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8. Spaniards, Cannibals, and the Eucharist in the New World

Rebecca Earle

“What temperance or docility can you expect from men who devote themselves to every sort of excess and shameful weakness, and who eat human flesh?”¹

A recurrent feature of Spanish colonial discourse in the early modern era is the lament that Amerindians from Florida to Patagonia suffered from two grave defects: they were hopeless drunks and they were prone to cannibalism. Examples of such allegations are legion. Drunkenness, insisted one seventeenth-century writer, “is such a common vice among Indians, that you scarcely find a single one who having some wine or *chicha* [maize beer], which is what they usually drink, does not get drunk.”² “Wine,” wrote the sixteenth-century chronicler Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, is “the thing they esteem most.”³ The Spanish Council of the Indies summed the situation up at the end of the sixteenth century: “all Indians are inclined to vice and drunkenness and to being idle, never applying themselves voluntarily to any sort of work whatsoever.”⁴ Colonial complaints about drunkenness were unrelenting throughout the colonial

¹ Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, *Demócrates segundo o De las justas causas de la guerra contra los indios*, ed. and trans. Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, 21 (1892), 309.

² Alonso de la Peña Montenegro, *Itinerario para parrochos de indios en que se tratan las materias mas particulares, tocantes a ellos, para su buena administración* (Madrid, 1668), 202.

³ Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, *Historia general y natural de las Indias*, ed. Juan Pérez de Tudela Bueso, vol. 2 (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1959 [1535-1557]), 198.

⁴ Consulta del consejo de las indias sobre los servicios personales de los indios, 1596, *Colección de documentos para la historia de la formación social de Hispanoamérica, 1493-1810*, ed. Richard Konetzke, vol. II (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1953), 45.

era, and came to form a standard element of post-colonial creole discourse as well.⁵

Drunkenness, such comments make clear, was considered by settlers to be a characteristic indigenous vice.

In addition, from Columbus's arrival in the Caribbean in 1492, European colonists and explorers consistently associated cannibalism with the new world. As many scholars have shown, Columbus at first vacillated as to whether the peoples he encountered in the West Indies were civilized subjects of the Great Khan or instead man-eating cynocephali, but a consensus quickly formed that the newly discovered lands were a zone of anthropophagi. The association between cannibalism and the Caribbean was particularly strong; Amerigo Vespucci reported matter-of-factly in 1503 that the island peoples of the Caribbean "slaughter those who are captured, and the victors eat the vanquished; for human flesh is an ordinary article of food among them," and for centuries the term "Carib" was practically synonymous with cannibal.⁶ Nonetheless, cannibalism was believed to extend across the hemisphere. Chroniclers of all regions reported carefully on whether particular groups did or did not eat human flesh, and the

⁵ For an overview see Rebecca Earle, "Indians and Drunkenness in Spanish America," *Cultures of Intoxication*, ed. Phil Withington and Angela McShane, *Past & Present Supplement 9* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁶ Amerigo Vespucci, "Letter on his Third Voyage to Lorenzo Pietro Francesco di Medici," 1503, *The Letters of Amerigo Vespucci and Other Documents Illustrative of his Career*, ed. Clements R. Markham (London, 1894), 6 (quote); Christopher Columbus, *Diary of the First Voyage*, 17 Dec. 1492, 13 Jan. 1493, and "Carta del Almirante a los reyes católicos," both in *Los cuatro viajes del almirante y su testamento*, ed. Ignacio Anzoátegui (Madrid: Espasa, 1971), 92, 127, 173; Peter Martyr D'Anghera, *De Orbe Novo: The Eight Decades of Peter Martyr D'Anghera*, trans. Francis Augustus MacNutt, 2 vols. (New York, 1912), decade 2, book 1, decade 3 book 5; Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The True History of the Conquest of New Spain*, c. 1568, trans. Alfred Percival Maudslay, 5 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), vol. I, 186, 196, vol. IV, 189, vol. V, 15, 263; Sebastián de Covarrubias, *Parte primera del tesoro de la lengua castellana, or española* (Madrid, 1674), 51.

fear of being eaten permeates many conquest narratives. The expectation of meeting cannibals was such that when a party of Spaniards captured in Patagonia were prodded by their captors the Spaniards immediately assumed “that they wanted to eat them, and wished to inform themselves about the taste of their flesh and what they were like inside.”⁷ The association between the Indies and cannibalism was immortalized in popular prints, theatrical works such as *The Tempest*, and the very word “cannibal.”⁸ (See Image 1.) “From the discovery,” writes Carlos Jáuregui in his authoritative cultural history of the new world cannibal, “Europeans found anthropophagites everywhere, creating a sort of semantic affinity between cannibalism and America.”⁹ In short, it is clear that for many colonists and colonial writers, drunkenness and cannibalism, like sodomy, stupidity, and general incivility, were part of a spectrum of distinctive behaviors associated with

⁷ Fernández de Oviedo, *Historia general y natural de las Indias*, vol. II, 246 (quote), 254. Or see Martín Fernández de Enciso, *Suma de geographía que trata de todas las partes y provincias del mundo: en especial de las Indias*, (Seville, 1530), li, lii, liii; Nicolás Federman, *Historia indiana*, trans. Juan Friede (Madrid: Aro-Artes Gráficas, 1958 [1557]), 63; Francisco López de Gómara, *Historia general de las Indias* (Barcelona: Linkgua, 2006 [1552]), 99, 135, 138, 140, 166, 222; Kelly Watson, *Insatiable Appetites: Imperial Encounters with Cannibals in the North Atlantic World* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 61.

⁸ The Dominican priest Bartolomé de las Casas thus complained that despite the abundant evidence to the contrary “some believe that eating human flesh had its origin in these lands.” Bartolomé de las Casas, *Apologética histórica sumaria*, c. 1550, *Obras escogidas*, vol. IV (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1958), 152; Carlos Jáuregui, “‘El plato más sabroso’: Eucaristía, plagio diabólico, y la traducción criolla del caníbal,” *Colonial Latin American Review*, 12, no. 2 (2003), 207. For an excellent analysis of visual representations see Yobenj Aucardo Chicangana-Bayona, *Imágenes de caníbales y salvajes del Nuevo Mundo: De lo maravilloso medieval a lo exótico colonial, siglos XV-XVII* (Bogotá: Editorial Universidad del Rosario, 2013).

⁹ Carlos Jáuregui, *Canibalia: Canibalismo, calibanismo, antropofagia cultural y consumo en América Latina* (Madrid: Vervuert, 2008), 14.

Amerindians, which showed them to be quite different from, and almost certainly inferior to, their colonizers.

[Insert Image 8.1. “Early German woodcut of a New World scene,” 1505, Spencer Collection, The New York Public Library. *Courtesy of the New York Public Library.*]

Many of the interpretative routes we can follow to explain this web of associations are by now clearly marked. It is evident, to begin with, that the claim that Indians were cannibals formed part of a larger European dismissal of Amerindians as unfit for self-government, which itself drew on longstanding European traditions of locating aberrant behavior in distant or mythical locations. The pioneering research of scholars such as William Arens and Peter Hulme has shown that the discovery of cannibals in the new world cannot be separated from the process of colonization that brought Europeans to the Indies in the first place.¹⁰ Cannibals, in a sense, were a necessary part of colonial space. As Gareth Griffiths put it, “for whites engaged in the activity of ‘conquest’ the dominant sign of the Indian is that of the cannibal.”¹¹ Many other scholars have similarly linked charges of both cannibalism and drunkenness to wider dismissals

¹⁰ William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (London: Methuen, 1986); Philip Boucher, *Cannibal Encounters: Europeans and Island Caribs, 1492-1763* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1992); Michael Palencia-Roth, “The Cannibal Law of 1503,” *Early Images of the Americas*, ed. J. Williams and R. Lewis (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993); Frank Lestringant, *Cannibals: The Discovery and Representation of the Cannibal from Columbus to Jules Verne*, trans. Rosemary Morris (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*, ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹¹ Gareth Griffiths, “The Myth of Authenticity,” *De-Scribing Empire: Postcolonialism and Textuality*, ed. Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 72.

of indigenous rationality, and to the justification of colonial violence.¹² Such research also informs a related body of scholarship that considers whether European colonial discourse, whatever its motivation, accurately captured any aspect of indigenous culture. Perhaps, as some scholars suggest, Spanish sightings of cannibals or drunks are no different from Columbus's implausible claims that he engaged in meaningful communication with the "Indians" he encountered, which have been so effectively dissected by Stephen Greenblatt. New world cannibalism was from this perspective a colonial mirage, not a meaningful indigenous practice.¹³ Other scholars maintain that we can glimpse aspects of the indigenous experience through the colonial wrappings. Neil Whitehead for example used the German sailor Hans Staden's 1557 account of his captivity among the Tupinamba to illuminate the meaning of Tupinamba cannibalism. Whitehead nonetheless attracted sharp criticism for his use of this colonial source.¹⁴

¹² See, in addition to the sources in note 10, Anthony Pagden, "Identity Formation in Spanish America," *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, ed. Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 75; Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); Federico Garza Carvajal, *Vir. Perceptions of Manliness in Andalucía and Mexico, 1561-1699* (Amsterdam: Amsterdamse Historische Reeks, 2000), 166.

¹³ Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991). See also William Taylor, *Drinking, Homicide and Rebellion in Colonial Mexican Villages* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979).

¹⁴ Neil Whitehead, "Hans Staden and the Cultural Politics of Cannibalism," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 80, no. 4 (2000); Hans Staden, *Hans Staden's True History: An Account of Cannibal Captivity in Brazil*, ed. and trans. Neil Whitehead and Michael Harbsmeier (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008). For the debate between Whitehead and Michaela Schmölz-Häberlein and Mark Häberlein in *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 81, nos. 3-4 (2001). See also Fernando Santos-Granero, *Vital Enemies: Slavery, Predation and the Amerindian Political Economy of Life* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009).

Likewise, scholars for decades have examined the repeated Spanish claim that Amerindians were unable to resist the lure of alcohol, and debated whether it simply reflects a European failure to understand the very different Amerindian ideas of moderation and the purpose of alcohol, or whether it instead reveals the reality of a demoralized indigenous society rent asunder by colonialism.¹⁵ A rich scholarship, in short, situates accusations of drunkenness and cannibalism within a broader analysis of Spanish justifications for colonization, and highlights the dilemmas scholars must confront as they try to disentangle Spanish rhetoric from indigenous experience.

There is, however, another context into which we can place early modern discussions of drunkenness and cannibalism: the Christian sacrament of communion. Communion after all entailed the (mediated) consumption of wine and the (mystical) ingestion of divine-made-human flesh. The centrality of the Eucharist to Reformation debates about Christian doctrine is reflected in the colonial church's sustained focus on this sacrament. It is clear that the Mass was not merely one of many Iberian practices that colonial actors aimed to transfer to the Indies. It was a fundamental element of early modern Catholic identity and belief. Many scholars have explored the varied efforts by missionaries to translate this sacrament to the Indies. These efforts were never separate from the hierarchies that structured life in the colonial world. Discussion of

¹⁵ Charles Gibson, *The Aztecs under Spanish Rule: A History of the Indians of the Valley of Mexico, 1519-1810* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964), 7, 150, 409; William Madsen and Claudia Madsen, "The Cultural Structure of Mexican Drinking Behaviour," *Contemporary Cultures and Societies of Latin America*, ed. Dwight Heath (New York: Waveland Press, 1974), 439; Taylor, *Drinking, Homicide and Rebellion*; Serge Gruzinski, *The Conquest of Mexico: the Incorporation of Indian Societies into the Western World, 16th-18th Centuries* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 203; Peter Mancall, *Deadly Medicine: Indians and Alcohol in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Christine Eber, *Women and Alcohol in a Highland Maya Town* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001).

whether indigenous people could comprehend the mysteries of transubstantiation informed, and was informed by, Amerindians' alleged irrationality and inability to govern themselves. Celebrations of Corpus Christi marked out Amerindians as incomplete converts even as they provided spaces for indigenous participants to insist on their status as members of the communion of saints. This research has also stressed the intrinsic connections between the Eucharist and other forms of literal or metaphorical consumption, including cannibalism. Corpus Christi, notes Carolyn Dean, was “*semiophagous*: it was a feast that dined on signs of difference, gaining sustenance for its triumph from the Andean subaltern. From the moment of its instigation the ravenous festival fed on the colonized.”¹⁶ To understand the meaning of indigenous drunkenness and cannibalism within Spanish colonial discourse we therefore need to consider not only their relation to broad rhetorics of colonial power but also to the very specific early modern debates about this most sacred of Catholic sacraments. By charting the shifting relationship between bread and wine, and flesh and blood we gain a richer understanding of the Spanish colonial imagination, and what it meant when settlers accused Amerindians of being drunkards, or cannibals. Building on this rich and imaginative body of work, this chapter argues

¹⁶ See in particular Sabine MacCormack, *Religion in the Andes: Vision and Imagination in Early Colonial Peru* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Carolyn Dean, *Inka Bodies and the Body of Christ: Corpus Christi in Colonial Cuzco, Peru* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 1 (quote); Jáuregui, ““El plato más sabroso””; Osvaldo Pardo, *The Origins of Mexican Catholicism: Nahua Rituals and Christian Sacraments in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); Jaime Lara, *Christian Texts for Aztecs: Art and Liturgy in Colonial Mexico* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008). See also Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Christopher Elwood, *The Body Broken: The Calvinist Doctrine of the Eucharist and the Symbolization of Power in Sixteenth Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

that cannibalism highlights a central feature of all colonial regimes—what Kate Teltscher has described as “a fundamental sense of insecurity which can rarely be allowed direct expression, but which keeps surfacing to be repeatedly allayed.”¹⁷

The chapter first explains the central role that wheat bread and wine occupied within Spanish religious and dietary regimes, and how these substances marked out the distance separating Spaniard from Amerindian. For Spanish Catholics, bread and wine represented both the essence of their Catholic identity and the sine qua non of bodily health. The consumption of earthly bread and wine ensured corporeal health, while the heavenly bread and wine of the mass ensured that of the soul. Amerindians, in contrast, were declared incapable of consuming these healthy, necessary substances appropriately. Indeed, many priests refused to administer communion to Amerindians on the grounds that their continual drunkenness rendered them ineligible. Far from providing spiritual succor, alcohol in the hands of Amerindians brought about their exclusion from the Catholic polity. Beyond this, many writers alleged that the terrible mortality that decimated indigenous communities across the hemisphere after the advent of colonialism was due in part to the failure of Amerindians to drink in moderation. The same wine that ensured health in the Spanish body proved lethal to the indigenous body. Worse, while Catholics worshipfully received the body of Jesus Christ made flesh in a communion wafer, Amerindians indulged in the terrible sin of earthly cannibalism. The distance that separated Amerindian from Spaniard could thus be measured precisely in the difference between a drunken cannibal and a sober Catholic. These differences however were fragile, and the distance perhaps

¹⁷ Kate Teltscher, *India Inscribed: European and British Writing on India 1600-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 151.

not as great as colonists might desire. The chapter's concluding section considers the colonial anxieties dogging such attempts at differentiation.

Sober Catholics and Drunken Idolaters

*"Wherever this wine is made there is hidden idolatry."*¹⁸

We need to begin with the Spanish diet, for food, as much as religion, lies at the heart of early modern discussions of drunkenness and cannibalism. Notwithstanding the variety of foods consumed in early modern Iberia, there was consensus on the preferred diet. A perfect meal would contain wheat bread and red wine, along with some fresh lamb or other familiar meat seasoned with olive oil and vinegar, and perhaps accompanied by a bit of salad, some olives, or a fig.¹⁹ These were the things that settlers missed in the new world; all the pineapples and chocolate in the world could never make up for their absence. Colonists across the Indies waxed lyrical on the foodstuffs that made up the ideal Iberian meal. From Mexico the Spanish doctor Francisco Hernández wrote that wheat was a "gift from Mother Nature as precious as health itself."²⁰ The grape vine was the "most beneficial and necessary plant that the Spanish brought and planted in this New World," in the view of Jesuit writer Bernabé Cobo.²¹ Meat, in turn, was

¹⁸ Pedro Sánchez de Aguilar, "Informe contra los idólatras de Yucatán," 1613, *Hechicerías e idolatrías del México antiguo*, ed. Pilar Máynez (Mexico City: Cien de México, 2008), 185.

¹⁹ Rebecca Earle, *The Body of the Conquistador: Food, Race and the Colonial Experience in Spanish America, 1492-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 54-83.

²⁰ Francisco Hernández, *The Mexican Treasury: The Writings of Dr. Francisco Hernández*, ed. and trans. Simon Varey, Rafael Chabrán and Cynthia Chamberlain (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 111.

²¹ Bernabé Cobo, *Historia del Nuevo Mundo*, 1653, *Obras*, ed. Francisco Mateos, vol. I (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1956), 391.

absolutely vital. “Spanish people . . . cannot survive without the sustenance of meat,” insisted one viceroy.²² These foods were redolent of health, of civilization, and of Christianity.

That they were healthy was beyond doubt. Wheat bread and grape wine, in particular, were regarded as exceptionally nourishing and digestible.²³ Early modern Spanish texts are full of encomia to wine, which was praised for its healthful, medicinal effects, provided it was drunk in moderation. Immoderate consumption came in for universal criticism—the examples of Noah and Lot were frequently cited—but most writers agreed that Spaniards were less prone to the vice of drunkenness than other Europeans, and even those most outspoken in their condemnation of drunkenness generally refrained from recommending total abstinence.²⁴ Spaniards indeed

²² Letter of Viceroy Marqués de Villmanrique to the king, Mexico, 20 July 1587, Audiencia de México 21, N. 19, fol. 10, Archivo General de Indias, Seville (henceforth AGI).

²³ Luis Lobera de Avila, *Vergel de sanidad que por otro nombre se llamaba banquete de caballeros y orden de vivir* (Alcalá de Henares, 1542), xxr; Francisco Nuñez de Oria, *Regimiento y aviso de sanidad, que trata de todos los generos de alimentos y del regimiento della* (Medina del Campo, 1586), 61r-73v; Carmen Peña and Fernando Girón, *La prevención de la enfermedad en la España bajo medieval* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2006), 196; Ken Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 67.

²⁴ Cristóbal de Villalón, *El scholástico*, 1538-1541, ed. José Miguel Martínez Torrejón (Barcelona: Crítica, 1997), 161-4; Pedro Mexía, *Silva de varia lección*, ed. Antonio Castro, vol. II (Madrid: Cátedra, 1989 [1540]), 101-10; Pedro de Mercado, *Diálogos de philosophia natural y moral* (Granada, 1574), dialogue 4; José de Acosta, *De procuranda indorum salute*, trans. L. Pereña, V. Abril, C. Baciero, A. García, D. Ramos, J. Barrientos and F. Maseda, vol. I (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1984 [1588]), 569; Juan de Torres, *Philosophía moral de príncipes para su buena criança y gobierno: y para personas de todo estado* (Burgos, 1596), 459-501; Benito de Peñaloza y Mondragón, *Libro de las cinco excelencias del español que despueblan a España para su mayor potencia y dilatición* (Pamplona, 1629), 141-4; Fernando de Avendaño, *Sermones de los misterios de nuestra santa fe católica, en lengua castellana y la general del inca, impugnandose los errores particulares que los indios han tenido* (Lima, 1648), 49.

boasted of their moderation, which they regarded as proverbial.²⁵ Far from being a menace to health, wine was practically a medical necessity. “To deprive an old man or a youth of a little wine,” observed one colonial writer, “is to send him straight to the grave.”²⁶

More importantly, wheat flour, like grape wine, was a symbol of Christianity itself. These were the substances that through the mystery of the mass were transformed into the very body and blood of Jesus Christ. Indeed, they were the only substances capable of undergoing this transformation. From the Middle Ages church doctrine required that communion be celebrated using only wheat bread and grape wine.²⁷ These substances were therefore essential to the execution of the most important of Catholic mysteries. Indeed, they were in some ways fungible, since, as the Council of Trent determined, Christ was fully present in both components of the mass.²⁸ In sum, bread and wine represented for Spaniards both the idealized, healthful diet and the essence of Christianity, in their potential to become the very body and blood of Christ.

Amerindians, in contrast, appeared to Spaniards to possess an entirely dysfunctional relationship to these basic foods. Everything was the reverse of what it should be. “Everyone in this province of New Spain, and even in the neighboring provinces, eats human flesh and

²⁵ Esteban de Salazar, *Veinte discursos sobre el credo, en declaración de nuestra sancta fe catholica, y doctrina chrisitina muy necesarios a todos los fieles en este tiempo* (Seville, 1586), 200; Miguel Herrero García, *Ideas de los españoles del siglo XVII* (Madrid: Gredos, 1966), 59-61; Taylor, *Drinking, Homicide and Rebellion*, 41; Earle, “Indians and Drunkenness.”

²⁶ Letter of Tomás López Medel, 25 March 1551, Audiencia de Guatemala 9A, R. 18, N. 77, fol. 1, AGI.

²⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, third part, question 74; Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 37-49.

²⁸ Lee Palmer Wandel, *The Eucharist in the Reformation: Incarnation and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 216, 222-3; Jerónimo de Ripalda, *Doctrina cristiana del P. Jerónimo de Ripalda e intento bibliográfico de la misma, años 1591-1900*, ed. Juan Sánchez (Madrid: Imprenta Alemana, 1909), 28.

esteems it above all other foods,” complained one sixteenth century writer, adding that “they are commonly sodomites, as I have said, and drink excessively.”²⁹ As regards alcohol, far from being healthful as it was for Spaniards, wine was declared positively lethal for Amerindians. Many writers argued that even a small amount of alcohol was dangerous to the indigenous body. Giving alcohol to Indians “has the effect of killing them off,” insisted a Mexican viceroy.³⁰ Everyone knows that “this drink destroys their health and kills them,” observed another.³¹ In the view of many writers, overconsumption of alcohol was behind the terrible mortality afflicting the indigenous population from the advent of colonialism.³² Alcohol, medicinal for Spaniards, was a poison for Indians. This conviction undermined the widely-expressed hope that Amerindians would adopt a European diet, in ways that point to the fundamental insecurities shaping early modern colonialisms, a matter to which we will return.³³

²⁹ Conquistador Anónimo, “Relación de algunas cosas de la Nueva España,” *Colección de documentos para la historia de México*, ed. Joaquín García Icazbalceta, vol. I (Mexico City, 1858), 398.

³⁰ Letter of Viceroy Marqués de Villmanrique to the king, fols. 4, 6, 18.

³¹ Letter of Viceroy Conde de Monterrey to the king, Mexico, 25 April 1598, Audiencia de Mexico 24, no. 8, fol. 14, AGI.

³² Juan de la Cruz, *Doctrina christiana en la lengua guasteca con la lengua castellana . . . compuesta por yndustria de un frayle de la orden del glorioso Sanct Augustin* (Mexico City, 1571), 19; Acosta, *De procuranda*, vol. I, 555; Alonso de Ovalle, *Histórica relación del Reyno de Chile* (Santiago: Instituto de Literatura Chilena, 1969 [1646]), 24; Juan de Solórzano Pereira, *Política indiana*, vol. I (Madrid, 1736 [1647]), 190; Avendaño, *Sermones*, 49-51; Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón, *Tratado de las supersticiones y costumbres gentílicas que hoy viven entre los indios naturales de esta Nueva España*, trat. 3, ch. 1, <<http://tinyurl.com/3zd8r4>> [accessed September 1, 2016]; Earle, *The Body of the Conquistador*, 167-74.

³³ Earle, *The Body of the Conquistador*.

Moreover, while the Christian mass involved sober and moderate consumption of wine, indigenous religious festivals were [condemned as little more than](#) drunken orgies. ~~As-t~~The sixteenth-century chronicler Juan Rodríguez Freyle ~~put it,~~[for instance alleged that](#) such events were nothing more than “great drinking sprees.”³⁴ Indeed, getting drunk was, in the [words-view](#) of the Jesuit priest José de Acosta, “their principal cult and religion.”³⁵ For Europeans, Amerindian drinking led inevitably to drunkenness and idolatry, to which indigenous people were all believed to be prone in the first place. Colonial prohibitions on the sale of alcohol to Amerindians often stipulated that not only was alcohol dangerous to indigenous health, but also that it opened the door to idolatry. Drunkenness was [thus](#), in the [view-words](#) of another Jesuit, “the ancient root of idolatry.”³⁶ For these reasons settlers should under no circumstances sell wine (let alone spirits) to Indians “because of the serious harm that ensues to both their bodies

³⁴ Juan Rodríguez Freyle, *Conquista y descubrimiento del Nuevo Reino de Granada*, 1636 (Bogotá, 1890), 10.

³⁵ Acosta, *De procuranda*, vol. I, 551 (quote), 563, 573. [It is impossible to generalise about the diverse roles that alcohol, and intoxication, in fact played in indigenous religious practices. For studies examining both the distant and more recent past see for instance John Kennedy, ‘Teguino Complex: The Role of Beer in Tarahumara Culture’, *American Anthropologist* 65:3 \(1963\); Taylor, *Drinking, Homicide and Rebellion*; Catherine Allen, *The Hold Life Has: Coca and Cultural Identity in an Andean Community* \(Washington: Smithsonian Books, 1988\); M.J. Weismantel, ‘Maize Beer and Andean Social Transformations: Drunken Indians, Bread Babies and Chosen Women’, *MLN* 106 \(1991\); .Thomas Cummins, *Toasts with the Inca: Andean Abstraction and Colonial Images on Quero Vessels* \(Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002\); and Eber, *Women and Alcohol*.](#)

³⁶ Pedro José de Arriaga, *Extirpación de la idolatría del Piru*, 1621, in *Crónicas peruanas del interés indígena*, ed. Francisco Esteve Barba (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1968), 239 (quote), 258; Anon, “Relación de las costumbres antiguas de los naturales del Pirú,” c. 1550, *Crónicas peruanas del interés indígena*, 174, 177; Auto of Marquez de Mancera, Lima, 28 July 1646, at front of Francisco de Avila, *Tratado de los evangelios que nuestra madre propone en todo el año* ([Lima], [1648]); Solórzano Pereira, *Política indiana*, vol. I, 191.

and souls.”³⁷ For Amerindians, drinking was fundamentally incompatible with Christianity and corporeal well-being, while for Spaniards it was a source of physical and spiritual health.

This unhealthy relationship to alcohol led a number of colonial writers to conclude that Amerindians should be excluded from taking communion altogether. Catholic doctrine prohibited administering the sacrament to individuals who attempted to receive communion while drunk, and it seems that many priests believed that Amerindians were so often drunk that they should be excluded as a matter of course.³⁸ Instead of treating the sacrament with respect, Indians just used it as an occasion to get drunk: “often on the very day that you take communion you get drunk just as you used to do before you became Christians,” one confessional manual complained.³⁹ Those who opposed this exclusionary practice insisted that as communion was necessary for salvation, to deny it to Amerindians was to deny them salvation. An inability to

³⁷ Miguel de Olabarrieta Medrano, *Recuerdo de las obligaciones del ministerio apostólico en la cura de las almas* (Lima, 1717), 106.

³⁸ Mónica Patricia Martini, *El indio y los sacramentos en Hispanoamérica: Circunstancias adversas y malas interpretaciones* (Buenos Aires: CONICET, 1993), 175-99; Pardo, *The Origins of Mexican Catholicism*, 131-58. See also Diego Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e islas de la Tierra Firme*, ed. Angel Garibay, vol. I (Mexico City: Porrúa, 1967 [1570]) 202, 272; Diego Valadés, *Retórica cristiana*, ed. Esteban Palomera, Alfonso Castro Pallares and Tarsicio Herrera Zapién (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1989 [1579]), 423-47; Acosta, *De procuranda*, vol. II, 401, 413; Juan Baptista, *Advertencias para los confesores de los naturales* (Sanctiago Tlatilulco, 1600), 56-9; Sánchez de Aguilar, “Informe contra los idólatras de Yucatán,” 186; Juan de Torquemada, *Monarchia yndiana*, vol. III (Seville, 1615), 213-14; Peña Montenegro, *Itinerario para parrochos*, 277-8, 440, 446; Olabarrieta Medrano, *Recuerdo de las obligaciones del ministerio apostólico*, 46-55.

³⁹ Pedro de Feria, *Doctrina christiana en lengua castellana y çapoteca* (Mexico City, 1567), 86 (quote); Bartolomé de Alva, *A Guide to Confession Large and Small in the Mexican Language, 1634*, ed. Barry Sell and John F. Schwaller (Norman: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 92-3, 96-7, 120, 123, 128-9.

consume alcohol appropriately thus resulted in the exclusion of Amerindians from the Christian community.⁴⁰ For instance, the Catholic Council of Lima, which met in the mid-sixteenth century to implement the resolutions of the Council of Trent, found it difficult to reach a decision about the indigenous capacity to engage in this most sacred ritual. The First Council, meeting from 1552, restricted communion to those approved by bishops and a few others. The Second Council determined that Amerindians should not receive the sacrament until they had a firmer grasp of the faith and had abandoned their bad habits, which included drunkenness. Communion was a “delicacy” not suited to them, in the Council’s view.⁴¹ In the 1580s, the Third Council reversed this position, and urged priests to encourage Amerindians to take communion. Overall, the colonial church was uncertain whether Amerindians should be permitted to take communion, drunkenness being a frequently cited obstacle.

The problematic relationship between Amerindians and the Eucharist extended beyond such concerns about drunkenness. Many colonial writers were horrified to perceive parallels between indigenous cannibalism and the sacrament of communion. As Carlos Jáuregui and Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra have shown, the fact that prior to the arrival of Europeans a number of indigenous groups engaged in ritual cannibalism was widely seen as demonically-inspired imitation intended to mock the Eucharist.⁴² In discussing Mexica sacrifice, with its associated cannibalism, the Dominican priest Diego Durán, for instance, drew attention to “how well this devilish ceremony counterfeits that of our holy church that commands us to receive the true body

⁴⁰ Torquemada, *Monarchia yndiana*, vol. III, 212; Peña Montenegro, *Itinerario para parrochos*, 277.

⁴¹ Acosta, *De procuranda*, vol. II, 391-9; Torquemada, *Monarchia yndiana*, vol. III, 213; Peña Montenegro, *Itinerario para parrochos*, 441.

⁴² Jáuregui, “El plato más sabroso”; Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors: Iberianizing the Atlantic, 1550-1700* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 100-4.

and blood of our lord Jesus Christ.”⁴³ Colonial writers disputed the precise origin of this horrifying similarity, which they observed not only in Mexica ritual but across the Americas. Like drunkenness, cannibalism was thus tightly linked to idolatry within colonial rhetoric. It was, as Cañizares-Esguerra observed, a key signifier of demonic activity.⁴⁴

In sum, the appropriate consumption of alcohol (in the form of grape wine) and flesh (in the form of transubstantiated wheat bread) lay at the center of the Catholic orthodoxy and sensible self-management that Spanish settlers in the new world aspired to represent, whereas Amerindians were said to be characterized by their inability to engage appropriately with this solemn activity and these healthful foods. Their defining vices served precisely to differentiate them from their Catholic colonizers. Colonial writers stressed that the coming of colonialism simultaneously brought an end to idolatry and to cannibalism, because the two were viewed as practically synonymous. And after all, as the learned jurist Juan de Solórzano y Pereira noted in a lengthy tome on colonial legislation, it was perfectly justified to conquer people who ate human flesh, were drunkards, and engaged in sodomy.⁴⁵

A Community of Cannibals

*“Do you eat the flesh of the Son and drink the blood of the Son of man?”*⁴⁶

⁴³ Jáuregui, “El plato más sabroso,” 205. For the place of cannibalism in Mexica cosmology see David Carrasco, “Cosmic Jaws: We Eat the Gods and the Gods Eat Us,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 63, no. 3 (1995); Inga Clendinnen, *Aztecs: An Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁴⁴ Cañizares Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors*, 88-95.

⁴⁵ Solórzano Pereira, *Política indiana*, vol. I, 189-90.

⁴⁶ Acosta, *De procuranda*, vol. II, 403.

And yet, the boundaries created by colonialism are never so stable as to allow sharp demarcation between colonizers and colonized, or between the faithful and those beyond redemption.⁴⁷ As Marcy Norton has observed, settlers in the Indies were never certain that they could “maintain a Christian and European identity in the colonial milieu.”⁴⁸ Nor was there consensus that Amerindians were incommensurably, irredeemably, distinct from Europeans. After all, bringing Christianity to the Indies was the central justification of Spain’s colonial endeavor, and the idea that Amerindians were “incompetent” Christians was troubling both doctrinally and morally.⁴⁹ Colonial rhetoric could not fail to reflect such anxieties. Spaniards debated the indigenous aptitude for Christianity; many argued that Amerindians had precisely the same capacity for faith as did Europeans. The very discourse of cannibalism that seemed to mark so clearly the differences between Spaniards and Indians in fact demonstrates the diaphanous nature of all such divisions, for it was never quite as evident as Spanish settlers might have desired whether they were really all that different from cannibals.

Despite the rhetorical efforts to situate cannibalism solely in the Indies, settlers were uncomfortably aware that Europe too had its cannibals. Although an older scholarship once claimed that cannibalism did not occur “in any culturally significant way” in Europe, in fact cannibalism was present in many different cultural arenas; in literature, folklore, and, of course,

⁴⁷ Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” *October*, no. 28 (1984); Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Earle, *The Body of the Conquistador*.

⁴⁸ Marcy Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures: A History of Tobacco and Chocolate in the Atlantic World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 131.

⁴⁹ The centrality of evangelization to the colonial endeavor is stressed in *Recopilación de leyes de los reynos de las Indias*, vol. I (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1943 [1791]), 1-10.

the mass, where “it was constantly discussed and represented.”⁵⁰ Nor was its presence solely symbolic. There is ample evidence that Europeans engaged in cannibalism in a variety of contexts. Indeed, Spanish texts discussed explicitly the circumstances under which it was acceptable for Christians to eat human flesh, which included both cases of extreme hunger, and also medical need. Stories of cannibalism during sieges and famines were told across Europe.⁵¹ The consumption of human body parts was moreover an established tool within academic and folk medicine. As the Spanish doctor Francisco Nuñez de Oria noted, Europeans consumed “mummia, which is the flesh of dead people,” and, even worse, in his opinion, drank fresh

⁵⁰ Michael Palencia-Roth, “Cannibalism and the New Man of Latin America in the 15th and 16th-Century European Imagination,” *Comparative Civilizations Review*, 12 (1985), 20 (“in any culturally”); Frank Lestringant, “Le cannibale et ses paradoxes,” *Mentalités/Mentalities*, 1, nos. 1-2 (1983), 6 (“it was constantly”); Charles Zika, “Cannibalism and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Reading the Visual Images,” *History Workshop Journal*, 44 (1997), 126.

⁵¹ Francisco de Vitoria, “On Self-Restraint,” 1537, *Political Writings*, ed. Anthony Pagden and Jeremy Lawrence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 207-12; Juan Focher and Diego Valadés, *Itinerario del misionero en América*, 1574, ed. Antonio Eguiluz (Madrid: Librería General Victoriano Suárez, 1960), 301-19; Peña Montenegro, *Itinerario para parochos de indios*, 461; Thomas Cummins, “To Serve Man: Pre-Columbian Art, Western Discourses of Idolatry, and Cannibalism,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 42 (2002): 109-30, esp. 119-20. On Europe’s cannibals see Piero Camporesi, *Bread of Dreams: Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe*, trans. David Gentilcore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 40-1, 87; Maggie Kilgour, *From Communion to Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Lestringant, *Cannibals*; Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 17-61; Merrall Llewelyn Price, *Consuming Passions: The Uses of Cannibalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 8-11.

human blood against certain ailments.⁵² The on-going wars of religion in addition provided contemporaries with ample evidence of cannibalism's currency as a technique of revenge and terror.⁵³ The uncomfortable existence of cannibalism in Europe, and more specifically in Spain, has led scholars to argue that early modern Spaniards focused on new world cannibalism "rather than confronting head on the unthought known" of cannibalism within their own society.⁵⁴ To attribute cannibalism solely to Amerindians served as "fictional sublimation" of a historical record that resisted complete erasure.⁵⁵ "In reality," notes Tom Cummins, "eating a human body was a practice shared by Spaniards and Indians."⁵⁶

This common history is apparent at many levels within the colonial archive. Its presence far exceeds rhetorical comparisons of Spaniards to wild animals, feasting on the flesh of the innocent Amerindians, of the sort penned by Bartolomé de las Casas, as well as by Spain's European competitors, or even the vivid engravings by Theodore de Bry of conquistadors

⁵² Nuñez de Oria, *Regimiento y aviso de sanidad*, 32r (quote); Piero Camporesi, *The Incorruptible Flesh. Bodily Mutation and Mortification in Religion and Folklore*, trans. Tania Croft-Murray (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Camporesi, *Bread of Dreams*, 23, 44-6; Richard Sugg, *Mummies, Cannibals and Vampires: A History of Corpse Medicine from the Renaissance to the Victorians* (London: Routledge, 2011).

⁵³ Frank Lestringant, "Catholiques et cannibales: Le Thème du cannibalisme dans les discours protestant au temps des guerres de religion," *Pratiques et discours alimentaires à la Renaissance*, ed. Jean-Claude Margolin (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1982); Lestringant, "Le canibale et ses paradoxes." See also Jean de Léry, *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil*, trans and ed. Janet Whatley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992 [1580]).

⁵⁴ Margaret Greer, "Imperialism and Anthropophagy in Early Modern Spanish Tragedy: The Unthought Known," *Reason and its Others: Italy, Spain and the New World*, ed. David Castillo and Massimo Lollini (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2006), 291.

⁵⁵ Greer, "Imperialism and Anthropophagy," 290 (quote); Heng, *Empire of Magic*, 17-61.

⁵⁶ Cummins, "To Serve Man," 116.

retailing human flesh.⁵⁷ (See Image 2.) Much more concretely, colonial sources admitted that Spanish settlers ate both Amerindians and each other.

[Insert Image 8.2. Spaniards sell human flesh from a market-stall. Theodore de Bry, illustration in Bartolomé de las Casas, *Narratio regionum Indicarum per Hispanos quosdam deuastatarum verissima* (Francofurti: Sumptibus Theodori de Bry, & Ioannis Saurii typis, 1598).
Courtesy of the Library of Congress.]

A few examples suffice: the Franciscan friar Pedro Simón described in his early seventeenth-century chronicle how Spaniards following the conquistador Ambrosio Alfínger killed and ate their indigenous porters in Venezuela. One man ate even a penis, which Simón condemned as “disgusting and obscene.” He however noted that if one was suffering great hunger it was acceptable to eat those already dead.⁵⁸ The German soldier Felipe von Hutten recounted that, “contrary to nature,” another “Christian” in Venezuela had “cooked part of a boy together with some vegetables.”⁵⁹ The humanist Peter Martyr’s second-hand account of the early exploration and conquest of the Americas likewise reported a number of incidents of Europeans

⁵⁷ Bartolomé de las Casas, *Breve relación de la destrucción de las Indias Occidentales* (Philadelphia, 1821 [1542]), 109; Theodore de Bry, illustrations to Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Narratio Regionum indicarum per Hispanos Quosdam devastatarum verissima* (Frankfurt, 1598); Tom Conley, “De Bry’s Las Casas” and Georges Baudot, “Amerindian Image and Utopian Project: Motolinía and Millenarian Discourse,” both in *Amerindian Images and the Legacy of Columbus*, ed. René Jara and Nicholas Spadaccini (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 383.

⁵⁸ Pedro Simón, *Noticias historiales de las conquistas de Tierra Firme en las Indias Occidentales*, ed. Juan Friede, vol. I (Bogotá: Biblioteca Banco Popular, 1981 [1627]), 196-7 (quote), 199-202.

⁵⁹ Felipe de Hutten, “Diario,” *Descubrimiento y conquista de Venezuela*, ed. Joaquín Gabaldón Márquez, vol. II (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1962), 368 (quote); Fernando Pizarro y Orellana, *Varones ilustres del nuevo mundo* (Madrid, 1639), 353.

eating Amerindians.⁶⁰ Francisco López de Gómara's history of the conquest recorded not only the names of Spaniards who killed and ate Amerindians ("Diego Gomez and Juan de Ampudia, from Ajofrín") but also of Spaniards killed and eaten by their compatriots ("Hernán Darías, from Seville," "Hernando de Esquivel, from Badajoz").⁶¹

This shared history of cannibalism, which undermined the rigorous distinctions between pious Catholics and idolatrous cannibals, intruded into the very sphere in which this distinction appeared to manifest itself most strongly: the Catholic mass. The very rite that Spanish settlers viewed as the antithesis of cannibalism proved immensely problematic for colonial writers bent on differentiating Spaniards from Indians. European theological and devotional writings offered little help in distinguishing between Christian ritual and indigenous atrocity. As Merrill Llewelyn Price observes, "anxieties about cannibalism can never be completely absent in the symbolic and literal act of eating the body and drinking the blood of a sacrificial victim."⁶²

After all, the materiality of the Eucharistic miracle has for centuries been a central element of theological discourse. Many medieval accounts described communion wafers that became a small child or a hunk of raw flesh, or that bled.⁶³ Images of Christ as a mystic mill or wine press, turning his own body into the flour and wine of the mass, were popular in both

⁶⁰ Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, decade 2, book 10.

⁶¹ Gómara, *Historia general*, 104-5, 109, 251, 361. Or see Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, "Naufragios y relación de la jornada que hizo a la Florida," 1555, *Historiadores primitivos de Indias*, ed. Enrique de Vedia, vol. 1 (Madrid, 1852), 531.

⁶² Price, *Consuming Passions*, 32, 80 (quote); Elwood, *The Body Broken*, 34-41; Wandel, *The Eucharist in the Reformation*, 8, 225-7.

⁶³ Price, *Consuming Passions*.

Europe and the Americas.⁶⁴ (See Image 3.) The Reformation prompted a proliferation of questions about the mechanics of transubstantiation. Christians wanted to know how Christ's body could be present in all hosts everywhere, and whether taking communion caused Christ pain.⁶⁵ In the face of Protestant doubt, and in some cases pointed accusations of cannibalism, the Council of Trent devoted considerable energy to explicating the implications of this transformation. It stressed, for example, that all the pieces of consecrated host left over after the completion of communion contained the body of Jesus, against Luther who insisted that only those that were eaten by communicants underwent this mystical change. Tridentine texts were moreover explicit about the physical nature of the communion experience. "Let your body, Lord, which I have eaten, and your blood, which I have drunk, adhere to my viscera," runs one missal from 1570.⁶⁶

[Insert Image 8.3. Christ in the winepress, c. 1400-1410. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 3676, fol. 14r. *Courtesy of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek/Wien.*]

New world texts were no less explicit. The faithful were reminded that Jesus had instructed them to eat "his holy flesh" and drink "his most precious blood." Priests praised the

⁶⁴ Juan de la Cruz, *Doctrina christiana en la lengua guasteca*, 19; James Clifton with David Nirenberg and Linda Elaine Neagley, *Body of Christ in the Art of Europe and New Spain, 1150-1800* (Munich: Presel, 1997), 114-15, 120-3.

⁶⁵ Roberto Belarminio, *Declaración copiosa de las quatro partes mas essenciales, y necessarias de la doctrina christiana*, trans. Bartolomé Jurado Palomino (Lima, 1649), 113-22; Elwood, *The Body Broken*; Wandel, *The Eucharist in the Reformation*, 21.

⁶⁶ Wandel, *The Eucharist in the Reformation*, 217-21, 239 (quote). For a poetic example see Benito Arias Montano, *Humanae Salutis Monumenta*, ed. Benito Feliú de San Pedro (Madrid: Editorial Swan, 1984 [1571]), 282.

“great delicacy that is the body of Christ.”⁶⁷ Such ideas were carefully rendered into indigenous languages, to allow Amerindians to appreciate them fully; bilingual “doctrinas” or primers in Christian teaching scrupulously translated the central features of Catholic belief, including transubstantiation, into Zapotec, Náhuatl and a host of other tongues. Clerics did not hesitate to employ direct comparisons between unholy cannibal Indians and saintly Christians: “if those barbarians with human flesh in their mouths put their enemies to flight, what cannot a devout Christian achieve, a son of the church, a soldier in the army of Christ our Lord, carrying in his mouth the flesh of God?” asked the Jesuit Alonso de Sandoval in an evangelical treatise.⁶⁸ Spaniard and cannibal, “usually antithetical and supposedly inviolable categories,” in fact approached each other in the very ritual that supposedly distinguished most clearly between them.⁶⁹

Conclusions

*Amerindians “hunger avidly for the body of Christ.”*⁷⁰

Was eating human flesh something that set Amerindians apart from Catholics, or was it something that united them? The unstable frontiers between colonizers and colonized are revealed with striking clarity in the inability of colonial discourse to maintain a sharp distinction

⁶⁷ Anon., *Doctrina christiana en lengua española y mexicana* (Mexico City, 1550), 102; Pedro de Faria, *Doctrina christiana en lengua castellana y çapoteca* (Mexico City, 1567), 85 (first quote); Belarminio, *Declaración copiosa*, prologue; Peña Montenegro, *Itinerario para parrochos de indios*, 278-9 (second quote).

⁶⁸ Alonso de Sandoval, *De Instauranda aethiopum salute: El mundo de la esclavitud negra en América*, ed. Angel Valtierra (Bogotá: Biblioteca de la Presidencia de Colombia, 1956 [1627]), 67-8.

⁶⁹ Goldberg, *Sodometries*, 208.

⁷⁰ Acosta, *De procuranda*, vol. I, 239.

in this apparently most emblematic of arenas. There are many reasons why cannibalism served not only to separate but also to unite Spaniards with the indigenous population. Without doubt, the inherently exploitative nature of all colonial relationships has made cannibalism a potent metaphor in many different colonial contexts. In seventeenth century Paraguay Guarani Indians suspected that the “ordinary food” of the Jesuits who corralled them into missions was human flesh.⁷¹ Andean peoples in the eighteenth century viewed Spaniards as *pishtacos*, fearful beings who sucked the fat out of indigenous bodies; similar suspicions are harbored against both foreigners and representatives of the Peruvian state by today’s highlanders.⁷² Villagers in rural Guatemala insisted that a 1950s Rockefeller-Foundation public health program was smuggling children to the US in order to eat them.⁷³ The vampiric colonist has proved an apt symbol of the (neo)-colonial relationship. Such stories, writes Luise White, are ways of talking about colonial power.⁷⁴

As White has noted, the nuance and specificity of these stories reflect the historical specificity of different colonial situations. In the case of early modern Spanish America, the

⁷¹ Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, *Conquista hecha por los religiosos de la compañía de Jesús en las provincias del Paraguay, Paraná, Uruguay y Tape* (Bilbao, 1892 [1639]), 129.

⁷² Jan Szeminski, ““Why Kill the Spaniard?” New Perspectives on Andean Insurrectionary Ideology in the Eighteenth Century,” *Resistance, Rebellion and Consciousness in the Andean Peasant World, 18th to 20th Centuries*, ed. Steve Stern (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987); Mary Weismantel, *Cholas and Pishtacos: Stories of Race and Sex in the Andes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

⁷³ Richard Adams, “A Nutritional Research Program in Guatemala,” *Health, Community and Culture: Case Studies of Public Reactions to Health Programs*, ed. Benjamin Paul (New York City: Russell Sage Foundation, 1955). I am grateful to Josh Moulding for this reference.

⁷⁴ Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

Reformation, with its explicit questioning of the very essence of the Eucharist, endowed this vivid metaphor with particular relevance. Spanish colonization occurred at a moment when the unity of Christendom was being reconceptualized in fundamental ways. Christian doctrine seemed no more capable of uniting colonizers and colonized into a single category than it was of bringing harmony to the contending factions in Europe. Or perhaps what united Spaniards and Amerindians was a repellent category mistake whereby, as Protestants charged, Catholics were themselves mere cannibals, no different from the native peoples they sought with such violence to subjugate. Neither option appeared reassuring to colonial actors.

In a treatise on evangelizing Amerindians, the Jesuit José de Acosta defended their capacity to receive the Christian doctrine by insisting that they “hunger avidly for the body of Christ.”⁷⁵ In the same years priests were told to quiz indigenous parishioners on whether “you ever eat human flesh cooked with maize, as this is a great and shocking sin.”⁷⁶ Officials elsewhere instructed a local landowner that her indigenous workforce should be reminded not to eat human flesh. “Tell them,” she was advised, “that they must not eat human flesh because the Christians who do this suffer great torments.”⁷⁷ Colonialism aimed to ensure that Amerindians hungered for the flesh of Christ, but for no other flesh. And what of the Christians who, as the instruction cited above conceded, themselves from time to time ate human flesh? They had best

⁷⁵ Acosta, *De procuranda*, vol. I, 239.

⁷⁶ Alonso de Molina, *Confessionario mayor en la lengua mexicana y castellana*, ed. Roberto Moreno (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1984 [1569]), 82.

⁷⁷ Visita al repartimiento de las batatas de doña Francisca Malaver, 1623, Visitas de Santander, tomo 6, doc. 7, fol. 599r, Archivo General de la Nación, Bogotá, Colonia; Gregorio Saldarriaga, *Alimentación e identidades en el Nuevo Reino de Granada, siglos XVI y XVII* (Bogotá: Biblioteca Básica de Cocinas Tradicionales de Colombia, 2012), 322. I am grateful to Gregorio Saldarriaga Escobar for the material in the Colombian national archive.

keep quiet about it. A sixteenth-century guide for missionaries warned that if anyone found himself compelled to eat human flesh while evangelizing among Amerindians, “upon returning to the company of the faithful he should say nothing, since it could happen that the Christians would expel him from their community, as I understand has sometimes happened here.”⁷⁸ On such fragile bulwarks did colonial settlers rely in their attempts to differentiate themselves from those they governed.

⁷⁸ Focher and Valadés, *Itinerario del misionero en América*, 315; Cummins, “To Serve Man,” 120-1.