression of, appetite and even Shallow's bragging about being familiar with John of Gaunt is figured in terms of his physical appearance, provoking a play on the word 'Gaunt': "I saw it, and told John O' Gaunt he beat his own name; for you might have trussed him and all his apparel into an eel-skin" (2:3.2.314–16).<sup>15</sup> In the 1600 quarto edition of the play, but not included in the Folio, is Sir John's complaint that Shallow proved to be "lecherous as a monkey, and the whores called him mandrake" (2: 'additional passages' after 3.2.309), a statement that emphasizes Shallow's exclusively sexual appetite (no whores are mentioned by Sir John in the earlier version). In both the quarto and Folio Shallow is described by Sir John via foodstuffs which allude quite specifically to sex: as we saw above, the radish was thought to provoke thinness but it was also a familiar synonym for the penis and the mandrake, which could also signify male genitalia, was thought by some to increase sexual prowess and fertility (Williams 1994b, 'radish'; Williams 1994c, 'mandrake'). In traditional representations of the seven deadly sins lust is a natural consequence of gluttony but here it is aligned with Shallow's alleged abstemiousness. The opposite is said of Prince John who, although not apparently exceptionally thin, is considered weak by Sir John specifically because of his diet:

Good faith, this same young sober-blooded boy doth not love me, nor a man cannot make him laugh. But that's no marvel; he drinks no wine. There's never none of these demure boys come to any proof; for thin drink doth so overcool their blood, and making many fish meals, that they fall into a kind of male green-sickness; and then when they marry, they get wenchens. They are generally fools and cowards—which some of us should be too, but for inflammation. (2:4.2.84–92)

By "thin drink" Sir John refers to small beer, that is, beer of a weak, poor, or inferior quality (Halliwell 1855, 'thin-drink'; OED small beer *n.* 1.) and in 2 *Henry 4* Hal is ashamed that he craves it: "Doth it not show vilely in me to desire small beer?" (2:2.2.5–6). Sir John's speech on the positive effects of sack (2:4.2.93–121) argues that it engenders heat and courage, a view which concurs with that of Andrew Boorde who claims that wine "doth ingendre good bloude, it doth comforte and doth nouryshe the brayne and all the body, and it resolueth fleume, it ingendreth heate, and it is good agaynst heuynes [heaviness] and pencyfulnes [pensiveness] ... " (Boorde 1547, D1v). While the dietaries tend to agree on the benefits of wine-drinking, Sir John's closing statement, that if he had sons he

“would teach them . . . to forswear thin potations, and to addict themselves to sack” (4.2.119–121) goes against the advice that consumption should be moderate.

Like Sir John, Thomas Elyot prefers wine to beer:

But to say as I thinke, I suppose that neither Ale nor Béere is to be co~pared to Wine, considering that in them doe lacke the heate and moysture which is in Wine. For that being moderately vsed, is most like to the naturall heat & moysture of mans bodie. And also the licour of Ale or Béere being more grosse, do ingender more grosse vapours and corrupt humours then Wine doth, being dronk in like excesse of quantitie (Elyot 1595, H3v).

But, citing Galen, Elyot warns that “yong men should drinke little wine, for it shall make them prone to furie, and leachery, & that part of the soule which is called rationable, it shal make troublous and dull”, suggesting that Prince John is right to stick to small beer (Elyot 1595, H2v). So too Walter Baley notes that wine is good “to preserue the sighte ... for the vapours of wine are drying, cleare abstersiue, & so do consume and extenuate grosse and thick humours” but also that “wine in some affectes of the eies is forbidden” (Baley 1602, A6r). William Vaughan praises white wine, which “drunk in the morning fasting, cleanseth the lungs: Being taken with red Onions bruised, it pearceth quickly into the bladder, and breaketh the stone” but not when consumed by a glutton like Sir John: “if this kind of wine be drunk with a full stomack, it doth more hurt then good, and causeth the [m]eat to descend, before it be fully concocted” (Vaughan 1600, B5v). Vaughan warns also that sack, Sir John’s favourite wine, “doth make men fatte and foggy” and specifically warns against its consumption by young men, again suggesting that Prince John’s choice of drink is a wise one. Vaughan also claims that sack “Being drunke before meales ... prouoketh appetite, comforteth the spirits marueilously” (Vaughan 1600, B6r), a point that would not seem to apply to Sir John who eats more or less constantly. Unlike Sir John, Vaughan seems especially keen on beer:

Beere which is made of good Malt, well brewed, not too new, nor too stale, nourisheth the body, causeth a good colour, and quickly passeth out of the body. In Sommer it auailleth a man much, and is no lesse wholesome to our constitutions then wine: Besides the nutritiue faculty, which it hath by the malt, it receiueh likewise a certaine property of medicine by the hop. (Vaughan 1600, B4r)

So too William Bullein approves of “Cleane brewed beere if it be not very strong, brewed with good hops, [which] clenseth the body from corruption, and is very wholsome for the liyer”, specifically the kind of beer ridiculed by Sir John, but warns against “many rotten hops, or hoppes dried like dust which commeth from beyond the sea” (Bullein 1595, L4r). Nevertheless he also holds the view expressed by Sir John that beer, and ale, “haue no such vertue nor goodnes as wyne hath, and the sur fetes which be taken of them, through drunkennes, be worse then the surfetes taken of wyne”, although he does note that while drinking ale or beer on an empty stomach “dooeth good”, drinking wine when hungry “will hurt the

sinewes, and bringeth crampe, sharpe agues, and palsies . . . “ (Bullein 1595, 77). Thomas Cogan also considers it “worse to be drunke of ale than wine” noting that “the drunkenesse indureth longer: by reason that the fumes and vapours of ale that ascend to the head, are more grosse, and therefore cannot bee so soone resolved as those that rise up of wine” (Cogan 1636, Ii1v–Ii2r).

Sir John criticizes Prince John for eating too much fish (“making many fish meals”, 2:4.2.89), a foodstuff generally regarded with some suspicion. Thomas Moffett concludes that “all fish (compared with flesh) is cold and moist, of little nourishment, engendring watrish and thinn blood” (Moffett 1655, U1v) and William Bullein, citing Galen, claims “the nourishments of flesh is better than the nourishments of fish” (Bullein 1595, K5v). The wealthy generally ate lots of red meat and the less well off ate as much meat as they could afford. ‘Fish days’, implemented for economic reasons—to encourage the fishing industry and bring down the high price of meat—were apparently unpopular, not least because, as Edward Jeninges indicates, many considered laws advocating abstinence from the eating of meat reminiscent of those “made and used in the time of Papistrie, and by ancient authoritie of the Pope, who we should not in anything imitate, but rather in all things by contrarie” (Jeninges 1590, D3r). In the *History of King Lear* the disguised Kent says to Lear

I do profess to be no less than I seem, to serve him truly that will put me in trust, to love him that is honest, to converse with him that is wise and says little, to fear judgement, to fight when I cannot choose, and to eat no fish. (4.12–16)

As Stanley Wells pointed out, the reference to eating no fish is “Self–deflatingly anticlimatic” but might also suggest that Kent is “a loyal Protestant who does not fast on Fridays” (Shakespeare 2000, 126n14–15). Wells cited W. J. Craig’s reference to John Marston’s *The Dutch Courtesan*: “I trust I am none of the wicked that eat fish on Fridays”, 1.2.18–19 (Shakespeare 1901, 43n18,19) and Gordon Williams’s explanation of Kent’s statement: “to avoid the ways of Roman Catholics and of whores” (Williams 1997, ‘fish’), since the fish was also a sexual emblem. Denouncing Prince John for eating fish would be in keeping with the historical figure upon whom Sir John was based: the proto–Protestant martyr Oldcastle.<sup>16</sup>

Most significantly, Sir John makes a connection between diet and masculine sexual prowess and attributes to Prince John a form of anaemia called chlorosis which was commonly termed ‘green–sickness’. The contemporary references to the illness cited by Gordon Williams demonstrate that it was usually thought to afflict young women, its cure being sexual activity (Williams 1994c, ‘green sickness’). As Ian Maclean pointed out, most early moderns, following Aristotle, believed that sex was determined at the moment of conception by the male semen and this could be affected by diet, climate or physical constitution (Maclean 1980, 37). Sir John’s comment about the sex of children born to weak men recalls Macbeth’s comment that his wife should “Bring forth men–children only, / For thy

undaunted mettle should compose / Nothing but males (1.7.73–5). Sir John believes the way to courage is through the stomach: in effect, according to Sir John, the Prince's diet of weak beer and fish has made him effeminate, suggesting his inferiority, and that he will thus produce inferior, that is female, children. Prince John is neither weak nor cowardly but he does reveal a shocking duplicity in his treatment of the rebels toward the end of *2 Henry 4*. Having ordered the rebels to "Discharge your powers unto their several counties, / As we will ours" (2:4.1.287–88) the prince assures them that their former hostility to the crown has been pardoned: "Let's drink together friendly and embrace, / That all their eyes may bear those tokens home / Of our restored love and amity" (2:4.1.289–291). When the Archbishop of York announces himself confident that all is resolved—"I take your princely word for these redresses" (2:4.1.292)—Prince John responds "I give it you, and will maintain my word; / And thereupon I drink unto your grace (2:4.1.293–294). The subsequent arrest of the rebels who are charged with high treason comes as a shock and it is difficult not to agree with the Archbishop who accuses the prince of breaking faith. The audience is perhaps torn at this point between regarding Prince John as a strong leader of men who will not compromise when it comes to rebellion or as a man not to be trusted, much like England's fish-eating Catholics. It is notable that Prince John makes and breaks his promise over a glass of wine which he himself has been brought to the meeting: as Sir John has already shown in his attack upon the prince's diet, food and drink can be effective weapons when dealing with one's enemies.

### The Gaping Grave

The first scene from *2 Henry 4* in which Sir John appears shows him awaiting a medical opinion on his urine, his fondness for large amounts of food and sack having apparently caught up with him. The prospect of mortality lingers in this scene and the humorous response from the Page to Sir John's question regarding the doctor's opinion—"He said, sir, the water itself was a good healthy water, but for the party that owed it, he might have more diseases than he knew for" (2:1.2.3–5)—cannot cancel the distinct sense of foreboding, reinforced by Sir John's numerous references throughout the scene to disease, including his own gout, and the pox. Where gluttony dominates the tavern scenes in *1 Henry 4*, there is in this play a sense that lust proceeds from gluttony, as was traditional when enumerating the seven deadly sins. This is especially apparent with the introduction of Doll: as far as Sir John is concerned, men are victims rather than co-perpetrators of the related vices: "If the cook help to make the gluttony, you help to make the diseases, Doll. We catch of you, Doll, we catch of you; grant that, my poor virtue, grant that" (2:2.4.43–5). The vices are paired also in Sir John's relationship with the Hostess who complains to the Lord Chief Justice that Falstaff "has eaten me out of house and home" and, moreover, "didst swear . . . to marry me" (2:2.1.75–6; 93–4). But we never get the impression that women are anything other than a

means to an end for Sir John: he repeats his oath to marry Mistress Quickly only in order to appease the Lord Chief Justice and in order to get more money from her (2:2.1.134–45). The notion of Sir John the lover, not fully developed in this play where the focus is on his gourmanding, was perhaps responsible for the apocryphal story that it was Queen Elizabeth's request to see Sir John in love that urged Shakespeare to write *The Merry Wives of Windsor*: we have seen how someone unwilling to fight performs in battle and in *Merry Wives* the focus is on his sexual/romantic performance, and audience hopes are not high.<sup>17</sup>

In *1 Henry 4* Sir John's body is described in terms of the food he eats and, as with many moral tirades against gluttony, it is his inordinate consumption of food rather than the food itself which is to blame. In *2 Henry 4* however, there is a shift toward regarding food as rotten or contaminated. In 2.4. Doll refuses Pistol's sexual advances: "Away, you mouldy rogue, away! I am meat for your master" (2:2.4.121–22) and ridicules his claim to be a captain "He a captain? Hang him, rogue, he lives upon mouldy stewed prunes and dried cakes" (2:2.4.141–42). As Williams pointed out, stewed prunes were a popular dish in brothels and were thought to protect against disease; the term could also suggest a brothel whore or even testicles (Williams 1994b, 'stewed prunes') and in *Measure for Measure* fun is had at the expense of Elbow's wife who, looking for more than the two stewed prunes in her possession, enters the brothel (2.1.87–132). The authors of the dietaries tend to emphasize the medicinal qualities of the fruit: Thomas Elyot asserts that prunes (a term often synonymous with plum, the pre-dried version of the fruit) "do dispose a man to the stoole but do brynge no maner of nourishment" although, like figs, "being dried they doo profite" (Elyot 1539, F1v) and Thomas Moffett refers to "Damase prunes", that is 'damask prunes' or dried damson plums, as "sweet, nourishing and pleasant being stued or sodden; when contrariwise the French prune is harsh and soure, fitter to cool men in agues and to edge distasted stomachs, then to be offred any man in way of meat" (Moffett 1655, Dd1r–v). The stewed prunes Doll claims are eaten by Pistol are presumably even less nourishing because they have gone off. Stewed prunes are also referred to by Slender in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in the context of a fencing-match: "I bruised my shin th'other day, with playing at sword and dagger with a master of fence—three veneys for a dish of stewed prunes—and, by my troth, I cannot abide the smell of hot meat since" (1.1.263–7). In the same scene Slender repeatedly rejects invitations to dinner and, indirectly, the opportunity to court Anne Page: "I am not a-hungry, I thank you, forsooth" (1.1.251); "I'faith, I'll eat nothing" (1.1.260); "I'll eat nothing, I thank you, sir" (1.1.282). Slender's lack of appetite for food is apparently connected to his sexual experiences, presumably in a brothel, which have provoked a desire to avoid all "hot meat", that is, sexually available female flesh. When Sir John playfully admonishes Mistress Quickly "for suffering flesh to be eaten in thy house, contrary to the law, for the which I think thou wilt howl" she defends her actions: "All victuallers do so. What's a joint of mutton or two in a whole Lent?" (2:2.4.348–351). Here, as in *Measure for Measure*, mutton refers to female flesh; the term was often used specifically to refer to a prostitute (OED

mutton *n.* 4) and although it could be used for young female flesh, there is a sense, especially when used in the context of a brothel, that the ‘meat’ referred to is rotten or contaminated and certainly past its best.

In the same scene, Sir John notes why the Prince loves Poinso so much: “Because their legs are both of a bigness, and a plays at quoits well, and eats conger and fennel . . .” (2:2.4.246–47). Rene Weis and A. R. Humphreys claimed that Sir John is here referring to conger–eel, a food thought difficult to digest and liable to blunt the wits (Shakespeare 1997, 183n243; Shakespeare 1966, 79n242). Both editors point to Beaumont and Fletcher’s *Philaster* where Galatea refers to “fresh pork, conger, and clarified whey” as “dullers of the vital spirits” (2.2.41–2) but, as Andrew Gurr noted, “vital spirits” is a reference to semen and ‘conger’ “was a common term for ‘cucumber’ in the Midlands” (Beaumont & Fletcher 1969, 34n41–2; OED conger *sb.* 3). It seems likely that Sir John refers to cucumber rather than fish since, as Gurr indicated, the former was “more distinctly noted as a chilling or unsexing food than eels” (Beaumont & Fletcher 1969, 34n41). Indeed, Thomas Elyot and Thomas Cogan both claim that cucumbers “abate carnall lust” (Elyot 1539, E3r; Cogan 1636, N1v). Fennel was used in sauces to accompany fish but it was also associated with women: Elyot asserts that “the sede or rote makith abundance of mylke” (Elyot 1539, F4r–v) and so too Philip Moore that it “causeth womens pappes to bee full of milke” (Moore 1564, C2r). The general sense of Sir John’s comments becomes clearer via knowledge of the dietaries: he appears to be suggesting that the Prince and Poinso lack virility, the same accusation he levelled against Prince John, which might explain his reference to their legs as “of a bigness”, that is slim like a woman’s, which makes better sense than Weis’s explanation “they are both of them fops who are obsessed with fashion” (Shakespeare 1997, 183n242) and fits with Sir John’s hints that there is a distinctly homoerotic dimension to their relationship.

Specific references to food in *2 Henry 4* tend to suggest sickness and death. At the beginning of 2.4 Francis admonishes the Second Drawer for bringing a dish of apple–johns to the table: “Thou knowest Sir John cannot endure an apple–john” to which the Second Drawer replies: “Mass, thou sayst true. The Prince once set a dish of apple–johns before him; and told him, there were five more Sir Johns; and, putting off his hat, said ‘I will now take my leave of these six dry, round, old, withered knights.’ It angered him to the heart” (2:2.4.2–9). The apple–john has come up before: in the latter half of *1 Henry 4* where Sir John describes himself as “withered like an old apple–john” (1:3.3.4); the fruit, said to keep two years and be in perfection when shrivelled and withered (OED apple–john), appears to alert Sir John to his own mortality. Disease, sickness and the prospect of death dominate this scene and others featuring Sir John and his cohorts in *2 Henry 4*: as we saw above, the figure of the thin man recurs, a symbol of involuntary as well as apparently self–induced starvation, and Sir John chooses amongst the sick and weak those who will be sent to fight in the war.

Illness and death also dominate those scenes from which Sir John is absent in *2 Henry 4*: the illness of the king is referred to repeatedly and he speaks of the

rebellion against him in terms of disease: “Then you perceive the body of our kingdom, / How foul it is, what rank diseases grow, / And with what danger near the heart of it” (2:3.1.37–9). The Archbishop of York, however, views rebellion as medicinal:

we are all diseased,  
 And with our surfeiting and wanton hours  
 Have brought ourselves into a burning fever,  
 And we must bleed for it—of which disease  
 Our late King Richard, being infected, died.  
 But, my most noble lord of Westmorland,  
 I take not on me here as a physician,  
 Nor do I as an enemy to peace  
 Troop in the throngs of military men;  
 But rather show a while like fearful war  
 To diet rank minds, sick of happiness,  
 And purge th’ obstructions which begin to stop  
 Our very veins of life.  
 (2:4.1.54–66)

In *Richard 2* Richard refuses the letting of blood (“Let’s purge this cholera without letting blood. ... / Our doctors say this is no time to bleed”, 1.1.153–57) yet the societal illness which causes Richard’s infection, referred to by the Archbishop above, leads to blood-letting in the form of war, as though a biological necessity were being played out. The Archbishop previously complained about the fickle nature of the multitude in terms of gluttony and regurgitation:

The commonwealth is sick of their own choice;  
 Their over-greedy love hath surfeited.  
 An habitation giddy and unsure  
 Hath he that buildeth on the vulgar heart.  
 O thou fond many, with what loud applause  
 Didst thou beat heaven with blessing Bolingbroke,  
 Before he was what thou wouldst have him be!  
 And being now trimmed in thine own desires,  
 Thou, beastly feeder, art so full of him  
 That thou provok’st thyself to cast him up.  
 So, so, thou common dog, didst thou disgorge  
 Thy glutton bosom of the royal Richard;  
 And now thou wouldst eat thy dead vomit up,  
 And howl’st to find it. What trust is in these times?  
 They that when Richard lived would have him die  
 Are now become enamoured on his grave.  
 (2:1.3.87–102)

As we saw earlier, in *1 Henry 4*, Bolingbroke compares Hal to Richard and warns against the multitude who “surfeit on honey” but this is a darker, sicker, vision of

feeding, alluding to the biblical image of the dog returning to his own vomit just as the fool returns to foolishness (*Proverbs* 26:11) and suggesting the practice, admonished by Aquinas, of vomiting in order to continue feeding.

Hal's rejection of Sir John occurs in the final scene of *2 Henry 4*:

I know thee not, old man. Fall to thy prayers.  
 How ill white hairs becomes a fool and jester!  
 I have long dreamt of such a kind of man,  
 So surfeit-swelled, so old, and so profane;  
 But being awake, I do despise my dream.  
 Make less thy body hence, and more thy grace.  
 Leave gormandizing; know the grave doth gape  
 For thee thrice wider than for other men.  
 (2:5.5.47–54)

Sir John's excessive feeding is denounced but specific reference is made to the incongruity of an elderly glutton. The playful reference to Sir John in *1 Henry 4* as "that reverend Vice, that grey iniquity, that father Ruffian, that Vanity in Years" (1:2.5.458–59) has given way to a serious moral diatribe.<sup>18</sup> Hal's view of gluttony as especially unfitting for an old man is one also held by Thomas Newton in his dietary aimed specifically at the elderly:

A special care for wholesome Diet must bee had in this Age, rather then in any other. For thereby the body now stowping, doating, tottering with yeres, is kept and conserued in lustie, strong and healtie plight, with the perfect and sound use of the Senses, euen till the very last caste of extreeme Age. (Newton 1586, B2r)

Newton, who considers the bodies of old men "by nature . . . colde and drye" (Newton 1586, B4r), warns that

olde folkes must feede sparingly and moderately, not inforcing them selues with much at once, but often in a daye, as twise or thrise, as their strength shall seeme to require, or be able to beare: and as by custome they haue acquainted themselues. For, if they exceed measure neuer so little, it doth them much harme. (Newton 1586, B8r)

We can guess what Newton would have thought of Sir John. The belief that the old should know better than to indulge in gluttony is reinforced by the *Homily against Gluttonie and Dronkennes* which says of Lot "Who woulde haue thought that an olde man . . . shoulde be so farre paste the remembraunce of his dutie?" (Church of England 1563, Oo4v). We saw above that the homily regards "excessiue drinking . . . more intolerable in a Magistrate or man of authority", perhaps alluding to *Ecclesiastes* which states "Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!" (10: 17), but Shakespeare is apparently more indebted to the notion of the drunkard as an undesirable companion to a ruler and thus perhaps to Spenser's Gluttony

who, like Sir John, is “Not meet to be of counsell to a king” (1.4.23.3) and must therefore be rejected.

The details surrounding Sir John’s death are reported by the Hostess in *Henry 5*:

A parted ev’n just between twelve and one, ev’n at the turning o’ th’ tide—for after I saw him fumble with the sheets, and play with flowers, and smile upon his finger’s end, I knew there was but one way. For his nose was as sharp as a pen, and a babbled of green fields. (2.3.12–17)<sup>19</sup>

In this description Shakespeare is perhaps indicating the inevitability of physical disintegration, even for as great a glutton as Sir John. Those familiar with Newton’s dietary would be prepared for what would happen to the body of an old man: “lacking his naturall strength and maintenaunce, [it] beginneth to quaille and faile . . . and becommeth thereby slenderer, thinner and dryer then it was . . . “ (Newton 1586, B4r–B4v); of course this fate is not exclusive to the elderly but occurs to all human flesh which must succumb to mortality and become ‘thin’, that is, finally reduced to a skeleton. The Hostess confirms Nim’s statement that Sir John denounced sack but not that he denounced women, her tendency to misunderstand what is going on highlighted when the Boy corrects her “Yes, that a did, and said they were devils incarnate”, a term she confuses with the colour red (2.3.26–32). That Sir John is an unrecognizable figure in this description partly stems from the confusion over what really occurred as much as any sense that the old sinner has repented his wicked ways. Nevertheless, the hostess’s report that Sir John “was rheumatic, and talked of the Whore of Babylon”, thinking the flea on Bardolph’s nose “a black soul burning in hell–fire” (2.3.35–9), as well as her claim that he “cried out, ‘God, God, God’, three or four times” (2.3.18–19), contributes to an acute sense of moral consciousness not present in the tavern scenes. Reference to the Whore of Babylon, thought by many Protestant commentators to represent the degenerate Catholic Church (Waters 1966, 281–2), and the allusion to Rome (as Gary Taylor pointed out, a pun on ‘Rome–atic’, Shakespeare 1982b, 143n34), brings us back to Sir John’s origin as the proto–Protestant martyr Sir John Oldcastle and the specifically religious significance of Shakespeare’s glutton.

Although disease and death dominate *2 Henry 4* and Sir John’s death is reported at the beginning of *Henry 5*, it seems appropriate, given the popular view of the character as one who delights, that Sir John should once more feature as a lovable rogue in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The kind of darkness that emerges in the plays considered above, in particular the sense that Sir John is judged for mistreating his fellow-men, does not dominate this comedy. Sir John is once again the fat knight and is referred to throughout in terms similar to those used in the tavern scenes in *1 Henry 4*: his “guts are made of puddings” (2.1.29–30), he is a “whale, with so many tuns of oil in his belly” (2.1.61–2), is “melted . . . in his own grease” (2.1.65), his “belly is all putter” (5.5.139–140), the Welsh Evan’s pronunciation of ‘butter’, a “hodge–pudding” (5.5.150), and so on. His aim in

courting Mistress Ford and Mistress Page is to get his hands on their husbands' wealth ("she has all the rule of her husband's purse; he hath a legion of angels", 1.3.47–8) and since they quickly discover his plan there is never any real prospect of adultery and no serious pain inflicted, apart from that suffered by Ford when he thinks his wife has made him a cuckold. As with the Gad's Hill robbery there is no danger that Sir John is fooling anyone but himself (imagining that Page's wife "did so course o'er my exteriors, with such a greedy intention, that the appetite of her eye did seem to scorch me up like a burning-glass!", 1.3.58–60); even Ford's suffering is due to his own unreasonable jealousy rather than any genuine threat from a rival. Sir John's machinations to deceive the women and their husbands resemble his lies about Gad's Hill described by Hal as "like their father that begets them, gross as a mountain, open, palpable" (1:2.5.229–30). In this comedy the consequences of Sir John's actions fall upon himself alone, there are no poor men pressed into service in the war, no "discarded unjust servingmen, younger sons to younger brothers, revolted tapsters, and ostlers trade-fallen" (1:4.2.28–9).

Yet there are some dark moments amidst the comedy. Although, broadly speaking, social commentary gives way to laughs in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Sir John suffers repeated punishments for his vanity and efforts to gain pecuniary advantage. The punishments are farcical—he is beaten by Ford when disguised as 'the fat woman of Brentford' (4.2.170–3), and pinched and burned by children when lured to the forest in the guise of a stag (5.5.83–101)—but there is potential for the aggression he suffers to be distinctly troubling. Perhaps most disturbing of all are the repeated references by Sir John to his body parts as foodstuff:

Have I lived to be carried in a basket like a barrow of butcher's offal, and to be thrown in the Thames? Well, if I be served such another trick, I'll have my brains ta'en out and buttered, and give them to a dog for a New Year's gift. (3.5.4–8)

Sir John asserts that had the shore not been "shelvy and shallow" he would have drowned, "a death that I abhor, for the water swells a man, and what a thing should I have been when I had been swelled? By the Lord, a mountain of mummy!" (3.5.14–17). As we saw earlier, Sir John refers to the consumption of his own body by others in *1 Henry 4*—saying that he would rather be turned to powder and eaten (an allusion to *mumia* or mummy, the remains of an embalmed corpse often consumed for therapeutic purposes) than allow himself to be embowelled (1:5.4.110–111)—but in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* the situation in which he finds himself is more perilous than in the earlier play: to very nearly drown at the hands of others is more serious than pretending to be dead; in the later comedy Sir John no longer has the upper hand. In *1 Henry 4* Sir John refers to the pathetic men he has pressed into service as "food for powder" (1:4.2.62) but it is clear that he will not himself become a source for food. Things appear less certain in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, there are too many near misses for comfort and his flesh is dangerously close to being a substantial source of material to be consumed by others: "a mountain of mummy! (3.5.17). A significant moral is voiced by Evans's

“serve Got [God] and leave your desires” (5.5.128) and the characterization of Sir John as “given to fornications, and to taverns, and sack, and wine, and metheglins; and to drinkings, and swearings, and starings, pribbles and prabbles” (5.5.156–158). Page’s estimation of Sir John as “Old, cold, withered, and of intolerable entrails” (5.5.152) is not entirely mitigated by his promise of a celebratory drink: “Yet be cheerful, knight. Thou shalt eat a posset tonight at my house” (5.5.168–9). The cruelty of the new king’s rejection at the conclusion of *2 Henry 4* is here replaced with laughter at the play’s “sport”, retold “by a country fire”(5.5.234) but it is quite clear that Sir John is the butt of the joke.

Sir John is a curious figure: he is a glutton and thus a sinner, the Vice who must be rejected by Hal if he is to become an effective leader, but he is also especially attractive, regarded by audiences with tremendous affection, perhaps because his attitude to food and feeding provides a vicarious release from specific cultural dictates: early modern religious and dietary strictures about consumption and the modern obsession with health and body image. For early modern play-goers he was a familiar figure, eating everyday foods, but this familiarity was tempered by his consumption of large quantities which was a luxury few could afford. Shakespeare’s creative multivalency does not prevent him from taking a moral stand on Sir John’s gluttony, even if it is unclear which side of the sectarian divide he stands, the playfulness of *1 Henry 4* giving way in *2 Henry 4* to contemplation of the consequences of Sir John’s excessive consumption. Sir John’s disregard for the welfare of his fellow-men, the prevalence of lust (a sin often considered alongside gluttony), rotten or contaminated food, and disease all cause the fat knight to be judged morally wanting by the playgoer. Ironically, Sir John himself uses food to characterize, indeed judge, others, specifically Hal and Poins, Justice Shallow, and Prince John, his comments about them only becoming fully clear via reference to the dietaries. There is a consensus amongst the dietary authors that food and drink should be consumed with moderation and these texts are preoccupied not only with the reader’s physical health but the state of their soul. However, reading the dietaries alongside Sir John’s opinions, especially on the merits of wine over beer, demonstrates that they are also dialogic, like the very plays they help to illuminate. Reviving Sir John for *The Merry Wives of Windsor* might be perceived as Shakespeare’s redemption of the fat knight but the comedy’s darker elements, specifically the violence against Sir John and the danger that he himself will become a foodstuff for others, raises troubling questions about him: he remains a gloriously ambivalent representative of human greed.

## Chapter 2

# Celtic Acquaintance and Alterity

## *Henry 5 and Macbeth*

This chapter will be concerned with that which was not entirely unfamiliar to early modern playgoers and yet, at the same time, would have been considered strange or harmful: foodstuffs relating to England's Celtic neighbours. As we saw in the introduction, the earliest English cookbooks, such as Gervase Markham's *The English Huswife* (1615), located domesticity at the core of national identity. The dietaries, however, were not aimed at an exclusively female readership, nor did they promote a consistently nationalist agenda. This chapter will consider the degree of exoticism evident in the food and feeding that lay closest to England: that of the Welsh, and the Scots. Shakespeare uses these nationalities in his plays for their interesting mix of familiarity and unfamiliarity: Terence Hawkes has noted this mix, claiming that while there were Welsh players in Shakespeare's company their language would have been regarded as "entirely exotic" (Hawkes 2002, 33). Similarly, while Scotland remained a strange place for many early modern playgoers, the Scottish were not entirely unfamiliar since many of them were living and working in the capital. As Steve Rappaport pointed out, sixteenth-century London was a city of immigrants, with many journeying "from six counties north of the rivers Mersey and Don and from Scotland and Ireland, that is, from places at least 150 miles away" to train as apprentices (Rappaport 1989, 77). The residents of London must have felt that their known world was expanding; unlike other parts of the country (from which most Londoners originated) this was a place into which poured foreignness and foreign foodstuff.

### ***Henry 5: Figs and Leeks***

In the first act of *Henry 5* the audience is led to expect dramatization of a conflict especially close to home, with reference to "the weasel Scot" (1.2.170) who King Henry fears "will make raid upon us / With all advantages" (1.2.138–9). However, the scene quickly shifts to France and the war brings together captains from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland against a common enemy. Philip Edwards described their presence as "a tribute to the Tudor idea of Britain as a union of peoples setting out to conquer foreigners" but one that is "condescending" since

Fluellen and MacMorris “being Welsh and Irish . . . are inevitably made comic”. For Edwards, “English superiority in this matter is invincible, and the condescension may unfortunately diminish the importance for the play that the happy few, the band of brothers at Agincourt, contains English, Scots, Welsh, and Irish” (Edwards 1979, 74–5). Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield also noted that the scene featuring the four captains (3.3) “seems to effect an effortless incorporation” with most attention given to Fluellen since Wales “must have seemed the most tractable issue, for it had been annexed in 1536 and the English church and legal system had been imposed” (Dollimore & Sinfield 1985, 224). Agreeing with Philip Edwards, they read “the attempt to conquer France and the union in peace at the end of the play as a representation of the attempt to conquer Ireland and the hoped-for unity of Britain” (Dollimore & Sinfield 1985, 225; Edwards 1979, 82–3).<sup>20</sup>

While it is true to say that in *Henry 5* unrest in Ireland is suggested via France, the main cause for the antagonism between Fluellen and MacMorris is professional disagreement over what Fluellen terms “the true disciplines of the wars” (3.3.17). MacMorris is apparently irritated at mention of his nation—“What ish my nation? Ish a villain and a bastard and a knave and a rascal? What ish my nation? Who talks of my nation? (3.3.66–8)—but, as Edwards pointed out, this seems less motivated by feelings of Irish nationalism than “indignation that a Welshman should think of Ireland as a separate nation from the great (British) nation which the Welshman apparently thought he belonged to” (Edwards 1979, 76). Despite their differences the captains are all willing to work together against the French. When the play was first performed the audience would have expected national disunity with mention of “the weasel Scot” (1.2.170) and this too is true of audiences today who are seeing the play for the first time. But there is a significant difference in how these respective audiences would regard the leek which features in the acrimony between the Welsh captain Fluellen and the English ensign Pistol. A modern audience, which tends to think of the vegetable as specifically Welsh and, moreover, as a healthy foodstuff would have little in common with their early modern counterparts, a difference which, as we shall see, becomes apparent through knowledge of the dietaries.

Nationality is not the main source of acrimony between Fluellen and MacMorris and nor is it the primary trigger for the enmity that emerges between Fluellen and Pistol. Later in the play a leek will be the focus of hostility between them but it is another foodstuff that features in their first exchange. Pistol asks Fluellen to intervene with Exeter on behalf of Bardolph, sentenced to death for stealing from a church, but Fluellen’s reply emphasizes the necessity of punishment for wrong-doing amongst the military: “For if, look you, he were my brother, I would desire the Duke to use his good pleasure, and put him to executions. For discipline ought to be used” (3.6.53–4), which provokes an angry exchange:

PISTOL Die and be damned! and *fico* for thy friendship.

FLUELLEN It is well.

PISTOL The fig of Spain.

FLUELLEN Very good.

PISTOL I say the fig within thy bowels and thy dirty maw.

(3.6.55–59)

As Gary Taylor pointed out, the Spanish insult ‘fico’ is “Comparable in tone to modern ‘up yours’ or ‘fuck off’, though the exact meaning seems rather different” and the accompanying gesture “was a thumb held between two fingers, or thrust into the mouth”. The fig’s shape suggests a turd and the pudendum, and a poisoned fig was often called a Spanish or Italian fig (Shakespeare 1982b, 189–190n56–58). Figs were regarded with ambivalence in the dietaries. William Bullein claims that the fruit “doeth purge the superfluitie of humors through the skin” but also that “it doth ingender lice”, a common belief amongst dietary–authors. Bullein continues:

they be hot in the first degré, and the new figs be moist in the second, the séedes & the skin of the fig, be not greatly commended: Figges and Almonds eaten of a fasting stomacke, be very wholesome to make the way of good digestion, but best if they be eaten with nuts. Figs, and hearbe grace stamped together, be verie wholesome to be eaten against the pestilence: Rosted figges beaten together, and hote applied vpon the pestilent sore, doth draw, mollifie, and make ripe the sore. And to the lungs, liuer and stomacke, figs be verie comfortable, as *Galen* saith. (Bullein 1595, 11r-11v)

Thomas Cogan echoes Thomas Elyot almost word for word when he notes that figs “doe least harme of any fruits” but advises moderation since “beeing much eaten, they make ill bloud, whereof lice are ingendred” (Cogan 1636, 03v; Elyot 1539, G3v). Pistol’s reference to the fig and Fluellen’s bowels might be explained not only by the fruit’s shape, as Taylor indicated, but by its laxative properties. Bullein hints at this with reference to digestion but Cogan, echoing Elyot, is more overt: “they fill the belly with winde, but by their quicke passage the wind is soon dissolved” (Cogan 1636, 04r). The curious belief that the fig caused lice might be explained simply by the fruit’s association with excrement, that is, dirt.

The leek is first mentioned in an encounter between the disguised King Henry and Pistol, who again uses the term ‘fico’:

PISTOL Know’st thou Fluellen?

KING HARRY Yes.

PISTOL Tell him I’ll knock his leek about his pate  
Upon Saint Davy’s day.

KING HARRY Do not you wear your dagger in your cap that day, lest he knock that  
about yours.

PISTOL Art thou his friend?

KING HARRY And his kinsman too.

PISTOL The *fico* for thee then.

KING HARRY I thank you. God be with you.

PISTOL My name is Pistol called.

KING HARRY It sorts well with your fierceness.

(4.1.53–64)

Henry's reference to Pistol wearing a dagger in his cap is apparently an allusion to the Welsh tradition of wearing a leek in the cap to commemorate military success but this is not made clear until later, in an exchange between Fluellen and King Henry:

FLUELLEN Your grandfather of famous memory, an't please your majesty, and your great-uncle Edward the Plack Prince of Wales, as I have read in the chronicles, fought a most prave pattle here in France.

KING HARRY They did, Fluellen.

FLUELLEN Your majesty says very true. If your majesties is remembered of it, the Welshmen did good service in a garden where leeks did grow, wearing leeks in their Monmouth caps, which your majesty know to this hour is an honourable badge of the service. (4.7.90–9)

As Taylor noted “what editors describe as the ‘traditional’ explanation of the wearing of leeks—commemoration of a Welsh victory over the Saxons in AD 540—is not found till the late seventeenth century” (Shakespeare 1982b, 248n93–5); as Herbert Arthur Evans put it, “For the fact of service done by Welshmen in a garden of leeks ... Fluellen remains our only authority” (Shakespeare 1903, 136n97). So an early modern audience might not have expected Fluellen to wear the leek, until he specifies this in 4.7, but it is repeatedly suggested in the play, even by Fluellen's enemy Pistol, that the Welsh wear, rather than eat, the leek. Fluellen, in conversation with Henry, clearly regards the leek as a symbol of military achievement rather than a foodstuff, indeed T. W. Craik commented that Fluellen's reference to service in conjunction with a garden and growing leeks is “*unintentionally* comic because what it suggests is that they ate the leeks” [my emphasis] (Shakespeare 1995, 318n97–8).<sup>21</sup> The leek as symbol rather than foodstuff is further reinforced by Fluellen's comment “And I do believe your majesty takes no scorn to *wear* the leek upon Saint Tavy's day” [my emphasis] (4.7.99–101). Henry's reply, “I wear it for a memorable honour, / For I am Welsh, you know, good countryman” (4.7.102–3), further emphasizes the vegetable specifically as an indicator of national pride but that the emblem is worn by the King of England modifies its exoticism in the same way Henry modifies the exoticism of monarchy by nurturing a bond between himself and the common soldiers.

It is Pistol who first mentions the leek as a foodstuff, as we learn from a conversation between Fluellen and Gower:

GOWER Nay, that's right. But why wear you your leek today? Saint Davy's day is past.  
FLUELLEN There is occasions and causes why and wherefore in all things. I will tell you, ass my friend, Captain Gower. The rascally scald beggarly lousy pragging knave

Pistol—which you and yourself and all the world know to be no petter than a fellow, look you now, of no merits—he is come to me, and prings me pread and salt yesterday, look you, and bid me eat my leek. It was in a place where I could not breed no contention with him, but I will be so bold as to wear it in my cap till I see him once again, and then I will tell him a little piece of my desires. (5.1.1–13)

Fluellen is insulted by Pistol's suggestion that he eat the leek because the object has been demoted from noble symbol of Welsh pride to a mere vegetable and, furthermore, one that will be consumed along with such basic foodstuffs as bread and salt. But there is more at stake here than the offensive suggestion that the symbol is nothing more than food that should be consumed without ceremony. As we shall see, it is the precise nature of consumption suggested by Pistol that has apparently enraged Fluellen and it is this that shall be utilized by Fluellen in his revenge:

FLUELLEN God pless you Ensign Pistol, you scurvy lousy knave, God pless you.

PISTOL Ha, art thou bedlam? Dost thou thirst, base Trojan,

To have me fold up Parca's fatal web?

Hence! I am qualmish at the smell of leek.

FLUELLEN I peseech you heartily, scurvy lousy knave, at my desires and my requests and my petitions, to eat, look you, this leek. Because, look you, you do not love it, nor your affections and your appetites and your digestions does not agree with it, I would desire you to eat it.

PISTOL Not for Cadwallader and all his goats.

(5.1.16–27)

Neither Gary Taylor, T. W. Craik, nor J. H. Walter comment on “Dost thou thirst . . .” but it seems possible that aside from the obvious meaning ‘dost thou desire’ it is part of Pistol's continued association between the leek and mundane or vulgar bodily processes—eating the leek, the body's desire for liquids, the propensity to vomit at the vegetable's smell—(similar to the association formerly drawn between the fig, and its evacuation by Pistol)—all indicate the leek as lowly vegetable. Fluellen insists that Pistol “eat your victuals” raw, his only “sauce” a beating (5.1.33). and announces: “You called me yesterday ‘mountain-squire’, but I will make you today a ‘squire of low degree’. I pray you, fall to. If you can mock a leek you can eat a leek” (5.1.34–6). We have seen that Fluellen is offended by the Welsh symbol being demoted to a common vegetable but it is only by considering the dietaries that we can fully understand Fluellen's anger at Pistol's behaviour and Fluellen's subsequent punishment of him. Moreover, the dietaries might serve to further explicate Pistol's reference to Fluellen's ‘thirst’.<sup>22</sup>

Thomas Elyot is ambivalent about leeks, listing the vegetable amongst foods that “do hurte the teth” (Elyot 1595, D3r). He states that leeks “Be of yll iuyce, and do make troublous dreames” but also that “they do extenuate and clense the bodye, and also make it soluble, [that is, facilitate a healthy flow of bodily fluids] and prouoketh vrine. More ouer it causeth one to spytte oute easily the fleume, which is

in the breaste” (Elyot 1595, F3v–F4r). So too Andrew Boorde notes the positive and deleterious effects of the vegetable on the body: “Lekes dothe open the breste, and doth prouoke a man to make water but they do make and increase euill blode” (Boorde 1547, G2r). Similarly Thomas Twyne claims that “although they prouoke appetite, yet make they the head to ake, and ingender euill dreames, and are hurtful for them [that] are commonly troubled with the continuall headach, and those that are sore offended with heate” (Twyne 1576, D3v). Philip Moore also mentions their ability to “make euill iuyce . . . prouoke urine . . . cause greuous dreames and hurte the stomake” but added that “they engender wyndines . . . [?kill] the sight if they be eaten often . . . hurte the raines [the kidneys or loins (OED reins *n.* pl. 1. and 2.)] and the bladder” but “are good against the hemerhoides” and “extenuate grosse humours in the bodie” (Moore 1564, E6v). It is likely that these writers refer to the raw and cooked vegetable since throughout the genre there is evidence that while the cooked leek can benefit one’s health the raw vegetable must be avoided at all costs. Although William Bulleyn comments on the leek as medicinal (in answer to the question ‘what is onions?’)—noting that they “doe purge the blood in March” and that “A *doge* saieth *Dioscorides*, the head being annoynted with the iuyce thereof keepeth haire from falling”—he also claims that they “paine the head, and be not greatly praised for [because of] their ill iuyce” (Bulleyn 1595, H2r). Bulleyn is specific that cooking the vegetable was crucial for good health: “Léeke bee euill, engender painfull sléepe: but eaten with honie, then they purge blood: but rootes eaten rawe, bréedeth ill iuice, therefore being first sodden, and the water cast away, and then sodden with fat mutton, or tender fatte bieffe, those rootes nourisheth much” (Bulleyn 1595, I2r–I2v).

Thomas Cogan too considers it necessary to cook the leek in order to avoid injury: “their nourishment is nought, they hurt the eyes, and ingender blacke melancholy blood, and cause terrible dreames they hurt the strowes [stomach?] through their sharpnesse, they hurt the teeth and gumes and cholerick and melancholy folkes should not use to eat them and especially raw yet if they be boiled and eaten with Honey they cause one to spit out easily the flegme which is in the breast, and open and ease the lungs” (Cogan 1636, H4r). Thomas Moffett notes that leeks

are esteemed so wholesome and nourishing in our Country, that few thinke any good Pottage can be made without them. That they engender blood no author denies, but they say it is gross, hot, and evil blood. Nevertheless, if they be first sodden in milke, and then used in meat, they are unclothed of all bad qualities, and become friendly to the stomach and nourishing to the liver. The Grecians made such reckoning of Leeks as our Welsh men do; yea he ever sate uppermost at Apollo’s feast that brought thither the greatest headed Leek. Some impute that to his mother *Latona* her longing for Leeks whilst she was with child of *Apollo*. Others say that Apollo did so highly esteem them, because they engender much blood and seed, whereby mankind is much increased: which opinion I like best of, hearing and seeing such fruitfulness in Wales, that few or none be found barren, and many fruitful before their time. (Moffett 1655, F3v)

In *Henry 5* Fluellen uses the leek as a weapon against Pistol, thus reinstating its status as something more than a mere vegetable. Crucially, he also force-feeds Pistol with a raw leek. Although potentially amusing, the scene takes on a darker, more violent aspect if we consider evidence from the dietaries that the early moderns believed eating raw leeks to be especially harmful to health; it is reasonable to suppose that Shakespeare's contemporaries would have considered the force-feeding of Pistol with a raw leek an act which would effect illness and even death. Surprisingly, the dietaries do not tend to associate leeks with the Welsh and even Moffett, who does make a connection, asserts the regard held for the vegetable in "our Country" (that is, England) as well as the vegetable's regard amongst the ancient Greeks. The force-feeding of Pistol with a leek perhaps carries a sexual dimension given the vegetable's phallic shape but Moffett is the only writer to suggest the vegetable's powers as an aphrodisiac, his reference to Welsh fertility, with "many fruitful before their time" a barely submerged criticism of the prodigious and uncontrollable breeding of the Celts, also evident in early modern descriptions of the Irish (Fitzpatrick 2000, 24–5).

The dietaries might also help explain the tradition surrounding the wearing of the leek on St David's Day, celebrated on March 1. As we saw above, William Bullein claims that leeks "doe purge the blood in March" and so too William Vaughan cites March as a month in which "it is good to eate cleansing things" such as "a pottage made of leekes" (Vaughan 1612, K1v) so there might have developed an association between the Welsh wearing of the symbol and the best reputed time for eating leeks. In the Christian calender the first day of Lent, known as Ash Wednesday, also occurs around this time, which could have encouraged a link between leeks and the notion of purging, indeed Cogan notes:

In some shires of England they use in Lent to eate raw Leekes, and Honey with Beanes or Pease sodden, but what Rusticks doe, or may doe without hinderance of their health, is nothing to Students . . . [if] Students be desirous to eat Leekes, let them be first boiled or else made in pottage, for Leek pottage be very wholesome, not only for such as be cumbered with flegme, but also for those that have the collick or stone. (Cogan 1636, H4r–H4v)

Fluellen, it seems, is especially sensitive to insult about rank. When force-feeding Pistol with the raw leek he states "You called me yesterday 'mountain-squire', but I will make you today a 'squire of low degree'. I pray you, fall to. If you can mock a leek you can eat a leek" (5.1.34–36). Cogan's point that raw leeks were eaten by rustics not students would explain why Pistol's insult would have hit home especially hard with Fluellen who considers himself something of a scholar. Lastly, the dietaries seem to add a further dimension to Pistol's question to Fluellen "Dost thou thirst, base Trojan, / To have me fold up Parca's fatal web?" (5.1.18–19) before announcing that the smell of leek makes him feel sick. Whether or not Pistol intended the insult, Fluellen apparently infers a repeat of Pistol's earlier suggestion that the Welsh Captain eat raw leek (FLUELLEN: "he is come to me, and prings

me pread and salt yesterday, look you, and bid me eat my leek”, 5.1.8–10). Arguably Fluellen, and indeed Shakespeare’s audience, might be expected to have made a connection between the eating of raw leeks and thirst since the dietaries emphasize a link between the vegetable and frequent urination.

In modern productions the scene where Fluellen force-feeds Pistol with a raw leek is often played as pure slapstick, a style certainly warranted by the text. In Laurence Olivier’s 1944 screen adaptation of the play Fluellen kicks Pistol’s bottom, hits him on the head with his own sword and in the face with the leek. In the 1979 BBC Shakespeare version directed by David Giles, Pistol is tripped up by Fluellen and twice hit on the head with the leek (Olivier 1944; Giles 1979). In Mark Rylance’s 1997 stage production at Shakespeare’s Globe Pistol “was knocked to the ground and was made to eat the leek with his head hanging over the edge of the stage” (Shakespeare 2002b, 221n45). Kenneth Branagh took a different approach in his 1989 adaptation (Shakespeare 1989b). He commented that he wanted to “make a truly popular film” whose “plot would be presented with the greatest possible clarity and immediacy” (Shakespeare 1989a, 10). For Branagh “It seemed clear that a great deal of the text would have to be cut” and that “the cuts dictated themselves”, the “first to go” being “The more tortuous aspects of the Fluellen/Pistol antagonism, culminating in the resoundingly unfunny leek scene” (Shakespeare 1989a, 11). Branagh is certainly correct to question the appeal of this scene for a modern audience but perhaps knowledge of the dietaries would encourage a theatre-goer to receive the scene in the spirit in which it was apparently composed, not as straight-forward humour, usually at the expense of the Welsh, but as a dark and aggressive encounter informed by a familiarity with early modern dietary literature. Shakespeare’s original audience would presumably have been aware of the tradition that leeks were to be used with caution and raw leeks entirely avoided. The encounter between Fluellen and Pistol only fully makes sense when read in conjunction with these texts which elucidate the magnitude of Pistol’s insult and the seriousness of Fluellen’s revenge.

### ***Macbeth* and Poisoned Nutrients**

As we saw above, the leek was not especially associated with Wales or the Welsh in the dietaries and its exotic signification in *Henry 5* stems from Fluellen’s characterization of the vegetable as a symbol of Welsh pride and the dangers of eating it raw. The tension between the familiar and the exotic evident in *Henry 5* occurs also in *Macbeth*. Although London was home to many Scots and England had a Scottish king when *Macbeth* was first performed, sometime during or after 1606 (Wells et al. 1987, 128), Scotland remained an exotic place for most early modern playgoers. As we shall see, *Macbeth*’s exploration of poisoned nutrients extends from the play’s opening scenes featuring the witches, to Lady Macbeth’s demonic incantations, and her husband’s failure to live up to his obligations as monarch.

In the early modern period Celtic alterity was underlined by connections drawn between the Scots and the Irish, with some early modern authorities citing their common Scythian ancestry as evidence for their alleged barbarity. Holinshed's history of Britain in the *Chronicles* describes the two nations as indistinguishable, noting that "the Irish . . . are properlie the Scots" and "reputed for the most Scithian-like and barbarous nation, and longest without letters" (Holinshed 1587a, B2r). The Scots (and thus the Irish) were also accused of a distinct tendency toward cannibalism:

Now, as concerning their name, the Saxons translated the word *Scotus* for Irish: whereby it appeareth that those Irish, of whom *Strabo* and *Diodorus* doo speake, are none other than those Scots, of whom *Ierome* speaketh . . . who vsed to féed on the buttocks of boies [boys] and womens paps, as delicate dishes. (Holinshed 1587a, B2v)

This description is echoed by Thomas Cogan who notes

when I was a boy, I saw in France, Scots a people of Britaine eate mans flesh. And when they found in the forrests heards of swine, beasts and cattell, they would cut off the buttocks of the boyes which kept them, and also the womens paps, and tooke that to bee the most dainty and delicate meate. (Cogan 1636, S2v)

Edmund Spenser too considered the Irish and Scottish as one and the same and was keen to emphasize their barbarous Scythian origins through what Richard McCabe termed "a pseudo-anthropological investigation" which ignored "mutual Briton antecedents" (McCabe 1993, 100). One of the Scythian customs Spenser describes is suggestive of cannibalism:

Allsoe the *Scythians* vsed when they would binde anie solempe vowe of Combinacion to drinke a bowle of blodd together vowing theareby to spende their laste blodd in that quarrell, And even so do the wilde Scottes as ye maie reade in *Buchannan* and some of the Northern Irishe likewise. (Spenser 1949, 108)<sup>23</sup>

There is no indication that the Scots continued to eat human flesh in the early modern period (although it does seem that the Irish were compelled to do so as a result of famine) but English descriptions of their diet remained focused on the Scots as distinctly different, for example in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, the Scots are denounced as gluttonous:

In Scotland likewise they haue giuen themselues (of late yeares to speake of) vnto verie ample and large diet, wherein as for some respect nature dooth make them equall with vs: so otherwise they far excéed vs in ouer much and distemperate gormandize, and so ingrosse their bodies that diuerse of them doo oft become vnapt to anie other purpose than to spend their times in large tabling and bellie chéere. (Holinshed 1587a, P5r)

Scotland is further characterized as a dangerous land: "they haue greeuous woolfes and cruell foxes, beside some other of like disposition continuallie conuersant

among them, to the generall hinderance of their husbandmen, and no small damage vnto the inhabiters of those quarters” which, it is suggested, is down to bad government since “The happie and fortunate want of these beasts in England is vniuersallie ascribed to the politike gouernement of king Edgar, who to the intent the whole countrie might once be clesed and clearelie rid of them, charged the conquered Welshmen (who were then pestered with these rauenous creatures aboue measure) to paie him a yearelie tribute of woolfes skinnes, to be gathered within the land” (Holinshed 1587a, D4v). Moreover, God is on the side of the English:

In martiall prowesse, there is little or no difference betwéene Englishmen and Scots: for albeit that the Scots haue beene often and verie gréuouslie ouercome by the force of our nation, it hath not béene for want of manhood on their parts, but through the mercie of God shewed on vs, and his iustice vpon them, sith they alwaies haue begun the quarels, and offered vs méere iniurie with great despise and crueltie. (Holinshed 1587a, L3r)

This divine partiality might in part be due to the fact that the Scots are “a nation greatlie bent to . . . [the] horrible practise” of “witchcraft and sorcerie” (Holinshed 1587a, D8r), a description apparently reporting past events but suggestive of national character rather than mere historical fact.

The characterization of Scotland and the Scottish in Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, Cogan’s dietary, and Spenser’s *View* indicate a land and people with a barbaric history and innate savagery. As we shall see, a hostile landscape, witchcraft, barbarity, and the suggestion of cannibalism are all evident in *Macbeth* but there is a recurrent tension between the familiar and the exotic. Shakespeare, it seems, was alert to the preconceptions most early modern theatre-goers would have had about their Celtic neighbour and he exploits these while at the same time interrogating the impact of more everyday phenomena, an aspect of *Macbeth* which is more often than not overlooked.

In the first scene featuring the witches they are located in a troubled natural environment:

*Thunder and lightning. Enter three Witches*

FIRST WITCH When shall we three meet again?

In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

SECOND WITCH When the hurly-burly’s done,  
When the battle’s lost and won.

THIRD WITCH That will be ere the set of sun.

FIRST WITCH Where the place? SECOND WITCH Upon the heath.

THIRD WITCH There to meet with Macbeth.

FIRST WITCH I come, Grimalkin.

SECOND WITCH Paddock calls. THIRD WITCH Anon.

ALL Fair is foul, and foul is fair,  
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

(1.1.1–11)

Thunder and lightening was a familiar early modern theatrical convention signalling the supernatural, much as it does in modern horror films. As Michael Goldman noted, this first short scene “should rush past us before we can recover” and it presents the witches as “frightening, uncanny, obscure” (Goldman 1985, 98) with part of our uneasiness about them stemming from their perverse inversion of things (“Fair is foul, and foul is fair”). Banquo describes the witches as difficult to categorize:

BANQUO What are these,  
 So withered, and so wild in their attire,  
 That look not like th' inhabitants o' th' earth  
 And yet are on 't?—Live you, or are you aught  
 That man may question? You seem to understand me  
 By each at once her choppy finger laying  
 Upon her skinny lips. You should be women,  
 And yet your beards forbid me to interpret  
 That you are so. (1.3.37–45)

The weird sisters, as they are referred to throughout the play, are neither earthly nor supernatural, neither women nor men. They also represent a curious fusion of the familiar and the exotic with their initial strangeness tempered by a distinct ordinariness:

FIRST WITCH Where hast thou been, sister?  
 SECOND WITCH Killing swine. THIRD WITCH Sister, where thou?  
 FIRST WITCH A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap,  
 And munched, and munched, and munched. 'Give me,' quoth I.  
 'Aroint thee, witch,' the rump-fed runnion cries.  
 Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o' th' Tiger.  
 But in a sieve I'll thither sail,  
 And like a rat without a tail  
 I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do.  
 (1.3.1–9)

It is telling that the witch should report asking for chestnuts and being refused since, as Keith Thomas pointed out, many who considered themselves victims of witchcraft “had been guilty of a breach of charity or neighbourliness, by turning away an old woman who had come to the door to beg or borrow some food or drink, or the loan of some household utensil” (Thomas 1971, 553). B.J. Sokol noted that in this scene Shakespeare dramatized precisely such a denial of a request for charity with the subsequent guilt of the denier giving rise to projection of blame onto the requester who is termed “witch” (Sokol 1996). The ordinariness of the act which has provoked the first witch's revenge is matched by the distinctly unimpressive crime reported by the second witch; although “Aleppo” lends an exotic flavour to the witches' endeavours it becomes clear that even their combined powers are limited since they cannot sink the sailor's ship: “Though his barque

cannot be lost, / Yet it shall be tempest-tossed” (1.3.23–4). The swine, the chestnuts and indeed the sieve locate these witches as distinctly domestic creatures.

Also suggesting the witches’ domesticity is their cauldron; though synonymous with witchcraft for a modern audience, the cauldron was a familiar cooking vessel in early modern England and it is striking that these creatures should be shown gathered around a cooking pot when their power over Macbeth is strongest, in act 4. Most of the ingredients used by the witches in their brew are edible but not all are equally exotic. They begin with the parts of fairly familiar animals which are made strange because they were not usually used in cooking—“Fillet of a fenny snake” (4.1.12), “Eye of newt and toe of frog” (4.1. 14), “Wool of bat and tongue of dog” (4.1.15), “Adder’s fork and blind-worm’s sting” (4.1.16), “Lizard’s leg and owlet’s wing” (4.1.16)—before progressing to more exotic ingredients, including human body parts:

Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf  
 Witches’ mummy, maw and gulf  
 Of the ravined salt-sea shark,  
 Root of hemlock digged i’ th’ dark,  
 Liver of blaspheming Jew,  
 Gall of goat, and slips of yew  
 Slivered in the moon’s eclipse,  
 Nose of Turk, and Tartar’s lips,  
 Finger of birth-strangled babe  
 Ditch-delivered by a drab,  
 (4.1.22–31)

The witches refer to this strange concoction in a rather homely fashion as “gruel” but move quickly back to the exotic by adding to it “a tiger’s chaudron” (4.1.33)—‘chaudron’ being an obsolete term for ‘chawdron’, meaning entrails (OED chaldron 2) yet, as George Steevens indicated, commonly used in cookery-books (Shakespeare 1778, 556n6)—and “a baboon’s blood” (4.1.37). The use of the shark’s stomach as an ingredient presumably lends the brew the power of the animal’s voracious appetite. Here, as elsewhere, Shakespeare appears to have thought of the shark in the context of the most obscene manifestation of voracious appetite: men feeding on each other; indeed the brew contains not only human flesh but the most exotic examples of it: the Jew, the Turk, and the Tartar.<sup>24</sup> The ‘mummy’ used by the witches (as noted in chapter 1, 00) refers to the remains of an embalmed corpse which although not quite an everyday ingredient is not as exotic as it might at first appear. As Melvin Ealres pointed out “Mummy *Mumia* was included in the London *Pharmacopoeia* of 1618. It was said to pierce all parts, restore wasted limbs, cure consumptions and ulcers, hinder blood coagulation and stop fluxes and rheumes. A shortage of the genuine article resulted in recipes for making artificial mummy from the newly dead” (Lane 1996, 197n3).<sup>25</sup>

The sliced-off nose and lips of the Turk and Tartar might be an allusion to the kind of punishment those found guilty of treason could expect in the early modern

period, having their ears cut off and their nostrils slit (Kesselring 2003, 39–40) or, more generally, to “the types of cruelty” that might be expected from the unchristened (Shakespeare 1951, 110n29). But perhaps these gruesome additions to the pot would suggest to an early modern audience that the witches’ victims are bestial and so the eating of their body–parts, though cannibalistic, adds to the culinary focus of the scene. As we saw in chapter 1, the early modern English “ate every part of the animals that came their way: eyes, snouts, brains lungs, and feet, the noses, lips, and palates of calves and steers, ox cheeks, the udders and tongues of young cattle, and lambs’ stones” (Thirsk 1999, 13). Addition of the Jew’s liver might be especially relevant to Macbeth. Jew’s were considered melancholic, a condition thought to derive from an excess of black bile in the liver, as Timothie Bright indicates (Bright 1586, B8r) and, as Robert Burton shows, the melancholy man was thought to be “in continuall darknes, feare & sorrow”, troubled by “divers terrible monstrous fictions in a thousand shapes & apparitions, and violent passions, by which the Brain and phantasy are troubled and eclipsed” (Burton 1621, R4r). Perhaps Macbeth is to be imagined consuming the witches’ brew and absorbing these melancholy attributes: he will later complain that his mind is “full of scorpions” (3.7.37).

The witches gathered around their cauldron might allude to contemporary brewing practices. Steevens explained the now familiar phrase “Double, double, toil and trouble” (4.1.10) as follows: “As this was a very extraordinary incantation, they were to double their pains about it” (Shakespeare 1778, 555) but neither he nor subsequent editors recognized the apparent allusion to double beer, which was especially strong (so called because it was boiled twice) or, more specifically, double–double beer which was stronger still. As H. A. Monckton pointed out

Queen Elizabeth, in the second year of her reign, complained that the brewers had ceased brewing single beer but brewed instead ‘a kynde of very strong bere calling the same doble–doble–bere, which they do comenly utter and sell at a very grate and excessive pryce’. She ordered that the practice of brewing double–double beer should stop and that the proper prices be observed. She also made it clear that brewers should brew each week ‘as much syngyl as doble beare and more’. (Monckton 1966, 107)

Elizabeth’s government was aware that “double double” could cause “toil and trouble”, indeed drunkenness and the threat it posed to public order was of real concern in the period. Burghley claims “the multiplyeng of Taverns . . . an evident course of disorder of the vulgar people, who by hastyng therto wast ther small substance which they wekly gett by ther hand labor, and committ all evills that accompany dronkenes” (Tawney & Power 1924, 125). Similarly in Holinshed’s *Chronicles* England’s weekly markets are accused of encouraging excessive drinking by selling especially strong alcoholic beverages:

there is such headie ale & béere in most of them, as for the mightnesse thereof among such as séeke it out, is commonlie called huffecap, the mad dog, father whoresonne, angels food, dragons milke, go by the wall, stride wide, and list leg, &c. And this is

more to be noted, that when one of late fell by Gods prouidence into a troubled co~science, after he had considered well of his reachlesse life, and dangerous estate: another thinking belike to change his colour and not his mind, caried him straightwaie to the strongest ale, as to the next physician. (Holinshed 1587a, S4v)

The exotic names given to the beers are echoed in the ingredients used by the witches (might not the drinkers of their brew be imagined purchasing ‘dragon’s scale’ or ‘wolf’s tooth’?) and it seems likely that this allusion to contemporary brewing practices would not have gone unnoticed by Shakespeare’s contemporaries. In the verse pamphlet *Tobacco battered, and the Pipes Shattered* (1616) Joshua Sylvester condemns the twin sins of smoking and drinking, complaining

And, for our *Vulgar*, by whose bold Abuse  
Tobacconing hath got so generall Vse;  
How mightily have They since multipli’d  
Taverns, Tap–houses! where, on every side,  
Most sinfully hath Mault been sunken heer  
In nappy *Ale*, and *double–double–Beer*;  
Invincible in a Threefold Excess;  
Strong *Drink*, strong *Drinking*, and strange *Drunkenness*:  
Which on the Land hath brought, so visibly,  
So great a Mischief, so past Remedy,  
That Thousands daily into Beggery sink  
Through *Idleness*; in wilfull *Debt* for *Drink*.  
(Sylvester 1621, lines 744–55)

“Nappy” means “intoxicating” but also “having a head, foaming; heady, strong” (OED nappy a.<sup>2</sup> 1. a). Thomas Tryon in *A New Art of Brewing Beer, Ale, and other Sorts of Liquors* . . . refers to the adding of yeast to make beer “bubble in the barrel” (Tryon 1690, B10r), perhaps what Shakespeare was suggesting by the witches’ bubbling cauldron (4.1.11).

As Judith Bennett pointed out, women brewed and sold most of the ale consumed in medieval England but were increasingly marginalized in the early modern period as the industry “became capitalized and industrialized” (Bennett 1996, 146). By 1600 brewing, especially the brewing of beer, was dominated by men but “women were not thrust out of the drink trade altogether. . . in villages and towns less touched by changes in the trade, they still brewed and sold their old–fashioned ale” (Bennett 1996, 152). Female brewers, known as ‘brewsters’ had a sleazy reputation and in much literature from the medieval and early modern period they are depicted as filthy, disgusting workers who produce polluted ale and cheat their customers (Bennett 1996, 122–44). The verb ‘to brew’ carries two relevant meanings besides the making of ale and beer that were current in the early modern period as now: the term could also mean “To concoct, contrive, prepare, bring about . . . evil, mischief, trouble, woe” (OED brew v. 4) as well as describing

“natural phenomena, as rain, wind, a storm” (OED brew v. 4. c.), both relevant to the supernatural malevolence that pervades the play and the pathetic phallacy that accompanies the witches’ entrance and the murder of Duncan. Upon encountering the witches Banquo wonders whether he and Macbeth have “eaten on the insane root” (1.3.82) and, indeed, “Root of hemlock” (4.1. 25) is one of the ingredients the witches add to their cauldron. Of course there is nothing to suggest that either Macbeth or Banquo consume the witches’ brew but it is possible that *Macbeth* carries an allusion to the intoxicating power of double–double beer with its reputation for causing social disorder; indeed, as Keith Thomas pointed out, the brewing of beer was one of the domestic operations those accused of witchcraft were charged with frustrating (Thomas 1971, 437). It is also possible that the weird sisters would have suggested to an early modern audience the loathed figure of the brewster, here made even more sinister than usual, since her participation in the male–dominated activity of beer–brewing is a clear subversion of social hierarchies.

Having learnt of the witches’ prophecies, Lady Macbeth echoes their demonic incantations in her invocation to the powers of darkness:

Come, you spirits  
 That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,  
 And fill me from the crown to the toe top–full  
 Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood,  
 Stop up th’ access and passage to remorse,  
 That no compunctious visitings of nature  
 Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between  
 Th’ effect and it. Come to my woman’s breasts,  
 And take my milk for gall, you murd’ring ministers,  
 Wherever in your sightless substances  
 You wait on nature’s mischief. Come, thick night,  
 And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,  
 That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,  
 Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark  
 To cry ‘Hold, hold!’  
 (1.5.39–53)

Thick blood, though unhealthy, will enable Lady Macbeth to contain the fear and pity that might otherwise impede her cruelty as well as resembling the witches’ gruel, made “thick and slab” (4.1. 32) by their bloody ingredients.<sup>26</sup> Lady Macbeth also echoes the witches in her reference to “gall”, that is “the secretion of the liver, bile” (OED gall n. I. 1. a.), since one of the ingredients they add to their cauldron is “Gall of goat”. It is not entirely clear whether Lady Macbeth desires the “murd’ring ministers” to nourish themselves with her milk which has turned to gall, as suggested by N. Delius or to take away her milk and put gall in its place, as suggested by Johnson (Shakespeare 1951, 31n48) but either meaning locates Lady Macbeth as unnatural. The phrase also signals a body out of balance since milk

should properly be located in the breast and gall in the liver; indeed the term ‘milk–livered’ meaning cowardly (as said by Goneril of Albany in *The History of King Lear*, 16.49) suggests a similar unnatural inversion.

In the dietaries gall is considered medicinally useful: William Bullein notes that “The gall of an Oxe or a Cowe, distilled in the Month of Iune, and kept in a close Glasse, doeth helpe to cleanse the eyes from spots, if you put a droppe of this water with a fether into your eies, when ye go to bed” (Bullein 1595, E5r) and that “The gall of an Hare mingled with cleane hony, doth cleanse waterie eies, or redde bloudie eies” (Bullein 1595, K1r). So too in the anonymous *Treasure of Pore Men* hare’s gall tempered with honey is recommended “for the Tey of the eyes” (Anon 1526, L1r), that is, cataracts (OED *tey* 2) and “For all maner of euyll aches in the heed” (Anon 1526, D4r). But not all dietary–writers thought gall good for the eyes: Girolamo Ruscelli advising how “to make the face fayre” advises “Take the gall of a Hare, of a Cocke or Henne, and of Eeles, temper them with Honnye, and putte them so into a vessell of brasse well stopped, for to annoynt your face with whan you lyste, but take heede it touche not your eyes: for it would inflame them and make them looke redde, and so hurt you” (Ruscelli 1558, Fol.72v). He also recommended the gall of goat “To take out spottes, lentilles, or pimpels of the face” (Ruscelli 1558, Fol. 69r). It is possible that Shakespeare was influenced by connections made in the dietaries between gall and spots which suggested Lady Macbeth’s conviction that she sees a spot on her hand which she cannot get rid of (“Out, damned spot; out, I say”, 5.1. 33) but more likely is the distinction drawn between the usual use of gall, specifically from animals, and that which is suggested in the play. Lady Macbeth’s desire to have gall in her breasts, or her declaration that the substance is already present in that part of her body, raises the possibility that she will use it for an unnatural purpose. An audience familiar with animal–gall as a medicinal substance would find the use of human gall strange and, as we shall see, the apparent substitution of gall for breast–milk has important ramifications for the play.

Lady Macbeth characterizes her husband as overly compassionate, and therefore weak, in specifically culinary terms:

Yet do I fear thy nature.

It is too full o’ th’ milk of human kindness  
To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great,  
Art not without ambition, but without  
The illness should attend it.  
(1.5.15–19)

Richard Green Moulton noted that human kindness referred to human nature and that “The other part of the clause, *milk* of humankind–ness, no doubt suggests absence of hardness: but it equally connotes natural inherited traditional feelings imbibed at the mother’s breast” (Moulton 1901, 150). In *Macbeth* the phrase “milk of human kindness” might also be explained by considering what the dietaries have

to tell us about early modern attitudes to milk, specifically female adult breast-milk, which in turn serve to illuminate Lady Macbeth's breast-milk as gall. In the early modern period, milk was regarded as closely related to and derived from blood, as Thomas Cogan puts it "Milke is made of bloud twise concocted . . . . For untill it come to the paps or udder, it is plaine bloud: but afterward by the proper nature of the paps it is turned into milke" (Cogan 1636, Y4r). Many authorities comment on milk as medicinal: Thomas Cogan notes "where milke is well digested, it engendreth good bloud, and giveth great nourishment, yea, it is a restorative for them that bee wasted or in a consumption, or be leane" (Cogan 1636, Z1r) and he considers pottage "being wel made with good Milke, and spiced with Sugar and Cinamon . . . verie pleasant and easie of digestion and restorative" (Cogan 1636, E1v). Thomas Moffett recommends milk as especially good for "those such as sickness hath consumed" because easily digested (Moffett 1655, Q4r) and, as we saw above, claims that leeks "are unclothed of all bad qualities" if "first sodden in milke, and then used in meat" (Moffett 1655, F3v).<sup>27</sup>

Milk is recommended for those suffering from melancholy by Thomas Cogan, Thomas Elyot and Hieronymus Brunschwig (Cogan 1636, Z1r; Elyot 1595, H3r; Brunschwig 1561, A3v) and William Bullein, like most of the dietary-writers, claims women's milk is "the beste mylcke that healpeth agaynst Consumptions" (Bullein 1558, Q1v). Bullein is also typical in advocating the consumption of human milk by adults as well as children but warns that milk is "not good for full stomachs" (Bullein 1558, Q1v).<sup>28</sup> So too Philip Barrough notes that although women's milk is good for certain conditions, including mania and eye problems "He must abstaine from milke, and meates, that fume into the head, or that be hard of digestion" (Barrough 1583, A2r).<sup>29</sup> William Vaughan warns that "Milk often vsed, of them that are not wont to laboure, causeth headach, and dimnesse of sight: it annoyeth the teeth. Which discommodities may be corrected by adding rice & sugar vnto it" (Vaughan 1600, B7r). He too focused on the use of milk for the sick, noting that "Womans milk is wholesomest and purest, because it is a restoratiue medicine for the braine and the consumption" (Vaughan 1600, B7r). Milk was considered to be cooling: Barrough warns those suffering from a "headache caused of colde" to "eschewe all meates and drinks that be cold in operation as milke, fishe and suche lyke" (Barrough 1583, A2v). Henry Butts, noting that milk is cold and moist warns "Eate no more milke than you can well digest: though it seemeth to be soft and easie meat", adding "Vse no violence after it, nor drinke wine, afore you feel it thoroughly concocted" (Butts 1599, N3r).

Lady Macbeth considers her husband overly compassionate and describes this weakness in terms of a bodily imbalance: he is "too full of the milk of human kindness". As Gail Kern Paster pointed out "For the early moderns, emotions flood the body not metaphorically but literally, as the humors course through the bloodstream carrying choler, melancholy, blood, and phlegm to the parts and as the animal spirits move like lightning from brain to muscle, from muscle to brain. And just as an imbalance of humors causes bodily disease, so an excess of passions causes disease . . . ." (Paster 2004, 14). By describing Macbeth as too full of milk-

like compassion Lady Macbeth suggests infirmity and milk's cooling qualities which are not conducive to the courage necessary to commit acts of violence. This contrasts with Lady Macbeth's single-mindedness:

I have given suck, and know  
 How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me.  
 I would, while it was smiling in my face,  
 Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums  
 And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn  
 As you have done to this.  
 (1.7.54–9)

She again fulfills the role of feeder when she visits Duncan's guards and "drugs their possets" (2.2.6), thus facilitating his murder. A posset was "A drink composed of hot milk curdled with ale, wine, or other liquor, often with sugar, spices, or other ingredients . . . used as . . . a remedy for colds or other affections" (OED posset *n.* 1) and it is fitting that Lady Macbeth, who wanted her own milk replaced with gall, should provide a milk-based beverage whose potentially health-giving properties are inverted.<sup>30</sup>

Ultimately, what is at stake is the influence Lady Macbeth wields upon her husband. In 'The Description of Scotland' from Holinshed's *Chronicles*, specifically identified as a source for *Macbeth* by Geoffrey Bullough, Scottish women are reported as breast-feeding their own children rather than passing them on to wet-nurses because "they feared lest they should degenerate and grow out of kind, except they gave them suck themselves, and eschewed strange milk . . ." (Bullough 1973a, 506)<sup>31</sup>. Muriel Bradbrook identified this description of Scottish women, together with their courage on the field of battle, as relevant for the characterisation of Lady Macbeth in its "intimate relation between tenderness and barbarity, suckling and bloodshed" (Bradbrook 1951, 40). But so too the passage makes clear, as do the dietaries, that milk is the means by which women could dictate the physical and mental health of the men, not merely the children, in their care. The repeated references to milk in relation to Lady Macbeth and her notions about male bravery suggest that Shakespeare had a dietary context in mind and one that an early modern audience might be expected to recognize. The power allotted to human breast milk to effect physical and psychological change might explain why Lady Macbeth should desire the "spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts" to replace her milk with gall: she not only desires the pernicious influence the gall will have upon her own body and mind but also to impart to her husband via feeding the necessary rancour that would enable him capable of murder.

Throughout the play, relationships are characterized in terms of poisoned nutrients and unnatural feeding: the more localized horror of the witches' brew and Lady Macbeth's perverse milk extending to the natural world so that Duncan's horses are said to eat each other (2.4.18). Macbeth and Lady Macbeth agree to kill Duncan while he is at supper (1.7.29–82) and so it is ironic that Duncan should

refer to Lady Macbeth as “most kind hostess” (2.1.15) and that he should consider Macbeth “full so valiant . . . / [That] in his commendations I am fed, / It is a banquet to me” (1.4.54–6). After the murder of Duncan, Macbeth fails to live up to the monarch’s obligation to feast his thanes, a direct consequence of his urging of Banquo to “Fail not our feast” (3.1.28) and under his governance Scotland suffers from famine: the lord conversing with Lennox tells how Macduff has gone to England

to pray the holy King upon his aid  
 To wake Northumberland and warlike Siward,  
 That by the help of these—with Him above  
 To ratify the work—we may again  
 Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights,  
 Free from our feasts and banquets bloody knives,  
 Do faithful homage, and receive free honours,  
 All which we pine for now.  
 (3.6.30–7)

Although it is too late for his wife—about whom he utters: “Throw physic to the dogs, I’ll none of it” (5.3.49)—Macbeth wonders if the land might be brought to health:

If thou couldst, doctor, cast  
 The water of my land, find her disease,  
 And purge it to a sound and pristine health,  
 I would applaud thee to the very echo,  
 That should applaud again.  
 (5.3.51–6)

Here Macbeth makes the traditional comparison between the country, the body, and the careful physician, that is familiarly at work in, for example, William Bullein’s dietary (Bullein 1595) and that was claimed by E.M.W. Tillyard to be a commonplace of early modern thought (Tillyard 1943, 87–91). But Macbeth has indeed consumed “th’ ingredience of our poisoned chalice” (1.7.11) which has led him to wish his fellow-Scots consumed by “famine and ague” (5.5.4); it is not surprising that he should be characterized in the play’s closing scene (ironically by the presumably blood-drenched Macduff) as a “butcher”, one who kills and slaughters (OED *butcher* *n.* 1. a), rather than one who heals.

In *Macbeth* and *Henry 5* there is a discernable tension between the familiar and the exotic: in the former the witches are demonic but, at the same time, domestic, perhaps even suggesting the loathed figure of the brewster. Like Lady Macbeth, they use familiar and unfamiliar ingredients and put both to sinister usage. So too in *Henry 5* the leek is exotic because it is worn as a symbol of Welsh pride but that very exoticism is modified when it is said to be worn by the king. Reading these plays in the context of the early modern dietaries helps elucidate Shakespeare’s use

of specific foodstuffs: in *Henry 5* figs suggest disease and dirt and the force-feeding of Pistol with a leek by Fluellen, usually considered comedic, has a distinctly sinister edge to it when we understand that leeks were considered harmful to health. So too reference to human milk as a foodstuff in the dietaries and animal gall as medicinal helps explain Lady Macbeth's irritation at her husband's nature and the unnatural inversion that 'taking milk for gall' effects. In the next chapter we consider further the tension between the familiar and the exotic but via a dietary restriction rather than location, that is vegetarianism and how it relates to melancholy in *As you Like It* and *The Winter's Tale*.

## Chapter 3

# Strange Diets: Vegetarianism and the Melancholic

## *As You Like It* and *The Winter's Tale*

We saw in the last chapter that Shakespeare was concerned with the tension between the familiar and the exotic in plays dealing with England's Celtic neighbours. Beyond Celtishness lay greater culinary exotica, but there were strange practices at home too. This chapter will consider early modern attitudes to vegetarianism, in particular the relationship between vegetarianism, meat-eating, and melancholy explored in *As You Like It*. Jaques is Shakespeare's most obvious exploration of melancholy but the condition is also apparent in *The Winter's Tale* where a tension between meat-eating and vegetarianism also features. This chapter will propose that the cause of and cure for Leontes's condition is suggested by one of Shakespeare's most famous stage directions "Exit, pursued by a bear" (3.3.57) and that Bohemia contains the potential to restore Leontes to his former health.

### *As You Like It*

In *As You Like It* Jaques's melancholy first expresses itself in his opposition to hunting which is part of a larger awareness in the play of the relationship between human beings and animals, vegetarianism and carnivory, community and monastic solitude. In the first scene set amongst the banished men in the Forest of Ardenne, Duke Senior expresses reservations about hunting:

Come, shall we go and kill us venison?  
And yet it irks me the poor dappled fools,  
Being native burghers of this desert city,  
Should in their own confines with forkèd heads  
Have their round haunches gored.  
(2.1. 21–5)

He refers to the animals not as living beings but as the meat they are to become, they are "venison" rather than deer. The animals are then humanized and it is primarily the violation of social laws rather than the brutality of their death that bothers the Duke. Jaques similarly laments the social inequity of killing the deer in

their own environment, accusing Duke Senior of being more guilty of usurpation than Duke Frederick (2.1.26–8) and the deer is similarly characterized in human terms, specifically that of the city: they are “fat and greasy citizens” (2.1.55). Jaques’s sympathy for the “poor sequestered stag / That from the hunter’s aim had ta’en a hurt” (2.1.33–4) apparently indicates his sensitivity to animal sensibilities:

The wretched animal heaved forth such groans  
That their discharge did stretch his leathern coat  
Almost to bursting, and the big round tears  
Coursed one another down his innocent nose  
In piteous chase.  
(2.1.36–40)

The description of the crying deer and Jaques’s sympathy for the animal does not come directly from him but, rather, is reported by the First Lord. As Winfried Schleiner indicated, reporting the scene is presumably due to the difficulty of bringing a stag and a brook onto the Elizabethan stage (Schleiner 1980, 175), but it has the distinct effect of distancing Jaques from the sentiments expressed. Jaques’s ‘moralizing on the spectacle’ (2.1.44), the deer having departed, is a comment on how “misery doth part / The flux of company” (2.1.51–52) and an observation that the injured deer is not consoled by his fellow-deers: “Wherefore should you look / Upon that poor and broken bankrupt there?” (2.1.56–57), the financial language indicating that Jaques is using the animal’s fate to make a more general point about misery (and one that can specifically be understood by humans). Still, Jaques is apparently alert to the animals’ suffering, specifically to the anxiety they experience as a result of the hunt when he condemns the Duke and his followers as “mere usurpers, tyrants, and what’s worse, / To fright the animals and to kill them up / In their assigned and native dwelling place” (2.1.61–63).

### **The Vegetarian Option**

Although Jaques’s sympathy for the deer is tempered by its being reported by another and by his focus on general misery rather than the specifics of hunting, we might still expect Jaques to openly advocate vegetarianism as he condemns hunting. But would being vegetarian give Jaques the moral high-ground from an Elizabethan point of view? As might be expected, the classical attitude to vegetarianism informed opinion on the matter, which was divided. Belief that human souls could transmigrate into animals was part of the reason that Pythagoras and Empedocles criticized the killing or maltreatment of animals. Moreover, adherence to vegetarianism was made difficult due to the connections between ritual sacrifice and eating meat. Aristotle denied reason to animals, as did the Epicureans and Stoics but Aristotle’s successor, Theophrastus, believed animals possessed reason and it was thus unjust to kill those that were not dangerous. The

chief defenders of animals were the Neopythagoreans and certain Platonists and the most important defence of animals was Porphyry's *On Abstinence from Animal Food* in which he claimed that animals, thought by some to be a gift from God to benefit humans only, were rational and therefore deserving of justice; he also denounced the eating of meat on ascetic grounds. The influence of Augustine, who sided with the Stoic argument in favour of killing animals for food, dominated the Western Christian tradition (Hornblower & Spawforth 1996, 'animals, attitudes to'). In the early modern period it was generally believed that God had ordained animal flesh as fit for human consumption after the flood (Genesis 9:3). As the dietary author Thomas Moffett notes:

whilst Adam and his wife were in Paradise, he had commission to eat only of the fruit of the Garden; being cast thence, he was enjoined to till the ground, and fed in the sweat of his brows upon worts, corn, pulse and roots; but as for flesh, albeit many beasts were slain for sacrifices and apparel, yet none was eaten of men 2240. years after the creation; even till God himself permitted Noah and his family to feed of every sensible thing that moved and lived, as well as of fruits and green hearbs. (Moffett 1655, E3r–E3v)

Moffett's rhetorical strategy is to present a heartfelt description of the brutality involved in butchering beasts, not unlike Jaques's reported comments on the injured deer:

can civil and humane eyes yet abide the slaughter of an innocent beast, the cutting of his throat, the mauling him on the head, the flaying of his skin, the quartring and dismembering of his joints, the sprinkling of blood, the ripping up of his veins, the enduring of ill savours, the hearing of heavy sighs, sobs, and grones, the passionate struggling and panting for life, which only hard-hearted Butchers can endure to see? Is not the earth sufficient to give us meat, but that we must also rend up the bowels of beasts, birds, and fishes? yes truely there is enough in the earth to give us meat, yea verily and choise of meats, needing either none or no great preparation, which we may take without fear, and cut down without trembling, which also we may mingle a hundred waies to delight our taste, and feed on safely to fill our bellies. (Moffett 1655, E3v)

The 'but' comes as something of a surprise to modern readers: "Nevertheless, we must not imagine, that God idely and rashly permitted flesh and fish to be eaten of mankind but that either he did it for causes known to himself, or for special favours shewed to us" (Moffett 1655, E3v). Moffett suggests a specific reason for the decision: "perhaps . . . God appointed men to eat flesh and fish: least happily overflowing the earth by dayly increase, there would scarce be any food left for man, and man should not be able to rule his subjects." But true to the spirit of his dietary, Moffett concludes that the most likely reason is health-related: "But the chiefest thing which he aimed at in the permission, was (in my judgement) the health and preservation of our lives: for as before the floud men were of stronger constitution, and vegetables grew void of superfluous moisture: so by the floud these were endued with weaker nourishment, and men made more subject to

violent diseases and infirmities” (Moffett 1655, E4r). Similarly Thomas Elyot claims that a long history of eating meat altered the human body with the effect that too much fruit and vegetables are harmful:

before that tillage of corne was inuented, and that deuouring of flesh and fish was of mankind vsed, men vndoubtedly liued by fruites, and nature was ther with contented and satisfied, but by chaunge of the diet of our progenitors, there is caused to bee in our bodies such alteration, from the nature which was in man at the beginning, that now all fruits generally are noyfull to man, and doe ingender ill humours, and bée oft times the cause of putrified feuers, if they bée much and continually eaten. (Elyot 1595, E2r)

Moffett condemns those who willfully ignore God’s law:

And truely whosoever shall with the *Adamites* refuse that Diet, which God and nature hath appointed, either because they think they should not, or because they would not feed upon living creatures: I dare boldly avouch they are religious without knowledge, and timerous without occasion; yea (unless naturally they abhor fish and flesh, as some men may) they shorten their own lives and do violence to nature. (Moffett 1655, E4r)

Later, discussing the relative merits of flesh and fish, Moffett criticizes those “filthy Friars” who think fish superior to meat because Christ fed upon it, arguing that Christ himself adhered to the laws of Moses and forbade the Israelites to eat fish with neither scales nor fins (Moffett 1655, H3r). As we saw in chapter 1, eating fish was generally associated with the Catholicism, specifically the practice of abstaining from animal flesh on Fridays. In the monasteries, meat had only been eaten occasionally: the Benedictine rule stated “let the use of fleshmeat be granted to the sick who are very weak, for the restoration of their strength; but, as soon as they are better, let all abstain from fleshmeat as usual” (Benedict 1952, 91; chapter 36).

The debate about the moral implications of eating animals was, of course, connected to the debate about hunting. Humanists attacked hunting and war for their cruelty and tendency to brutalize but it did not necessarily follow that those who were anti-hunting were also vegetarian. Some opponents of hunting distinguished between the activity as a sport and as a means of survival while others condemned hunting even if it was specifically for food. Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, an especially scathing critic of hunting, saw it as a consequence of original sin “which ended forever the peace between men and animals” and implied that life in Eden was vegetarian. So too Michel de Montaigne’s essay “Of Cruelty” refers to Pythagorean as well as Christian attitudes towards animals in his denunciation of the cruelty inflicted upon them (Berry 2001, 24–7). In Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* vegetarianism was a feature of the Golden World; Ovid imagines Pythagoras speaking in condemnation of the first meat-eater:

‘But that pristine age, which we have named the golden age, was blessed with the fruit of the trees and the herbs which the ground sends forth, nor did men defile their lips with blood. Then birds plied their wings in safety through the heaven, and the hare

loitered all unafraid in the tilled fields, nor did its own guilelessness hand the fish upon the hook. All things were free from treacherous snares, fearing no guile and full of peace. But after someone, an ill exemplar, whoever he was, envied the food of lions, and thrust down flesh as food into his greedy stomach, he opened the way for crime. It may be that, in the first place, with the killing of wild beasts the steel was warmed and stained with blood. This would have been justified, and we admit that creatures which menace our own lives may be killed without impiety. But while they might be killed, they should never have been eaten'. (Ovid 1916, 371–2; lines 96–110).

So, the standard Elizabeth view appears to have been that eating meat was divinely ordained and more healthy than a vegetarian diet although there were voices of dissent which considered meat eating a barbaric and indulgent practice. Jaques's sympathy for the deer suggests that he would not 'defile his lips with blood', as Ovid puts it, but rather live off the 'fruit of the trees and the herbs which the ground sends forth' in the forest of Ardenne but the condition from which Jaques's suffers, his melancholy, suggests that exactly the opposite is true.

### Melancholy and Diet

As we saw in the introduction, melancholy (black bile) is one of the four bodily humours, the proper alignment of which resulted in good physical and mental health and an excess of which caused illness and character defects. As Lawrence Babb pointed out, it was thought that melancholy could be caused by the climate, the situation of one's dwelling, too much or too little sleep, idleness or over-exertion, immoderate passions, or intent thinking (Babb 1951, 23–4). Carol Falvo Heffernan noted that, in the medieval period the condition was related to *acedia*, a theological concept which began as a deadly sin and evolved into a psychiatric syndrome primarily associated with religious contemplatives (Heffernan 1995, 9–10). But diet was also an important factor. Since melancholy was considered cold and dry, foods also classified as such should be avoided by the melancholic. In order to avoid "dolour or heuynesse [heaviness] of mynd" Thomas Elyot advises against the daily consumption of a range of foods, amongst them old beef, mutton, hard cheese, and hare. Like Galen, he warns against the consumption of boar, thick red wine and coleworts ("originally, a general name for any plant of the cabbage kind, genus *Brassica*, of which varieties were formerly less distinct than now", OED colewort 1.). For the same reason he also denounces venison, burned or fried garlic, onions and leeks (Elyot 1595, O4r). William Bullein notes that although "cholericke men may as lightly digest béefe, bacon, veneson, &c. With as much spéede and litle hurt as the fleugmatike man may eate, rabbit chicken, and partridge, &c.", the melancholic man "through the coldnesse of the stomacke hath not that strength in the stomacke as hee hath promptnes in wil: to eat things warm and moyst be good for him" (Bullein 1595, E3r). Timothie Bright considers most vegetables safe for the melancholic to consume except coleworts and beet (Bright

1586, B5v). Robert Burton, on the other hand, denounces most vegetables, particularly if served raw, but concurs with most authorities that cabbage was especially to be avoided (Burton 1621, F6r). Bright advises against “porke, except it be yong, and a litle corned with salt, beefe, ramme mutton, goate, bores flesh, & veneson” (Bright 1586, B6v). So too Thomas Cogan notes that “Venison, whether it be of red deer or fallow, maketh ill iuice, engendereth melancholy, and is hard of digestion, as Galen witnesseth. Wherefore it is no wholesome meat for students” (Cogan 1636, S1r). Robert also lists venison amongst the meats those of a melancholic disposition should avoid: “All *Venison* is melancholy, and begets bad blood” and although “somwhat better, hunted then otherwise, & well prepared by cookery” it is “generally bad, & seldome to be vsed” (Burton 1621, F4v).

Venison referred to the flesh of any animal killed by hunting and used as food and could include boar, hare, rabbit or other game animal, including deer (OED venison 1.a), as indicated when Thomas Moffett refers to “the fleshe of wild beasts, or venison” and includes wilde boar and wild sow under that heading (Moffett 1655, K4r). Moffett does not specifically mention the effect of deer-meat upon the melancholic but asserts that

young Bucks and Does, Hinds and Staggs, (whilst they are in season) are a wholsom and delicate meat, breeding no bad iuice of themselves, yet bearing often the faults of bad Cooks (which know not how to dress or use them aright) but more often the deserved reproaches of greedy Gourmands, that cannot moderately use the good creatures of God; either eating Venison when they should not, or more liberally and usually than they should. (Moffett 1655, L1r)

Whether it be bad cooks, the effect of venison itself, as most of the dietary authors seemed to think, or excessive consumption of the meat (greed was one of the characteristics attributed to the melancholic), venison, it appears, was generally considered unhealthy for those afflicted by an excess of melancholy, that is, black bile. But the deer could cure as well as provoke the condition: as Winfried Schleiner noted, “medical treatises of the period . . . [show] that in the seventeenth century the belief was still very much alive that the tear of the hart, sometimes called *lapis bezoar*, was a remedy indicated specifically for melancholy”. Schleiner cites Daniel Sennert’s *Epitome Naturalis Scientiae* (1632) which states that the tear “is highly recommended against all poisons, it is given for all malignant fevers, to rid children of worms, against melancholic diseases” (Schleiner 1980, 176). Schleiner considered it “appropriate in several ways” that Jaques finds himself with the weeping stag on the edge of a brook: like the wounded, melancholic animal (deers, like Jaques’s dominant humour, were considered cold and dry), he is drawn to the water for relief, and although “Jaques is unable to apply the stag’s tears in any medicinal sense . . . it might be argued that on another level they act as a spiritual purgative” (Schleiner 1980, 177). But Jaques still suffers physically and, given the general view of venison as a food which engenders melancholy, it seems likely that an early modern playgoer would conclude that he eats the meat of the

deer hunted by Duke Senior and his fellow-exiles. Via the dietaries, we can recover likely original audience responses to “Monsieur Melancholy” (3.2.288): our knowledge of early modern views on food and its effect upon the humours enhances the sense that Jaques is a hypocrite, his sorrow apparently a direct consequence of having eaten the very animal whose death he laments.

## A Christian Golden World

In *As You Like It* Duke Senior is reported as being “already in the forest of Ardenne, and a many merry men with him; and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England. They say many young gentlemen flock to him every day, and fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world” (1.1.109–13). But the characterization of Ardenne as another golden world does not sit easily with the hunting and meat-eating engaged in by Duke Senior and his men; moreover, it is ironic that the description of life in Ardenne comes from Charles, the wrestler, a man who makes his living from a sport which, like hunting, constitutes a violent necessity (defending oneself) that has been deflected into recreation. Although Duke Senior relates that he and his men do not feel “the penalty of Adam” (2.1.5), he also describes how they do feel the “churlish chiding of the winter’s wind” (2.1.7). As Walter Whiter indicated, “the penalty of Adam” might refer to a life of pain and labour rather than the seasons (Whiter 1794, 13–15) but Duke Senior and his men do not suffer pain and although they hunt they do not have to labour for their food. The general sense seems to be that the perpetual spring of the Golden Age and Eden has been replaced by the seasons and amity between man and beast has been destroyed by human sin.<sup>32</sup>

Notably, it is the envy and greed of the first man who killed animals for food that is emphasized by Ovid. Although Duke Senior and his followers hunt, the shepherds who also live in the forest do not. Corin’s focus is on the self-contained industry of the pastoral life and the pleasure he gains from witnessing the nourishment of his flock: “Sir, I am a true labourer. I earn that I eat, get that I wear; owe no man hate, envy no man’s happiness; glad of other men’s good, content with my harm; and the greatest of my pride is to see my ewes graze and my lambs suck” (3.2.71–5). As a shepherd, Corin does not kill his sheep for food but, rather, facilitates their feeding, just as earlier he facilitated the feeding of Rosalind, Celia and Touchstone:

My master is of churlish disposition,  
 And little recks to find the way to heaven  
 By doing deeds of hospitality.  
 Besides, his cot, his flocks, and bounds of feed  
 Are now on sale, and at our shepcote now  
 By reason of his absence there is nothing  
 That you will feed on. But what is, come see,

And in my voice most welcome shall you be.  
(2.4.79–86)

It seems that only those courtiers who are not familiar with the essence of pastoral life kill animals for food. As we shall see later, in *The Winter's Tale* Perdita, queen of the sheep–shearing festival, sends the Clown shopping for foods which indicate that the feast will be a vegetarian celebration.

Even from the very outset of *As You Like It* there is a distinct affinity between humans and animals which is figured in terms of feeding: Orlando eats with Oliver's "hinds" (1.1.17), asking him "Shall I keep your hogs, and eat husks with them?" (1.1.35–6). Being forced to eat with animals is regarded as degrading by Orlando but the situation lends him a distinct dignity the cruel Oliver does not possess.<sup>33</sup> Similarly when Oliver calls Adam "Old dog" (1.1.77) there is an emphasis on the latter's faithfulness as much as the former's contempt which undermines Caroline Spurgeon's assertion that Shakespeare associated dogs with false friends and flatterers (Spurgeon 1935, 194–9). Adam's reference to Oliver's house as "but a butchery" (2.3.28) underlines the older brother's savagery—as Duncan–Jones pointed out, images of butchery as a bloody, violent trade permeate Shakespeare's plays (Duncan–Jones 2004, 192–4)—and the would-be slaughter of Orlando contrasts with the animals and humans taken care of by God and man: when Adam provides Orlando with money, saying that God will provide ("he that doth the ravens feed, / Yea providently caters for the sparrow", 2.3.44–6), Orlando will not abandon him, insisting rather that "We'll go along together" (2.3.67). Adam can now feed Orlando because, like Corin, Adam has fed moderately all his life: "For in my youth I never did apply / Hot and rebellious liquors in my blood / Nor did not with unbashful forehead woo / The means of weakness and debility" (2.3.49–52). Orlando is willing to kill the animals in the forest for food but the animal he targets will be "savage" and his reason selfless: he will kill in order to provide food for Adam (2.6.6–7). When invited by Duke Senior to "Sit down and feed, and welcome to our table" (2.7.105) Orlando refuses to eat, asking the others to refrain also, until Adam feeds (2.7.127–33). It is after Jaques has given his 'Seven Ages of Man' speech, defining old age as "second childishness and mere oblivion" (2.7.165), that Orlando enters carrying Adam. Alan Brissenden's comment that this "is a visually striking denial of Jaques's pessimism . . . Adam, though old, is no dotard" (Shakespeare 1993, 152n166) is only partly true: Adam has become like a child again because he cannot feed himself and must depend on the instinctive kindness of others, a point emphasized by Orlando who likens himself to a doe and Adam to his faun which he must feed (2.7.127–9).

In *As You Like It* feeding is synonymous with community and humanity, and it is fitting that the banquet Orlando and Adam are invited to share apparently consists only of fruit (2.7.98) since any mention of animal flesh would jar with the gentleness repeatedly urged by Duke Senior (2.7.102–3, 2.7.124).<sup>34</sup> This focus on communal feeding pervades the play: Orlando is mistreated by his brother Oliver

because he is prevented from feeding with his fellow-humans and Celia underlines the communal aspect of her history with Rosalind:

We still have slept together,  
Rose at an instant, learned, played, eat together,  
And wheresoe'er we went, like Juno's swans  
Still we went coupled and inseparable. (1.3.72–5)

Rosalind's decision to dress as a man and take the name of Ganymede, Jove's own page, is practical, since it will allow her protection when travelling, as well as facilitating the play's sexual ambiguity, but it also indicates her role as provider of a different sort: where Ganymede was Jove's cupbearer, a literal provider of sustenance, Rosalind as Ganymede will "satisfy" (5.2.109) all the lovers' demands at the play's dénouement. In contrast to the community which is celebrated by feeding together, Jaques prefers to be alone. In his 'Seven Ages of Man speech', each man plays his part on the stage of life alone and there is little sense of any interaction between the solitary figures he expounds upon. Jaques demands that Duke Senior

Give me leave  
To speak my mind, and I will through and through  
Cleanse the foul body of th' infected world,  
If they will patiently receive my medicine.  
(2.7.58–61)

Unlike Duke Senior and Orlando, Jaques will purge rather than nourish humankind. Duke Senior's response emphasizes Jaques's hypocrisy:

Most mischievous foul sin, in chiding sin;  
For thou thyself hast been a libertine,  
As sensual as the brutish sting itself,  
And all th' embossèd sores and headed evils  
That thou with licence of free foot hast caught  
Wouldst thou disgorge into the general world.  
(2.7.64–9)

Brissenden considered the "embossèd sores and headed evils" a reference to "the sores of venereal disease" and, like Latham, explained the "brutish sting" in terms of lechery and animal passion (Shakespeare 1993, 147n66–7; Shakespeare 1975, 52n66) but there is little sense that Jaques is or ever has been a lover. It is apparently another kind of sensual appetite the Duke has in mind: that Jaques would "disgorge into the general world" suggests vomit but also, as Alan Brissenden noted, evacuation of the bowels, a sense made more likely when we consider that the name 'Jaques' is a pun of 'jakes', an early modern word for lavatory (Shakespeare 1993, 147n69, 126n27). Robert Burton, citing Galen and other authorities, emphasizes the "continual, sharp, and stinking belchings" that

emanate from the melancholic “as if their meat in their stomachs were putrefied” (Burton 1621, P5r), a description remarkably similar to the condition now known as Irritable Bowel Syndrome. It seems likely that an early modern audience, familiar with the rules governing what specific humoral types should eat, would suspect that Jaques’s melancholy derives primarily from his diet: he has made himself ill by eating venison and criticizes those who hunt for the very meat he enjoys. It is this hypocrisy that is strongly condemned by the Duke in distinctly excremental terms. It is ironic that Jaques should offer “medicine” to others but himself refuses the panacea offered by the tears of the deer over whom he moralizes.

It is not Jaques who is the play’s most virtuous figure but rather Orlando who provides sustenance for Adam. The name Adam is an obvious biblical allusion to Edenic innocence but also to the sin brought into the world by the Fall of humankind, a concept further developed by Oliver’s entry into the Forest of Ardenne. Oliver’s story of his rescue by Orlando from the snake which “approach’d / The opening of his mouth” and the lioness “with udders all drawn dry” (4.3.110–15), makes allusion to biblical symbols for evil: “Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet” (Psalm 91:13), as recognized by Richard Knowles who thought the episode distinctly Christian:

Orlando is presented with the situation that all who would imitate Christ must face: whether to take ‘revenge’ on one’s sinful brother and enemy . . . or to take the more difficult and dangerous course of ‘kindness’. Orlando might with justice consign his would-be murderer to perdition, for Oliver has only himself to blame that he is in the power, actual and symbolic, of the serpent and the lion . . . Yet after being tempted three times to abandon the sinner, Orlando decides to be his brother’s keeper and thus, by exercising mercy rather than justice, wins a victory over Satan both for Oliver and himself. (Knowles 1966, 12–13)

Orlando prevents Oliver becoming “Food to the sucked and hungry lioness” (4.3.127) and in doing so provides spiritual sustenance to his fellow-man. Oliver’s “conversion” (4.3.137) is echoed in the reported transformation of Duke Frederick who came to the Forest of Ardenne and, “meeting with an old religious man / . . . was converted / Both from his enterprise and from the world” (5.4.158–60). Given the link between melancholy and religious contemplatives, Jaques decision to follow Duke Frederick (“Out of these convertites / There is much matter to be heard and learned”, 5.4.182–3) does not bode well for his condition and suggests a desire to feed off others which stands out against the generosity offered throughout the play.

The generosity demonstrated by Orlando, Duke Senior, and Corin is constructed specifically in terms of feeding, and society rather than solitude is celebrated. The countryside is not a place to escape relations with others, but to consider them afresh, and there is a distinct sense, articulated in dietary terms, that to think otherwise (even in order to live the simple religious life of an ascetic) is

unhealthy. The play seems to be suggesting that moderation and need should dictate whether or not humans can justly hunt and eat the flesh of animals. Jaques pontificates on man's mistreatment of animals in their own domain but the rhetorical force of his speech is diminished by its being only reported, and moreover, it is a reflection on misery in general. Jaques cares little for his fellow-man while Orlando offers sustenance to his friend and enemy alike; unlike Corin he is not native to the Forest and has not found other forms of sustenance. The play seems to be suggesting that hunting for food is a necessary evil but, if moderately undertaken, eating the flesh of animals can be justified. Even after Adam has been provided for, Orlando is apparently willing to hunt, evident when Celia describes him as "furnished like a hunter" (3.2.240) but the description is part of the romantic tradition of love as a hunt and the familiar punning on 'deer' and 'hart' is evident in Rosalind's reply: "O ominous—he comes to kill my heart" (3.2.241). The lovesick Orlando, spread out under a tree and described by Celia as "like a dropped acorn" (3.2.230) is, according to Rosalind, fruit dropped from "Jove's tree" (3.2.231). The allusion is to the Golden Age when men "Did live by . . . apples, nuts and pears . . . And by the acorns dropped on ground, from Jove's broad tree" (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1, 119–21) and also to the New Testament: "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Matthew 7:18). The Forest of Ardenne is a kind of Golden World but it is one informed by the Christian ideals of charity and forgiveness. Jaques conforms to the introspection typical of the melancholic and by feeding upon that which is harmful to his own well-being is deemed unfit to purge others by those who judge him.

### *The Winter's Tale*

In *As You Like It* there is a shift from the tyrannical court to the Forest of Ardenne and back again following Oliver's conversion and the reported transformation of Duke Frederick. In *The Winter's Tale* there is a similar journey from the tyrannical court of Sicilia to the shores of Bohemia which results in the salvation of Perdita but, as we shall see, the court and country are less obviously dichotomized in Shakespeare's later play. As we saw above, it is suggested that Jaques's melancholy is related to his diet which raises questions about his sincerity in opposing hunting. In *The Winter's Tale* too it seems that diet is a more dominant issue than has hitherto been considered and might explain Leontes's apparently motiveless jealousy. Similar to *As You Like It*, *The Winter's Tale* also considers food and feeding via representations of hunting, meat-eating, and vegetarianism but in a quite distinct, and often rather surprising manner.

## Leontes's Condition

In a recent essay Murray M. Schwartz noted that “Criticism of *The Winter’s Tale* discloses an almost uniform denial of significant motivation in the representation of Leontes’ jealousy” (Schwartz 2005, para.1). For Schwartz, the exception is those psychoanalytically informed critics who recognize that the motif for the jealousy “is embodied in the structure of linguistic and personal relationships acted out on the stage (and in our minds)” (Schwartz 2005, para.2). As Schwartz pointed out, J.I.M. Stewart was the first to recognize that Leontes’s jealousy can be partially explained by his sexual desire for Polixenes which is projected onto Hermione; C.L. Barber related Leontes’s jealousy to early infancy: Hermione is a maternal figure and Polixenes, representing the father, is hated for his sexual possession of the mother; and Stephen Reid considered Leontes’s rejection of Hermione a refusal to accept his feminine self which desires Polixenes, a desire eventually satisfied by the union of Perdita, that feminine self, and Florizel, Polixenes’s masculine self.<sup>35</sup> Schwartz added to these responses to the play by arguing that Leontes’s attempts to destroy Hermione in order to reunite himself with a fantasized ideal maternal figure. For Schwartz, Leontes’s paranoid jealousy can be explained as a fear of maternal engulfment.

The wider medical significance of Leontes’s jealousy was considered by B.J. Sokol who, in his fascinating study of *The Winter’s Tale*, argued that Leontes is suffering from couvade syndrome, a condition common to expectant fathers, which has both physical and mental effects. The sufferer might experience “disorders of teeth, lips, eyes, eyelids, abdomen, weight and sexual function” as well as “delusions of persecution”, in which the world is full of coded references to the sufferer and his fears, and “baseless sexual jealousy and/or certainty of cuckoldry” (Sokol 1994, 42–4). As Sokol pointed out, there are numerous references to the syndrome in English drama and medical texts from the seventeenth century (Sokol 1994, 42–5). David Houston Wood also suggested that Leontes is suffering from a medical condition but argued that he reveals symptoms consistent with melancholy. Wood focussed on “the overlapping vocabularies of mental and physical disease in the humoral body”, paying particular attention to “excesses of bodily heat that early modern physicians identified as prominent among the atmospheric variables that could negatively affect health” (Wood 2002, 188). As Wood noted, “if a humour which in its natural state tended toward the cool (phlegm or melancholy) was suddenly acted upon or scorched by heat, producing thereby what was identified as an ‘unnatural’ humor, then a terrific altering in the health and character of the affected individual was understood to result” (Wood 2002, 207n10). He argued that this is what appears to have happened to Leontes: “Leontes’ localizing of trauma within his brain, use of the medical term ‘tremor cordis’, and insistence on the agency of heat . . . points specifically to a subjective expression of the sudden onset of an illness that follows an early modern understanding of the nature of physical and psychological cause and effect within the humoral body” (Wood 2002, 190).

Wood's argument is convincing but does not mention the role of diet in Leontes's affliction. As we saw in the discussion of *As You Like It* above, the dietaries repeatedly invoke food as one of the main causes of melancholy and the means by which the condition might be treated. Timothie Bright's *A Treatise of Melancholy* and Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, both cited by Wood for their discussions of the physical and mental consequences of melancholy, also focus on the role of diet in provoking and curing the condition. Bright notes "The causes of excess of this humour are diuerse, and all (except it be receaued from the parent) spring from fault of diet . . ." and proceeds to "declare vnto you, such nourishments as are apt to engender those humours, that in this present state you nowe stand in, oppressed therewith, knowing which they are that minister matter to this grosse iuyce, you for your speedie recouerie auoide them, and with choice of better, alter that which is amisse into a more cheerfull qualitie" (Bright 1586, B5r–B5v). So too Burton notes that "Diet, which consists in meate and drinke . . . causeth Melancholy, as it offends in Substance or Accidents, that is, quantity, quality, or the like" (Burton 1621, F3v), listing the offending foods and why too much or too little food can also cause the condition.

Throughout *The Winter's Tale* there are subtle references to food and feeding in the court of Sicilia and it is likely that an audience alert to the important role allotted to diet in early modern culture would have made connections between these references and Leontes's condition. The play opens with a conversation between Archidamus and Camillo, courtiers from Bohemia and Sicilia respectively, and much is made of the welcome given to those Bohemians visiting the Sicilian court:

ARCHIDAMUS If you shall chance, Camillo, to visit Bohemia on the like occasion whereon my services are now on foot, you shall see, as I have said, great difference betwixt our Bohemia and your Sicilia.

CAMILLO I think this coming summer the King of Sicilia means to pay Bohemia the visitation which he justly owes him.

ARCHIDAMUS Wherein our entertainment shall shame us, we will be justified in our loves; for indeed—

CAMILLO Beseech you—

ARCHIDAMUS Verily, I speak it in the freedom of my knowledge. We cannot with such magnificence—in so rare—I know not what to say. —We will give you sleepy drinks, that your senses, unintelligent of our insufficiency, may, though they cannot praise us, as little accuse us.

CAMILLO You pay a great deal too dear for what's given freely.

ARCHIDAMUS Believe me, I speak as my understanding instructs me, and as mine honesty puts it to utterance.

(1.1.1–1.1.20)

Michael Bristol sensed anxiety in the Bohemian courtier's comments that Leontes's generosity has compromised the ability of the Bohemian court to respond in kind and identified a sinister impulse behind the extravagance: "The

lavish entertainment provided for Polixenes is prompted by Leontes's desire to exceed his guest-friend in honor and prestige" (Bristol 1996, 160), which is an indication of the hostility to come. Given the connections made in the dietaries between melancholy and food, an early modern audience might well have considered Leontes's condition the result of the lavish entertainment referred to in this opening scene. Leontes can be imagined to have participated in the wrong kind of feeding (as we have seen, excessive feeding was thought to provoke melancholy) and it is perhaps this, rather than homosexual desire for Polixenes, which has caused his sickness. A bad diet coupled with signs he interprets as proof of Hermione's infidelity (the nine month's Polixenes has stayed, Hermione's success at encouraging him to stay longer, their hand contact, 1.2) makes a man already prone to melancholy suffer in the most extreme fashion.

That ill-health is a central feature of life in Sicilia is reinforced by several references to physic both before and during the onset of Leontes's jealousy. In the latter part of the exchange between Archidamus and Camillo, Mamillius is the focus of attention:

ARCHIDAMUS You have an unspeakable comfort of your young prince, Mamillius. It is a gentleman of the greatest promise that ever came into my note.

CAMILLO I very well agree with you in the hopes of him. It is a gallant child; one that, indeed, physicks the subject, makes old hearts fresh. They that went on crutches ere he was born desire yet their life to see him a man.

ARCHIDAMUS Would they else be content to die?

CAMILLO Yes—if there were no other excuse why they should desire to live.

ARCHIDAMUS If the King had no son they would desire to live on crutches till he had one. (1.1.34–1.1.46)

It is unsettling that Leontes's subjects should require physic and the impression given is that of a kingdom full of the sick and infirm. Moreover, placing such inordinate hope in the young suggests a lack of faith in Leontes's ability to govern. When Leontes announces himself convinced of Hermione's infidelity, and indeed the infidelity of many women, he characterizes her alleged failing as an illness without remedy: "Should all despair / That have revolted wives, the tenth of mankind / Would hang themselves. Physic for 't there's none" (1.2.199–201). So too he characterizes the victims of women's infidelity as suffering from a morbid physical condition: "Many thousand on 's / Have the disease and feel 't not (1.2.207–8). This scene is interspersed with playful banter between Leontes and Mamillius in which Leontes states "How like, methought, I then was to this kernel, / This squash, this gentleman" and asks Mamillius "Will you take eggs for money?" (1.2.163). Earlier in the scene Leontes refers to Mamillius as his "calf" ("How now, you wanton calf— / Art thou my calf?", 1.2.128–9) and his "collop" ("Most dear'st, my collop!", 1.2.139), meaning an egg fried on bacon, the bacon itself, (OED *collop* *n.* 1. b) or any slice of meat (OED 2. b.). The repeated references to physic and food, specifically linking food with fertility (the kernel and egg evoking procreation), suggests Leontes's preoccupation with diet, literal

feeding as well as the sexual appetite of his wife, and the harm that feeding can do. Leontes cannot tell the difference between a loyal wife and an unfaithful one and announces himself glad that Hermione did not breast-feed their son (2.1.57–8) believing, as was common in the period, that breast milk could affect the character of the feeding child. Hermione’s insistence that her “innocent milk” was received by the “most innocent mouth” (3.2.99), that of her new-born child, goes unheeded: Leontes cannot distinguish between innocence and guilt, good food and bad. As though sensing the negative effects of diet upon the adults around him, Mamillius stops eating:

LEONTES

Conceiving the dishonour of his mother  
 He straight declined, drooped, took it deeply,  
 Fastened and fixed the shame on ’t in himself;  
 Threw off his spirit, his appetite, his sleep,  
 And downright languished.  
 (2.3.13–17)

As Katherine Duncan–Jones noted, Leontes’s affectionate name for Mamillius in 1.2. (“my calf”) is connected to the “many complex images of calf– and cow–killing” identified in Shakespeare’s work and “shares one vital characteristic with most of the other ‘calves’ alluded to in Shakespeare’s plays. Though he will not be a victim of murder or butchery, he is going to die young, and the word applied to him by Leontes so early in the play serves to activate some audience anxiety” (Duncan–Jones 2004, 194). Ironically, the boy who provides physic for the ailing subjects of Sicilia is, in effect, killed by his sick father.

It is not surprising that Leontes should refer to his knowledge of Hermione’s alleged infidelity in terms of consuming poison:

There may be in the cup  
 A spider steeped, and one may drink, depart,  
 And yet partake no venom, for his knowledge  
 Is not infected; but if one present  
 Th’ abhorred ingredient to his eye, make known  
 How he hath drunk, he cracks his gorge, his sides,  
 With violent hefts. I have drunk, and seen the spider.  
 (2.1.41–7)

Murray Schwartz indicated the potent symbolism of the spider: “Psychoanalysis has shown that the spider, like the serpent, is an over–determined symbol. On one level, it represents the sexually threatening mother, contact with whom signifies incest. On a deeper level, it signifies the horror of maternal engulfment, frequently confused with the child’s own oral–aggressive impulses” (Schwartz 2005, para. 27). Yet there may also be a more literal level of signification: Leontes’s melancholy suggests that he has indeed consumed that which has made him ill and

repeated references in the text to physic, food, and feeding increase the likelihood that it is specifically his diet, rather than the knowledge of his wife's infidelity, that is the cause. Leontes's melancholy not only affects his own body but acts like a poison upon others, although he is prevented from doing further harm by the good Camillo who will not allow the literal poisoning of Polixenes. Like Mamillius, who is reported to be the provider of physic in 1.1, Paulina too would prove medicinal, not to the people but to the jealous Leontes:

Good my liege, I come—  
 And I beseech you hear me, who professes  
 Myself your loyal servant, your physician,  
 Your most obedient counsellor; yet that dares  
 Less appear so in comforting your evils  
 Than such as most seem yours—I say, I come  
 From your good queen.  
 (2.3.52–8)

This further reinforces diet as a likely explanation for Leontes's behaviour: he requires physic to remedy it and, following the death of Mamillius and the apparent death of Hermione, a period of monastic-like dedication to grief:

LEONTES Once a day I'll visit  
 The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there  
 Shall be my recreation. So long as nature  
 Will bear up with this exercise, so long  
 I daily vow to use it.  
 (3.2.237)

Camillo's later characterisation of Leontes as a "penitent" (4.2.6) serves to underline the ascetism that has replaced bad feeding in Sicilia and which apparently allows Leontes to correct his melancholy. But the reference to the limitation of "nature" by Leontes suggests that he will only mourn as far as his body can endure: he will guard against too much fasting, which Burton warns is as likely to provoke melancholy as over-feeding (Burton 1621, G2r).

### **"Exit, pursued by a bear"**

In 2.3 Leontes orders Antigonus to take the child Perdita

To some remote and desert place, quite out  
 Of our dominions; and that there thou leave it,  
 Without more mercy, to it own protection  
 And favour of the climate. (2.3. 176–9)

Antigonus, believing himself directed in a dream by the dead Hermione to bring the child to Bohemia—"Places remote enough are in Bohemia. / There weep, and

leave it crying” (3.3.30–1)—lands amidst its deserts. He is warned by the Mariner to “go not / Too far i’ th’ land. ‘Tis like to be loud weather. / Besides, this place is famous for the creatures / Of prey that keep upon ’t” (3.1.9–12). The future looks bleak for the child abandoned in this landscape but, ironically, it is Antigonus who becomes the victim of the bear that appears at the end of the scene in Shakespeare’s most notorious stage direction. As Michael Bristol pointed out, the bear “has been addressed primarily as a practical and contingent question of theater history, an aspect of the play as spectacle. Was it a real bear or a man in a bear suit? How does the bear fit into the play’s atmosphere and its decor? Was it supposed to be funny, or was it intended to frighten the audience?” (Bristol 1991, 159).<sup>36</sup> Amongst those who did attend to the bear’s symbolic meaning was Neville Coghill who read the scene as “a kind of dramaturgical hinge” which allows the shift from tragedy to comedy as well as symbolizing “the revenge of Nature on the servant of a corrupted court” (Coghill 1958, 35). Dennis Biggins agreed with Coghill but went further, asserting that “the bear scene focusses Leontes’ now dead brutality and false suspicion on Antigonus, in order to destroy them *dramatically*. . . through Antigonus the tragic world of Leontes’ jealousy is finally manifested and symbolically destroyed” (Biggins 1962, 8). As Bristol noted, in early modern European culture the bear is identified with winter, royal tyranny, and aggressive sexuality but also features as a symbol “of nurture and creativity”—the she-bear licks her babies into shape from within her womb-like den (Bristol 1991, 160)—and is best considered in the context of Candlemas, “the terminal date of the Christmas cycle” (2 February), since it is “a figure of boundaries and of transformations, marking both the moment of ending or death and the moment of new beginnings or birth” (Bristol 1991, 161).

Of course the appearance of a bear onstage would also evoke bear-baiting, which encouraged the practical discussions about stagecraft Bristol considered over-represented. Arthur Quiller-Couch thought the decision to bring a bear on stage opportunistic: “the bear-pit in Southwark . . . had a tame animal to let out, and the management took the opportunity to make a popular hit” (Shakespeare 1931, xx). If Coghill was right and “the practical aspects of production” make it clear that the bear was not real but a man in a suit (Coghill 1958, 34), it does not necessarily make the scene amusing: there is no reason why audiences should not have felt a frisson of fear as the creature pursued a man on stage especially since, as Alexander Leggatt pointed out, “real bears sometimes escaped, causing death or injury” (Leggatt 1994, p45). Bear-baiting was apparently very popular but it also attracted criticism. Philip Stubbes is perhaps the most eloquent in his condemnation of the sport:

What Christian herte can take pleasure to see one poore beast to rent, teare and kill an other, and all for his foolish pleasure. And although thei be bloody beasts to mankind, and seeke his destruction, yet wee are not to abuse them, for his sake who made them, and whose creatures thei are. For notwithstanding that thei be evill to us, and thirst after our blood, yet are thei good creatures in their own nature and kind, and made to set forth the

glorie, power, and magnificence of our God, and for our use, and therefore for his sake we ought not to abuse them . . . And to be plaine, I think that the Devill is Maister of the Game, Beareward and all. (Stubbes 1583a, P2r)

Stubbes's sympathy for the bear is clear but even those accounts not overtly critical of bear-baiting show evidence of compassion for the animal concerned, for example Thomas Dekker's description in *Work for Armourers* (1606):

At length a blind bear was tied to the stake, and instead of baiting him with dogs, a company of creatures, that had the shapes of men and faces of Christians (being either colliers, carters or watermen) took the office of beadesles upon them, and whipped Monsieur Hunkes till the blood ran down his old shoulders. (Chambers 1923, 457n6)

The bear is given a human name ("Monsieur Hunkes", also known as 'Harry Hunkes') but is taunted by creatures that merely "had the shapes of men" and there is apparent affection and familiarity in the reference to "his old shoulders".<sup>37</sup> Another description of a bear-baiting is by Paul Hentzner, a German visitor to London:

There is still another place, built in the form of a theatre, which serves for the baiting of bears and bulls. They are fastened behind, and then worried by those great English dogs and mastiffs, but not without great risks to the dogs from the teeth of the one and the horns of the other; and it sometimes happens they are killed upon the spot. Fresh ones are immediately supplied in the places of those that are wounded or tired. To this entertainment there often follows that of whipping a blinded bear, which is performed by five or six men, standing in a circle with whips, which they exercise upon him without any mercy. Although he cannot escape from them because of his chain, he nevertheless defends himself, vigorously throwing down all who come within his reach and are not active enough to get out of it, tearing the whips out of their hands and breaking them. (Wilson 1944, 207–8)<sup>38</sup>

Reading between the lines of Hentzner's account, the lack of mercy shown by the men who outnumber the bear is barbaric and the bear heroically defends himself. Alexander Leggatt noted Shakespeare's regular use of the bear-baiting metaphor in a range of plays and that Shakespeare was apparently alert to the animals' suffering as well as their courage (Leggatt 1994, 44–5). As Terence Hawkes pointed out, the devouring of Antigonus in *The Winter's Tale* "undermine[s] by parody the inhuman savagery of the law of Leontes's court" (Hawkes 2002, 99)—and, indeed, it is ironic that Leontes should refer to Paulina's admonitions as a baiting of him (2.3. 91–2.3. 93)—but perhaps Shakespeare was also undermining those who enjoyed the savage sport of bear-baiting by inverting the usual power-relation between man and beast. As will become clear, the allusion to bear-baiting informs references to hunting and meat-eating in the scene that follows the stage direction signalling the demise of Antigonus.

The appearance of a bear on stage was a symbolic device that would also have reminded play-goers of the animals tortured in the bear-baiting rings but what else

might the bear have suggested? Bear-meat is listed as a foodstuff in the dietaries and bear-grease recommended for medicinal purposes by topical application. For Thomas Cogan bear is a foreign food which is no longer consumed and which he apparently considers in the same vein as cannibalism: “Galen maketh mention of divers other kindes of beasts which some nations use to eat, as the flesh of Asses, Lyons, Dogges, Wolves, Beares, and such like. To the which he might have added the Canibals who feed on mans flesh, as sometime the Scots did . . . “ (Cogan 1636, S2v). But it does seem that bear was still being eaten since other dietary writers discuss it in the context of humoral disorders. In a chapter considering “the diet of persons melancholicke” Thomas Elyot includes “beares flesh” amongst the range of foods to be avoided by the afflicted (Elyot 1595, P4r). So too Levinus Lemnius urges the melancholic to avoid bear-meat (Lemnius 1576, U1r). Thomas Tryon, typical of a later shift away from the view that meat was generally beneficial, specifically warns against eating the kind of animals cited by Cogan:

all such Animals as naturally will eat Flesh, are by all means counted unclean, as Dogs, Cats, Beares, Wolves, Foxes and many others both in the Sea and Land, and most Men will avoid the eat[ing] of such Creatures, as being unclean in the Root of their Natures. Therefore they desire such Food as hath affinity with them, for every Creature rejoyceth in its likeness. (Tryon 1682, C3r)

The notion that ‘you are what you eat’ extended also to the use of bear-grease as a medicine. The rationale presumably being that a hairy animal will encourage hair growth, Girolamo Ruscelli provides “A remedy for that disease when the heare of the bearde or head falleth of, of it selfe” which directs the afflicted to “shaue with a rasour the place, and than rubbe it well with an onyon: that done, take barley parched and made into pouder, and mixe it with Beare suet, and so lay it vpon the place, and the heare wyll growe agayne” (Ruscelli 1562, I3r). Ruscelli also recommends bear-grease “For the payne of the loynes or haunches”, suggesting the patient “Take the roote of Iris or gladiolus, and braye it with quicke Brimstone and Beares grease, and laye it vpon your loynes lyke a plaister, and you shall fynde a soueraigne remedye” (Ruscelli 1562, K1r). Oswald Gabelkover recommends bear-grease for a range of ailments including for “meliorizatione [improvement] of the sight”, “all manner of swellinge”, “the Ruptures of oulde, and yonge persons”, “Doloure of the Legges” and specifies “the greace of a shee, or female Beare” for ailments affecting women (Gabelkover 1599, E5v; O2v; Q5r; R5v; X2r).

Evidence from the dietaries suggests that the appearance of the bear on stage in *The Winter’s Tale* would have suggested to early modern playgoers a dimension not hitherto considered by critics. As Bristol noted, the bear is “a figure of boundaries and of transformations, marking both the moment of ending or death and the moment of new beginnings or birth” (Bristol 1991, 161). The dietaries add to this sense of dichotomy: the bear evokes Leontes’s melancholy and the illness which has hitherto dominated the play but at the same time suggests a cure: the promise of rejuvenation that will be found in Bohemia. Ruscelli’s reference to bear

as a curative for pain in the loins pertains to the sexual jealousy experienced by Leontes and echoes the references to physic and fertility discussed above. Ruscelli might well be speaking about the second half of *The Winter's Tale* when he says of bear's medicinal properties "and you shall fynde a soueraigne remedye" (Ruscelli 1562, K1r).

## Vegetarian Feasts

In the Forest of Ardenne hunting and meat-eating are a central part of life but the devouring of Antigonus is the only meat-eating that occurs in *The Winter's Tale* and it is a darkly ironic moment: animals not courtiers do the hunting in this instance. Yet the hunting of animals does occur in Bohemia. Moments after Antigonus's exit an Old Shepherd enters complaining about the behaviour of the young:

I would there were no age between ten and three-and-twenty, or that youth would sleep out the rest; for there is nothing in the between but getting wenches with child, wronging the ancientry, stealing, fighting—hark you now, would any but these boiled-brains of nineteen and two-and-twenty hunt this weather? They have scared away two of my best sheep, which I fear the wolf will sooner find than the master. (3.3.58–65)

This is the only reference to hunting animals in the play and the hunters do not come off well: the activity is depicted as anti-social behaviour and our sympathy lies with the shepherd who, like Corin in *As You Like It*, tends animals as opposed to slaughtering them. The other hunter in the play, the bear who pursues Antigonus, though fierce, is also afforded sympathy. The Clown describes the savagery of the animal's attack upon Antigonus—"to see how the bear tore out his shoulder-bone, how he cried to me for help" (3.3.92–4)—but also the animal's reason for attacking: "They are never curst but when they are hungry" (3.3.126–7); the bear hunts in order to survive and not merely for sport. As we saw above, there was a great deal of sympathy for the bears who suffered in London's bear-baiting rings and perhaps Shakespeare too felt pity for the creatures, a sympathy demonstrated in *The Winter's Tale* by having the bear hunt and eat the man rather than the other way around.

To what extent does condemnation of human hunters and sympathy for the bear suggest an affinity with vegetarianism? It is not clear what is eaten in Sicilia, merely that Leontes has become sick and physic is required but we have seen that meat, including bear-meat, was thought to provoke the condition from which he apparently suffers. In Bohemia the sheep-shearing feast is entirely vegetarian, as is evident from the clown's shopping list:

Let me see, what am I to buy for our sheep-shearing feast? Three pound of sugar, five pound of currants, rice—what will this sister of mine do with rice? But my father hath made her mistress of the feast, and she lays it on. . . . I must have saffron to colour the

warden pies; mace; dates, none—that's out of my note; nutmegs, seven; a race or two of ginger—but that I may beg; four pound of prunes, and as many of raisins o' th' sun. (4.3.35–48)

It is clear that this feast will not involve the eating of meat.<sup>39</sup> Many of the items on the clown's list would have been imported goods which makes them exotic and thus expensive; we are presumably to conclude that the money left with Perdita by Antigonus facilitates the purchase of such luxuries. Significantly, the clown does not know what the rice is for, which appears to suggest his vulgarity and Perdita's innate superiority. Recipes involving the use of rice appeared throughout the early modern period and it is also mentioned in several of the dietaries.<sup>40</sup> Combined with cow's milk or almond milk, rice is recommended as a food especially good for the sick by Philip Barrough (Barrough 1583, I2r), Oswald Gabelkover (Gabelkover 1599, L6r), and Hieronymus Brunschwig (Brunschwig 1561, E1r). Thomas Elyot lists "Rice with Almond milke" as one of the foods "which maketh good iuyce and good bloud" (Elyot 1595, D2r) and William Vaughan is more specific: "Rice sodden with milke and sugar qualifieth wonderfully the heate of the stomake, increaseth genitall seede, and stoppeth the fluxe of the belly" (Vaughan 1600, C5r). Rice was also a symbol of fertility (as implied by Vaughan's reference to seed) and was traditionally thrown at weddings, which suggests that the clown is ignorant of the fact that his sister's marriage is imminent.<sup>41</sup> Rice as a food for the sick and as a symbol of fertility brings us neatly to the role of Perdita as queen of the sheep-shearing feast and her broader signification in the play.

B.J. Sokol noted that the name Flora, which Florizel—as-Doricles gives Perdita as she enters the festival garlanded with flowers, is no doubt meant as praise, but had strongly ambivalent connotations for an early modern audience. The name was associated with the famous Roman 'strumpet' *Laurentia*, it appeared in Thomas Heywood's *An Apology for Actors* (1612) as a character name for an "unchaste woman", and in Renaissance visual iconography Flora proffering or holding a bunch of flowers is a sexual offer (Sokol 1994, 131–2). The flowers Perdita initially wishes to give Florizel are phallic ("bold oxlips and / The crown imperial", 4.4.125–6) and she then adds the wish to give him "lilies of all kinds, / The flower-de-luce being one" (4.4.126–7), flowers that Nicolas Culpepper considered capable of reducing lust or genital swelling (Sokol 1994, 136–7). The rosemary and rue she distributes to Camillo and Polixenes are dismissed as "flowers of winter" (4.4.79) by the latter and, as Sokol pointed out, she refuses the falsifying arts that produce cross-bred flowers because "carnations" have a 'carnal' resonance and "gillyvors" sound like 'gill-flirts' or wantons (Sokol 1994, 134–9). For Sokol the flower-giving speech is a complex self-portrait of Perdita's sexual ambivalence: her passionate desire for Florizel and her fear of that desire (Sokol 1994, 137). Sokol's focus is on the flowers Perdita rejects and those she lacks but what about those she does distribute?

The Rosemary and rue dismissed by Polixenes are replaced by "flowers / Of middle summer" (4.4.106–7): lavender, mints, savoury, marjoram and marigold

(4.4.104–5). The flowers that Perdita says she lacks suggest sexual arousal and the reduction of lust or genital swelling but those she actually distributes are everyday flowers which the dietaries recommend should be used medicinally and in cooking. Crucially, the flowers she distributes are recommended in the dietaries as cures for a range of what were termed ‘cold’ diseases, including melancholy. Philip Moore in his dietary discusses “the goodlie vertues of sonderie herbes” at some length and characterizes all those distributed by Perdita, including Rosemary and Rue, as hot and dry (Moore 1564).<sup>42</sup> As we saw earlier, melancholy was considered cold and dry so foods also classified as such should be avoided by those suffering from the condition. Indeed Thomas Elyot recommends mint infused in milk as a suitable treatment (Elyot 1595, H3r). Amongst the herbs recommended by William Vaughan as “preseruatiues against cold diseases” are mints, wild marjoram, rosemary, and lavender (Vaughan 1612, K6r). So too Nicholas Culpepper recommends rosemary, lavender, and sweet marjoram for cold diseases (Culpepper 1652, Mm2r; X2v; Z1v). Oswald Gabelkover includes the use of rosemary, lavender, marjoram, and rue in the treatment of what he terms “extreme melancholy” and assures his readers that “By this meanes is a renouvmnede Gentleman, vvvhich vvas bereft of his sences, restored agayne to his former helth” (Gabelkover 1599, C6r). Leontes refers to his condition as a fluctuation of the heart, which he terms “*tremor cordis*” (1.2.109), and the flowers distributed by Perdita are relevant here also: Elyot recommends rosemary as good for the heart (Elyot 1595, D3v); Gabelkover advises the use of rosemary-flowers to remedy “the pantinge of the Harte” (Gabelkover 1599, H4v); and Nicholas Culpepper suggests the use of rosemary flowers to “comfort the heart”, lavender to remedy “the tremblings and passions of the Heart”, and marigold flowers which are “a comforter of the heart and spirits, and to expell any malignant or pestilential quality which might annoy them” (Culpepper 1652, Mm2r; X2v; Z2r).

Moore notes that mints and savoury provoke “carnall luste” but also that rue “destroieth carnall lust” (Moore 1564, E8v, F3v, D8v) and so too Philip Barrough warns that rue and mint must not be taken together for although mints “ingender much sede, yet, that which they ingender, is feble & weake: but rewe doth altogether corrupt & destroy seede” (Barrough 1583, O1v). Although Culpepper warns that spearmint provokes lust, he suggests wild or horse mints as “an especial Remedy for those that have Venerious Dreams and pollutions in the Night” when applied directly to the testicles (Culpepper 1652, Aa1v) and has nothing but praise for savoury (Culpepper 1652, Oo1r–Oo1v). Moreover, mint and “sauiē” (presumably savoury), is recommended by Brunschwig to cure “payne in the loynes” (Brunschwig 1561, F6r) and by Ruscelli as a remedy for “colde impostumations of the testicles” (Ruscelli 1569, L2r), suggesting the herbs’ anti-inflammatory quality. We cannot be sure how informed Shakespeare’s audience would have been about the specific effects of certain herbs (and, as we have seen, the dietaries are distinctly dialogic) but if Shakespeare’s contemporaries did consider mint and savoury as potentially harmful, they would perhaps have expected rue to counter its effects. Crucially, the overwhelming impression given

of the flowers distributed by Perdita is that they are medicinal and, like the bear-grease referred to earlier, suggest amelioration of symptoms we might associate with Leontes's sexual jealousy.<sup>43</sup> Sokol is correct to focus on the sexual ambivalence at work in this scene but also suggested is the importance of dietary health: the bad feeding that prevailed in Sicilia and made Leontes sick is not a problem in Bohemia. The sheep-shearing feast will be entirely vegetarian and Perdita does not possess the kind of flowers that pose a significant threat to sexual health, flowers that would exacerbate Leontes's illness. More importantly, by banishing Perdita from Sicilia Leontes has inadvertently excluded the means of curing his condition since the flowers she distributes were thought to benefit those suffering from melancholy and fluctuations of the heart. Moreover, the rice which the Clown is sent to buy in 4.3, and with which Perdita presumably intends to feed her guests at the feast, suggests not only fertility but curing of the sick. Although Leontes has benefited from the physic provided by Paulina there is a real sense that his recovery would have taken less than the 16 years that have passed if Perdita had attended him.

When Leontes touches the apparently newly-painted statue of Hermione he proclaims "O, she's warm! / If this be magic, let it be an art / Lawful as eating" (5.3.109–111). Horace Howard Furness ignores this esoteric comment (Shakespeare 1898, 300) as does J. H. P. Pafford (Shakespeare 1963b, 159) while Stephen Orgel ignores the culinary dimension of the quote, focussing instead on the illegality of magic (Shakespeare 1996, 229n110–11).<sup>44</sup> The word *lawful*, meaning normal, was used in the early modern period to refer to a benign tumour or swelling (OED *lawful* *a* 1.c.) which locates the word as specifically dietary- and health-related. Leontes's comment is arguably informed by the notion that eating was once unlawful or abnormal in Sicilia, that is, it contravened the dietary laws which urged moderation and the avoidance of specific foods. In the second half of *The Winter's Tale* there is a constant looking back to Sicilia and Leontes's condition: as the dietaries make clear, the bear suggests both the cause of and the cure for his disease, the vegetarian feast suggests freedom from the kind of feeding that provoked the disease in the first place, and the flowers distributed by Perdita signal her role as his physician, albeit 16 years too late. Like the unnamed gentleman in Gabelkover's dietary, Leontes who "vvas bereft of his senses" is "restored agayne to his former helth".

In *As You Like It* and *The Winter's Tale* a vegetarian diet offers relief from melancholy. The consequences of Jaques's melancholy is less serious than that which afflicts Leontes but in both cases the impact of a food-related illness upon society at large is clear: the hypocritical Jaques withdraws from humanity and Leontes excludes the innocent from court, in particular Perdita, who is capable of curing him. In the early modern period a vegetarian diet was generally considered unhealthy and against divine ordination, but these plays problematize that view: although hunting animals for food is not condemned in all circumstances, Jaques would be healthier if he did not consume venison and Sicilia's opulent feasting compares unfavourably with the feeding that we witness in Bohemia. In this

chapter we have examined a diet considered strange but not necessarily one that would only be practised abroad. In the next chapter we will consider feeding which is distinctly foreign and the tensions between hunger and abstinence, distinctly exotic foodstuffs and rebellion.

## Chapter 4

# Famine and Abstinence, Class War, and Foreign Foodstuff

## *Sir Thomas More, Coriolanus, and Pericles*

Anxieties surrounding the availability of food, and tension between the physical need for food and intellectual or spiritual demands, forms the focus of the three plays considered in this chapter: *Sir Thomas More*, *Coriolanus*, and *Pericles*. Prolonged periods of hunger and fear of famine were familiar to many during the years in which these plays were written. Arguably the main cause of hunger during this period was the process of enclosure which, together with harvest failures, provoked unemployment and led to a sharp rise in the price of food. In *A Discourse of the Commonweal of this Realm of England* (a text dated 1581 and subsequently attributed to Sir Thomas Smith) a conversation takes place between five fictional figures: a knight, merchant, capper, husbandman, and doctor. The Doctor (who evaluates the arguments put forward by all the others and thus presents the most authoritative voice in the piece) proposes that debasement of the coinage “is a great cause of this dearth that we have now of all things” (Dewar 1969, 34) but the opinion of the farmer, that enclosure is primarily to blame, would have appealed to most: “these enclosures do undo us all; for they make us to pay dearer for our land that we occupy and causes [sic] that we can have no land in manner for our money to put to tillage. All is taken up for pasture, either for sheep or for grazing of cattle. . . . and where forty persons had their livings, now one man and his shepherd has all” (Dewar 1969, 17). Another contemporary and anonymous tract, *The Decay of England Onely by the Great Multytude of Shepe* (1550) calls attention in its title page to “certayne causes gathered together, wherein is shewed the decaye of England, only by the great multitude of shepe, to the vtter decay of household keeping, mayntenaunce of men, dearth of corn, and other notable dyscommodityes” (Anon 1550). Similarly in *Utopia* Thomas More’s persona refers to England’s sheep “that used to be so meek and eat so little” but which “are becoming so greedy and wild that they devour men themselves, as I hear”. He blames “the nobility and gentry, yes, and even some abbots” for enclosing land for pasture, a process which “has had the effect of raising the price of grain in many places” (More 1992, 12–13).

There were good and bad harvests throughout the earlier part of the sixteenth century, with three bad harvests in the 1560s and a particularly bad harvest in

1573. Philip Stubbes wrote a shocking account of England's poor and vulnerable who suffered from malnutrition:

[They] die some in ditches, some in holes, some in caues and dens, some in fields . . . rather like dogs than Christian people. For notwithstanding that they be neuer so impotent, blind, lame, sick, old or aged, yet are they forced to walke the countries from place to place to seeke their releefe at every mans doore, except they wil sterve or famish at home . . . Yea, in such troups doe they flocke, and in such swarmes doe they flowe, that you can lightlie go any way, and you shall see numbers of them at euerie doore, in euerie lane, and in euerie poore caue . . . (Stubbes 1583b, G1).

This picture of starving people is similar to Edmund Spenser's infamous account of the famished Irish in his *View of the Present State of Ireland*:

Out of everye corner of the woode and glenns they came creepinge forth upon their hands, for their legges could not beare them; they looked Anatomies [of] death, they spake like ghostes, crying out of their graves; they did eate of the carrions, happye wheare they could find them, yea, and one another soone after, in soe much as the verye carcasses they spared not to scrape out of their graves; and if they found a plott of water-cresses or shamrockes, theyr they flocked as to a feast for the time, yett not able long to contynewe therewithall; that in a shorte space there were none almost left, and a most populous and plentyfull countrye suddenly lefte voyde of man or beast: yett sure in all that warr, there perished not manye by the sworde, but all by the extreamytie of famyne which they themselves hadd wrought. (Spenser 1949, 104)

But where Spenser is advocating such human misery as a means of controlling Irish insurrection (the key phrase being “the extreamytie of famyne which they themselves hadd wrought”) Stubbes is recording a national catastrophe: the Irish are to be blamed for their hunger, the English pitied.

There was a general dearth in 1586, but because the early 1590s saw four good harvests the government decided to repeal the anti-enclosure act of 1563 and allow the export of wheat. The year 1594, around the time *Sir Thomas More* was originally composed, saw the first of four consecutive bad harvests leading to widespread starvation, near-starvation and the threat of popular rebellion in various parts of England. The early part of the seventeenth century saw several good harvests in a row, but 1607 was average to poor and that of 1608, bad (Hoskins 1968, 106–8). As we shall see, it was in these years that *Coriolanus* and *Pericles* were most likely composed and first performed. Roger B. Manning described the circumstances that led to serious riots throughout England in 1596 and 1608: Kent, East Anglia and the West of England, areas of clothing manufacture, “were especially vulnerable to a combination of dearth and unemployment resulting from trade depressions”, but in other areas, especially the Midlands, “popular protests against grain shortages and high prices were more likely to take the form of anti-enclosure riots” (Manning 1988, 220). In parts of Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire, Lincolnshire, and Leicestershire much arable land was enclosed causing depopulation, poverty, and hunger.

*Sir Thomas More* and *Coriolanus* open with mutinous citizens who are fearful about starvation demanding action from their social superiors, in both plays an attempt is made to quell the citizen's fears by rhetoric, and in both the complex relationship between the needs of the body and the intellectual demands of an individual is fully interrogated in the context of heroism and rebellion. It seems likely that the earlier play, *Sir Thomas More*, influenced the representation of civil insurrection as a result of food shortages in *Coriolanus* although the uprising that occurred in the Midlands in 1607 perhaps triggered Shakespeare's interest in revisiting this topic. As we shall see, hunger also dominates the scene in *Pericles* featuring the people of Tarsus.

### *Sir Thomas More*

In *Sir Thomas More* food is primarily significant in its effect upon the economy, the strangeness of its cultivation by foreigners, and its use as a means of undermining national and specifically masculine pride.<sup>45</sup> The recurrent association in the early modern period of foreign culinary appetites with physical and sexual degeneracy gave rise to the perception that foreign consumption was harmful to English natives. Complaints made by Londoners against European foreigners in the play can be contextualized via the dietaries and contemporary accounts of the Irish diet in colonial prose writings. The latter, which describe unusual and degenerate consumption, are useful sources for the way in which distinctions were regularly made between civilized Englishmen and their foreign inferiors and will be considered in the section below entitled 'Close to Home: Dirt, cannibalism, and the stereotypes of Ireland'. As we saw in the introduction, the notion that there were four human complexions based on the four humours and that diet was the most effective way of altering an unfavourable complexion indicate that food was more than simply a means to assuage hunger.

As we shall see, the need for food which dominates the play's opening scenes is dramatically related to the desire for sex, and accusations of foreigners' gluttony are accompanied by accusations of their voracious sexual appetite suggesting that foreign appetites must be controlled in order that English national security be maintained. Scott McMillin and the editors of the Revels edition of the play concur, as do most scholars, that Shakespeare is probably the composer and writer of Hand D and hence of the scene which depicts events leading up to the riots of Londoners against resident foreigners on May Day 1517 (McMillin 1987, 135–59; Munday 1990, 23). The riot's leaders—John Lincoln, Williamson and his wife Doll, George and Ralph Betts, and Sherwin—are angry at the behaviour of foreigners in London and have planned a violent uprising against them. Shakespeare's contribution comes before the entry of Sheriff More of London who has been sent by the authorities to calm the situation:

*Enter [at one end] LINCOLN, DOLL, CLOWN, GEORGE BETTS, [SHERWIN,] WILLIAMSON [and] others; and [at the other end] a Sergeant-at-arms [followed by MORE, the other Sheriff, PALMER and CHOLMLEY].*

*Lincoln.* Peace, hear me: he that will not see a red herring at a Harry groat, butter at elevenpence a pound, meal at nine shillings a bushel, and beef at four nobles a stone, list to me.

*Another citizen.* It will come to that pass, if strangers be suffered: mark him.

*Lincoln.* Our country is a great eating country, *argo* they eat more in our country than they do in their own.

*Clown.* By a halfpenny loaf a day troy weight.

*Lincoln.* They bring in strange roots, which is merely to the undoing of poor prentices, for what's a sorry parsnip to a good heart?

*Another.* Trash, trash! They breed sore eyes, and 'tis enough to infect the city with the palsy.

*Lincoln.* Nay, it has infected it with the palsy, for these bastards of dung—as you know, they grow in dung—have infected us, and it is our infection will make the city shake, which partly comes through the eating of parsnips.

*Clown.* True, and pumpions together.

*Sergeant.* What say you to the mercy of the King? Do you refuse it?

*Lincoln.* You would have us upon th' hip, would you? No, marry, do we not; We accept of the king's mercy; but we will show no mercy upon the strangers.

(2.3.0–24)<sup>46</sup>

The accusations rehearsed against the foreigners in this scene are that they have a detrimental effect upon the economy, specifically inflation, they have strange culinary practices, and they bring disease. Moreover, there is an underlying fear of hunger, that foreigners will eat more than their fair share of English food and that English people will suffer malnutrition as a result. Also apparent is the belief that vegetables grown by the foreigners infect Londoners and undermine the security of the city: “for these bastards of dung—as you know they grow in dung—have infected us, and it is our infection will make the city shake”. The Revels editors claimed that Lincoln confuses parsnips with potatoes, discovered by the Spanish in the West Indies, and first mentioned in print by Sir John Hawkins in his *Second Voyage to Guinea*, c. 1565 (Munday 1990, 95n10). Hawkins appears to be referring to the sweet potato (*Ipomea batata*), or yam, first introduced into England in the 1580s, the common potato (*Solanum tuberosum*) following sometime after. The potato, generally regarded with suspicion, was considered an exotic and unusual delicacy, not becoming a field crop in England until the late eighteenth century (Drummond & Wilbraham 1939, 28–9; Brears et al. 1993, 142, 185).

Whether or not the “bastards of dung” are the ‘parsnips’ or the foreigners is unclear, and is perhaps a deliberate conflation of both, but certainly the term ‘bastard’ refers to plants artificially cultivated by humans, here by the addition of manure.<sup>47</sup> The body’s consumption of infected vegetables, propagated by manure, becomes a powerful symbol for what the rioters believe to be the detrimental effect of London’s absorption of aliens. Just as the body consumes that which will infect

it so London incorporates the seeds of its own destruction by allowing the aliens to remain. As a body that has been poisoned should purge itself of the poisonous matter to ensure its well-being, so violent efforts to purge London of foreigners are considered necessary by the rioters to ensure the safety of the city. The city will “shake”, become weak and feverish, if its people are made sick, but the city will also ‘shake’ at the hands of the rioters if things are allowed to continue as before. Pernicious consumption is a powerful symbol of foreign influence in *Sir Thomas More* and it is not surprising that eating, an essential human behaviour, should be made to seem unnatural in the case of foreigners: even their food is harmful. Certain vegetables appear to have acquired their negative reputation from a general association with the place from which they came and the nationality of those responsible for their importation to England but, as we saw in chapter 3, there was a general suspicion toward vegetables in the dietaries. Hostility toward the potato was arguably made worse by its association with the Spanish but its West Indian origin presumably added to the suspicion with which it was regarded. Notably the parsnip was imported to England from France which was, like Spain, a traditional enemy (Munday 1990, 84n1).

The Londoners’ concern about the influx of foreigners in *Sir Thomas More* reflects the reality of demographic change in England and the specific effect of such change upon London. W.K. Jordan noted that during this period the population of London expanded rapidly:

. . . it would seem probable that London in 1500 did not number more than about 1.5 per cent of the whole population. But by 1600 the city very probably included slightly more than 5 per cent of the inhabitants of the kingdom and, most pertinently, controlled nearly 80 per cent of its foreign trade (Jordan 1960, 15–16).

London’s expansion, which “was ill understood in the late sixteenth century and was truly frightening to the responsible authorities”, continued as “hordes of men poured in to the metropolis to fill its ranks and . . . the population continued to rise at a rate which suggests that London can best be described as a ‘boom town’” (Jordan 1960, 17). Stephen Mullaney concurred that this period saw “unprecedented social and cultural upheavals” (Mullaney 1995, 19) so that John Lyly could say of England:

Traffick and travell hath woven the nature of all Nations into ours, and made this land like Arras, full of devise. . . . Time hath confounded our mindes, our mindes the matter; but all commeth to this passe, that what heretofore hath been served in several dishes for a feaste, is now minced in a charger for a Gallimaufrey. If wee [in our play] present a mingle-mangle, our fault is to be excused, because the whole world is become an Hodge-podge.<sup>48</sup>

As Mullaney noted, Lyly’s view of England was also “most emphatically true of Elizabethan London” and “As the city expanded far beyond its customary social, cultural, and geographical limits, it indeed became a ‘Gallimaufrey’ of the nation

(if not of all nations) as a whole” (Mullaney 1995, 19). That the influx of “all Nations” into England, or perhaps more specifically London, should be considered in terms of food, a “Gallimaufrey” and a “Hodge-podge”, is particularly striking in relation to *Sir Thomas More* and demonstrates that Lyly, like Shakespeare, was interested in the changing face of London and the connection to be drawn between strangers, food, and disorder.

The Revels editors referred to William Harrison’s Description of England from Raphael Holinshed’s *Chronicles* for “the obnoxious properties of the strange roots” condemned by Lincoln in 2.3.13–19 (Munday 1990, 95n10). Harrison states as follows: “Of the potato and such venerous roots as are brought out of Spaine, Portingale, and the Indies to furnish vp our bankets, I speake not” (Holinshed 1587a, P5r). Besides the obvious contempt with which any discussion of foreign vegetables is dismissed, Harrison’s use of the adjective “venerous” strikingly imbues the inanimate with a characteristic associated with the foreign, sexual lust. Significantly, some of the dietaries urge caution when consuming parsnips because they were thought to provoke lust (Boorde 1547, G2r; Cogan 1636, 71), a belief perhaps in part due to the phallic shape of both the parsnip and the sweet potato as well as their foreign origin. The dietaries do not mention the potato but Gerard describes it in his *Herball*: distinguishing between what is obviously the sweet potato and the common potato he notes that the former “comfort, nourish, and strengthen the body, procuring bodily lust, and that with greedinesse”; the common potato he considers “equall in goodnesse and wholesomenesse” but in the 1633 edition, enlarged and corrected by Thomas Johnson, is added a note that “the vse of these roots was forbidden in Bourgondy (where they call them Indian Artichokes) for that they were persuaded the too frequent vse of them caused the leprosie” (Gerard 1597, Ccc7r–7v; Gerard & Johnson 1633, Hhhh6v).

Although the complaints levelled against foreigners in 2.3. centre on food, they have previously irritated the Londoners with their sexual impropriety: in the opening scene of the play De Barde accosts Doll, Williamson’s wife, and boasts about his previous sexual exploits with Sherwin’s wife. In both cases sexual relations with Englishwomen are constructed in terms of the offence such relations cause to Englishmen. De Barde aggravates the offence when he boasts to Betts “I tell thee fellow, and she were the mayor of London’s wife, had I her once in my possession I would keep her, in spite of him that durst say nay” (1.1.46–9) since the notion of sex with the wife of an English official is here meant to constitute a general insult to the English nation. Notably, in the same scene, Caveler enters with a pair of Doves which he has stolen from Williamson. Doll’s admonishment—”How now, husband? What, one stranger take thy food from thee, and another thy wife?” (1.1.31–2)—alerts us to an oft-repeated association in the play between foreigners and food. Caveler’s sneer “Beef and brewis may serve such hinds. Are pigeons meat for a coarse carpenter?” (1.1.23–4) demonstrates that food is socially encoded in the play and just as the penetration of Englishwomen by foreigners emasculates Englishmen, so too does their dictation of what Englishmen should eat: Williamson is forced to settle for modest fare and reduced to a “hind”, a

female deer. Sexual insults from foreigners undermine English pride and in a period when food supplies were under threat and food was becoming increasingly expensive, the depiction of foreigners taking food from Englishmen would have caused considerable unease.

Lincoln arranges for the Londoner's complaints against the strangers to be read from the pulpit during the following week's sermons and the specific grievance that foreigners steal English jobs and thus reduce Englishmen to poverty is initially couched in terms of food. The complaint that foreigners "eat the bread from the fatherless children" (1.1.112) emphasizes how ineffectual Englishmen have become in the face of hostile foreigners, something previously noted by Doll: "I am ashamed that freeborn Englishmen, having beaten strangers within their own bounds, should thus be braved and abused by them at home" (1.1.77–80). The civil unrest provoked by the behaviour of some of the foreigners must be considered in the light of genuine contemporary fears about hunger. That the foreigners consume more than their fair share of English food and English wealth is apparent even to the nobility with Shrewsbury expressing concern that the aliens should have responded to the King's grace with insolence and "fattened with the traffic of our country / Already leap into his subjects' face." (1.3.14–15).

The author of the first scene and Hand D focus on food and foreignness in a like manner, and since the 'additions' appear to be rewritings of some kind, rather than sources for the main text, Hand D was presumably influenced by his knowledge of the existing first scene. But Hand D might also have been influenced by the section of Holinshed's *Chronicles* upon which the first scene is closely based.<sup>49</sup> The *Chronicles* themselves link food and foreignness:

About this season there grew a great hartburning and malicious grudge amongst the Englishmen of the citie of London against strangers; and namelie the artificers found themselves sore griued, for that such numbers of strangers were permitted to resort hither with their wares and to exercise handie crafts to the great hinderance and impouerishing of the kings liege people. Besides that, they set nought by the rulers of the citie, & bare themselves too too bold of the kings fauor, wherof they would insolentlie boast; vpon presumption therof, & they offred manie an iniurious abuse to his liege people, insomuch that among other accidents which were manifest, it fortun'd that as a carpenter in London called Williamson had bought two stockdooues in Cheape, and was about to pay for them, a Frenchman tooke them out of his hand, and said they were not meate for a carpenter. (Holinshed 1587c, LIII4v)

Then follows the incident upon which the taking of Sherwin's wife in *Sir Thomas More* is based:

For a Lombard called Francis de Bard, entised a mans wife in Lombard street to come to his chamber with hir husbands plate, which thing she did. After, when hir husband knew it, he demanded his wife, but answer was made he should not haue hir: then he demanded his plate, and in like maner answer was made that he should neither haue plate nor wife. (Holinshed 1587c, LIII4v)

Although Holinshed is an important source for 1.1 the play contains material not present in the prose source, including a greater focus on foreign food. It is likely that the pun on ‘heartburning’ in the first extract cited above triggered for the composer of 1.1. a connection between the Londoner’s grievances, foreigners, and food and he decided to elaborate upon the references to food in the *Chronicles*.<sup>50</sup> Most notably, 1.1. saw the invention of Doll, which allows for an emphasis on the sexual misbehaviour of the foreigners in the context of anxieties about foreign influence on English food. In the *Chronicles* Lincoln is recorded as saying that foreign trade makes “Englishmen want and starue” whilst the foreigners “liue abundantlie in great pleasure”, a hint at the sexual abandonment which is made more explicit with reference to the foreigners as “raueners” (Holinshed 1587c, LIII4v), a word which implies sexual force and greed as well as robbery (OED *ravener n.*). It seems that hints of sexual impropriety in the *Chronicles* were noted by the composer of 1.1. and expanded upon in his creation of Doll so that sexual misbehaviour is considered in the context of goods, wives, and food in order to suggest that the foreigners are responsible for all kinds of pernicious consumption.

In 2.1., revised by Hand B who was probably Thomas Heywood, the Clown urges action against the foreigners: “Come, come, we’ll tickle their turnips, we’ll butter their boxes. Shall strangers rule the roast? Yes, but we’ll baste the roast” (2.1.1–3). This might be nonsense with ‘turnips’, a pun on ‘turn-ups’, simply referring to the turned-up part of a garment (OED *turn-up n. 2*) or it may carry an altogether different meaning. The word ‘turn-up’ could mean prostitute (OED *turn v. 81bb, turn-up n.1*), and so it seems likely that the clown is using ‘tickle’ in a lewd sense, urging fornicating with foreign women, here denounced as whores, as revenge against the foreign men who have behaved with sexual impropriety toward Englishwomen.<sup>51</sup> Punning on food and violence, specifically sexual violence, continues with the notion that the foreigners will have their boxes buttered. The Revels editors suggested that as well as carrying the violent sense of beating heads the phrase is “based on ‘butterbox’, the current nickname for a Dutchman” (Munday 1990, 84n1–2). It is also likely that ‘buttering boxes’ refers to sexual intercourse; Gordon Williams provided examples of ‘box’ meaning ‘vagina’ and ‘butter’ meaning ‘semen’ in early modern usage (Williams 1994a, ‘box’; ‘butter’).<sup>52</sup>

That the Revels editors should omit any reference to the sexual implications of the Clown’s revenge fantasy is puzzling, especially since further evidence that the Clown, more than any other rioter, intends specifically sexual violence toward foreign women is evident in his announcement: “Now Mars for thy honour, / Dutch or French, / So it be a wench, / I’ll upon her” (2.1.50–3). The Clown is clearly (and typically for this stock character) preoccupied with foreign women as whores, as suggested by his estimation of Doll as their opposite: “Ay, Lincoln my leader / And Doll my true breeder” (2.1.5–6). Doll stands for chaste Englishwomen everywhere who will not allow their ‘boxes buttered’ by foreign bullies, as made clear in the opening scene of the play. The Clown’s reference to foreigners’ ruling and basting “the roast” (2.1.2–3) continues the punning on food and implies

violence, as suggested by the Revels editors, and perhaps, more specifically, burning, since the rioters discuss setting fire to houses belonging to foreigners. The extended association in the early part of the play between the foreigners and food continues in More's appeasement of the rioters when he argues that if violence were to rid them of foreigners then some day violence might be used by others to get rid of them: "other ruffians . . . Would shark on you and men like ravenous fishes / Would feed on one another" (2.3.90–3). If, as seems likely, Hand D is a subsequent addition, its writer picked up on and repeated associations drawn between foreigners and food in the earlier part of the play in an effort to fully realize the extent of their pernicious consumption; they not only devour the wives of London's citizens but their food, their profits, their culinary culture, and their general well-being.

Sheriff More quells civil disorder by recourse to rhetoric when he argues that London's citizens should not rebel against the king and, moreover, should afford others the understanding they themselves would welcome. Ultimately, and ironically, however, he finds that he cannot apply this rhetoric to himself and, when faced with a point of principle, proves a rebel. Having framed his argument about rebellion and pity in geographical terms, asking London's citizens to picture foreigners as outcasts, "Plodding to th'ports and coasts for transportation" (2.3.82), he condemns himself to a kind of exile, not from England's shores but from the centre of its power and influence, the court. The play explores the familiar and the exotic in terms of national boundaries but Shakespeare is also alert to what we might term intellectual exoticness, the kind of thinking which questions, indeed, rebels against the dominant ideology.

### **Close to Home: Dirt, Cannibalism, and the Stereotypes of Ireland**

The desire to maintain homogeneity and define borders against the Europeans, as figured in *Sir Thomas More*, ran contrary to the English desire for colonial expansion, with the first focus for England's colonial aspirations being Ireland. As with the Scots and Welsh, proximity did not prevent the English viewing the Irish as alien, a view encouraged by their diet. The potato had not yet become a staple food in Ireland and English writers were particularly interested in the Irish tendency to include raw flesh and blood in their diet. In his *Britannia* William Camden observes

When they are sharp set [hungry], they make no bones of raw flesh, after they have squeez'd the blood out; to digest which, they drink *Usquebaugh*. They let their cows blood too, which, after it is curdled, and strew'd over with butter, they eat with a good relish. (Camden 1971, 1048)

In *The glory of England, or a True description of Blessings, whereby she Triumpheth over all Nations* Thomas Gainsford similarly claims: "Both men and

women not long since accustomed a sauage manner of dyet, which was raw flesh, drinking the blood, now they seeth [boil] it, and quaff vp the liquor, and then take *Vsquebath*" (Gainsford 1618, 151). The distinctive characteristics of the Irish diet are raw meat, and a combination of the familiar, butter, with the unfamiliar, blood; 'usquebaugh' or 'usquebath' is, literally, 'water of life' or whiskey (OED *usquebath n.*), the alcoholic beverage made strange by the Gaelic word used to identify it. Although the dietaries do not specifically mention raw meat or blood as foodstuffs, some warn against the consumption of similar items: animal entrails and black pudding (Langton 1545, lxix; Elyot 1539, D1r). Camden and Gainsford's descriptions of the Irish appetite for blood concur with that given in Holinshed's *Chronicles*:

Fleshe they deuour without bread, and that halfe raw: the rest boyleth in their stomackes with Aqua vitæ, which they swill in after such a surfet by quartes & pottels: they let their coves bloud, which growne to a gelly, they bake and ouerspread with butter, and so eate it in lumpes. (Holinshed 1587b, D4r)

The implication is that the niceties of English eating habits are neglected by the Irish: cooked meat should be taken with bread, a foodstuff generally recommended in the dietaries, and consumption should be leisurely.<sup>53</sup> The effect of Stanyhurst's description of Irish eating habits is to align them with the animals they devour and so alert the reader to the brutishness of the Irish nature.

In a comment analogous to the complaints made by Londoner's against the European foreigners in *Sir Thomas More*, Fynes Moryson makes a metaphorical connection between the Irish diet and disease:

Many of the English-Irish, have by little and little been infected with the Irish filthinesse, and that in the very cities, excepting Dublyn, and some of the better sort in Waterford, where the English continually lodging in their houses, they more retaine the English diet (Moryson 1617, Sss2r).

If left unchecked, diet, an important indication of civility, can effect English degeneration, a process which preoccupied Early modern English writing on Ireland; commentators denounced those Old English, or twelfth-century colonists, who had become like their colonized inferiors and warned the second wave of colonizers, the New English, against a similar degeneration. Foreign vegetables, or "strange roots" (2.3.10) are condemned in *Sir Thomas More* because it is feared they will be the "undoing of poor prentices" (2.3.11) causing the breeding of infection and a physical weakening. So too in early modern writings about the Irish diet there is a fear that the absorption of strange foodstuffs will make strange the English body and initiate a wider social corruption that will inevitably undermine English cultural superiority. As in *Sir Thomas More* and many of the dietaries, early modern commentators on Ireland perceived a link between diet and sexual degeneracy, something hinted at in *A New Description of Ireland* where Barnaby Rich claims that the Irish "had rather stil retaine themselues in their sluttishnesse,

in their vncleanliness, in their rudenesse, and in their inhumane loathsomnes, then they would take any example from the English, either of ciuility, humanity, or any manner of Decencie” (Rich 1610, D4v). The link between diet and sexual behaviour is more overt in Sir John Davies’s *A Discoverie of the True Causes why Ireland was never Entirely Subdued* which refers to “their promiscuous generation of Children; their neglect of lawfull Matrimony; their vncleanesse in Apparrell, Diet, & Lodging; and their contempt and scorne of all thinges necessary for the Ciuill life of man” (Davies 1612, Aa2r).

In *Sir Thomas More*, the mob claim that the foreigners’ vegetables are poisonous because they have been grown in dung (2.3.16), and although the foreigners have Dutch names (De Barde, Peter van Hollock, Adrian Martine), Shakespeare might well have drawn upon the popular association between actively hostile foreigners particularly close to home, the Irish, and dung, or dirt, via the word “bog”. Bogland, a common feature of the Irish landscape, was closely identified with Ireland itself and, by association, with its people, a racist slur which identifies Ireland and the Irish as being the equivalent of excrement: waste matter and ultimately dispensable. Andrew Hadfield drew a connection between Shakespeare’s association of Ireland with the kitchen maid’s buttocks in *The Comedy of Errors* (Ireland is “in her buttocks. I found it out by the bogs”, 3.2.120–21) and John Derricke’s *The Image of Ireland* (1581).<sup>54</sup> Hadfield noted that

Derricke explicitly connects the Irish with dirt as an inversion of the clean and proper established order, specifically with the anus. One of the accompanying woodcuts represents figures publicly defecating at a feast, and he tells the story of the Irish eagles (who clearly stand for the Irish) preferring life in ‘the Deuills Arse, A Peake’ and the desolate bogs to that at court. (Hadfield 1997, 47)

Defecation in front of an audience and during a formal meal situates the Irish as uncivilized and makes a specific connection between excrement and food similar to that found in *Sir Thomas More*. As mentioned earlier, it is unclear whether the phrase ‘bastards of dung’ refers specifically to the “strange roots” (2.3.10), the foreigners, or is a deliberate conflation of both but in any case the association between troublesome foreigners and dung or dirt extended to Ireland as well as mainland Europe. Ireland’s position as England’s most exotic neighbour might well have made Shakespeare alert to the parallels between the foreigners in *Sir Thomas More* and reports coming out of Ireland from his contemporaries; they share a reputation for strange diets associated with dung and disease as well as degenerate sexual behaviour.

Detailed descriptions of the common Irish diet by Camden, Gainsford, Stanyhurst and Moryson function as disturbing accounts of alterity primarily due to their emphasis on the Irish taste for raw flesh and blood which suggests a people capable of that most extreme form of uncivilized eating, cannibalism, explored in relation to the Scots in chapter 2. Although contemporary English accounts of Irish cannibalism describe a people not naturally disposed to the practice but reduced to

survival cannibalism as a result of war, the overwhelming effect of such accounts is the endorsement of English perceptions of the Irish as savage. In *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, Irenius describes the starving Irish in Munster as “Anatomies of death” that “did eate the dead Carrions, happie wheare they Coulede finde them, Yea and one another sone after, in so muche as the verye carkasses they spared not to scrape out of their graves” (Spenser 1949, 158). Writing on Ireland in Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, John Hooker reports that after the defeat of the Papal force in 1580 the people of the area surrounding Smerwick ate the bodies of dead men washed up on shore from a shipwreck, so severe was the extent of the famine after the Desmond rebellion (Holinshed 1587b, R2r). Similarly Fynes Moryson claims in his *Itinerary* that after the tactical destruction of Irish corn by English forces a group of soldiers returning home from an expedition against the rebel Brian Mac Art came across “a most horrible spectacle of three children (whereof the eldest was not about ten yeeres old), all eating and knawing with their teeth the entrals of their dead mother” (Moryson 1617, Bbb2r). Other accounts accuse the Irish of ritual cannibalism, confirming suspicions that their participation in the uncivilized and unnatural practice was voluntary. As we saw in chapter 2, Spenser’s *A View of the Present State of Ireland* reports that the Irish, like the Scots (and indeed the Scythians before them), indulge in blood rituals:

Allsoe the *Scythians* vsed when they would binde anie solempe vowe of Combinacion to drinke a bowle of blodd together vowing theareby to spende their laste blodd in that quarrell, And even so do the wilde Scottes as ye maie reade in *Buchannan* and some of the Northern Irishe likewise. (Spenser 1949, 108)

Spenser was particularly sensitive to perceived English degeneration in Ireland and his focus on Irish blood rituals, passed on from one people to another, suggests a real fear that Englishmen might become implicated in barbaric Irish cultural practices.

Although there were European accounts of cannibalism amongst native American tribes, the important matter was proximity: barbarity might be expected in the unchartered territory of the New World but the prospect of cannibalism in Ireland, a region physically close and inhabited by Englishmen, would have proved more disturbing than reports of the practice in a remote location. As in *Sir Thomas More*, the cultural practice that raises particular concern and is perceived as strange and harmful is a culinary one: consumption, be it of strange vegetables or raw meat or blood, is as much an indication of alterity, of the exotic, as physical appearance, language or other customs. While there is no straightforward equivalence between the invasive strangers in *Sir Thomas More* and the invaded Irish, implicit comparisons are drawn between the two via their strange culinary customs. Proximity conditions influence: European foreigners in *Sir Thomas More* threaten to undermine English order and effect degeneration in much the same way that English order was being challenged in the colony of Ireland, the resistance to

colonial rule being judged by English authorities as civil disorder rather than political resistance.

William Camden rejected as spurious stories suggesting that the Romans had conquered Ireland and complained that this failure made England's job of civilizing the Irish more difficult:

I can never imagine that this island was conquered by the Romans. Without question it had been well for it, if it had; and might have civilized them. For wheresoever the Romans were Lords and Masters, they introduced humanity among the conquer'd; and except were they rul'd, there was no such thing as humanity, learning, or neatness in any part of Europe. Their neglect of this Island [Ireland] may be charged upon them as inconsiderateness. For from this quarter Britain was spoil'd and *infested* with most cruel enemies . . . [my emphasis] (Camden 1971, 967–8).

The anger expressed by Camden about ancient 'infestations' by the barbarous Irish echoes the feelings expressed by the mob in *Sir Thomas More*. The common confusion of 'infest' with 'infect' (OED *infest* v.<sup>2</sup> 1b) serves to draw connections between the perception that England will be overrun by foreigners and the perception that those foreigners will bring disease and cause degeneration.

In *Sir Thomas More* foreign contact triggers the ingestion of poisonous strangers, yet simplistic notions of civility and savagery are problematized via the savage potential of the rioters admonished by More. In *The Faerie Queene* Spenser refers to the civilizing influence of Brutus on ancient Britain. Before the coming of Brutus the land was a "saluage wilderness, Vnpeopled, vnmanurd, vnprou'd, vnpraysd" (2.10.5.3–4) and its inhabitants were barbaric "But farre in land a saluage nation dwelt, / Of hideous Giants, and halfe beastly men, / That neuer tasted grace, nor goodnesse felt," (2.10.7.1–2). England's savage past is a painful memory which undermines notions of inherent English civility and implies the need for constant vigilance against degeneration. This danger was particularly threatening given the proximity of Ireland which, unlike Britain (England, Wales, and to a lesser degree Scotland), had not felt the civilizing influence of Roman invasion, a reality which was used by some commentators to explain Ireland's contemporary status as an especially uncivil environment. In *Sir Thomas More* the traffic is in destabilizing and threatening figures whose behaviour undermines a precarious order. Read alongside representations of foreign eating habits in *Sir Thomas More*, English writings on Irish foodstuffs and their habits of consumption provide important clues about what was considered familiar and what was considered particularly exotic in early modern England.

### *Coriolanus*

*Coriolanus*, like *Sir Thomas More*, opens with mutinous citizens who are fearful about starvation demanding action from their social superiors, but this time

aggression is not directed toward strangers. The play was probably composed and first performed in 1608 (Wells et al. 1987, 124–5; 131) a time when, as we saw earlier, shortage of food was a national concern and, indeed, critics have commented on the play's topicality (Pettett 1950; Zeeveld 1962; Patterson 1989, 127–46; Wilson 1993, 88–117). Whereas, in *Sir Thomas More* the citizens' complaints are nationalistic, with foreigners accused of causing inflation, bringing diseased food into England, and stealing bread from the mouths of Englishmen, the citizens in *Coriolanus* blame those Romans who govern them for their hunger claiming that "What authority surfeits on would relieve us" (1.1.15–16) and, as in *Sir Thomas More*, much is made of the contrast between the citizens who fear starvation and those who grow fat at their expense. As Gail Kern Paster pointed out, "the play never even allows us to find out whether the plebs are right to accuse the patricians of hoarding grain" (Paster 1978, 126); it is clearly enough that the citizens are convinced the Patricians "ne'er cared for us yet: suffer us to famish, and their store-houses crammed with grain" (1.1.77–79) with their anger from the very outset directed toward one individual, Caius Martius "chief enemy to the people" (1.1.7–8). As we saw above, in *Sir Thomas More* the play's hero, Sheriff More, quells civil disorder by recourse to rhetoric only to subsequently rebel himself against the authority of the king but in *Coriolanus* it is Menenius Agrippa, Martius's friend, who endeavours to appease the crowd while Martius, though undoubtedly heroic in the service of his country, considers it beneath him to pity the citizens' hunger.

In their accusations against the patricians the citizens complain "If the wars eat us not up, they will; and there's all the love they bear us" (1.1.82–4), the first of the play's many references to cannibalism, the most exotic eating of all, with the patricians presented as predators and the plebeians their prey. Such imagery was common in anti-enclosure literature, for example Robert Crowley's *The Way to Health* (1550) which denounces those landlords who enclose land and raise rents as "Cormerauntes, gredeye gullies; yea men that would eate vp menne, women & chyl dren" (1550, A4v). As we have seen in *Sir Thomas More*, cannibalistic imagery is used by More to quell the citizens' anger when they are asked to consider the prospect of violence being used against them: "other ruffians . . . Would shark on you and men like ravenous fishes / Would feed on one another" (2.3.90–3). More's rhetoric works by impressing upon the citizens that they, not just the authorities, benefit from civil order but Menenius's fable of the belly, which invokes the notion of the body politic (the stomach representing the senators of Rome and the limbs Rome's citizens) is not quite so straightforward.

The fable of the belly, which emphasizes the stomach as "the storehouse and the shop / Of the whole body" from which the blood, heart, and brain, and thus the rest of the body, "receive that natural competency / Whereby they live" (1.1.131–132; 137–8) echoes Galen's description of the stomach not as a passive receptacle but as a storehouse of nutrition that actively sorted the wheat from the chaff:

For just as workmen skilled in preparing wheat cleanse it of any earth, stones, or foreign seeds mixed with it that would be harmful to the body, so the faculty of the stomach thrust downward anything of that sort, but makes the rest of the material, that is naturally good, still better and distributes it to the veins extending to the stomach and intestines. (Galen 1968, 204)

Galen recognizes the importance of digestion for maintaining the humoral balance of the body suggesting that, if the stomach and intestines' functions were impaired, other bodily functions would suffer. Many Renaissance writers divided the body into a political and hierarchical triumvirate containing the brain, heart, and belly, the brain associated with the upper classes and the belly with the lower, following Galen's description of the stomach as a kind of workman. As Michael Schoenfeldt pointed out, the fable of the belly in *Coriolanus* goes against this typical interpretation of the political order of the body since "a hierarchy based on the distinction between low and high" is replaced with "a hierarchy based on the distinction between center and periphery" which "underscores the vast importance given to the digestion and distribution of food in the maintenance of the individual body".

Schoenfeldt interpreted Menenius's fable as a fantasy "that a society's resources naturally trickle down from its most to its least privileged members . . . [using] the physiological centrality of the stomach to mystify a doctrine of social inequality and to obscure the actual labor that is part of the production and distribution of provisions" (Schoenfeldt 1999, 29).<sup>55</sup> Schoenfeldt is right to use the term 'mystify' to describe Menenius's fable as an attempt to make inequality seem natural but he does not succeed in his efforts since the citizen is not confused, insisting rather that the fable, on its own, explains nothing: "How apply you this?" (1.1.145); "I the great toe? Why the great toe?" (1.1.154). Whereas Thomas More asked the rioters to imagine themselves persecuted, like the strangers who they would have removed, Menenius asks the hungry citizens to understand the perspective of the wealthy and well fed, his own perspective in fact. It is not surprising that where More's rhetoric provokes one of the rioters to remark "We'll be ruled by you, Master More" (2.3.153) Menenius causes irritation, raises questions and provokes the citizens' impatience rather than providing answers; contrary to Gail Kern Paster's suggestion, he does not succeed in "calming the angry citizens" (Paster 1978, 126). As Stanley Cavell pointed out, Shakespeare's Menenius is "partisan, limited . . . as teller of the tale" when compared to the Menenius in Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poetry* who Sidney notes "wrought such effect in the people, as I never read that only words brought forth but then, so sudden and so good an alteration; for upon reasonable conditions a perfect reconciliation ensued" (Cavell 1985, 261). In *Coriolanus* the irritation and hostility is only made worse by the entrance of Martius who insults the citizens, calling them "dissentious rogues" and "scabs" (1.1.162; 164) and, though echoing More's reference to men eating each other, uses the image of cannibalism to denounce

democracy rather than as an urge to self-preservation: “the noble Senate . . . / keep you in awe, which else / Would feed on one another” (1.1.186).

More’s ability to communicate with the people and encourage their empathy is distinct from Menenius’s incompetence and Martius’s arrogance but although More and Martius differ in their attitude to the ordinary people they are similar in their ability to decouple the human mind from the body and rise above physical desire. When reasoning with the rioters More warns against a society where “insolence and strong hand . . . prevail” (2.3.7); later in the play More refuses to sacrifice his religious principles in order to prologue the life of his body and, from his prison cell, denounces courtly indulgence: “the prince, in all his sweet-gorged maw / And his rank flesh that sinfully renews / The noon’s excess in the night’s dangerous surfeits” (4.4.73–5). More’s emphasis on moderation, his rejection of the sin of gluttony, is to be expected from a religious man who denounced the Londoners’ rebellion as a rising against God himself (2.3.105–15), but Martius’s attitude to food and feeding is more extreme; indeed it lies at the opposite end of the spectrum from the gluttony so often denounced in the dietaries.

Although references to hunger and feeding recur throughout *Coriolanus*, the most striking eating images are those that refer to abstinence: self-induced hunger rather than hunger imposed from without. As we saw in chapter one, abstinence was associated in the dietaries with monastic orders, England’s Catholic past, and thus regarded with suspicion. Moderation, emphasized by More, was considered the key to spiritual fulfillment and eating too much or too little indicated an obsession with the flesh rather than the soul. Although Martius’s abstinence would have been understood by the early moderns as inherently Roman (because stoical) it does suggest that a man out of touch with his body can become out of touch with ordinary (hungry) people, ending up with so little sense of cultural identity that Rome’s arch-enemy, Aufidius, becomes his friend. That Caius Martius quickly becomes ‘Coriolanus’ after his successful defeat of the city of Corioles signals this play’s concern with the nature of identity and the extent to which place confirms or elides subjectivity: to what extent is Coriolanus a hero of Rome when he switches allegiance to the Volscians and intends to massacre the city with which he has been identified for so long?

Throughout the play Coriolanus warns against the desire to feed, denying his bodily needs and caring little for physical comfort when honour is at stake. He can barely contain his disgust at being compelled to appear before the citizens in the traditional gown of humility and display his wounds to them, uttering his true feelings when they exit and he is alone on stage:

Better it is to die, better to starve,  
 Than crave the hire which first we do deserve.  
 Why in this womanish toge should I stand here  
 To beg of Hob and Dick that does appear  
 Their needless vouches? Custom calls me to ‘t.  
 (2.3. 113–17)

This is not the last time Coriolanus will draw a parallel between self-induced starvation and honour. When facing banishment, having been denounced as “a traitor to the people” (3.3.69), he is defiant:

Let them pronounce the steep Tarpeian death,  
 Vagabond exile, flaying, pent to linger  
 But with a grain a day, I would not buy  
 Their mercy at the price of one fair word,  
 Nor check my courage for what they can give  
 To have 't with saying 'Good morrow'.  
 (3.3. 92–7)

The fantasy that starvation might be coupled with bodily torture, being thrown headlong from a rock (“Tarpeian death”), or suffering “flaying” is indicative of Coriolanus’s disregard for his physical well-being which is apparent from the very outset of the action when, already injured by a previous encounter with the Volscians, he again enters into battle and emerges “bloody” (S.D.1.7.21) and, according to Cominus, looking “as he were flayed” (1.7.22). Coriolanus’s comment to Lartius, that his own blood “is rather physical / Than dangerous to me” (1.6.18–19) shows that he considers himself more than merely human and indeed, as Eugene M. Waith noted, his “god-like” achievement against the Volscians “borders on the supernatural” (Waith 1962, 125).

Coriolanus’s disregard for the effects of hunger or injury upon his body can be contrasted with the appetite of the citizens who are characterized throughout in oral terms (as mouths, tongues, and teeth) and denounced by Coriolanus as the very foodstuff they desire: “musty superfluity” (1.1.226), and “noisome, musty chaff” (5.1.26). Just as Coriolanus emphasizes his detachment from his own body so he focuses on the physicality of the citizens—“Bid them wash their faces / And keep their teeth clean” (2.3.61–2)—believing that they should not be involved in political, and thus intellectual, decision-making. He denounces them as “curs, whose breath I hate / As reek o’ th’ rotten fens” (3.3.124–5), suggesting that their very breath has the ability to contaminate.

For Coriolanus subjectivity is located in the mind, heroism proceeds from the intellect and the body is merely the means by which to achieve it. The citizens allow themselves to be governed by their bellies and so are contemptible to him; his disgust at their desire to feed indicating a pathological aversion toward the visceral. But, as Robin Headlam Wells noted, Martius cannot cut himself off from other men, cannot be the author of himself, but is, rather, tied to them by a common human essence and this is why “the supreme solipsist” cannot, finally, deny his family’s pleas for mercy (Wells 2000b, 172). Although, as Stanley Cavell put it, “what he incessantly hungers for is . . . not to hunger, and not to desire, that is, not to be mortal” (Cavell 1985, 249), Coriolanus cannot deny his body’s need for food despite his disgust at the ordinariness of feeding. Being human, Coriolanus must eat even if this necessary activity appears fraught with irritation

for him: Menenius twice refers to his bad temper before dining (5.1.50; 5.2.36–7). Coriolanus's mother Volumnia, upset by her son's banishment similarly exhibits a desire to abstain from food and immerse herself in mental activities: "Anger's my meat, I sup upon myself, / And so shall starve with feeding (4.2.53–4). What emerges in the play is an anxiety about food and feeding in general coupled with a desire toward self-harm.

Nancy Gutierrez's important study of anorexia (2003), is a timely consideration of abstinence in the early modern period, but its focus is specifically female, and although she touches upon some figures who abstain from food in Shakespeare she considers neither Coriolanus nor Volumnia, even though her description of the modern understanding of anorexia is particularly useful when considering food and feeding in this play. At the beginning of the twenty-first century the condition is usually "attributed primarily to family dynamics and societal pressures and expectations" and although its cause appears to be "a complex assortment of individual and societal factors" it is generally agreed that "its primary etiology rests on a young woman's attitude toward the numerous and often contradictory expectations placed on her . . . the need to be successful; the need to be feminine". There is also some debate as to whether the condition is "an act of passive resistance or a death wish" (Gutierrez 2003, 7). As R.B. Parker noted, there has been a shift from the Romantic and Victorian idealization of Volumnia to the late twentieth-century conception of her as "an emasculating virago" (Shakespeare 1994, 48) and, although neither view is exhaustive of the character's complexity, Janet Adelman's characterization of Volumnia as a mother who does not nourish (Adelman 1992, 148) does seem particularly pertinent to Gutierrez's description of the family dynamics that involve those who develop an abnormal attitude to food and feeding.

This abnormality, which Adelman identified as a desire to be self-sufficient, feeding only on anger, is also evident in Valeria's report of Young Martius as "the father's son!" who, having fallen over running after a butterfly, becomes enraged: "whether his fall enraged him, or how 'twas, he did so set his teeth and tear it! O, I warrant, how he mammocked it!" (1.3.65–7). Coriolanus's need for success in battle is related by Adelman to his lack of maternal nourishment: "The rigid masculinity that Coriolanus finds in war becomes a defense against acknowledgment of his neediness . . . His body becomes his armor . . . he himself becomes a weapon" (Adelman 1992, 149). Certainly Coriolanus's disregard for his body, his single-handed battle "Within Corioles' gate" (2.1.160) treads a fine line between courage and foolhardiness, raising the possibility that he harbours a deathwish, something also evident when he bares his throat to Aufidius, announcing himself "Longer to live most weary" (4.5.96) and later, when denounced as a traitor by Aufidius, calling upon the crowd of Volscies to "Cut me to pieces . . . / Stain all your edges on me" (5.6.112–13).

Coriolanus's desire to be cut to pieces is fulfilled when he is stabbed to death at the hands of the Volscians, a mirroring of the play's opening scene when the Roman citizens demanded his life, as Gail Kern Paster pointed out (Paster 1978,

142). Coriolanus's pride, his refusal or inability to manipulate his fellow-Romans via rhetoric, something which Sheriff More achieves with ease, brings about his downfall. Unlike More he dies at the hands of a vengeful crowd, his final words defiant and extreme ("O that I had him, / With six Aufidiuses, Or more, his tribe, / To use my lawful sword!", 5.6.127–9), his body bearing witness to the savagery by which he defined himself and was defined by others. Leonard Barkan's reference to the fragmentation of Roman society, the tendency of both Coriolanus and the citizens toward division and disharmony (Barkan 1975, 96–108), is made literal in his demise as he is cut to pieces by the Volscian swords. More's death occurs offstage and with quiet dignity: "No eye salute my trunk with a sad tear; / Our birth to heaven should be thus: void of fear" (5.4.113–18), and he is praised by the Earl of Surrey as "A very learned worthy gentleman" (5.4.119).

Ironically, but perhaps inevitably, Coriolanus, who went to such extremes to deny his body's baser needs, is remembered not for his intellect but for his physical prowess, his epitaph left to his enemy Aufidius who considers his "noble memory" only after the innocent Volscians who have suffered at his hand, "widowed and unchilded many a one" (5.6.152–4). Coriolanus and More certainly differ in the nature of their deaths (although both die bravely) and in their attitude toward humanity when at the height of their powers but both are ultimately defeated by the principled stand they take for their beliefs in a world which is changing politically and which as individuals they are powerless to change, with Rome becoming a democracy and England a Protestant country. Paster commented on the way in which *Coriolanus* sets personal feeling against public action whereby personal glory is privileged over and above the glory of Rome (Paster 1978, 133). So too More's personal feeling, and ultimately his personal glory as a Catholic martyr, is privileged over Henry's political and religious plans for the future of England although the difference between Coriolanus and More is one of faith: Coriolanus, the stoic Roman believing in the honour of the individual in battle and the superiority of the patricians, More in a shared humanity and the role of the individual within the Catholic faith.

### *Pericles*

When Shakespeare takes his audience to new times and places (Thomas More's London, Coriolanus's Rome) he uses food to explore that which does not change (hunger, xenophobia, violence), along with that which does (political systems and religious orthodoxy). *Pericles*, probably composed in 1607 and first performed in early 1608 (Wells et al. 1987, 130–31) looks back also, its basic source the ancient tale of Apollonius of Tyre, a version of which occurs in John Gower's fourteenth-century poem *Confessio Amantis*. Gower's appearance as the play's chorus reinforces its engagement with the past but the play's numerous journeys comment on the present, newly expanding world, coinciding with the first permanent English settlement in Jamestown, America in 1607. Where *Thomas More* takes place in a

familiar location filled with unfamiliar peoples (London) and Coriolanus journeys from ancient Rome to the neighbouring Volscian state, Pericles moves from Antioch throughout the Mediterranean, to Tyre, Tarsus, Pentapolis, Ephesus and Mytilene, locations that would have been considered highly exotic by its early modern audience.<sup>56</sup>

As we saw earlier, *Sir Thomas More* and *Coriolanus* open with mutinous citizens who are fearful of starvation demanding action from their social superiors. In *Pericles* too a scene featuring hungry people occurs toward the beginning of the play but where the former saw the citizens of London and Rome object that others (strangers and patricians respectively) are responsible for interfering with food supplies Cleon, the governor of Tarsus, suggests that their current state of dearth is a consequence of their own indulgent past:

A city o'er whom plenty held full hand,  
 For riches strewed herself ev'n in the streets,  
 Whose tow'rs bore heads so high they kissed the clouds,  
 And strangers ne'er beheld but wondered at,  
 Whose men and dames so jetted and adorned  
 Like one another's glass to trim them by;  
 Their tables were stored full to glad the sight,  
 And not so much to feed on as delight.  
 All poverty was scorned, and pride so great  
 The name of help grew odious to repeat.  
 (4.22–31)

Luxury rather than want characterized life in Tarsus before the famine and their prosperity encouraged a perverse attitude toward food and feeding, a full table satisfying the sense of sight rather than the sensation of hunger and people admiring, rather than feeding upon, viands. All this suggests the kind of groaning tables that were part of the Renaissance banqueting practice (Meads 2002, 8–21) and subtleties, erections of sugar, wax, and flowers, such as those described by John Leland at the enthroning of Archbishop Warham: “Saint Eustace kneelyng . . . under a great tree full of Roses, and a Whyte Hart before hym with a crucifixe betweene his hornes, and a man by hym leadyng his horse” (Leland 1970, 25). Where *Sir Thomas More* and *Coriolanus* present the lower classes in particular as victims of hunger, *Pericles* shows its effect upon all the citizens of Tarsus. Notably, Cleon admits that in their obscene abundance they all have been guilty of pride, a sin which showed itself also in Coriolanus's efforts to avoid feeding.

As Suzanne Gossett pointed out in her recent edition of *Pericles*, Tarsus, an ancient city on the south-east coast of modern Turkey, had “both Old and New Testament associations. Jonah was shipwrecked while on his way to Tarsus, and the city was the birthplace of St Paul” (Shakespeare 2004, 169). Richard Halpern noted the specifically Christian context of the play which he found “heavy with futurity, specifically with the arrival of a messiah who will convert its decadent cities into the landscape of redemption” (Halpern 1997, 147). Similarly Maurice

Hunt recognized the influence of the Acts of the Apostles upon the play, arguing that Pericles's armour figures "the salvatory symbolic armour that Paul describes in Ephesians 6:11–17" with Pericles himself as "both the donor and recipient of proto-Christian virtues . . . [whose] divine election for a secularly redemptive dream seems appropriate" (Hunt 2000, 296–305). The starving people of Tarsus consider their current state of dearth to be a punishment from God ("But see what heav'n can do by this our change", 4.33) for receiving the natural gifts from a generous earth with ingratitude:

Those mouths who but of late earth, sea and air  
Were all too little to content and please,  
Although they gave their creatures in abundance  
As houses are defiled for want of use,  
They are now starved for want of exercise.  
(4.34–6)

It seems odd to compare the mouths of starving people to "houses" which are "defiled for want of use" and neither Gossett nor her predecessor for Arden, F.D. Hoeniger, commented on the comparison's significance (Shakespeare 1963a). Although the body was 'the temple of the soul' in Christian teaching, an idea elaborated upon by Edmund Spenser in his house of Alma (*The Faerie Queene* 2.9), it was not usual to compare the mouth itself to a house; for example in Spenser the mouth is a gate within which sits "a Porter" (2.9.25.1), the tongue. It is also unclear why not eating should cause the mouth to become polluted or corrupt ("defiled"), unless to emphasize the forced abstinence of the people of Tarsus as a punishment from God: not eating is a result of their sins and has 'defiled' their mouths just as eating too much or the wrong kind of foodstuffs would implicate the mouth in the body's gluttony. Cleon's recollection that the people of Tarsus demanded "inventions to delight the taste" (4.40) suggests the fantastic food-sculptures that accompanied the copious foodstuffs at Renaissance banquets (Meads 2002, 17) and which contrast with the current state of dearth when people "Would . . . be glad of bread and beg for it" (4.41). The excessive and over-refined feeding in which the people of Tarsus have indulged, the "superfluous riots" (4.54) condemned in the dietaries, has provoked a moral putrefaction made physical in their "defiled" mouths, prefiguring the polluted mouths that will later feed off "unwholesome" (16.19) whores in the brothel and the Spaniard's mouth, which waters at the thought of consuming Miranda (16.95–6).

In *Sir Thomas More* and *Coriolanus*, famine threatens social disorder but while the prospect of men eating each other is used for rhetorical effect in the former, and is a recurring metaphor in the latter, *Pericles* sees mothers ready literally to eat their children and couples to eat one another:

Those mothers who to nuzzle up their babes  
Thought naught too curious are ready now  
To eat those little darlings whom they loved.

So sharp are hunger's teeth that man and wife  
 Draw lots who first shall die to lengthen life.  
 (4.42–6)

As Anthony Lewis pointed out, the prospect of cannibalism in Tarsus is related to the definition of incest that occurs in Antiochus's riddle:

I am no viper, yet I feed  
 On mother's flesh which did me breed.  
 I sought a husband, in which labour  
 I found that kindness in a father.  
 He's father, son, and husband mild;  
 I mother, wife, and yet his child.  
 How this may be and yet in two,  
 As you will live resolve it you.  
 (1.107–14)

For Lewis, the play “enacts one theme: the personal, familial, and governmental obligation to nourish self, relations, and citizens” (Lewis 1988, 147). Cannibalism, like incest, is “a kind of devouring” (Lewis 1988, 148) and both are “familiar metaphors for perverse human behaviour” (Lewis 1988, 150). Antiochus and his daughter “seek to sustain themselves through self-consumption, perverting the socially acceptable means of propagating their family as fully as if they nourished themselves by eating human flesh” (Lewis 1988, 153). As in *Sir Thomas More* foreign feeding is represented as degenerate and intervention is required to assert divinely ordained order. Pericles brings the starving people of Tarsus that which was demanded by the citizens of Rome, “corn to make your needy bread” (4.94), the common notion of Christ as ‘the bread of life’ reinforcing Halpern and Hunt’s readings of the play as a Christian allegory. Bread, a staple food of the poor in the early modern period and generally recommended as a healthy foodstuff in the dietaries, contrasting with the “inventions” (4.40) and gluttony in which the people of Tarsus had indulged. Pericles feeds the body of the people with bread, the implication being that he feeds their souls also, and is himself saved by other feeders: the fishermen who rescue him from starvation and cold after shipwreck, identified by Hunt as “early Christians” (Hunt 2000, 296). Their conversation involves the same kind of cannibalistic rhetoric used by More (2.3.93) and so too here men are compared to fish:

the great ones eat up the little ones. I can compare our rich misers to nothing so fitly as to a whale: a plays and tumbles, driving the poor fry before him, and at last devours them all at a mouthful. Such whales have I heard on o’ th’ land, who never leave gaping till they swallowed the whole parish: church, steeple, bells, and all. (5.69–75)

The devouring detailed here echoes the greedy consumption by the people of Tarsus of all the land had to offer them and is interpreted by Halpern as an allusion to the enclosures that led to the Midlands uprising of 1607, the “rich misers”

signify the enclosing landlords, an image which brings us back to the real hunger experienced by ordinary people during the years in which *Sir Thomas More*, *Coriolanus*, and *Pericles* were composed and first performed. Halpern further noted a parallel between this speech and Menenius's parable of the belly in *Coriolanus*: "here we get an emetic version of the same conceit when the whale's belly is forced to disgorge its contents." In *Pericles*, however, the "discourse of politics . . . puts on 'mythic' garb: Jonah was a type of Christ, and *Pericles* seems to invoke this typological framework in the fishermen's image of salvation through the ringing of the church bells and through the fishermen themselves, from whose profession Jesus recruited his disciples" (Halpern 1997, 144–5). As in *Sir Thomas More* and *Coriolanus*, food is used to explore that which does not change (hunger, social inequities), along with that which does (the specific phenomenon of the enclosure system).

Shakespeare's alteration of his source material—developing Holinshed's references to food in his report of the Londoners' riot and down-playing the complaints that Roman citizens had about usury—tells us that he regarded food and feeding to be a social phenomenon worthy of dramatic comment. How the English cope with that which is culturally alien is an abiding concern of Shakespeare's drama. Although *Coriolanus*'s abstinence is strange (the product of another time and culture), the hunger experienced by Rome's citizens would be instantly recognizable to a contemporary audience as would the hunger in Tarsus which, though exotic, is rooted in the familiar via *Pericles*, a Christ-like figure of redemption, and John Gower who provides the play's Chorus. Gower is a specifically English figure, praised by Philip Sidney as the originator of vernacular verse: ". . . [first] wer *Gower*, and Chawcer, after whom, encouraged & delighted with their excellent foregoing, others haue folowed to bewtify our mother toong . . ." (Sidney 1595, B2r). As Gossett pointed out, Shakespeare apparently identified Gower with Englishness, it is the name of the Englishman in *Henry 5* who "sees through knaves (*Henry 5* 3.6.66–80), is familiar with the king, supplies information about classical figures (*Henry 5* 4.7.19–21) and makes peace between the Irish and Welsh captains" (Shakespeare 2004, 121). Gossett overlooked another Gower, as Gabriel Egan noted, the message-bearer in 2 *Henry 4*, which begins with a choric Rumour and which Shakespeare may have recalled when composing *Pericles* (Egan forthcoming in 2007). More is another recognizable English figure and just as he guides the rebellious Londoners toward humane treatment of the foreigners, so Gower guides the audience through hazardous journeys to various exotic locations. Both are familiar figures amidst the exotic and they constitute the voice of authority; they are perhaps comparable to the authors of the dietaries, self-appointed experts who condemn surfeit and urge caution against the consumption of specific foods, much as More warned against devouring one's fellow-man and Gower condemns the perverse feeding in Antioch: "Bad child, worse father, to entice his own / To evil should be done by none" (1.27–8). Where Rome's authorities, Menenius and *Coriolanus* fail, rooted in the current political system

and not attuned to the basic needs of their fellow-men, the Christian guides succeed in their ability to sustain men both physically and spiritually.

As we have seen, all three plays can be contextualized by contemporary accounts of the social and economic circumstances which led to wide-spread hunger, fear of starvation, and civil unrest in the years prior to and during their composition. Recorded in the dietaries and elsewhere, including early modern English writings on Ireland, is a clear distrust of strange foodstuffs and growing practices such as manuring. Moderation, emphasized by More, was considered the key to bodily and spiritual health in the dietaries and other writings of the period and Martius's abstinence, although recognizably Roman, would have been regarded with suspicion. In *Pericles*, as in *Sir Thomas More*, foreign feeding is represented as degenerate and the people of Tarsus recognize that their gluttony (a sin repeatedly denounced in the dietaries and elsewhere) has led to the state of dearth which greets the arrival of Pericles, their redeemer and feeder. In this chapter we have considered famine and abstinence, foreign foodstuffs and exotic consumption in the context of rebellion; in the next we will encounter the ultimate exotic consumption, human flesh and materials which cannot possibly be consumed.

## Chapter 5

# Beyond the Pale: Profane Consumption

## *Hamlet, Timon of Athens, and Titus Andronicus*

Hamlet is subject to an old injunction, revenge but, as a student and learner of new ways at Calvinist Wittenberg, is very much the radical sceptic, questioning what are essentially religious issues. Hamlet interrogates the whole cycle of living, eating, and dying and so too in *Timon of Athens* the nature of humankind is interrogated and dichotomized, Timon's initial belief that humankind is benevolent giving way to the equally extreme notion that they are all utterly beastly. In *Hamlet* food and feeding is made strange—the play features references to drinking vinegar and eating crocodiles as well as the consumption of men by worms—and so too in *Timon of Athens* men eat that which is not usually considered a human victual: stones. Hamlet is alert to the cannibalistic aspects of interment and men are compared to cannibals throughout *Timon of Athens* but in *Titus Andronicus* this most extreme and profane consumption is made literal in the most dramatic fashion. This chapter will conclude with a consideration of the ultimate exotic consumption which, as we shall see, anticipates Shakespeare's later and more subtle explorations of food and feeding in the plays and relates to the religious and philosophical concerns that preoccupy Hamlet.

### *Hamlet*

Hamlet's disgust at his mother's "o'er hasty marriage" (2.2.57) is focused on the inappropriate feasting that has occurred so quickly after his father's death: "The funeral baked meats / Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables" (1.2.179–80). This statement closely follows his first soliloquy ("O that this too too solid flesh would melt, / Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew", 1.2.129–30). What exactly does Hamlet mean by those words? How might human flesh (whether it be 'solid', as in the Folio, or 'sallied'/'sullied' as in the Quartos) "melt" or "thaw" and is there more going on here than the understandable grief at his father's death and his mother's decision to marry again so soon after? Hamlet denounces the world as "an unweeded garden / That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature / Possess it merely" (1.2.135–7) and he remembers the apparent affection his mother had for his father: "Why, she would hang on him / As if increase of appetite had grown / By what it fed on" (1.2.143–5). As Janet Adelman noted, the metaphor of

the “unweeded garden” relates to the contaminating maternal body (Adelman 1992, p260) but, as we shall see, Shakespeare seems to be drawing attention to literal feeding as well as sexual desire: the “things rank and gross in nature” in the garden are perhaps the very materials that sustain Hamlet’s solid or sullied flesh: food and drink. Gertrude is condemned by Hamlet as “a beast that wants discourse of reason” (1.2.150–1) for not sufficiently mourning the death of her first husband and it is this distinction between animal instinct and intellect, especially in terms of feeding, that preoccupy Hamlet throughout the play.

The first appearance before Hamlet of his father’s ghost coincides with his denunciation of the court’s revelry:

The King doth wake tonight and takes his rouse,  
Keeps wassail, and the swagg’ring upspring reels,  
And as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down  
The kettle–drum and trumpet thus bray out  
The triumph of his pledge.  
(1.4.9–13)

While Claudius consumes white wine, Old Hamlet is released from the mouth of death, as Hamlet puts it, the sepulchre “Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws / To cast thee up again” (1.4.31–2). Stephen Greenblatt made a convincing argument that the ghost has come specifically from purgatory, a place where “imperfect souls, souls still bearing the stains of the faults they had committed in mortal life, would have to endure excruciating pain” but whose sufferings could be relieved by “the pious fasts, prayers, and alms of relatives and friends” (Greenblatt 2001, 19). In Catholic doctrine it is clear that the soul, not the body, suffers the torments of what is termed “a cleansing fire” (Hanna 1913, ‘purgatory’) but the ghost describes purgatory as a place where the body suffers physical agony, he is

for the day confined to fast in fires  
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature  
Are burnt and purged away. (1.5.11–13)

G. Blakemore Evans glossed ‘fast’ as “do penance” but provided no explanation for this choice nor for ignoring the more obvious meaning, ‘to go without food’ (Shakespeare 1974, 1149n11). The ghost’s description of a specifically physical pain is at odds with the Christian belief that the body is mortal, destined to rot after death, with the soul dispatched to heaven, hell or the Catholic purgatory. Yet despite a focus on the soul’s suffering (whatever that might entail), this did not prevent the notion that in purgatory and hell, pain was inflicted upon the body, as in the torments imagined by Hieronymus Bosch, perhaps because human beings most easily relate to pain in physical terms. The ghost claims that torture of the body would extend even to one who hears about “the secrets of my prison–house” (1.5.14):

I could a tale unfold whose lightest word  
 Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,  
 Make thy two eyes like stars start from their spheres,  
 Thy knotty and combinèd locks to part,  
 And each particular hair to stand on end  
 Like quills upon the fretful porcupine.  
 (1.5.15–20)

But this remains off limits “To ears of flesh and blood” (1.5.22). Greenblatt concluded that the ghost is what Pierre Le Loyer in a 1586 book on apparitions calls a ‘phantasmal body’ and those who see the ghost are aware that “The king’s actual body, were they to exhume it, would bear the signs and smell of decay” (Greenblatt 2001, 212).

The physical pain Hamlet’s father must suffer in purgatory is appropriate punishment for a man who has indulged in culinary pleasures while alive: as Hamlet later notes, Claudius “took my father grossly, full of bread” (3.3.80). The ghost is forced “to fast in fires” because he was gluttonous when alive, the punishment presumably inflicted upon the body because the soul cannot fast. It is also appropriate that the action of the poison poured into Old Hamlet’s ear should be described in terms of food and feeding:

And with a sudden vigour it doth posset  
 And curd, like eager droppings into milk,  
 The thin and wholesome blood. (1.5. 68–70)

The potentially health-giving properties of a posset are inverted (the use of the word is also altered, with the noun becoming a verb) and the concoction which should act as a remedy for ailments has a destructive effect: “a most instant tetter barked about, / Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust, /All my smooth body” (1.5.71–3).<sup>57</sup> In “The Death of Hamlet’s Father” Ernest Jones argued that the poison is semen, the ear a displaced anus, and the act therefore a homosexual rape (Jones 1951, 323–8) and Dianne Hunter considered the poisoned king’s symptoms suggestive of venereal disease (Hunter 1997), but it seems more likely that the act represents gluttony. Jones’s point that the ear represents a displaced anus suggests a preoccupation with the excreta that results from feeding as much as lust and using the anus rather than the mouth to pour poison into the body is in-keeping with the inversion that the sinner must suffer after death: just as the anus receives food, so the glutton must fast.

Another inversion apparent in the play, and one which fascinates Hamlet, is the eating of, rather than by, the human body. In his conversation with the gravedigger, Hamlet asks “How long will a man lie i’th’earth ere he rot?” and the gravedigger suggests that a diseased body will rot sooner than a healthy one: “I’faith, if a be not rotten before a die—as we have many pocky corpses nowadays, that will scarce hold the laying in—a will last you some eight year or nine year” (5.1.159–163). Hamlet had earlier referred to Polonius “at supper” (4.3.19):

Not where he eats, but where a is eaten. A certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet. We fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service—two dishes, but to one table. That's the end. (4.3.20–5)

Hamlet's comment suggests that death is the great leveller: the gluttonous ("Your fat king") and the hungry ("your lean beggar") will both become food for worms, but he soon after refers to Polonius, killed only recently, as already decaying: "you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby" (4.3.35–6). Like the grave-digger, Hamlet seems to suggest that the rate of bodily decomposition is affected by the morality of the person when alive—and Polonius is, of course, tainted by his loyalty to Claudius whose "offence is rank . . . [and] smells to heaven" (3.3.36)—but this creates problems for a son aware that his father was, as he puts it, "Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin" (1.5.76). The discussion with the grave-digger about the effect of decomposition upon the skull of Yorick makes Hamlet feel sick ("my gorge rises at it", 5.1.183) and it appears that this revulsion at the natural consequences of death is part of a larger disgust toward food and feeding. Hamlet is preoccupied by what happens to the body after death but rather than focusing on spiritual solutions he plays with materialist answers and the whole cycle of living, eating, and dying: the body is reborn as clay (a holder of food and drink) or bait (a catcher of food). Moreover, Hamlet is alert to the cannibalistic aspects of interment ("a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar", 4.3.30–1) and the ordinary process of bodily decomposition (man's flesh eaten by worms and the earth) is made strange. As David Hillman pointed out, Hamlet's "aggressive desire for access to the interior of the body and . . . his angry preoccupation with entrails" results in the discovery that hidden within the body is not truth but, rather, death and all one can ever know about interior of human body is that it is destined for decay (Hillman 1997, 92). A crucial part of Hamlet's preoccupation with entrails however, and one overlooked by Hillman, is the role of food and feeding in his desire for truth. Like death itself, food and feeding are great levellers: all men must feed and all men will provide food for worms.

Whether Hamlet in his first soliloquy refers to 'solid' or 'sullied' flesh, the disgust at his own body is apparent but if, as the Oxford editors contended, it is the former then there is more clearly suggested a disgust at corpulence, perhaps triggered by the feeding that continues in the Danish court after his father's demise. Knowing that his father's body suffers rapid decomposition in the earth, causes Hamlet to be more alert to his own feeding and the feeding that is going on around him and he becomes disgusted by the visceral. This disgust will be made worse later when he learns that his father also suffers physical torture in purgatory as a result of the sin of gluttony. Polonius thinks that it is rejection by Ophelia that has caused Hamlet's alteration and he tells Claudius and Gertrude that the prince "Fell into a sadness, then into a fast" (2.2.148). If Polonius can be believed, then it seems likely that Hamlet's fasting is less a means to convince others that he is mad than a reaction to his father's experiences. Hamlet's conversations tend to be concerned

with degenerate or perverse feeding: he asks Polonius “For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion—Have you a daughter?” (2.2.183–4) and responds to Claudius’s question “How fares our cousin Hamlet?” with “Excellent, i’ faith, of the chameleon’s dish. I eat the air, promise–crammed. You cannot feed capons so” (3.2.90–92). The maggots in the dead dog, presumably feeding upon its flesh, echo the worms that will eat Polonius and already eat Old Hamlet, while feeding on air, as the chameleon was reputed to do, is what Hamlet desires: to no longer eat the “funeral baked meats” or drink the “rhenish” he identifies with the court and, thus, corruption. Comparing himself to a capon, a bird made fat by castration but also over–feeding, reinforces the sense that Hamlet is disgusted by his own appetite, a process which began shortly after his father’s death but has been accelerated by the knowledge that Claudius “took my father grossly, full of bread” (3.3.80).

Michael Bristol suggested that “the funeral meats that grace the wedding banquet are offensive to Hamlet in the way they actualize a process of continuity oblivious to the distinctions he wishes to make. Meat is the link between the living and the dead; in the wedding feast/funeral banquet, the continuity of social life is affirmed over the finite individual” (Bristol 1994, 375). But it seems rather than Hamlet is offended because the meat reminds him of his own feeding and his father’s sin. Meat is the link between the living and the dead in other ways also: the human body provides meat for worms and it is the thought of this which upsets Hamlet in the play’s opening scene and upon which he ponders as the play progresses. Hamlet’s preoccupation with feeding extends to his conversation with others. When, after the players have performed, Guildenstern reports that Claudius “Is in his retirement marvellous distempered” (3.2.288), not “with drink”, as Hamlet suggests, but “rather with choler” Hamlet responds: “Your wisdom should show itself more richer to signify this to his doctor, for for me to put him to his purgation would perhaps plunge him into far more choler” (3.2.289–90). Claudius’s ‘purgation’ is, of course, his death but there is a strange sense of the curative as opposed to utter annihilation since to ‘purge’ the body is “to make physically pure or clean” (OED *purge* v.1. a.). Hamlet again refers to himself as Claudius’s physician when he cannot kill him at prayer:

Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hint.  
When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,  
Or in th’ incestuous pleasure of his bed,  
At gaming, swearing, or about some act  
That has no relish of salvation in ’t,  
Then trip him that his heels may kick at heaven,  
And that his soul may be as damned and black  
As hell whereto it goes. My mother stays.  
This physic but prolongs thy sickly days.  
(3.3.88–96)

Here sin is figured as sickness and Claudius attempts a self-cure, a “physic”, via prayer, but Hamlet refers also to inaction as physic, casting himself as a kind of perverse physician who, by doing nothing, endeavours to maintain what he should cure by allowing “the bloat king” (3.4.166) to live.

When Guildenstern comes to Hamlet with business from Gertrude, Hamlet announces that he cannot make him “a wholesome answer” because “My wit’s diseased” (3.2.308–9). The notion of a contaminated world has already been posited by Hamlet in his first soliloquy but is developed in act three. When left alone he speaks in a manner anticipating Lady Macbeth: “‘Tis now the very witching time of night, / When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out / Contagion to this world” (3.2. 377–9).<sup>58</sup> This comment about hell echoes that made by Hamlet in the play’s first act, when he did not know whether the spirit that appeared before him was “a spirit of health or goblin damned” nor whether it brought with it “airs from heaven or blasts from hell” (1.4.21–2), it seems that Hamlet is ambivalent about his father’s corrupt nature. In the closet scene Hamlet shows Gertrude a picture of Old Hamlet and compares the “form . . . / Where every god did seem to set his seal” with Claudius: “like a mildewed ear / Blasting his wholesome brother” (3.4.59–64). The distinction between disease and health Hamlet apparently intends is problematized by reference to the “mildewed ear”, recalling the poisoned ear of his father and our awareness that Old Hamlet died in a state of sin, in particular the sin of gluttony. Hamlet characterizes Gertrude as a perverse feeder: “Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed, / And batten on this moor? Ha? Have you eyes?” (3.4.65–6). Since all feeding is anathema to Hamlet, Gertrude’s sexual appetite is considered inordinate (batten = “To feed gluttonously *on*, glut oneself; to gloat or revel *in*”, OED *v.* 1. b.), the suggestion being that she feeds on that which should not be consumed: ‘moor’ suggesting waste ground on which nothing nutritious would grow (OED *moor n.* 1.) and also the alien non-Christian from North Africa (OED *moor n.* 2).

Anticipating the killing of Claudius, Hamlet announces “Now could I drink hot blood” (3.2.379), an action which G.R. Hibbard, citing Jonson’s *Catiline* (1.491–4), noted “was supposed to be an incitement to homicide” (Shakespeare 1987a, 269n373), but which also signals an escalation in Hamlet’s attention to profane consumption. It might be useful at this point to compare Hamlet to Laertes. When the latter attends Ophelia’s burial he admonishes the priest who is officious in the degree of ritual she is allowed and, undermining the priest’s belief that she died a sinner, announces “Lay her i’th’ earth, / And from her fair and unpolluted flesh / May violets spring” (5.1.233–5). Although Laertes seems to be aware that Ophelia’s body will decompose (the violets will spring from the very earth that she will become part of), he is not apparently disgusted by the process. Unlike Hamlet he is not disgusted by feeding either, as evident earlier in the play when he tells Claudius that he will provide sustenance to his father’s friends: “thus wide I’ll ope my arms, / And, like the kind life-rend’ring pelican, / Repast them with my blood. (4.5.145–7).<sup>59</sup> While Hamlet desires to drink blood (and it is not clear whose) as a prelude to ending another’s life, Laertes will gladly give his own blood to others,

yet in both cases the blood is shed in the context of revenge. In his confrontation with Laertes, Hamlet challenges him over who loves Ophelia most:

HAMLET

I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers  
 Could not, with all their quantity of love,  
 Make up my sum.—What wilt thou do for her?

KING CLAUDIUS O, he is mad, Laertes.

QUEEN GERTRUDE For love of God, forbear him.

HAMLET

'Swounds, show me what thou'lt do.  
 Woot weep, woot fight, woot fast, woot tear thyself,  
 Woot drink up eisel, eat a crocodile?  
 I'll do 't. Dost thou come here to whine,  
 To outface me with leaping in her grave?  
 Be buried quick with her, and so will I.  
 (5.1.266–76)

G.R. Hibbard glossed “eisel” as vinegar and noted that the crocodile was “probably included here on account of the toughness of its skin (Shakespeare 1987a, 333n266).<sup>60</sup> Theobald also considered “eisel” to mean vinegar, citing as evidence Chaucer’s *The Romaunt of the Rose*: “breed Kneden with eisel strong and egre” (line 217), Shakespeare’s 111th Sonnet: “Potions of eisel ‘gainst my strong infection”, and a poem by Sir Thomas More: “remember therewithal How Christ for thee tasted eisel and gall” (Shakespeare 1733, 352n69).<sup>61</sup> Although, as Horace Howard Furness indicated, some critics considered “eisel” a river, specifically (given reference to the crocodile) the Nile, Alexander Schmidt thought “drinking vinegar, in order to exhibit deep grief by a wry face, seems much more to the purpose that drinking up rivers” (Shakespeare 1877, 405n264; Schmidt 1874, ‘Eysell’). Moreover, noted Schmidt, “As for the crocodile, it must be remembered that it is a *mournful* animal” (Schmidt 1874, ‘Eysell’). But it must also be remembered that the crocodile’s mourning is counterfeit: in medieval bestiaries the creature was said to weep during or after devouring its victim and was thus a symbol of hypocrisy (Anglicus 1907, 149; Anon 1954, 50–51).<sup>62</sup> This may have implications for Hamlet’s sincerity in grieving for Ophelia but so too do traditional associations between the crocodile and pride: as George F. Butler pointed out, the crocodile is linked with Leviathan, a creature considered “King ouer all the children of pride” (Job 41.25), in most of the annotations to the Geneva bible (Butler 2000, 9–11).<sup>63</sup> The dietaries emphasize the medicinal qualities of drinking vinegar (for example see Ruscelli 1569, C2v; Bullein 1595, P6r; A T 1596, T4r; Gabelkover 1599, K4r), but Bullein warns that since it is “colde and drie” it “is hurtfull for them that be melancholy” (Bullein 1595, P6r) and, similarly, Ruscelli suggests wine replace vinegar if the patient “féele rigor or coldnesse” (Ruscelli 1569, C2v). So, when Hamlet challenges Laertes that he will do remarkable things to prove his love for Ophelia he might well be suggesting that his love is so great

he is willing to eat and drink the most tough and bitter foodstuffs, even those that will exacerbate his melancholy, or that he is willing to ‘swallow his pride’ (symbolized by the crocodile), that is, abandon all desire to take revenge upon Claudius.

The food and drink Hamlet once enjoyed has become disgusting to him because of his father’s over-indulgence (he died “full of bread”, 3.3.80) and the court’s subsequent inordinate eating and drinking.<sup>64</sup> Due to his father’s death and the appearance of his ghost, Hamlet has become preoccupied by what happens to the body after death but it not only the ordinary process of bodily decomposition that interests him but the cannibalistic nature of interment: “a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar” (4.3.30–31). It is one king in particular Hamlet appears to have in mind. As a student and learner of Protestant ideas at Calvinist Wittenberg, Hamlet can be considered a radical sceptic but the reappearance of his father “in such a questionable shape” (1.4.24) triggers a crisis of faith: the Protestant scholar must recognise the possibility that Catholic purgatory is a reality. The Christian implications of drinking “eisel” were noted by Thomas More, amongst others, and Hamlet certainly regards himself as a kind of saviour: putting right, at his father’s behest, the sin that he perceives to dominate the court of Denmark. When Hamlet announces that he could drink “hot blood” it is not only classical Rome that is suggested but also the Catholic sacrament of transubstantiation, a once familiar practice (drinking the blood of Christ) made strange by Protestantism, just as the ordinary process of bodily decomposition is made strange by Hamlet’s focus on its cannibalistic dimension. This allusion to the communion blood and the circumstances that have provoked Hamlet’s crisis of faith are further developed in the play’s final scene when Claudius is compelled to drink from the poisoned ‘chalice’, a word for a drinking-cup or goblet which has distinctly religious dimensions (OED *chalice* *n.* 1. and 2.). The death of Claudius brings about a kind of resolution and Hamlet can revert to sceptic once more, killing himself by drinking poison in the traditional classical manner: “O, I die, Horatio! / The potent poison quite o’ercrows my spirit” (5.2.304–305). When Fortinbras enters upon the bloody scene he observes

This quarry cries on havoc. O proud death,  
What feast is toward in thine eternal cell  
That thou so many princes at a shot  
So bloodily hast struck!  
(5.2.318–21)

There is a real sense that feeding will continue but no indication that any unquiet spirit will return. Hamlet has achieved his aim of self-destruction but his “too too solid flesh” will not quite “melt, / Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew,” (1.2.129–30) but rather, having provided sustenance for death itself, it will become part of the soil and food for worms, in other words it will suffer the fate of all mortals.

*Timon of Athens*

Hamlet's characterization of feeding as bestial is provoked by his father's gluttony and made worse by the knowledge that not only do worms consume his body but he is tortured physically in purgatory. In *Timon of Athens* Timon's magnanimity and his desire to feed others is destroyed when his 'friends' prove false, conspicuous consumption in feasting giving way to food as a vehicle for punishment. Throughout the play, feeding metaphors are used to denounce the greed and hypocrisy of humanity with profane feeding described in cannibalistic terms. Before Timon discovers that those he has feasted are parasites, Apemantus functions as a warning voice and Timon's animosity toward others is anticipated by a loyal servant. The play was written by Shakespeare and Thomas Middleton, as John Jowett made clear (Shakespeare & Middleton 2004, 144–53), and references to food and feeding occur in scenes written by both playwrights. This chapter will trace the numerous references to profane feeding in the play and also the numerous allusions to *Hamlet*, not usually considered one of its sources.<sup>65</sup> As we shall see, *Timon of Athens*, like *Hamlet*, focuses on the relationship between food and sex, food and revenge, and has a preoccupation with the visceral.

No reason is given for Apemantus's antipathy toward feasting other than his general misanthropy. Invited to dine by Timon, Apemantus announces "No, I eat not lords" (1.1.208), responding to Timon's courteous reply "An thou shouldst, thou'dst anger ladies" (1.1.209) with "O, they eat lords. So they come by great bellies" (1.1. 210). The suggestion is that those who attend Timon's banquet feed upon him and women consume men sexually. Curiously, cannibalistic imagery is used by those who benefit from Timon's generosity as well as those who criticize it, with Alcibiades referring to feeding upon Timon: "Sir, you have saved my longing, and I feed / Most hungrily on your sight" (1.1.256–57). Indeed Timon himself uses such imagery, referring to Alcibiades's warrior nature: "You had rather be at a breakfast of enemies than a dinner of friends" to which he replies "So they were bleeding new, my lord; there's no meat like 'em" (1.2.74–7). Apemantus considers food an evil and men and women less than human: he will not go to Timon's feast "to see meat fill knaves, and wine heat fools" (1.1.264), as though the human beings of whom he speaks were mere objects, kitchen vessels to be filled and heated. Like *Hamlet*, *Timon of Athens* opens with a feast and a discontented observer who will not feed and, like Hamlet, Apemantus is alert both to literal and sexual feeding. Apemantus will not eat Timon's food and announces himself troubled "to see so many dip their meat in one man's blood" (1.2.40), a sentiment echoed by the First Stranger: "Who can call him his friend / That dips in the same dish?" (3.2.66–7). For Apemantus a feast is the perfect opportunity for betrayal:

The fellow that sits next him, now parts bread with him, pledges the breath of him in a divided draught, is the readiest man to kill him. 'T'as been proved. If I were a huge

man, I should fear to drink at meals, Lest they should spy my windpipe's dangerous notes. Great men should drink with harness on their throats. (1.2.45–51)

As Jowett indicated, the allusion is to Judas's betrayal of Christ (Shakespeare & Middleton 2004, 193n46–52), yet the poisoning of Hamlet's father is also evoked and 'dipping in the same dish', referred to by the Stranger, suggests the shared sexual pleasure in Gertrude. Apemantus praises "Honest water, which ne'er left man i' th' mire" and denounces feasts as "too proud to give thanks to the gods" (1.2.58–60), suggesting that opulent feasting is sinful and that his ascetism has a distinctly religious bias, a sense reinforced by his diet of "a little oil and root" (1.2.131). As we saw in chapter 3, a vegetarian diet was regarded with suspicion in the early modern period and associated with monastic life but the dietaries emphasize the benefits of oil, specifically olive oil, (for example see Cogan 1636, P3r and Bullein 1595, K6r–K6v), and its use by Apemantus also suggests religious or sacred rites.<sup>66</sup> Apemantus declares that "Friendship's full of dregs" (1.2.236), which can suggest excrement as well as the useless sediment of liquors (OED *dreg n.* 2. and 1.). If the former, then Apemantus, like Hamlet, is preoccupied by the visceral as well as the inordinate appetite, both literal and sexual, of men and women.

Timon's numerous invitations to dinner indicate his hospitality but also his profligacy. As we saw above, Hamlet is disgusted by feeding but Laertes offers sustenance to his father's friends as a reward for helping him gain revenge. Feeding others apparently defines Timon but his generosity in providing food as well as valuable gifts is excessive and ill-judged and, as his Steward points out, he has encouraged waste ("our vaults have wept / With drunken spilth of wine / [and] . . . every room / Hath blazed with lights and brayed with minstrelsy, ) as well as "riotous feeders" (2.2.156–8). Later, Timon seems to acknowledge this and, when cursing humanity, first denounces feasts: "Therefore be abhorred / All feasts, societies, and throngs of men" (4.3.20–1). Flaminius anticipates Timon's curses when he denounces Lucullus for refusing to help his master, calling him "Thou disease of a friend" and asking "Has friendship such a faint and milky heart / It turns in less than two nights?" (3.1.53–4). This reference to false friendship as food, specifically milk, that has gone-off recalls the curdling action of the poison poured into Old Hamlet's ear:

And with a sudden vigour it doth posset  
 And curd, like eager droppings into milk,  
 The thin and wholesome blood.  
 (*Hamlet* 1.5. 68–70)

The image of milk as harmful to the body, is developed in Timon's denunciation of women when he calls upon Alcibiades not to spare any inhabitant of Athens:

Let not the virgin's cheek  
 Make soft thy trenchant sword; for those milk paps

That through the window-bars bore at men's eyes  
 Are not within the leaf of pity writ;  
 But set them down horrible traitors.  
 (4.3.115–19)

Recalling also Lady Macbeth's invocation to malevolent spirits, the breast, which should be a source of nutrition has become a means only to entrap men, and so Alcibiades must "Spare not the babe / Whose dimpled smiles from fools exhaust their mercy" (4.3.119–20). Flaminius curses Lucullus in specifically dietary terms:

This slave  
 Unto this hour has my lord's meat in him.  
 Why should it thrive and turn to nutriment,  
 When he is turned to poison?  
 O, may diseases only work upon 't;  
 And when he's sick to death, let not that part of nature  
 Which my lord paid for be of any power  
 To expel sickness, but prolong his hour.  
 (3.1.55–62)

Food, which should provide nutrition, is here figured as fuel for infection and the body, "that part of nature", divided against itself. Just as Hamlet decided to prolong the life of Claudius by doing nothing, so too Flaminius desires inaction, but this time inaction by the very body itself, which will extend his enemy's misery.

The banquet of steaming water and stones prepared by Timon against his faithless friends parodies his previous feasts by presenting that which cannot be consumed (stones) with that which the early moderns believed should be consumed only with caution (some water was not fit for drinking). Timon urges "Each man to his stool with that spur as he would to the lip of his mistress" (3.7.65–6), like Apemantus (and, indeed, Hamlet), considering feeding in terms of sex, and denying any social distinction between his guests: "Your diet shall be in all places alike" (3.7.66–7), a fitting preface to his ultimate rejection of society. Timon's saying of grace before the 'meal' is a parody of the usual religious ceremony since he calls upon the Gods to "Make the meat be beloved more than the man that gives it" (3.7.75–6) and, having presented the banquet of water and stones, he characterizes himself as a kind of perverse physician in much the same manner as Hamlet, throwing water and apparently also stones at his guests: "What, dost thou go? / Soft, take thy physic first. Thou too, and thou" (3.7.98–9). James C. Bulman argued that the anonymous comedy *Timon* is a source for *Timon of Athens* (Bulman 1974), and although both plays make much of the mock banquet, with Timon throwing food at his guests in both, the former sees them pelted with stones painted as artichokes (Bullough 1973b, 328). We might wonder why Middleton, who Jowett claimed wrote the banquet scene (Shakespeare & Middleton 2004, 2), decided not to include the false artichokes. Thomas Moffett, whose dietary was first published in 1655, notes that artichokes "since my remembrance . . . were so

dainty in *England*, that usually they were sold for crownes a peice” (Moffett 1655, Ee4r), so perhaps Middleton thought the audience would be distracted by the strangeness of the missiles thrown by Timon. On the other hand, perhaps Middleton wanted the focus at this point to be on literal feeding and thought the audience would be distracted by the vegetable’s reputation as an aphrodisiac: Moffett notes that artichokes “mightily stir up lust of the body both in men and women” (Moffett 1655, Ee4r) and so too Thomas Cogan remarks that they “procure a more earnest desire both of man and woman to the veneral act” (Cogan 1636, H4r).

Jowett argued that “stones and water can be seen as equivalent to the bread and wine of the Communion. Christ’s first miracle was to turn water to wine, and in the desert Satan tempted Christ to ‘command this stone that it be made bread’ (John 2:1–11; Luke 4:3)” (Shakespeare & Middleton 2004, 257n84.2). Although the dietaries recognize that water is one of the four elements and man’s first drink, they tend to urge caution in selecting drinking water, with the reader urged to ensure that it is pure and that it suits one’s particular complexion. There was a danger that some water could, as Andrew Boorde puts it, “indgender many infirmytes” (Boorde 1547, D1r). William Bullein advises that “clay water is pure, for clay cleanseth the water, and is better than water that runneth ouer grauell, or stones, so that it bee pure clay, voyde of corruption” (Bullein 1595, L1r). While Boorde recommends waters “the which doth swyftly run from the East in to the west”, Bullein recommends those “running toward the east” but both are fairly typical in rejecting standing waters which Bullein warns “bee euer full of corruption, because there is so much filth in them of carrions and rotten dung” (Boorde 1547, D1r; Bullein 1595, L1r).<sup>67</sup> He also warns that “colde water is euill, for it will stoppe the body, and engender melancholy” (Bullein 1595, L1r–L1v). Timon offers his guests “lukewarm water” but the general sense of water as a possible cause of disease may be what Middleton had in mind, especially given the connections drawn between diet and disease by Flaminius earlier in act 3.

Rejecting all feasts, which he comes to believe represent the greed and hypocrisy of humanity, Timon fantasizes about consuming the whole of Athens (4.3. 284–5). Having earlier offered his heart and blood to his creditors, asking even that they “tear” and “take” his body (3.4.90–6), Timon is in effect himself eaten up with misanthropy. Regret, hunger for revenge, and diseases which ravage the body preoccupy Timon’s ascetic (and hence, by early modern standards, exotic) existence, his previous magnanimity and desire to feed replaced by the desire to poison others: “O blessed breeding sun, draw from the earth / Rotten humidity; below thy sister’s orb / Infect the air” (4.3.1–3). He urges Alcibiades’s whore Timandra

Be a whore still. They love thee not that use thee.  
Give them diseases, leaving with thee their lust.  
Make use of thy salt hours: season the slaves  
For tubs and baths, bring down rose-cheeked youth

To the tub—fast and the diet.  
(4.3. 84–8)

Timon wants Timandra to spread venereal disease but there is also a suggestion that this will curb the consumption of food since those undergoing treatment for the pox in the sweating tub would be advised to fast or eat only drying foods such as oat cakes, and biscuits (OED tub—fast; Williams 1994a, ‘diet’). Timon rejects Alcibiades’s gold (“Keep it. I cannot eat it”, 4.3.101), but offers some that he found himself earlier when he learns that Alcibiades intends war against Athens, urging him to “Be as a planetary plague when Jove / Will o’er some high—viced city hang his poison / In the sick air” (4.3.109–111). Apemantus is critical of Timon’s misanthropy:

If thou didst put this sour cold habit on  
To castigate thy pride, ’twere well; but thou  
Dost it enforcèdly. Thou’dst courtier be again  
Wert thou not beggar.  
(4.3.240–3)

and Timon’s response is predictable:

TIMON Where feed’st thou a—days, Apemantus?  
APEMANTUS Where my stomach finds meat; or rather, where I eat it.  
TIMON Would poison were obedient, and knew my mind!  
APEMANTUS Where wouldst thou send it?  
TIMON To sauce thy dishes.  
(4.3.295–301)

Ironically, Apemantus offers Timon food: “Here, I will mend thy feast” (4.3.285). It is not clear what food Apemantus offers at this stage but a moment later he offers a medlar and urges Timon “eat it”. The medlar, a fruit resembling an apple and “eaten when decayed to a soft pulpy state” (OED medlar *n.* 2) is appropriate food for one who believes humankind degenerate and corrupt and Apemantus takes advantage of the obvious pun: “An thou’dst hated meddlers sooner, thou shouldst have loved thyself better now” (4.3.311–12).

As Jowett noted, the early moderns would have considered misanthropy “a beast—like state”. In *Politics* (1598) Aristotle rejects the solitary man as not properly human, noting “he that cannot abide to live in company, or through sufficiency hath need of nothing, is not esteemed a part or member of a city, but is either a beast or a god”, a sentiment echoed by Francis Bacon and Robert Burton who states that those living in solitude “do frequently degenerate from men, and of sociable creatures become beasts, monsters, inhuman, ugly to behold, *misanthropi*; they do even loathe themselves, and hate the company of men . . .” (Shakespeare & Middleton 2004, 29–30). But it seems that Timon’s foraging for roots as much as his desire for solitude would have struck an early modern audience as distinctly

bestial, indeed pig-like. When visited in the woods by thieves looking for gold, Timon advises them to feed upon the food offered by nature:

Your greatest want is, you want much of meat.  
 Why should you want? Behold, the earth hath roots.  
 Within this mile break forth a hundred springs.  
 The oaks bear mast, the briars scarlet hips.  
 The bounteous housewife nature on each bush  
 Lays her full mess before you. Want? Why want?  
 (4.3.418–423)

The “mast” referred to is the fruit of forest trees, usually fed to swine (OED *mast n.* 2. 1.) and the association with animals is not lost on the thieves: “We cannot live on grass, on berries, water, / As beasts and birds and fishes” (4.3.424–425). Although the thieves consider themselves superior to animals because they desire that which they cannot feed upon, gold, Timon rejects their desire as worse than bestial: “You must eat men” (4.3.427), a point reinforced later when he remarks “What a god’s gold, / That he is worshipped in a baser temple / Than where swine feed!” (5.1.46–8). For Timon, men are worse than pigs. Ruth Morse observed that in his digging for roots “Timon’s world has narrowed to the point where only food counts, and that food the lowest and least appropriate food fit for men, roots” (Morse 1983, 146). But food has always been a priority for Timon, it is merely his focus that has shifted. Before his fall Timon fed others but he has since learned that humanity’s cannibalistic impulses can make society more degenerate than isolation and that feeding upon men is much worse than eating the food of swine.

In the banquet scene, Timon is a kind of perverse physician, throwing stones and water at his guests: “What, dost thou go? / Soft, take thy physic first. Thou too, and thou” (3.7.98–9). Upon giving gold to the thieves he urges them “Go suck the blood o’th’ grape / Till the high fever seeth your blood to froth, / And so scape hanging” (4.3.431–3), suggesting that wine is blood and the thieves themselves leeches. Yet just as Hamlet’s physic to Claudius “prolongs thy sickly days” (3.3.96), so too Timon—as-physician intends ill health toward his enemies: “Trust not the physician; / His antidotes are poison” (4.3.433–4). In his attack upon Athens, Alcibiades is characterized by the Second Senator as a profane feeder:

If thy revenges hunger for that food  
 Which nature loathes, take thou the destined tenth,  
 And by the hazard of the spotted die  
 Let die the spotted.  
 (5.5.32–5)

But Alcibiades sees himself rather as a physician: “I will use the olive with my sword, / Make war breed peace, make peace stint war, make each / Prescribe to other as each other’s leech” (5.5.87–9). Those who have fed upon Timon, Alcibiades excepted, will be forced to shed blood. Once again, food has become a

vehicle for punishment but here it is the flesh and blood of men, not stones and water, that will satisfy the desire for revenge. Yet Timon's advice, that men should "Trust not the physician", proves unsettling and the play concludes not with a feast for death provided by those already deceased, as in *Hamlet*, but rather with the prospect of men continuing to feed upon each other.

### *Titus Andronicus*

In both *Hamlet* and *Timon of Athens* there is a preoccupation with metaphoric cannibalism and humanity is depicted as parasitic and sexually debased. Timon gets revenge upon his false friends by providing a parodic feast and so too in *Titus Andronicus* a parodic feast is prepared by Titus for Tamora. But where Timon sets that which cannot be eaten before his enemies, Titus presents Tamora with that which should not be eaten: human flesh. In this chapter, we end at the beginning—*Titus Andronicus* is thought to be one of Shakespeare's earliest plays—because it was here, at the start of his career, that Shakespeare dramatized the most extreme kind of eating, apparently becoming more subtle in his explorations of food and feeding as his writing developed.

In *Titus Andronicus* profane feeding is centered on the exotic Tamora whose cannibalism in the play's final scene is apparently prefigured by her sexual appetite throughout the play. Having found herself at the centre of Roman authority as a result of her miscegenist relationship with Saturninus, Tamora undermines Rome's hierarchical and sexual order. Her relationship with Aaron, also miscegenic, violates social codes and her sexual appetite for the Moor produces a direct threat to the state of Rome via a hybrid child. Aaron's plan to switch his black child with a local Moorish-white child and fool the Roman emperor into considering the latter his own (4.2.152–61) alerts us to the political ramifications of female sexual incontinence. Yet Saturninus is partly to blame for the harm that Aaron intends since he has allowed himself to be attracted to Tamora, the enemy within, choosing her over Lavinia and so leaving himself vulnerable to Moorish-Gothic machinations.

When Timon becomes disgusted by humanity it is to the woods that he flees in an effort to avoid society but even here he must interact with his fellow-humans and their desire for what he can provide is undiminished. In *Titus Andronicus* woodland forms the setting for the act which most clearly indicates Gothic savagery against Rome: the violent rape and mutilation of Lavinia by Tamora's sons, Chiron and Demetrius. In keeping with Roman social codes, Lavinia prefers death to the dishonour that rape represents and pleads with Tamora that she "keep me from their worse-than-killing lust, / And tumble me into some loathsome pit" (2.3.175–6). Tamora's response—"So should I rob my sweet sons of their fee. / No, let them satisfy their lust on thee" (2.3.179–80)—suggests an unnatural interest in the sexual appetites of her sons, which Catharine Stimpson identified as incestuous (Stimpson 1980, 61). In Lavinia's rape, physical penetration of the

chaste and civilized by the barbaric clearly constitutes an inversion of the colonial relationship and is an enactment in microcosm of the usual colonial situation, often expressed via the woman-as-land trope, since Rome (in the shape of Lavinia) is entered by its savage enemy. Rome's expansionist policy has incorporated savagery into what was an innocuous environment (a "green", or virginal, wood), and thus the politically triumphant Romans can be considered to have provoked the violence which is being directed against them. That the savagery against Lavinia has been encouraged by a woman alerts the audience to the harmful influence of the sexualized foreigner in particular.

The forest is also the location of Tamora's sexual liaison with Aaron, which further emphasizes its association with alterity via degenerate sexual appetites. The opportunities that the forest affords are recognized by Aaron who draws an important distinction between the court which is "full of tongues, of eyes, and ears" and the woods which are "ruthless, dreadful, deaf, and dull . . . shadowed from heaven's eye" (2.1.128-31). As Robert Miola pointed out, Aaron considers the forest to be

a region of lawless freedom where one can transform imagined schemes into reality. Unlike the court, the forest has no laws of civilization, no obstructions of custom, no censoring public voices to regulate actions. (Miola 1983, 51)

The traditional court/woodland dichotomy emphasized by Aaron exists in classical myth and folklore. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, an important source for *Titus Andronicus*, Philomela is taken by her attacker Tereus from her father's court to "a pelting graunge that peakishly did stand / In woods forgrown" (Bullough 1973b, 52). Before the rape of Lavinia, Titus refers to the woods as "green" (2.2.2) but after the rape, and with reference to the story of Philomela, he describes the woods as "ruthless, vast, and gloomy" (4.1.53), echoing Aaron's description of the woodland and effectively aligning Roman and Moorish opinion. Shakespeare's problematizing of distinctions between the Romans and the Goths begins much earlier in the play, in Titus's refusal to show mercy by sparing Tamora's son (1.1.104-126) and in the killing of his own son who stands in his way (1.1.286-89). Tamora's plea includes the reminder that "Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge", and that she is refused it reflects badly on Roman nobility. Aaron and Tamora, it seems, are neither entirely savage nor civilized and Roman cruelty undermines its claims to civility. Indeed, boundaries are further blurred between civilized Roman and savage Goth and Moor; as Francesca Royster pointed out, it is Aaron who possesses self-discipline and moderation. Aaron is restrained in his sexual relationship with Tamora and his role in the rape of Lavinia is intellectual rather than physical (Royster 2000, 446-7). Tamora also defies what might be expected of her as Queen of the Goths when she becomes Roman Empress, masking her savagery under the veil of Roman respectability.

Sexual appetites are satisfied in the woods and it is in this location that food and feeding metaphors most clearly indicate the visceral nature of human desire.

David Willbern offered a full psychoanalytic reading of the significance of Shakespeare's pit: "Here is Freud's plenty. The passage expresses highly sadistic fantasies of sexual attack . . . 'The Abhorred pit' will soon assume its central and over-determined symbolic significance as vagina, womb, tomb, and mouth." (Willbern 1978, 168). The pit is a "subtle hole . . . / Whose mouth is covered with rude-growing briars" (2.3.198-9), a description which echoes the covering of Lavinia's mouth by Chiron (2.3.184) and prefigures Titus's order to stop the mouths of her attackers (5.2.160). Martius's description of the murdered Bassianus lying "like to a slaughtered lamb, / In this detested, dark, blood-drinking pit" (2.3.223-4), characterizes the pit as mouth-like but also Bassianus as food: the "lamb" who has been sacrificed and fed to the "devouring" and "swallowing" pit with "ragged entrails" (2.3.235, 2.3.239, 2.3.230). Lavinia is also described as food, not only the "corn" that the rapists will "thresh" (2.3.123) but also "a cut loaf", from whom they will "steal a shive" (2.1.87): Lavinia has already been sexually consumed by her husband and so the "shive", or slice of bread (OED shive *n.* 1.) will, they reason, go unnoticed. Lavinia will feed their appetite just as Bassianus fed the pit and it is fitting that she is compared to bread, a basic foodstuff that will feed a base desire.

The metaphor of Tamora's voracious sexual appetite is made literal in the feeding that takes place in the final scene. As in *Sir Thomas More* there is anxiety about foreign appetites with an association drawn between strange foodstuffs, degenerate sexual behaviour, and the health of a nation since foreigners who have been absorbed into native culture are responsible for all kinds of profane consumption. Indeed, Titus is keen to distance the Andronici from Gothic gluttony and limits their diet to just enough for survival when planning his vengeance: "look you eat no more / Than will preserve just so much strength in us / As will revenge these bitter woes of ours" (3.2.1-3). Yet although Tamora indulges in the barbaric act of cannibalism she eats with ignorant innocence while Titus's monstrousness is shown in the act of making the human pie. As in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Philomela and Procne, innocent victims of Tereus's lust, are made monstrous when they slaughter the innocent Itys. Both Tereus and Tamora eat cooked human flesh presented in the formal setting of a banquet, perhaps indicating that the barbaric lurks just beneath the surface of the apparently civilised.<sup>68</sup> Where Hamlet and Timon characterize themselves as perverse physicians in the context of revenge, Titus presents himself as a perverse cook:

You know your mother means to feast with me,  
 And calls herself Revenge, and thinks me mad.  
 Hark, villains, I will grind your bones to dust,  
 And with your blood and it I'll make a paste,  
 And of the paste a coffin I will rear,  
 And make two pasties of your shameful heads,  
 And bid that strumpet, your unhallowed dam,  
 Like to the earth swallow her own increase.

This is the feast that I have bid her to,  
 And this the banquet she shall surfeit on;  
 For worse than Philomel you used my daughter,  
 And worse than Progne I will be revenged.  
 (5.2.183–94)

The pies made by Titus will make for a profane feast and he puns horrifically upon the usual container into which a dead body is put and the pastry-type mould into which he will insert the human heads, also known as a ‘coffin’ in the early modern period (OED coffin *n.* 4. *a*). Titus brings Roman civility itself into question and any sense of innate Roman moral superiority is undermined by his involvement in such a barbaric act. The readers of the dietaries would have been familiar with the Roman appetite for blood. Thomas Moffett, who disapproved of eating pork, claims that the Romans liked the “dainty meat being taken blood and all out of the Sowes belly ere she was ready to farrow, eating them after a little bruising in the blood, no less greedily then some do the pudding of a bruised Deer” (Moffett 1655, K1r). He also notes the means by which the animal might be killed: “The Roman cooks thrust a hot iron into his side, and then run him to death; thinking thereby that his flesh waxed tenderer and his brawn firmer” which, though gruesome, was no less so than the method for fattening and killing pigs recommended to the dietary’s readers’:

Shut up a young Bore (of a year and a half old) in a little room about harvest time, feeding him with nothing but sweet whey, and giving him every morning clean straw to lye upon, but lay it not thick. So before Christmas he will be sufficiently brawned with continuall lying, and prove exceeding fat, wholesome and sweet; as for the common way of brawning Bores, by stying them up in so close a room that they cannot turn themselves round about, and whereby they are forced alwaies to lye on their bellies, it is not worthy the imitation: for they feed in pain, lye in pain, and sleep in pain: neither shall you ever find their flesh so red, their fat so white, nor their liver so sound, as being brawned otherwise accordingly, as is before rehearsed. After he is brawned for your turn, thrust a knife into one of his flanks, and let him run with it till he dye: others gently bait him with muzzled Doggs. (Moffett 1655, K2r)

As Wendy Wall pointed out, the average early modern kitchen “could become a slaughterhouse reeking of blood and strewn liberally with animals waiting to be killed, plucked, and dressed” (Wall 2002, 192). Wall also noted the link between butchery and medicine which “invited early modern people to glimpse connections between eating and the anatomist’s dissection theater” with the result that “Health smacked of licensed bloodshed” (Wall 2002, 195). A medical recipe to cure epilepsy which called for cranial [skull] powder and required the pounding of a skull into particles cited by Wall (Wall 2002, 195), would not have been regarded as especially strange since it was usual to have body parts in the kitchen for cures which demanded dung, breast milk, human urine, and animal organs. As Wall put it, housewifery generally involved “a world of interchangeable, absorbable, and

consumable body parts, extracted from live and dead beings” (Wall 2002, 197). Louise Noble cited a recipe involving *mumia*, or mummy (which, as we saw in chapter 1, was the remains of an embalmed corpse), part of “a well-established therapeutic model, which subscribes to the pharmacological superiority of the human body, both living and dead, and valorizes medicinal cannibalism—the ingestion of medicinally-prepared human flesh, as well as blood, fat, bone, and bodily excretions for therapeutic purposes” and is comparable with Titus’s formula for the preparation of his victims (Noble 2003, 677). According to Moffett, consumption of human blood and body parts was practiced by the ancients:

in *Rome* . . . Physicians did prescribe their patients the blood of Wrestlers, causing them to suck it warm breathing and spinning out of their veins, drawing into their corrupt bodies a sound mans life, and sucking that in with both lips, which a dogg is not suffered to lick with his tongue; yea they were not ashamed to prescribe them a meat made of mans marrow and infants brain. The Grecians afterwards were as bold and impious as the Romans, tasting of every inward and outward part of mans body, not leaving the nails unprosecuted. (Moffett 1655, T2r)

If we can suppose that Shakespeare’s audience was aware of the long-established tradition of medicinal cannibalism then the feast prepared by Titus for Tamora raises specific questions. Is there a suggestion that Titus wishes to strengthen Tamora? or cure barbarity? Hardly. Noble referred to the belief that drinking the blood of a criminal could result in the acquisition of his criminal character (Noble 2003, 685) so we might wonder whether Shakespeare was suggesting that by consuming her monstrous sons Tamora would reabsorb the barbarity she herself encouraged.

The weak distinction between Roman and Goth, evident in the lack of compassion shown by Titus against Tamora and his own son, begins when Lucius commands that Tamora’s son be burned and that his killers “hew his limbs till they be clean consumed” (1.1.129). His bloodthirsty appetite conjures images of cannibalistic feasts (the “entrails feed the sacrificing fire”, 1.1.144) as does the tomb of the Andronici which consumes human flesh and which Tamora notes will be stained with blood at the sacrifice of Alarbus (1.1.116). That moral commentary should come from the Goth Chiron (“Was never Scythia half so barbarous”, 1.1.131) further blurs the distinction between Roman civility and Gothic savagery. Comparing Lucius’s behaviour with Scythian barbarism prepares us for Lucius’s later hostility toward Rome and his confederacy with the Goths (3.1.298–99). Lucius becomes Rome’s governor but only by incorporating its old enemy, an action suggested by Titus (3.1.284–86) but which, ironically, nullifies his earlier triumph against the Goths and signals Roman degeneration. The early modern contrast between Rome’s glorious past and its present moral decay as the centre of Papal power suggests anachronistic criticism of Roman savagery via allusion to the Roman Catholic belief that they eat the body of Christ. Although, as Michael Schoenfeldt noted, George Herbert in *The Temple* identified consumption of the

Eucharist as the ultimate nutritive act (Schoenfeldt 1999, 99), in *Titus Andronicus* it indicates barbarity and excess.

As governor, Lucius commands that Tamora's body be abandoned for birds of prey to feed upon (5.3.195–9). This act, intended to mark Tamora's foreignness by not allowing her the dignity of a funeral, also ironically serves to emphasise Roman savagery. The fate dealt out by Lucius to Aaron is even more telling:

Set him breast-deep in earth and famish him.  
 There let him stand, and rave, and cry for food.  
 If anyone relieves or pities him,  
 For the offence he dies. This is our doom.  
 Some stay to see him fastened in the earth.  
 (5.3.178–182)

Aaron's appetite for lust and murder is punished by starvation and thus constitutes an inversion of Tamora's cannibalistic feast and the consumption of her body by birds of prey after death. Aaron's defiant response to Roman justice "Ten thousand worse than ever yet I did / Would I perform, if I might have my will" (5.3.186–7) provides no hope for redemption but besides fixing him as an irredeemable villain his comment functions as a warning against the incorporation of foreigners whose appetites might provoke civil disorder.

In *Titus Andronicus* Shakespeare makes distinct connections between foreign influence and profane consumption but subtly undermines conventional depictions of the exotic by raising pertinent questions about the nature of Otherness, colonial expansion and degeneration: the colonizers are as capable of savagery as those they colonize. Shakespeare's classical story of the Romans and the Goths is perhaps informed by the contemporary issue of colonial expansion: if the colonizers are not vigilant and if they do not guard against their appetite for unwise expansion they may find themselves at the mercy of foreign appetites which ultimately will consume them.

The three plays considered in this chapter share a preoccupation with profane consumption and disgust with excess is a recurrent theme. For Hamlet, the realisation that his father was gluttonous provokes a fascination with the cannibalistic nature of interment and a desire to guard against all feeding but he is willing to eat strange foods (crocodile) and drink that which may harm his melancholic body (vinegar) in order to prove his love for Ophelia is genuine. Timon offers strange and potentially dangerous 'food' (stones and water) to those who have proved untrue. Like Apemantus, and indeed Hamlet, Timon becomes obsessed, rejecting those who have fed upon him and wishing to inflict disease upon all humankind and death upon himself. False friends are compared to cannibals in *Timon of Athens* but metaphor gives way to the literal in *Titus Andronicus* and cannibalism is a means to avenge Gothic sexual excess. In these plays Shakespeare takes his audience to new times and places (Hamlet's Denmark, Titus's Rome, Pericles's Greece) and that which should be familiar is made

strange: the body does not eat but is eaten (suggesting Catholic doctrine) and food becomes distinctly exotic: a vehicle for murder or punishment rather than a source of nourishment.



# Conclusion

In Shakespeare we can identify a sliding scale from the most ordinary to the most exotic manifestations of food and feeding. We began with Sir John Oldcastle, a consumer of ordinary foods in extraordinary amounts and ended with Tamora, one of Shakespeare's most exotic figures but whose exoticism is tempered by another's preparation of her cannibalistic feast. I hope to have shown that the dietaries are invaluable texts, providing modern audiences with an important insight into early modern views on food and feeding. These hitherto overlooked documents illuminate Shakespeare's plays and yet, like the plays themselves, are dialogic, providing a useful record of the range of early modern opinions on food and feeding.

As we saw in chapter 1, Sir John eats food that would have been familiar to the early moderns but large quantities set him apart (exoticize him as it were) from the majority who could not afford to consume so much. Excessive consumption was denounced by the writers of the early modern dietaries who focused on the detrimental effect gluttony had upon the body while there were repeated warnings from the pulpit to avoid immoderate consumption because of the effects it had upon the soul and society in general. Edmund Spenser's focus was on the physical consequences of excessive consumption but also on the figure of Gluttony as spiritually bankrupt: "Not meet to be of counsell to a king" (1.4.23.3). Shakespeare too concentrated on the body of his gluttonous creation and was perhaps influenced by Spenser in the suggestion that Sir John would be an unsuitable advisor to a monarch. Sir John scoffs at Prince John's moderation, specifically his diet of fish and small beer which he claims has made the Prince effeminate. The dietaries reinforce Sir John's view that wine is good for one's health but not that large amounts of wine are beneficial (and not all agree that it is better than beer). Sir John is an ambivalent figure: he is a glutton and thus a sinner but also attractive, perhaps specifically because he ignores cultural dictates.

In chapter 2 we learnt that food rather than national pride is the primary trigger for the enmity between the Welsh captain Fluellen and the English ensign Pistol in *Henry 5*. That figs were regarded with ambivalence in the dietaries helps us to understand an otherwise esoteric exchange between them. So too the knowledge that the consumption of raw leeks was considered dangerous by dietary authors makes sense of a scene condemned by Kenneth Branagh as "resoundingly unfunny" (Shakespeare 1989a, 11). The leek is an indicator of Welsh national pride in *Henry 5*, but King Henry's wearing of the leek modifies its exoticism and the

leek, denounced by Pistol as a mere vegetable, becomes Fluellen's instrument of revenge. Modern theatre audiences tend to recognize the leek as specifically Welsh but the dietaries do not emphasize the vegetable's national associations so much as its potential to cause physical harm, although they do help explain the link between the Welsh wearing of the symbol and the vegetable's reputed cleansing qualities. The notion that raw leeks are bad for one's health seems strange to a modern audience and so too is the fact that many of the ingredients added to the witches' brew in *Macbeth*, which we think utterly exotic, would have been familiar to our early modern counterparts. Also surprising is the similarity between the witches and early modern brewing practices: their familiar phrase "Double, double, toil and trouble" (4.1.10) an apparent allusion to double double beer and the demonized female brewer. Lady Macbeth's reference to gall (Come to my woman's breasts, / And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers", 1.5.47–8) makes more sense when we realize, from the dietaries, that gall was used for medicinal purposes. Similarly her reference to breast milk, indeed the numerous references to breast milk in the play, become clearer when we realize, again from the dietaries, that breast milk was commonly recommended as a foodstuff for sick adults, specifically those suffering from melancholy: according to his wife, Macbeth is too full of milk, specifically the "milk of human kindness" (1.5.16) to act like a man.

In chapter 3 we saw that, via the dietaries, we can recover likely original audience responses to Jaques's melancholy in *As You Like It*: our knowledge of early modern views on food and its effect upon the humours enhances the sense that Jaques is a hypocrite, his sorrow apparently a direct consequence of having eaten venison, meat from the very animal whose death he laments. Elsewhere in the play there is an affinity between human beings and animals and although hunting is viewed as sometimes necessary, moderation is an important qualifier; there is evidence of a sympathy with vegetarianism that would have seemed strange to most early moderns. In *The Winter's Tale* this sympathy is also apparent: a man is hunted and eaten by a bear, rather than the other way round, and the feast organized by Perdita is apparently vegetarian. It seems that Leontes, like Jaques, suffers from melancholy, apparently as a result of excessive feeding at court and, as the dietaries show, over eating was thought to trigger the condition amongst those who were susceptible to it. Sicilia is the source of the excess that has caused Leontes's condition but Bohemia contains the means to cure him. The bear that eats Antigonus represents both cause and cure: as the dietaries show, bear-meat was thought to provoke melancholy but bear-grease was considered medicinal. Perdita herself also offers a cure: the dietaries list the flowers she distributes and the rice from her feast as capable of adjusting the imbalance that has provoked Leontes's ill health in the first place.

Chapter 4 considered *Sir Thomas More*, where (as in *2 Henry 4*) gluttony is aligned with a voracious sexual appetite but the perpetrators are specifically foreign and it is strange culinary practices that are thought to bring disease. In the play, Londoners are especially agitated by the growing of vegetables: generally considered with suspicion in the dietaries, the potato and parsnip were considered

especially strange because of their foreign origin but also because the latter were thought by the dietary authors to provoke lust. There is some evidence that Shakespeare might have been thinking of Ireland and the Irish as well as European foreigners since the Irish were also identified in the period with exotic feeding practices including cannibalism; like the foreigners in *Sir Thomas More* the Irish threatened to undermine English order and effect degeneration. There are references to cannibalism also in *Coriolanus* with the patricians depicted as predators and the plebeians their prey. Menenius's fable of the belly contradicts Galen's description of the stomach as a kind of workman and the hungry plebeians are asked to understand the perspective of the well-fed while Martius insults them as potential cannibals. Moderation, emphasized by More, is repeatedly recommended in the dietaries while the abstinence practiced by Martius is denounced. In *Pericles*, the gluttonous people of Tarsus are punished by famine but saved by bread, a foodstuff generally recommended in the dietaries as beneficial to all providing certain rules were adhered to in its production.

Chapter 6 focussed on diets that would have seemed strange, even repulsive, to the early moderns and remain so to us. In *Hamlet* some references are made clear via knowledge of the dietaries, such as Hamlet's drinking of eisel (which probably means vinegar) but others remain strange, such as the eating of crocodile. Hamlet's unnatural preoccupation with the cannibalistic nature of interment is related to his father's death and his apparent gluttony when alive, which has in turn provoked Hamlet's characterization of feeding in general as bestial. In *Timon of Athens* and *Titus Andronicus* revenge provokes the provision of strange diets: in the former, false friendship is compared to food that has gone-off and men who have proved false are presented with that which can provide little or no nutrition: a meal of stones, which men should not eat, and water, which the dietaries specifically warn against. In *Titus Andronicus* the feast prepared by Titus for Tamora represents, for the early moderns as for us, the most extreme and profane consumption possible, that of one human by another and, specifically, the consumption of a child by its mother.

Having considered a range of dietaries and Shakespeare's depiction of food in a range of plays it seems clear that although we are unlike our early modern predecessors in specific ways we are surprisingly similar to them in others. We have seen that excessive consumption was criticized by the early moderns but so too was excessive abstinence; Shakespeare tends to regard those who do not enjoy eating and drinking with distinct suspicion and a professed lack of appetite suggests hypocrisy, sometimes of a specifically religious nature. Sir John remains attractive for a modern audience who may not have the same adherence to religious teachings as their early modern counterparts but are all too aware of dietary strictures and the obsession with health and body image. Today we similarly regard excessive abstinence with suspicion and would perhaps term the behaviour 'eating disorder' but there is a tension between this and the physical ideal of thinness: there is as much envy as disapproval for those who can refrain from eating even moderately. Only since the end of the second World War has everyone in Britain

had enough to eat and malnutrition been eliminated: all our health concerns in the last 50 years have been about quality not quantity. This contrasts with the preceding 350 years when most people were underfed: as we saw in chapter 2, accusations of witchcraft often came about because the poor and hungry had been refused food and drink. Yet, surprisingly, we have many concerns that would be familiar to the early moderns. The writers of the early modern dietaries, like modern nutritionists, focused on the harm overeating and drinking too much alcohol did to the body. Although we have lost their focus on the spiritual consequences of gluttony, we share the early modern focus on the detrimental effect gluttony has upon the body and upon society. Rightly or wrongly, we tend to judge those who over-indulge as lacking in self-control: the early modern notion of the glutton as a sinner who betrays his fellow-man has given way to the glutton as a social problem, even an embarrassment. Rank remains a significant issue, although there has been an important inversion: in the early modern period the less well off were unable to afford great amounts of food and drink, and so were less likely to suffer the effects of gluttony, whereas today it is the less well off who are most likely to suffer obesity. It is not unreasonable to suggest that we share with the early moderns the sentiment that industry guards against the inclination to over-indulgence and those who do indulge should not be trusted, even if the pressures of late industrial capitalism and the efforts to conform to a physical ideal have superceded admonitions from the pulpit to curb excess.

As we saw in the introduction, the Cartesian division of mind and body dominates post seventeenth-century Western philosophy while the early moderns regarded states of mind as purely hydraulic phenomena. The dietaries show that we have, in many significant ways, moved a long way from our early modern counterparts: we do not regard red meat as especially healthy, nor are we suspicious of fish, fruit, and uncooked vegetables. But the dietaries also demonstrate that we are perhaps more like the early moderns than we might think in our focus on moderation, the benefits of drinking wine, and the medicinal qualities of many herbs. We no longer believe in the humoral model but perhaps it has been replaced to some extent by our preoccupation with dietary disorders and food allergies whereby those suffering from irritable bowel syndrome are advised to avoid the consumption of pulses, the migraine sufferer considers an attack provoked by chocolate, cheese, or some other food, certain people must avoid nuts, and the consumption of over-processed food and fatty food is considered responsible for all kinds of behavioural disorders. Like the early moderns, we too believe that food can be a source of disease or ill health as well as medicinal, and we believe, much as they did, that it impacts in significant ways upon our emotional well-being.

# Notes

- 1 As the Oxford editors point out, Sir John Falstaff was originally conceived by Shakespeare as Sir John Oldcastle in *1 Henry 4* but, for reasons discussed later, Shakespeare subsequently changed the name to Falstaff (Wells et al. 1987, 330). In order to avoid confusion I will refer to the character as Sir John throughout this chapter, and indeed this book.
- 2 In this chapter most of the references to *1 Henry 4* and *2 Henry 4* occur in separate sections but, again, in order to avoid confusion, quotations from each play will be prefaced by a numerical 1 (for the first part) and 2 (for the second part).
- 3 The birds are caught alive and blinded or kept in a dark box so that they gorge themselves continuously on grain. Once their bellies are distended beyond their natural size they are drowned, plucked, and roasted. The head is either cut or bitten off and the entire bird consumed, including their bones and internal organs, from underneath a napkin. This is reputedly to hide the shame of such cruelty and gluttony from the sight of God but is also meant to enhance the aroma of the cooked bird. It is ordinarily considered excessive to eat more than one ortolan, but on the night of his last meal Mitterrand ate two and supposedly nothing else for the next eight days until his death (Paterniti 1998).
- 4 When Thomas Nashe in *Pierce Penilesse His Svypplication to the Divell* notes that he would represent the excess of gluttony “but that a new Laureat hath sau’d me the labor” he is presumably referring to Spenser (Nashe 1904a, 199). All quotations of *The Faerie Queene* are from Spenser 2001.
- 5 A ‘vomitorium’ is “a passage or opening in an ancient amphitheatre or theatre, leading to or from the seats” which appears to have led to the erroneous belief that the Romans set a special room aside for deliberate vomiting during feasts (OED vomitorium 1. and 2.).
- 6 Thomas Dekker refers to “the old Morralls at *Maningtree*” in *The Seven Deadly Sins of London* (Dekker 1606, f4v) and in *The Choise of Valentines*, a work attributed to Thomas Nashe, reference is made to “a play of strange morality / Shown by bachelry of Manningtree” (Nashe 1904b, 404).
- 7 That is, a tub of fat (OED tallow–catch).
- 8 The instrument used to sift bran or coarse meal (OED bolting–hutch *vbln.* 3).
- 9 For a detailed discussion of the emendation, see Taylor 1985.
- 10 He refers to the story again in *2 Henry 4* when he calls for the shopkeeper who refused him credit to “be damned like the glutton” (2:1.2.34).
- 11 Similarly Sir John ridicules the Lord Chief Justice in *2 Henry 4* by replying to his admonition “There is not a white hair in your face but should have his effect of gravity” with “His effect of gravy, gravy, gravy” (2:1.2.161–3).

- 12 As we shall see in chapter 6, Hamlet, unlike Speed, desires to be like the chameleon and feed only on air.
- 13 The role of Feeble might be interpreted ironically and played by a physically robust actor but it is clear in *1 Henry 4* that Sir John has allowed healthy men to buy their way out of service and is left with pathetic figures, “scarecrows” of whom he is ashamed (1:4.2.38–9), and there is little reason to think that the men sent to their death in *2 Henry 4* would be any different.
- 14 Why the Beadle should be described as such was explained by A.R. Humphreys who noted that “Censers had figures thinly embossed on them” and Shakespeare frequently compares thin men to low-relief carved or hammered figures on, for example, coins, flasks, and brooches (Shakespeare 1966, 178n19). But as H.J. Oliver pointed out, in *2 Henry 4* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, where the word also occurs at 4.3.91 the precise meaning is uncertain (Shakespeare 1982c, 199n91). If an incense container is being referred to then Doll is making a distinct connection between thinness and Catholic church ritual. Although incense was used in the Anglican church there were objections from radical Protestants against what they considered to be a distinctly papist practice which they believed indicated that religion’s debt to paganism: John Bale denounces the burning of incense, which he terms “snsynges” and “al of souche heythnyshe wares . . . done by us as theyr olde predecessours the Idolatrouse prestes ded by the aunycnt Romanes” (Bale 1551, A1v–A2r).
- 15 Notably, there is a tangible link between this play’s focus on feeding and Chaucer’s attention to gluttony since John of Gaunt was Chaucer’s patron.
- 16 The fish was also an early Christian symbol and the connection between fish-eating and Christ, especially via the biblical story of Christ’s miraculous multiplying of loaves and fishes (Mark 6: 35–42), was used by some Catholics to suggest that eating fish was superior to eating animal flesh, a point discussed further, in the context of vegetarianism, in chapter 3.
- 17 The story that Elizabeth I wanted to see Sir John in love can be found in Nicholas Rowe’s 1709 account of Shakespeare’s life: “She [Elizabeth] was so well pleas’d with that admirable character of *Falstaff*, in the two parts of *Henry* the Fourth, that she commanded him to continue it for one Play more, and to shew him in love. This is said to be the occasion of his writing *The Merry Wives of* [sic] Windsor. How well she was obey’d, the play it self is an admirable proof” (Rowe 1903, 5).
- 18 Although it is not clear what age Sir John is in *1 Henry 4*, he is apparently advanced in years or the playful reference to his age at 1:2.5.458–9 would make little sense but, as with the casting of thin actors, this is something about which a production might generate textual friction: if Sir John is noticeably younger in the earlier play then his ill health and premature death are consequent on his moral weakness.
- 19 According to Hippocrates, a thin nose was one of the signs that death was imminent: “when the nose and nostrils are extenuated and sharpened” (Lowe 1597, Appendix, A4v).
- 20 Lisa Hopkins also thought the Welsh and Scots in the play “unproblematically absorbed into a pan-Britishness” (Hopkins 1997, 15) with Ireland more difficult to subsume because “beneath the fields of France loom the Irish bogs” (Hopkins 1997, 14).
- 21 Craik also referred to *Much Ado About Nothing* “where Beatrice interprets Benedick’s ‘good service . . . in these wars’ as valiant eating”, 1.1.46–9 (Shakespeare 1995, 318n97–8; *Much Ado* 1.1.46–9).

- 22 The reference was cut in Olivier's 1949 screen adaptation of the play and David Giles's 1979 BBC Shakespeare version, presumably because it added little to the sense of the scene for a modern audience (Olivier 1944; Giles 1979).
- 23 It is significant that the taboo ritual is celebrated by the Northern Irish, recognized in this period as the most obdurate in their enmity against English colonizers.
- 24 The link between the shark and cannibalism is apparent in *Sir Thomas More* where the rioting Londoners are warned by More that if they use violence to rid themselves of foreigners then some day violence might be used by others to get rid of them: "other ruffians ... Would shark on you and men like ravenous fishes / Would feed on one another" (2.3.90–3). It is also suggested in *Hamlet*, where Fortinbras is said to have "Sharked up a list of landless resolute / For food and diet to some enterprise / That hath a stomach in 't" (1.1.97–9), that is, the war against Denmark.
- 25 Notably, Shakespeare refers to mummy elsewhere to signify the exotic (Othello tells Desdemona the handkerchief with "magic in the web of it" was "dyed in mummy", *Othello* 3.4.69; 3.4.74) and the mundane (as noted in chapter 1, Falstaff proclaims that, had he drowned in the Thames into which he has been thrown he would have been "a mountain of mummy!", *The Merry Wives of Windsor* 3.5.16–17).
- 26 Thick blood as unhealthy is referred to elsewhere by Shakespeare: as we shall see in Chapter 5, in *Hamlet* the ghost of Hamlet's father describes the action of poison upon his body: "And with a sudden vigour it doth posset / And curd, like eager droppings into milk, / The thin and wholesome blood" (1.5.68–70) and King John refers to "that surly spirit, melancholy" making blood "heavy, thick, / Which else runs tickling up and down the veins" (3.3.42–4).
- 27 Similarly in Holinshed's *Chronicles* it is suggested that saffron "mingled with the milke of a woman, and laied vpon the eies . . . staieth such humors as descend into the same, and taketh awaie the red wheales and pearles that oft grow about them" (Holinshed 1587a, E2v).
- 28 The section 'What is the propertie of milke' appears only in the first edition of the dietary.
- 29 Barrough recommends milk for those who have a weak stomach but warns "you must take heede that you giue it not to those, that are wont to haue it waxe soure in their stomach, for to those it doth more hurt then good. But if it be well digested, it doeth not onely stop the appetite, but it softeneth the bellie being stopped, and stoppeth his fluxes" (Barrough 1583, H2r).
- 30 The medicinal quality of possets is stressed in the following dietaries: Bullein 1558, R6r–R6v and A T 1596, Irv.
- 31 So too in Edmund Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland* it is claimed that in the act of suckling, English children will "drawe into themselues together with their sucke even the nature and disposicion of their [Irish] nurses" (Spenser 1949, 119).
- 32 The apparent contradiction of Duke Senior's statement troubled Theobald who thought "the penalty" referred to seasonal change and suggested that 'not' be replaced by 'but' (Shakespeare 1733, 205n9).
- 33 Agnes Latham and Alan Brissenden both gloss "hinds" only as servants (Shakespeare 1975, 4n19; Shakespeare 1993, 98n17) but it seems obvious that the animal is also suggested.
- 34 'Fruit' could refer to vegetable products in general (OED fruit *n*), just as 'meat' could refer to food in general (OED meat *n*. 1. a) but there is no sense that animal flesh is part of the banquet.

- 35 See Stewart 1949, 30–9; Barber 1969; Reid 1970.
- 36 These issues have been discussed by, amongst others, Biggins 1962 and Gurr 1983.
- 37 It appears to have been usual for the bears to be given human names, for example, Tom of Lincoln, Sackerson, George Stone, Harry of Tame, Little Bess of Bromley, Don Jon, Blind Robin, Ned Whiting, Ned of Canterbury (Hawkes 2002, 87).
- 38 Hentzner's account was written in Latin.
- 39 This fact apparently escaped those responsible for the 1997 'African' *Winter's Tale* at Shakespeare's Globe in London. This production, directed by David Freeman, saw the stage strewn with sheep-skins during the feast (not so much a 'sheep-shearing' as a 'sheep-massacre'); Freeman clearly misunderstood the underlying principle of the pastoral existence which is to care for, not kill, animals.
- 40 Whether the clown's list is written down or committed to memory is unclear. Horace Howard Furness agreed with R.G. White who suggested that the list is not written down and by "that's out of my note" the clown means 'that's not among the matters of which I am to take note'. White argued that, moreover, a literate clown would have been considered ridiculous by early audiences (Shakespeare 1898, 172n49).
- 41 Any grain could be thrown to represent fertility. The Elizabethan puritan text *Admonition to the Parliament* complains about corn being thrown at weddings and other irreligious customs "whereby they make rather a Maie game of marryage, then a holy institution of God" (Anon [John Fielde and Thomas Wilcox?] 1572, B3v–B4r).
- 42 For lavender and rosemary see D7v–D8r, for rue D8v, for marigolds E3v, for marjoram E6v, for mints E8v and for savoury F3v.
- 43 In *All's Well That Ends Well* the King of France has a fistula, which is probably a genital swelling (1.1.30–4). His ailment is cured by Helena who has inherited from her father "a remedy, approved, set down, / To cure the desperate languishings whereof / The King is rendered lost." (1.3.226–8) but Shakespeare is not specific about what the remedy involves and no mention is made of bear-grease or flowers.
- 44 Orgel's gloss on Leontes's comment—"Though the practice of magic was illegal, prosecutions diminished significantly after about 1585, and very few cases are recorded in the early 17th century"—is not especially relevant.
- 45 *Sir Thomas More* is an inherently interesting text since part of it probably represents the only creative writing by Shakespeare that has survived in his own handwriting. The play exists solely as British Library manuscript Harley 7368, in several hands, and comprising 22 sheets. Most of the writing is in the hand of Anthony Munday, although 'additional' sheets in different hands have been inserted. The front of the first sheet contains a provisional licence from Edmund Tilney, the state censor, requiring alterations before public performance. The 'additions' might represent changes to the play made after Tilney's objections were known, but this explanation is difficult to sustain because in some ways the changes (such as the rewriting of the scene in which More quells the rioters) make matters worse. This problem is treated in the Revels edition of the play by its editors Vittorio Gabrieli and Giorgio Melchiori (Munday 1990) and more fully in Scott McMillin's book *The Elizabethan theatre and 'The Book of Sir Thomas More'* (McMillin 1987).
- 46 All quotations of the play will be from Munday 1990.
- 47 In *The Winter's Tale* Perdita engages with the traditional Renaissance debate of whether art should be privileged above nature, noting that "carnations and streaked gillyvors", hybrids and counterfeits, "some call nature's bastards" (4.4.82–3). As the editor of the Arden edition of the play noted, analogues to Perdita's argument can be found in

- Montaigne's essay "Of the Cannibals": "in [wild fruits] are the . . . natural properties most lively and vigorous, which in these we have bastardized, applying them to the pleasure of our corrupted taste" (Shakespeare 1963b, 93–94n88–92).
- 48 This comment appears in the prologue to Lyly's play *Midas*, first published in 1592 (Lyly 1902, 12).
- 49 John Jowett used stylistic analysis to argue that Henry Chettle (not Munday as is usually claimed) wrote the first scene of the play and that several others wrote: "over one-third of the original text" (Jowett 1989, 147–8). For my purpose however, the question of the authorship of particular scenes is less important than the parallels that can be traced between them and like Jeffrey Masten I find that a number of thematic concerns run across the traditional editorial divisions of the work into hands (Masten 2001).
- 50 The OED records that the word 'heartburning' in the sense of grudge and in the sense of a stomach ailment was current in the period (OED heart-burning *n.*).
- 51 The Revels editors gloss "we'll tickle their turnips" to mean 'kick their bottoms' since a sense of 'tickle' recorded in the OED is 'chastise' and 'turnups' indicate 'the backside of breeches' as well as carrying an association with French parsnips (Munday 1990, 84n1).
- 52 Crucially, an intimation of sexual violence problematizes the claim by the Revels editors that the introduction of the new role of the Clown by Hand B was meant to lighten the riot scenes (Munday 1990, 24).
- 53 Although bread was generally recommended as a healthy foodstuff for all humoral types, the authors of the dietaries are specific about which type of bread should be consumed and which avoided. It was thought that the best bread was made from wheat, contained little bran, was leavened, came in neither too large a loaf nor too small, and was neither too fresh nor too stale. As Elyot notes: "Bread hauing much branne, filleth the bellie with excrements, and nourisheth little or nothing, but shortly descendeth from the stomacke" (Elyot 1595, G1r–G1v). Although Barley bread "clenseth the bodie" it "doth not nourish so much as wheat, and maketh cold iuyce in the bodie" (Elyot 1595, G1v). Elyot notes that brown coarse bread, bread without leaven and rye bread cause melancholy (Elyot 1595, D2v), and Bullein, that "Rie bread is windy and hurtfull to manie, therefore it shoulde be well salted and baked with Annis seedes, and commonly crustes of bread be verie drie and burneth, they doe engender melancholy humours" (Cogan 1636, L5r). Similarly Cogan observes that rye bread is "heavy and hard to digest" (Cogan 1636, D3r) and, like Elyot, notes that barley bread is not nourishing but also that it "ingendreth winde" although "some affirme that it is good for such as have the Gout" (Elyot 1595, G1v; Cogan 1636, D3r).
- 54 Shakespeare may well have known Derricke's work which, aside from Holinshed's sections on Ireland in the *Chronicles* (1577), was the only description of Ireland readily available to English readers.
- 55 As Robin Headlam Wells noted, Menenius's version of the Belly Fable is unlike other tellings in that it imagines merely a one-way flow of nourishment to the extremities; whereas the fable is usually about the mutual benefit of health in all parts of the body: the importance to the belly of what the extremities do for it (Wells 2000a, 417).
- 56 *Pericles* has a complicated textual history, usefully outlined by Gabriel Egan who considered it in the context of Shakespeare as a collaborative writer. Egan noted that *Pericles* belongs in a particularly disreputable group of plays (*The London Prodigal*, *Sir John Oldcastle*, *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, *Thomas Lord Cromwell*, *The Puritan*, and *Locrine*) that were added to the 1664 issue of the third Shakespeare Folio. The play was

- printed in quarto in 1609 with a title page claiming it was by William Shakespeare but the same can be said for others in its disreputable group. Overwhelming evidence indicates that the play was the result of a collaboration in 1607 between Shakespeare and George Wilkins, the case for which has been expertly summarized by Brian Vickers and comprehensively laid out by MacDonald P. Jackson (Egan forthcoming in 2007). The editors of the Oxford edition of the Complete Works claimed that Wilkins was probably responsible for the first 9 scenes of the play, including scene 4 featuring the starving people of Tarsus (Wells et al. 1987, 130) but, as Egan pointed out, it is not clear how dramatists made collaborative plays (Egan forthcoming in 2007), and this scene merits close analysis in order to establish how it corresponds to and deviates from the scenes involving hungry citizens authored by Shakespeare in *Sir Thomas More* and *Coriolanus* and how it relates in general to the play's engagement with food and feeding.
- 57 As we saw in chapter 2, this occurs also when Lady Macbeth visits Duncan's guards and "drugs their possets" (2.2.6), thus facilitating his murder.
- 58 Lady Macbeth is also anticipated when Claudius considers the irrevocability of his sin: "What if this cursèd hand / Were thicker than itself with brother's blood, / Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens / To wash it white as snow?" (3.3.43–6), although the notion that a huge amount of water will not wash away a stain is proverbial, as is the phrase 'as white as snow' (Tilley 1950, W85, S591).
- 59 Shakespeare refers to the pelican in three plays: *King Lear*, *Richard 2*, and *Hamlet*, and it is mentioned only once in each. In *King Lear* Goneril and Regan are represented as "pelican daughters" by Lear (*The History of King Lear*, 11.68); in 2.1 of *Richard 2* John of Gaunt, railing on Richard, declares "Oh spare me not my brothers Edwards sonne, / For that I was his father Edwards sonne, / That bloud already like the Pelican, / Hast thou tapt out and drunkenly carowst" (2.1.125–8). Later, in a possible reference to the pelican, Bolingbroke, having received news that his order to kill Richard has been carried out, expresses his regret that he should receive sustenance from blood and so benefit from murder: "Lords, I protest my soule is full of woe, / That blood should sprinkle me to make me grow" (5.6.45–6). Only in *Hamlet* is the pelican depicted in a positive light.
- 60 As Hibbard noted, according to Thomas Nashe "no iron will pierce" the crocodile's skin (*Have With you to Saffron-Walden*, iii.96). A twelfth-century Bestiary reinforces this view: "So great is the hardness of its skin that no blow can hurt a crocodile, not even if hefty stones are bounced on its back" (Anon 1954, 49). Harold Jenkins also glossed eisel as vinegar but did not mention the crocodile, only that "The absurdity of the ranting match has troubled the critics. But we must not forget that the lady is dead" (Shakespeare 1982a, 392n270–9).
- 61 A connection with Christ was also made by Joseph Hunter who noted that the word "occurs often in a sense of which *acetum* is the best representative, associated with verjuice and vinegar. It is a term used for one ingredient of the bitter potion given to our Saviour on the cross, about the composition of which the commentators are divided" (Hunter 1845, 263).
- 62 Othello rebukes Desdemona's grief: "O, devil, devil! / If that the earth could teem with woman's tears, / Each drop she falls would prove a crocodile (4.1.244–6), and in *The Faerie Queene* the false Duessa, who weeps for the Knight of Holiness, is described as "a cruell craftie Crocodile / Which in false grieffe hyding his harmefull guile" swallows its pitting victim (1.5.184–5).

- 63 See also Anon 1954, 50.
- 64 As Harold Jenkins noted, Gertrude's comment in the final scene that he is "fat and scant of breath" probably suggests that he is sweaty or out of condition (Shakespeare 1982a, 568–9) but even if Shakespeare were suggesting Hamlet is fat (and we should remember that Polonius mentioned his 'fasting' in 2.2.148). In fact, that would not necessarily mean he enjoys food, it might suggest the opposite.
- 65 Bullough merely noted that "the mood" of the play "has something in common with those of *Troilus and Cressida*, *Hamlet*, *Lear* and *Coriolanus* . . ." (Bullough 1973b, 235).
- 66 Jowett noted that oil is referred to as "the enemy of poison" in Middleton's *The Changeling* (Shakespeare & Middleton 2004, 200n131).
- 67 In *King Lear*, the apparently mad Edgar as Poor Tom drinks "the green mantle of the standing pool" (*The History of King Lear*, 11.121).
- 68 The eating of raw meat is commonly thought of as an indication of barbarity, although Claude Levi Strauss noted that myths may contrast natural transformations (fresh meat into carrion) with cultural transformations (raw meat into cooked meat) without necessarily privileging the latter (Levi–Strauss 1983, 134–43).



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