Feast, Fast, and Flesh:
Hunger and Conflict in New England and New France, 1637-1763

A dissertation presented

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Abstract

This dissertation is a history of hunger in the borderlands between New England and New France from 1637, the end of the Pequot War, to 1763, the end of the Seven Years’ War. Trapped in cycles of conflict throughout the violent seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, English, French, and Native communities tried to solve the problem of hunger. The solutions they arrived at often greatly resembled each other, yet these very solutions drove these communities into more intercultural conflict. By participating in ritual feasts and fasts, arguing over the possibility of cannibalism in communion ceremonies, rejecting other cultures’ solutions to hunger, and expressing disgust at survival foods, English, French, and Native peoples made unique borderlands hunger cultures.

Acknowledging the material origins of violence in early America, historians have struggled to explain the persistence of intercultural conflict despite cross-cultural similarities between colonists and native peoples. Unlike many histories of food in early America, which have highlighted plenty, this dissertation places scarcity at the center of borderlands conflicts. While historians tend to focus on ways to explain change, this dissertation makes a continuity argument about cycles of hunger and conflict.

Using the methods and insights of a new interdisciplinary field, hunger studies, this dissertation brings together food studies, crisis studies, material culture, and the history of medicine. Reinterpreting sources that are not usually examined together—captivity narratives, sermons, devotional and medical texts, diplomatic and military sources, diaries, recipe books,
and material culture from communion cups to rotting meat—the project traces the ways social cohesion unravels in the face of hunger.

“Feast, Fast, and Flesh” examines four different strategies that English, French, and Native communities used against hunger: feasting and fasting, communion, knowledge practices, and disgust. The dissertation progresses from strategies used in times of stability through the increasingly desperate strategies used in times of crisis. Chapter One, “Govern Well Your Appetites: Feasting and Fasting,” examines English, French, and Native feasting and fasting rituals, arguing that communities protected themselves from crisis by disciplining their bodies with communal eating and not-eating. Chapter Two, “This is My Body: Communion and Cannibalism,” analyzes communion rituals in English, French, and Native communities to conclude that these ceremonies had striking material and conceptual similarities. Despite these cross-cultural similarities, communion ceremonies were implicitly and explicitly violent ways to show community belonging. Chapter Three, “Arrows of Famine: Hunger Knowledges and Cultures,” demonstrates that, born into an English hunger culture that did not prepare them to suffer hunger, the majority of English colonists in New England failed to understand Indian approaches to scarcity, or to make new hunger cultures or knowledges in the borderlands. Chapter Four, “The Violence of My Appetite: Disgust and Sustenance,” explores accounts of disgust from English and French people eating among Indians to demonstrate that disgust tested, transgressed, and ultimately solidified cultural boundaries in colonial New England and New France.

In the borderlands between New England and New France, hunger was more than a fact of life; it was a historical actor. This dissertation demonstrates that continuity, more than change, defined intercultural negotiations in the violent crucible of the borderlands.
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Introduction

Eaten Up: The Problem of Hunger in Early America

“You have almost eat us up.”
Teganissorens, 1694

“Our flesh is weake, and unable to undergo the want of necessary food.”
John Norden, 1615

“You have almost eat us up,” said Teganissorens, an Onondaga diplomat, in a speech to Louis de Buade de Frontenac, Governor General of New France, during a negotiation between the French and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy at Albany in 1694. He continued, “Our best men are killed in this bloody war.” Teganissorens wore a scarlet coat and a beaver hat trimmed with lace, and his dignified attire suited his purpose. He was trying to end King William’s War, brokering peace between the Haudenosaunee and the French, and calling on the French and English to make peace amongst themselves. Teganissorens would take up wampum belts again and again at negotiations like the one at Albany, for this war was one of many wars in a bloody time.

Teganissorens’s pronouncement is of the sort that catches the eye of scholars of early America. Its mournful quality fits neatly into the myth of the Disappearing Indian. But Teganissorens described this ‘disappearance’ with a particular metaphor: “You have almost eat us up.” The rhetoric of war and diplomacy was, for the Onondagas and the French, a rhetoric of food, eating, and violence. This dissertation examines food history at its most violent: hunger in

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the war-torn borderlands of colonial New England and New France. At this negotiation, Teganissorens and Frontenac were talking about eating, but they were really trying to talk their way out of conflict. The borderlands, the places where indigenous and colonial peoples met, mingled, and made war, were an eat-or-be-eaten space. To eat was to survive; to be eaten or to starve was to die.

This rhetoric was not confined to the borderlands: it also stretched back across the Atlantic to imperial centers. English minister John Norden’s 1615 *A Pensive Soules Delight* contained prayers for times of scarcity and war, and times of peace and plenty. Norden recognized hunger as a threat to the social, and as a “calamity” that accompanied other kinds of catastrophe, namely war and pestilence: “warres follow securitie, famine war, and the pestilence followes famine,” he explained. Even one of these disasters, Norden observed, had the “force to confound kingdoms.” Throughout biblical and secular history Norden saw examples of these miseries intertwining. During the siege of Samaria, the biblical capital of the Kingdom of Israel, mothers boiled and ate children; during the wars of the reign of Edward II in England, prisoners of war ate each other “raw and halfe dead.” Facing outside threats, members of these hungry communities literally consumed one another. Norden composed his prayers as England

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embarked upon a colonial project that would see plenty of calamities, calamities that threatened to swallow them, and the peoples they colonized.  

This is a story of failure, the story of peoples presented over and over again with an intractable problem: the problem of hunger. Hunger destroys bodies. It destroys communities. Used as a weapon, or resulting from environmental catastrophe, hunger can destroy entire populations and cultures. Under the threat of famine, people will at first become more intent on sharing, or traveling far and wide to find food. As famine sets in, people withdraw to their family units, hoarding food, sharing only with their closest relations. Finally, hunger destroys all sense of social relationships, and even close family members will fight each other to the death for food as society completely collapses.

In its destructive power, hunger is not unlike war, and these two great “calamities” stalked the globe in the early modern period. Hunger and conflict drove each other, for hunger has a “violent antisocial power.” War disrupts seasonal cycles of agriculture, hunting, fishing, and food preservation. Hungry people compete for resources. People hungry enough will literally eat each other. Hunger and conflict, natural and human factors combined in a “fatal

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synergy” from early America’s borderlands to the Atlantic World and beyond.\textsuperscript{14} Trapped in
cycles of conflict throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, English, French, and
Native communities tried to solve the problem of hunger. The solutions they arrived at to this
problem—even if they greatly resembled each other—often drove them into more conflict. These
solutions included feasting and fasting, communion, knowledge practices, and disgust and taboo.

Hunger in early New England and New France was both a physiological drive and a
signifier of rich cultural meaning.\textsuperscript{15} The study of hunger in early America is a growing field,
with scholars questioning American food history’s conventional narrative of abundance.\textsuperscript{16}
Scholars of hunger have examined early colonists’ “seasons of misery”: the English ate each other at Jamestown, suffered famine at Plymouth, started a resource war in Connecticut, stole food from Indians throughout the early colonial period, and disputed food access well through the Revolution. Contrary to egalitarian visions of the American past, early America was a place of cruel inequities. The story of hunger is part of this story of inequality: throughout early America, power regulated access to food, and people were more likely to go hungry if they were enslaved or impoverished.

Many accounts of hunger come from literate colonists: captives, missionaries, and soldiers swept up in borderlands conflicts. From 1675, the start of King Philip’s War, to 1763, the end of the Seven Years’ War, New England and New France were at war more often than at peace. Those who recorded their hunger in this era were privileged enough both to experience hunger only in times of violence, and to be literate, and able to describe those experiences in the written record. These people wrote in obsessive detail about their hunger, which has been read as spiritual allegory, sublimated sexuality, and a cross-cultural tipping point. While we can read

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19 Hunger has received some notice in scholarship on violence and war in this period, but it has not been the main mode of analysis. For an example, see Fred Anderson, *A People’s Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years’ War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 83-87.

food—and colonists’ obsessions with it—as evidence of social and moral tensions in the borderlands, in these accounts it is also, and in fact primarily, a physiological necessity, an “inescapable materiality.” Historians must look beyond what hunger symbolized, to what hunger did.

Defining Hunger

The writers of my sources used the word “hunger,” but I also use it as an umbrella term for a variety of words, including “appetite,” often meaning a particular taste for something, or gluttony; “famine,” the widespread hunger that affects an entire population; “dearth,” the scarcity experienced by the poor; “starvation,” or death from hunger; and other words referring to a shortfall in food such as “want,” “lack,” or “scarcity.” This hunger is both a physiological and metaphorical drive, and this project explores both matter and metaphor. An important distinction is between intentional and unintentional hunger; much of this dissertation concerns the latter, although peoples’ experiences with intentional fasting shaped their expectations of unintentional hunger, as shown in chapter 1.


23 My thanks to Cristobal Silva for helping me to think through these definitions.
With this dissertation, I am proposing a new field of “hunger studies,” or the interdisciplinary study of hunger. Hunger studies is a response to food studies, and to the larger abundance narrative of American food history. As a physiological necessity and a cultural signifier, food drew boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in early America.\(^\text{24}\) In the conventional food history of colonial America, colonists drawn by a myth of New World plenty instead found “seasons of misery” and ruthless intercultural violence.\(^\text{25}\) From here, though, settler colonialism flourished. Importing slaves, removing Native peoples, and joining in a thriving Atlantic world of trade, the colonies became agriculturally productive on a scale unprecedented in Europe.\(^\text{26}\) The hunger of early colonization faded away into distant memory, and Americans were free to focus on plenty. The reality, of course, is much more complicated, and a growing number of food historians are attacking food studies’ emphasis on plenty and the whiggish interpretation of early American food that it invites.

The hunger narrative runs counter to the conventional narratives of American food history and whiggish interpretations of colonial America more generally. Re-orienting the field of early American food history to focus on scarcity, a different narrative emerges, in which oppressed peoples, the indigenous, the poor, the enslaved, faced scarcity throughout the colonial


\(^{25}\) Key works on scarcity and early colonization include: Herrmann, “The Tragical Historic”; Donegan, *Seasons of Misery*; Grandjean, “New World Tempests.”

period. This dissertation contends that for colonists, the memory of scarcity in the early days of settler colonialism and back in Europe created particular hunger cultures that shaped the ways they perceived Native hunger. Recent works on the ever-scrutinized Revolutionary era have also argued that hunger continued to exert cultural force at least through the end of the eighteenth century, a conclusion which challenges totalizing narratives of social and cultural upheaval after the Revolution.

After a long—and, some scholars have argued, frivolous—focus on plenty, the field of food studies has only recently begun to turn its attention to scarcity. This dissertation pushes back against the abundance narrative of American history, a story of plenty that begins with an edenic New World and ends with the paralyzing choices of the grocery aisle. Darra Goldstein wrote in the first issue of *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* in 2001, “The more we know about food, the greater our pleasure in it.” However, just as we can learn about

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pleasure when we study food, so we can analyze deprivation, suffering, and inequality. America has a hunger narrative as well as an abundance narrative, a story that demands to be told.

This hunger study of early America tells a story of broad geographical and chronological scope: the borderlands between New England and New France, as well as their Atlantic connections in England and France, between 1637 and 1763. By analyzing the borderlands between New England and New France, this dissertation joins other works in recognizing the cross-cultural, continental scope of early America.33 The chronology of this dissertation begins and ends with wars, but settler colonialism, resistance, and dueling imperial ambitions made early America a crucible of peoples and cultures, a place that violence forged.34 The consequences of this violence stretched far beyond the borderlands into the Atlantic world, and this dissertation uses sources from England, France, New England, and New France to compare the mentalités of colonists, metropolitan Europeans, and native peoples.35 The colonists of my sources were only a sea journey or a few generations removed from Europe, connected “umbilically” back to the beliefs of their ancestors, which ought to “call into question the entire assumption of ‘newness’ surrounding our narratives of first encounter.”36


36 Susan Juster, Sacred Violence in Early America (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), x.
The mentalité of colonial America was forged in constant borderlands conflict, as English, French, and Native peoples warred over territory and resources. The borderlands of New England and New France—present-day Massachusetts, New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia—became both home front and front lines of brutal violence in the colonial period. Between the violence and famine of early colonization efforts, and the sweeping instability of the Age of Revolutions, New France and New England from the mid-seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries were characterized by more or less constant violence and war. These conflicts took several forms. In the Intercolonial Wars—King William’s War (1688-1697), Queen Anne’s War (1702-1713), King George’s War (1744-1748), and the Seven Years’ War (1757-1763)—the British and French empires wrestled for ‘control’ of colonial spaces around the globe, while Native peoples took advantage of these disputes in order to resist colonial incursion. This cluster of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century wars is confusing for multiple reasons, including nomenclature: in the U.S. they have been (inaccurately) called the French and Indian Wars; I will use the more precise (though still vague) Canadian term, Intercolonial Wars. Eastern North America was only one of the venues of these global imperial wars, which spread over Europe, the West Indies, and beyond. Each individual war of the period resulted in little redefinition of colonial boundaries, rendering these conflicts anticlimactic from a geopolitical sense. It was not until the end of the Seven Years’ War (1754-1763) that Britain decisively defeated France and asserted claims to North America north

of Mexico and east of the Mississippi. Where these wars did little politically, they were culturally transformative, in combination with other violence of the era.

This period also saw smaller, less formal borderlands conflicts, including Father Rale’s War from 1722 to 1725, and Father Le Loutre’s War from 1749 to 1755, between declared wars. Native people and colonists clashed in the Pequot War in 1637 and King Philip’s War from 1675 to 1678. For Indians, this period of shifting alliances offered a strategic opportunity to defend land rights, material resources, and other kinds of power from imperial incursion, by playing the warring empires off each other. Even the American Revolution, viewed in isolation from the global Age of Revolutions, continued this tradition of another borderlands conflict.

The sum of these episodes is that more often than not, Indians and colonists in New England and New France were at war with each other or lived in fear of violence. This violence


40 To be fair, war was the norm in early modern Europe. This constant warfare, however, did not resemble modern total warfare, though it had tremendous social and cultural impacts. Though historians often trace total war to the first World War, others have located it much earlier. David A. Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007).
made culture, for “fear was functional.” The context of violence also shaped colonists’ and Native peoples’ experiences of hunger. Violence introduced hunger into the lives of those who rarely faced it otherwise. In an era when only certain populations achieved literacy in large numbers, those who faced hunger as a novelty were the same people most likely to write about their experiences. They feared being “eaten up,” and their fear survives in the historical record. For Native peoples, the violence of settler colonialism challenged established ways of navigating hunger.

Historians have long wrestled with the cultural implications of violence in the colonial era. Pre-1990s scholarship emphasized difference between Native and Euro-American peoples and the fundamental incompleteness and fragility of any shared culture. Since Richard White’s *The Middle Ground* and similar scholarship, which has accompanied, in the past two decades, a move from the Turnerian ‘frontier’ to borderlands, scholars have emphasized cultural similarity and shared culture in these fluid spaces. Within this subfield, scholars now face the task of analyzing why cultural similarity failed to stop cross-cultural violence in this period. The origins of conflict in early America were, to be sure, material: Europeans wanted to exploit the

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New World’s resources, its furs and timber, its soil, the bodies of its people. But the stakes of these conflicts were often couched in cultural terms, in the construction of racial difference, the policing of gender norms, the invention of national mythologies.

Studying hunger enables us to trace these cross-cultural and intercultural conflicts. But hunger is also a tangible reality. By focusing on hunger, and its effects on individual bodies and broader communities, this dissertation makes hunger real. It rescues the reality of physical experience, and the notion of material limitations as determinants, from purely symbolic readings. This project is in some ways antithetical to a great deal of scholarship, which has long positioned the abstract as “higher” than material things. This tendency towards “semantic ascent” poses serious issues within scholarship and within the academy more broadly, where the rejection of the thingliness of bodies, for example, has left the industry with lingering shortcomings in its treatment of students and scholars with regards to race, gender, sexuality, disability, and parenthood.

As the twisting and turnings of this section suggest, cultural history might at first glance seem like an odd place to examine the material. In the “cultural turn” of the 1980s and 1990s, language consumed the humanities. An unfortunate side effect of this turn was the tendency of some scholars to see hunger in early American accounts as merely symbolic of something else. This dissertation instead looks at how the physiological experience of hunger, and the fear of that

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47 Baird, Thing-Knowledge, 8-10.

48 Baird, Thing-Knowledge, 8-10.
experience, led communities to create cultural coping practices and knowledges. In early modern European history, for example, cultural historians have lingered over the bleakness depicted in peasant cultural production. The wicked stepmothers of fairy tales reveal demographic instability to the historian—high mortality rates for women of child-bearing age meant that most children would have had at least one stepmother, if not several, during their childhoods.49 At the same time, though, other historians have questioned whether the peasants lived in such desperate circumstances as the fairytales suggest.50 This gap between the cultural and the material nullifies the importance of neither, and is, moreover, interesting and suggestive. Colonists, especially in New England, reached agricultural and demographic stability unimaginable to their European forebears, but they remained both frightened of hunger and ignorant about how to surmount it, and sometimes both at once.

The relationship between the material and cultural is like an early modern humoral body—fluid, permeable, constantly seeking equilibrium. 51 As theorists Diana Coole and Samantha Frost explain, “For critical materialists, society is simultaneously materially real and socially constructed: our material lives are always culturally mediated, but they are not only cultural.”52 Material culture is culture, of course, but there is a scholarly tendency to see the material and cultural as exclusive if not opposed. In the development of this project, I have been


52 Coole and Frost, “Introducing the New Materialisms,” 27.
asked again and again, “but what about conditions on the ground? Were they really hungry?” On one level, the answer is immaterial to me as a cultural historian. Whether or not English and French colonists and Native people in the borderlands were ‘really hungry,’ they brought hunger cultures and knowledges to bear on their circumstances, and their assumptions structured the ‘real’ world around them. But on another level, the ‘real hunger,’ the physiology, matters a great deal. And it is a hunger which needs historicizing. Like the rest of the human body, hunger has both changed since the period of this study, and remained tantalizingly the same.

This dissertation defines “culture” as both “a system of symbols and meanings” and “practice.” Drawing on the New Materialisms, it argues that things and beliefs make the world around them, but it also acknowledges how these processes are not seamless, and are full of dislocations, ruptures, and failures. Histories of the body and ritual studies in early America have concluded that rapid social and cultural change in the age of conquest and colonialism drove ritual behaviors that sought to maintain stability. Where historians of the body have tracked the ways that authorities attempted to regulate bodies and preserve hierarchies in this era, these attempts were always fundamentally incomplete. Moreover, in early America, food was often synonymous with crisis. Teganissorens claimed that the Onondagas were being “eaten up”

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53 The task remains of quantifying hunger in early America, and I hope that this project will guide future inquiries by economic historians and others.


in a “bloody war.” Where “crisis studies” has helped scholars to catalogue the cultural effects of crisis in Europe, scholars of early America are only just beginning to examine the ways that crises shape history—or, as in this dissertation, fail to create cultural change.  

This is a story of cyclical continuity in the face of crisis. Over approximately 125 years, the sources used in this dissertation show little evidence of large-scale change in colonists’ and native peoples’ attitudes towards hunger. There are several explanations for this continuity. First, the circumstances of many borderlands peoples’ encounters with hunger were moments of crisis, which promoted retrenchment and not change in cultural values. Second, the historical memory of dearth and famine in Europe, as well as the starving times of early colonization, flourished in the New World, despite material prosperity for white elite colonists. Finally, as previously noted, the barrage of borderlands conflicts throughout this period shared fundamental similarities, as English, French, and Native groups continued to war with each other throughout the era.

Studying continuity and studying hunger have much in common with each other: in both cases the historian’s challenge is to delineate the lack of something, the absence of food, the absence of change.

Continuity arguments are few and far between, and rarely trumpeted as such, in the writing of history. Despite the fact that we tell our students that history is about “continuity and change,” and there is a journal of the same name, change is king. Historians proclaim the “transformation,” “making,” and “change” of history.  


58 A search for book reviews of titles containing the words “transformation,” “making,” “made,” or “change” in the *Journal of American History* from 1980 to 2015 returned 12,551 results. The same search for “continuity” returned 481 results.
not necessarily call attention to them. One groundbreaking example, which remains so decades after its publication, is Laurel Thatcher Ulrich’s *A Midwife’s Tale*. Martha Ballard, the midwife of the title, kept a diary of her life in rural Maine from 1785 to 1812. This chronology encompasses the writing and ratification of the Constitution, the Louisiana Purchase, the outbreak of the War of 1812, and what other historians, writing around the same time as Ulrich, concluded was a period of tremendous social and cultural upheaval.59 By contrast, Ulrich concluded that “the political events that inhabit so much of the foreground” in another (male) diarist’s account “are only a hazy background, if that” in Ballard’s.60 Ballard’s gender and geographic location fundamentally shaped her engagement, or lack thereof, with the large political narratives upon which historians expend so much ink.

This example demonstrates how change-oriented arguments favor particular narratives, and particular sources. Women, minorities, the illiterate, and the poor usually have not had the privilege of change.61 The rhythms of everyday life change slowly. Scholars of reform movements have often concluded that change is slow, incomplete, and won with blood: David Brion Davis credited the difficulty of change to the fragility of its circumstances, the “perishability of revolutionary time.”62 Cultural history, which grapples with often-unstated beliefs and assumptions, has a long tradition of continuity arguments or evidence of only small,

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61 On continuity and the history of gender, see Judith M. Bennett, “Confronting Continuity,” *Journal of Women’s History* 9, No. 3 (Fall 1993): 73-94.

slow change over time, for “Mentalité” is a slippery subject. The cultural history of early modern Europe is full of continuity arguments, and to a lesser extent they can be found in early American scholarship as well.63

Even histories of change are really about continuity. In the 2002 William E. Massey Sr. Lectures at Harvard University, social historian John Demos described a theory of history that would be published in 2004 as Circles and Lines: The Shape of Life in Early America. In the early modern period, Demos argued, Euroamerican people lived and thought in cyclical ways. The agrarian cycle of the seasons and the rhythms of the life cycle mapped onto a belief that history was constantly repeating itself, and that institutions must uphold tradition instead of responding to change.64 In the midst of colonization, which historians today recognize as a time of violent transformation, the first English colonists instead struggled “to block out the strangeness of their circumstances” in order to recreate England in the New World.65 In Demos’s telling, it was the American Revolution, not colonization, that led to a profound rupture in ways of thinking about the world, history, and the self. However, Demos admitted that scholars have not satisfactorily nailed down the reasons why the Revolution caused this dramatic transition.66


65 Demos, Circles and Lines, 32.

66 Demos, Circles and Lines, 50-56.
On the present side of the Revolution, in Demos’s telling, lines replaced circles. History no longer consisted of cycles of continuity, but of upward trends of progress, such as the Industrial Revolution. Autobiographies emphasized the independent self making decisions on a journey of change. But in the last ten pages of *Circles and Lines*, Demos noted that this sweeping change in *mentalité* did not happen for everyone. Women, African Americans, and the poor were all systematically denied the opportunities for progress and self-making that defined the nineteenth century. To phrase this point differently, only white men of a certain economic standing could participate in this new mode of history, and they barred others from the same opportunities. From this perspective, suddenly Demos’s sweeping narrative of change seems much more modest. If Demos’s revolution in *mentalité*, or the big-R Revolution that precipitated it, left the majority of Americans behind, is change really the most significant force shaping American history?

This is a big question, but one that does not receive much attention among historians. In 2014, David Armitage and Jo Guldi released *The History Manifesto*. In their polemic, they blamed the historical profession’s waning political influence upon the decline of the *longue durée* in the interest of the “Short Past.” Since the 1960s, and particularly in the heyday of social history, historians have cast aside broad narratives in the interest of microhistories with much shorter time scales. The “Short Past” has transformed the field in valuable ways, Guldi and Armitage admit, particularly by challenging the racist, sexist, and imperialist master narratives

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68 Demos, *Circles and Lines*, 76-77.
that suffuse western cultures.\textsuperscript{70} Nevertheless, the authors argue that the massive challenges facing the twenty-first century—income inequality, climate change—demand that historians “make those large stories comprehensible to the public,” which means the profession must widen its gaze to centuries and millennia, not decades.\textsuperscript{71}

To be clear, I agree with Guldi and Armitage that a longer view of history ought to shape humanity’s decisions about the future: my research seeks to understand twenty-first century problems through the ways that our early modern predecessors faced similar challenges. This dissertation is not a microhistory: it spans continents and centuries. However, in the entirety of \textit{The History Manifesto}, the word “continuity” appears exactly once.\textsuperscript{72} As historians heave open our chronologies and turn to big data in our quest for “understanding long-term changes over history,” are we discounting the things that \textit{are not changing}?\textsuperscript{73}

Continuity, I contend, is a more realistic way of looking at much of American history than narratives of progress or declension. Faced with crisis, many people would rather dig in their heels and cling to the past than confront real change. One need look no further than 2016’s populist backlash against globalization, in the form of Brexit, the United States election, and beyond, to see this tendency in action. And if we accept continuity, hunger in early America casts a long shadow; hunger stretches out over American history. In the conclusion to this dissertation, I turn to the larger continuity of hunger in American culture.

\textbf{Contexts: Hunger and the Body}

\textsuperscript{70} Guldi and Armitage, \textit{The History Manifesto}, 55.

\textsuperscript{71} Guldi and Armitage, \textit{The History Manifesto}, 56.

\textsuperscript{72} Guldi and Armitage, \textit{The History Manifesto}, 19.

\textsuperscript{73} Guldi and Armitage, \textit{The History Manifesto}, 93.
The physiological and psychological effects of hunger form the backdrop of this dissertation, and while many of these may seem obvious to the observer, knowledge about hunger has its own dark history. Most of what scholars know about the effects of hunger originated in studies conducted under coercive conditions during the Second World War. Nazi leaders used starvation as a cheap method of exterminating undesirable populations, and doctors in the occupied Netherlands and the Warsaw ghetto diligently recorded the horrific consequences of these policies.74 In the United States, researchers at the University of Minnesota experimented on conscientious objectors in what would become known as the Minnesota Starvation Experiment. In a two-volume, 1300-page report, they summarized the effects of semi-starvation and refeeding on thirty-six men between the ages of twenty and thirty-three. Researchers found that semi-starving or starving people lose weight, muscle strength, and endurance.75 Their hearts and other organs shrink.76 Even as they lose body mass, they may swell because of the water retention of edema.77 They become irritable, apathetic, depressed, anxious, antisocial, and emotionally unstable.78 Hunger impacts every bodily system, and if left untreated, shuts every last one of them down. The ethical issues of studying hunger have prevented much in the way of further studies of the physiology of hunger, although starving populations in developing


76 Keys, et. al., The Biology of Human Starvation, vol. 1, figure 93, 625.

77 Keys, et. al., The Biology of Human Starvation, vol. 2, 921-965

countries, particularly children, have received considerable scholarly interest. This dissertation makes use of the findings from this scholarship while acknowledging its often coercive origins.

**Contexts: Food in Peacetime**

This project examines unraveling, chaos, the breakdown of established ways of doing things. These were in many ways the norm in the borderlands, where the norms of many cultures conflicted and conflated. But to give a sense of how disorienting this would have been for English, French, and Native peoples caught up in borderlands conflicts, it is necessary to establish what a normal meal might have looked like for these peoples. The following necessitates some generalization, but serves to contextualize the mayhem of the following chapters.

The foodways of English colonists in New England both clung to tastes and technologies brought from England, and incorporated Native foods. Early colonists, struggling to adapt their agricultural practices to new ecologies and climates, at first relied heavily, if reluctantly, upon new-to-them Indian foods, especially corn, even as they feared that eating Indian foods might transform English bodies. Within a few years, colonists figured out which European grains could grow in the new climate—oats and rye thrived, but their beloved wheat did not. In the seventeenth century, New Englanders adhered to a traditional English seasonal subsistence diet, reliant upon bread, meat, fish, vegetables (primarily in warmer months), milk and cheese, with

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beer to drink. Many households may have faced some form of food scarcity, or at least a lack of food choice, in late spring, after winter stores ran out and before summer crops could be harvested. In both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, wealthier colonists would have eaten much more meat than their poorer neighbors, and would have replaced the dense rye and cornmeal bread called “Rye and Injun” with a refined wheat bread as their staple.

Early New Englanders would have brought English recipe books to the New World; the first American cookbook was not published until the end of the eighteenth century. Two dinner menus from Penelope Bradshaw’s 1754 *The Family Jewel* demonstrate seasonal variation, as well as the wide variety of foods available to England’s wealthier classes, including tropical groceries. Dinner was the main meal, eaten in the middle of the day. Wealthy Europeans of the era would have eaten their meals French-style, meaning that servers brought all of the dishes in each course to the table at the same time. Sweet and savory dishes could be served together in the same course. Accordingly, Bradshaw’s dinner menus also indicate where on the table each dish would be placed.

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85 Amelia Simmons, *American Cookery* (Hartford: Hudson & Goodwin, 1796).

86 These menu plans must be viewed as aspirational, not necessarily reflective of actual meals. Food historian Sandra Oliver argues that relying too much on cookbooks to interpret food in the past presents several methodological issues. Cookbooks are inherently elite sources, for only elites had the money and literacy to buy and use cookbooks for much of the past, and especially in the early modern period. Moreover, cookbooks cannot capture what Oliver terms “vernacular cookery,” that is, the recipeless everyday meal preparation, like toast and eggs for breakfast—which is much more representative of day-to-day food habits than a recipe for a Christmas turkey. Oliver, “Ruminations on the State of American Food History,” 93-94, 96-97.

Bradshaw’s February dinner had a first course of soup, salmon or “stew’d Breast of Veal,” fowl with “Oyster-sauce,” a pudding, cutlets of mutton, and “a Fricassey of Pig’s Ears.”\(^8\)

The second course continued with partridges, ducks, jellies, “Stew’d Apples, preserved Quinces,” custards, and cheesecakes.\(^9\) In June, the first course featured roast pike, “Scotch Collops,” a meat dish, stewed crab, boiled chickens, “Quaking Pudding,” and tongue with venison sauce, beans, and bacon. The second course consisted of turkey, ducks or rabbits, strawberries, lobster, peas, “Green Codlings” (a preparation of unripened apples), apricot custards, tarts, and “preserv’d Damsins or Flummery,” the latter a starchy sweet pudding.\(^9\)

Unlike the February menu, which relied more upon preserved fruits and vegetables, the June menu prominently featured spring produce, such as strawberries, peas, and immature apples. Both menus showed off a wide variety of meat, poultry, and fish, including veal, partridge, duck, mutton, pork, pike, crab, chicken, turkey, and rabbit. Both menus also showed the English appetite for sweets, from preserved fruits to custards, cheesecakes, tarts, and sweet puddings—most or all of them using the popular tropical sweetener, sugar. Both menus revealed the diet of the wealthy as rich in meats and sweets. The health ramifications of such a diet drove an industry of books offering instructions on medicine and health.\(^9\)

By the end of the seventeenth century, New England’s shipping industry embraced the Atlantic slave trade, and English people on both sides of the Atlantic began to develop an

\(^8\) Penelope Bradshaw, *The Family Jewel, and Compleat Housewife’s Companion* (London: R. Whitworth, 1754), 121.

\(^9\) Bradshaw, *The Family Jewel*, 121.

\(^9\) Bradshaw, *The Family Jewel*, 123.

appetite for an array of tropical commodities, including sugar, chocolate, and tea. The profits from the slave economy and appetites for these goods propelled broad transformations in the material culture of the colonies, and especially of dining. Over the course of the eighteenth century, the material trappings of a more elaborate and refined dining experience spread from France to England and its colonies, with tables, chairs, and individual place settings entering many households. Individual place settings became increasingly common among a broader swath of the population after trickling down from the upper classes. In the seventeenth century and well into the eighteenth century, many English colonial households did not have tables; many homes might have only one chair, for the patriarch, and everyone else sitting on boxes, barrels, or benches. Most people would have eaten out of common pots or bowls and drunk out of common cups. If the household were wealthy enough, diners would eat with spoons and knives; in poorer households, diners would have eaten stews and porridges with their hands, or the crust of sturdy cornmeal and rye bread. Forks did not become common until the end of the century. The consumption of tropical groceries called for a dizzying array of new

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94 Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, 76-78.


98 Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, 77.
accoutrements: a tea service, for example, might make use of tea tables and tablecloths, tea canisters and boxes, teapots, teacups, sugar bowls, sugar tongs, milk containers and creamers, strainers, and dishes for disposing of used tea leaves. Being able to use all of this specialized equipment appropriately signaled gentility in the tea-drinker, and gentility signaled and maintained hierarchies in the deeply hierarchical eighteenth century.

From the medieval period onward, French chefs were a hot commodity among wealthy households in England, and English and French cuisines increasingly converged over the early modern period. During the Reformation, Protestants and Catholics battled over whether English cuisine should take after the more Catholic Continental style or the more ascetic, simpler Puritan fare. French cuisine remained very fashionable among England’s elites throughout the eighteenth century. A spectacularly ostentatious dinner for seven in lavish French style garnered breathless press in London in May 1751. One pamphlet listed and priced the over 40 dishes, served over three courses, and compared it to a banquet consumed by Henry VIII and hundreds of attendees, before concluding, “the Value of what fed many Hundreds for five Days, did not much exceed what Seven swallow’d in one Day.” Another pamphlet provided English translations of the sophisticated French dishes, and diagrammed their placement on the table.


101 Ken Albala, Food in Early Modern Europe (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003), 164-72. Stephen Mennell, however, disputes the notion that guilt about food was widespread in Puritanism. All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 102-108.

102 A Modern Bill of Fare for Seven: As It was Perform'd, By Their Own Desire and Approbation, in May, Anno Domini, 1751 (London: Mons. Potage Julien Verd la Petit Paté, 1751), 8.

103 An Explanation and Translation of a Modern Bill of Fare, May 1751 (London: C. Mushroom Truffle Morelle, 1751).
The meal included “Potage de Tortue,” or turtle soup with “Butter, an Onion stuffed with Cloves,” herbs, lemon, salt, pepper, “Mushrooms, Truffles, and Artichoke-Bottoms”; “Queüe d’Agneau a la Montaban,” or braised “Lambs Rumps”; and “Amorte de Jesuits,” a dish of pickled, battered, and fried veal necks.\(^{104}\) This was stunt gluttony, in no way representative of the daily meals of ordinary people, but its excess and exoticism show the hold of French cuisine upon the English imagination.

In general, culinary innovation flowed from Italy and France to England. Through much of the early modern period, English cuisine remained medieval in taste, with many dishes heavily spiced, sweetened, and acidic.\(^{105}\) By contrast, the “nouvelle cuisine” that arose in France in the same era “intensified the flavor of the main ingredient” rather than hiding or augmenting it.\(^{106}\) Like English cuisine, the *haute cuisine* of France in the early modern period was characterized by a large variety of dishes served at the same time. In the seventeenth century, French chefs developed the fundamental techniques and tastes of French cuisine that have persisted into the present day, including emulsified and thickened sauces.\(^{107}\) During this same centuries, a divide developed between *haute cuisine*, served in the urban households of the very wealthy, and the *cuisine bourgeoisie* of middle-class country homes.\(^{108}\) During the Enlightenment, French cuisine shifted towards “studiedly informal,” “simple” cuisine that invoked an idealized peasant

\(^{104}\) *An Explanation and Translation of a Modern Bill of Fare*, 3, 5.

\(^{105}\) Pinkard, *A Revolution in Taste*, 144-146.

\(^{106}\) Pinkard, *A Revolution in Taste*.


lifestyle. Bored or overwhelmed with courtly life, aristocrats including Marie Antoinette set up mock farms on their estates and played at milking cows.

Peasants would not have recognized these aristocratic versions of their lives. While new concepts of cuisine traveled easily among European elites, the poor were left out of many of these new developments, with the diets of the French peasantry actually decreasing in variety between the medieval period and the eighteenth century, even as elites consumed dozens of dishes in a sitting. The surprising roots of this trend lay in the bubonic plague, which decimated medieval populations and led to an abundance of food, even among the poor. Demographic and economic changes throughout the early modern period, however, corrected this imbalance, while the violence and instability of the seventeenth century pushed peasants closer to starvation. French peasants in the eighteenth century received ninety-five percent of their daily calories from cereal grains, in the form of either bread or gruel, accompanied by vegetable soups and only rarely animal proteins.

French cuisine in New France adapted to New World ingredients and lack of access to Old World ones. Colonists and metropolitan diners quickly integrated some New World foods,

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110 These hamlets were very symbolically complex places; for one reading, see Jill H. Casid, “Queer(y)ing Georgic: Utility, Pleasure, and Marie Antoinette’s Ornamented Farm,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 30, No. 3 (Spring, 1997): 304-318.


114 Norman, “‘Fit for the Table of the Most Fastidious Epicure’,” 36-45.
such as squashes, Jerusalem artichokes, beans, strawberries, and maple sugar.\textsuperscript{115} Foods that seemed familiar and were easy to grow transitioned into French diets most easily, and Native peoples taught their agricultural technologies to colonists.\textsuperscript{116}

Generalizing about Northeastern Native foodways in this same period is a much more difficult task than for the British or French, because of the vast array of peoples and places this dissertation encompasses. Further complicating this task, just as English and French diets evolved through borderlands exchanges, Native diets responded to colonial and environmental pressures.

Like European diets, Native diets varied with the seasons. The Jesuit missionary Sébastian Rales described the seasonal labor and travel of the Wabanaki people he missionized at Norridgwock, Maine. In the spring, their winter stores exhausted, the Wabanaki traveled to a river to harvest fish (likely shad) which “ascend the river in so great numbers that a man could fill fifty thousand barrels with them in a day.” Dried, the fish supported the Wabanakis as they planted and cared for corn along with beans and squash. In June, the Wabanakis traveled to the coast to live off fish and shellfish, and stayed until it was time to harvest crops in August. In late fall, the Wabanakis returned to the coast to catch “large fish” and “shell-fish,” as well as “bustards, ducks, and all sorts of game.” In midwinter, the community returned inland, and men left the village to hunt moose, elk, bear, and other large game, before the cycle repeated again.\textsuperscript{117}


\textsuperscript{117} \textit{The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791} 67, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers Co., 1900), 213-19. On Wabanaki hunting,
Further inland, Iroquois or Haudenosaunee diets in the colonial era combined agriculture with foraging. Women and children cultivated the three sisters, or corn, beans, and squash, and also foraged for wild foods, including roots, berries, and maple sap. Men hunted in the winter and fished at other times of the year. Under pressure from colonists to adapt their gender norms and agricultural practices, Haudenosaunee people increasingly focused on agriculture and were successful farmers. Nevertheless, hunting, fishing, and foraging persisted, resulting in hybrid diets that mixed pre-contact practices with more European ones.118

Not unlike European peasants, Native peoples relied heavily upon a staple grain, corn. Algonquian women prepared corn in porridges, breads, and a broad variety of dishes, combined with fruit, vegetables, or proteins.119 Roots, nuts, berries, wild rice, and maple sugar added variety to staples.120 Northeastern native peoples kept dogs as livestock, in addition to hunting and fishing, and prepared meat and fish by roasting, boiling, or drying it.121 Farther north, in the Maritime provinces, Algonquian-speaking peoples relied upon hunting, fishing, and foraging as their primary means of subsistence, in climates inhospitable to agriculture.122

In the borderlands, challenged by the problem of hunger, all of these ways of doing things fell apart. Tight food stores might become even more monotonous than usual, or semi-


118 Norman, “‘Fit for the Table of the Most Fastidious Epicure’,” 33-35.


120 H. Russell, Indian New England Before the Mayflower, 81-91.


122 Lacombe, Political Gastronomy, 12-15.
starvation might push hungry people to seek out large varieties of meager amounts of food. Hungry people had to adapt to new or different flavors, including revolting ones. Differences between English, French, and Native cuisines became more pronounced or collapsed altogether in the face of scarcity. Borderlands people fumbled through crumbling cultural expectations and alien material cultures of dining. Mothers stole food from children. Guests threatened their hosts. Hunger tore the world asunder.

Evidence and Methodology

This project examines English, French, and Native communities separately and together, in order to trace similarities and differences across cultures. Similar comparative frameworks are a staple of cross-cultural early American history, and the rich multicultural world of early America demands studies of mentalité.¹²³ For parallel reasons, the project analyzes a broad range of sources from England and France, and the borderlands known as New England and New France, to determine pervasive cultural attitudes that spanned the Atlantic and beyond.¹²⁴

Religious documents, including sermons, devotional texts, litanies, and prayer books, illuminate the rituals and rhetoric of food, hunger, and the body. Recipe books, and the visual and material culture of food, have much to tell historians about food, and, read against the grain, can also speak to hunger. Medical and scientific texts hint at the medicalization of eating and hunger. Finally, captivity narratives, missionary accounts, provincial and military records, and

¹²³ Notable examples include: Chaplin, Subject Matter; Seeman, Death in the New World; Shoemaker, A Strange Likeness.

letters and diaries provide a sense, however incomplete, of experiences of hunger and violence in the borderlands.

Like other scholars of early America, I face a historical record that is overwhelmingly European, which means that I have had to extrapolate Native behaviors and thought from European-authored documents. Recovering and interpreting Native voices in this context is a challenge. Exploring English and French mentalités helps scholars to subtract these biases from sources, leaving at least some grains of truth about Native experiences. Moreover, while science is by no means immune to bias, applying physiology and natural science can provide a fuller picture of the past than European sources.\textsuperscript{125} The use of material culture as sources offers another option to correct Eurocentrism in the written record.\textsuperscript{126} These methods do not offer a silver bullet for historical injustices, but I strive, unlike many of my historical actors, to give native peoples the benefit of the doubt.

This dissertation proposes a new field and gives one example of what hunger studies looks like in practice: an interdisciplinary study of hunger, with attention to the body, culture, materiality, food, medicine, and religion. Early America is only one possible site for hunger studies, and as I discuss in the Conclusion, the time is ripe for the field to grow.

\textbf{Chapter Structure}

Each of the chapters describes a moment of continuity, a cycle of challenge and retrenchment, or a small shift over a long chronology. The dissertation traces an overall unraveling of social cohesion in the face of hunger, beginning with solutions to hunger used in times of relative stability, and ending with solutions employed in times of complete chaos.


\textsuperscript{126} See Ulrich et. al., \textit{Tangible Things}, 3-4.
Chapter One, “Govern Well Your Appetites: Feasting and Fasting” examines English, French, and Native feasting and fasting ceremonies, arguing that communities protected themselves from crisis by disciplining their bodies with communal feasts and fasts. While these efforts were largely successful, communities nevertheless faced pressure from internal and external divisions. Because Native peoples preferred ritualistic feasting over fasting, English and French observers rarely recognized Native bodies as disciplinable. Over the course of the eighteenth century, fasting’s efficacy began to wane for the English, as the Great Awakening reframed spirituality to focus upon the individual, not the community.

Chapter Two, “This is My Body: Communion and Cannibalism” analyzes communion rituals in English, French, and Native communities to conclude that these rituals had striking material and conceptual similarities. Despite these cross-cultural similarities, communion ceremonies were implicitly and explicitly violent ways to show community cohesion, and they gave rise to further intercultural conflict.

Chapter Three, “Arrows of Famine: Hunger Knowledges and Cultures” demonstrates that, born into an English hunger culture that did not prepare them to suffer hunger, the majority of English colonists in New England failed to understand Indian approaches to scarcity, or to make new hunger cultures or knowledges in the borderlands. This chapter introduces the concepts of hunger culture, the cultural responses to the physiological experience of hunger, and hunger knowledge, the practices used to overcome hunger, and contends that lacking these knowledges and cultures could be deadly in the borderlands.

Chapter Four, “The Violence of My Appetite: Disgust and Sustenance,” explores accounts of disgust from English and French people eating among Indians to demonstrate that disgust tested, transgressed, and ultimately solidified cultural boundaries in colonial New
England and New France. The foods that Europeans saw as desperate may have been the norm for Native peoples.

The Conclusion, “Cruel Torture: Hunger Culture in American History,” traces the broader cultural ramifications of hunger across a long chronology, and contends that responses to borderlands hunger in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries could be instructive for the challenges humans face in the twenty-first century.

English, French, and Native communities faced hunger again and again in the violent borderlands of northeastern North America. Their solutions to the problem of hunger, in their similarities and differences, drove these communities back into further conflict with each other, a spiral of relentless violence and scarcity.
Chapter 1
Govern Well Your Appetites: Fasting and Feasting

“The History I am going to Write, proves, that Days of Fasting and Prayer without REFORMATION, will not avail, to turn away the Anger of God from a Professing People.”
John Williams, The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion (1707)127

“I tell you, that on condition we … embrace what is written in what the whites call God’s Book-it will be a complete subversion of all the ancient customs; religious feasts and our offerings to Thaoughyayawagon which our forefathers so strictly observed- all- all will be gone.”
Saquamwaraghton, addressing the Senecas at Conowarohare (1765)128

In July 1757, as thirty-one Indian tribes massed with French forces to attack the English stronghold at Fort William Henry, the Jesuit missionary Pierre Roubaud took part in a war feast with Abenakis, Nipmucs, Algonquians, and Maliseets at Saint-Jean-Sur-Richelieu, Quebec. The attendees ornamented their bodies in full ceremonial regalia, rubbing their skin with “vermilion, white, green, yellow, and black” pigments mixed with tallow, anointing themselves with earrings and nose rings, “porcelain necklaces, silver bracelets,” and “a large knife hanging over the breast.”129 The tribes gathered to sit in rows around kettles of cooked meat, their living bodies surrounding dead flesh. War captains led the assembly in song, and a speaker addressed the group with “arguments that prove the lawfulness of the war, the motives of glory and of Religion” to encourage men to join the expedition.130


128 Samuel Kirkland, Diary Volume 1, 1764-5, Pre-Revolutionary Diaries, 5.9:47, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts.


130 Jesuit Relations 70, 97.
Finally, the leader of the raiding party rose to his feet. He reached into the kettles and picked up the head of an animal, declaring, “Behold the head of the enemy.”\(^{131}\) This man walked through the rows of people singing a war song, “in which he exerts all his force in boastings and insulting defiance of the enemy,” and describing his own glorious deeds in battle.\(^{132}\) The speaker concluded this performance by “disdainfully throwing down the head,” gesturing, as Roubaud believed, “that food of a wholly different kind is necessary to satisfy his military appetite.”\(^{133}\) Other leaders would make similar performances, drawing “enlistments” to the expedition, before the group feasted together.\(^{134}\) They metaphorically consumed their enemies, before the bloody feast of war. Another Jesuit at another Wabanaki war feast wrote that the men divided up enemy territory and told each raiding party, “To you is given this hamlet to eat.”\(^{135}\)

Three months earlier, in May 1757, on the day of the annual fast, the minister Arthur Browne addressed the Anglican congregation at Queen’s Chapel in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. His text was Isaiah 1:20: “For if ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the Sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”\(^{136}\) As the congregation fasted, Browne’s choice of biblical passage invoked eating, a devouring sword, the mouth of the Lord. He titled his sermon *The Necessity of*

\(^{131}\) Jesuit Relations 70, 99.

\(^{132}\) Jesuit Relations 70, 99.

\(^{133}\) Jesuit Relations 70, 101.

\(^{134}\) Jesuit Relations 70, 101.

\(^{135}\) Jesuit Relations 66, 203.

Reformation, in Order to Avert Impending Judgments, and spoke to the congregation as the British suffered one defeat after another in the Seven Years’ War: “the unfortunate expedition to the Ohio; and the wretched defence of Oswego” troubled Browne and the congregants far to the east.\(^{137}\) These military disasters indicated God’s displeasure with the English, over such sins as the “Excessive drinking of spirituous liquor.”\(^{138}\) Unless the community stamped out these practices, Browne warned, God would defeat the English forces, and “our rights, religion and properties will be blasted and defeated.”\(^{139}\)

If the French won the war and spread Catholicism through the land, Browne reminded his listeners that they would face “a famine, …not of bread, nor a thirst for water, (altho’ these also may befall us) but of hearing the word of the Lord.”\(^{140}\) Where Protestants insisted that believers be able to read the bible and understand worship services in their native languages, the Catholic Mass was conducted in Latin, its truths, Protestants believed, shrouded in mystery. Stripped of their ability to engage directly with the Word of God, Protestants under Catholic rule would find their souls in jeopardy, Browne warned.

By fasting and attending worship services on this day of the annual fast, the congregation made the first step towards regaining God’s forgiveness, and averting a terrible Catholic future for their community. But Browne demanded more of his listeners, calling for a spiritual solution in corporeal language. Believers must examine themselves for sin: “Let every one of us then descend into his own breast,” Browne declared, to search for “what darling lust is nourished


there.” Such lust brought God’s judgment down on the community and must be destroyed. “Let us bring it instantly forth and slay it before the Lord,” Browne proclaimed. It was an image of vanquishing sin from one’s heart, but also, curiously, of infanticide, of taking the thing nourished at one’s breast and putting it to death. Violent times called for stern measures against the weak body and sinful heart.

In the borderlands between New England and New France, violence and uncertainty were the norm. English, French, and Native peoples in the borderlands turned to practices of feasting and fasting to try to hold their communities together. They controlled the body through consuming or not consuming food, as violence threatened to consume their communities. Eating and war made the bodies of English and French and Indians “vulnerable to each other in ways that are terrible.” It was necessary to control these bodies in ceremonies that put the “body” in “body politic.” In the face of the possibility of unintentional hunger, these communities turned to intentional hunger. Ritual created certainty when uncertainty loomed. Commentators and authorities sought to control the body through visceral rituals of tightly regulated fasting, which also encompassed broader practices of bodily mortification.

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141 Browne, The Necessity of Reformation, 17. This image was likely a reference to Lamentations 4:3, “Even the sea monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones.”


143 Tompkins, Racial Indigestion, 3-4.

144 Maggie Kilgour, From Communion to Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990): 4-5, 8. However, Cristobal Silva warns scholars not to get too wrapped up in the metaphor of the body politic, arguing that it must be historicized: “While corporeal representations of the body politic make illness a potent metaphor for cultural and political upheaval,” scholars must “move away from metaphor, or … consider how metaphors and representations shift over time as a reflection of biological processes.” Cristobal Silva, Miraculous Plagues: An Epidemiology of Early New England Narrative (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 15.

145 Hall, Worlds of Wonder, 167-69.
Nevertheless, the ordered communities created via ritual remained vulnerable to devouring hungers within and without. Despite witnessing Indian rituals of feasting and fasting, English and French observers rarely recognized these practices as equivalent to European ones, instead reading Native bodies as impossible to discipline. English denominations warred amongst each other and with French Catholics over the proper means of mortifying the body. Moreover, English faith in the efficacy of the communal fast eroded over the course of the colonial period, particularly as the Great Awakening encouraged believers to seek a more personal and less community-mediated experience of faith. In the end, in the face of continuous borderlands violence, many observers began to suspect that feasting and fasting could not turn God’s anger away from their sinful communities. Rituals of eating and not-eating both used religion to preserve community cohesion, and revealed when these ideals began to crumble.

This chapter compares English Protestant, French Catholic, and varying Native religions’ rituals of feasting and fasting, and argues that they shared goals of disciplining the body and regulating communities. Religious feasting and fasting on both sides of the Atlantic has received considerable scholarly attention, with an emphasis on these rituals’ importance in maintaining social control.\textsuperscript{146} Scholars of religion in early America have argued for varying degrees of

hybridity and syncretism between colonial and Native religious practices. While scholars have pointed to similarities between rituals of feasting and fasting in English, French, and Native cultures, historians have not completely fleshed out the relationships between these practices. Historians of the body, meanwhile, have emphasized the ways authorities in New England attempted to control the social hierarchy through control of the body, and how individuals resisted these attempts. Pushing back against Foucault’s totalizing concepts of culture, scholars of the body are beginning to focus on the agency of the body and the means by which the body resists cultural inscription. Finally, both food studies and religious studies have pointed to the ways that food and food-related rituals have the potential to foster both inclusion and exclusion in communities.

In the borderlands between New England and New France, rituals of feasting and fasting faced a variety of intercultural challenges. The largest challenge of all was how to maintain belief in these rituals’ efficacy in a violent world forever teetering on the edge of chaos. This chapter examines the dangers that the threat of hunger posed to communities, then surveys first

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149 In *Racial Indigestion*, Kyla Wazana Tompkins argues that white mass culture struggled mightily to objectify black bodies in nineteenth-century America. Nevertheless, “the constitution of whiteness via the most racist images and practices…is neither seamless nor easy. …black bodies and subjects stick in the throat of the (white) body politic, refusing to be consumed.” Tompkins, *Racial Indigestion*, 8. For another example of this scholarship, see Isobel Armstrong, “Bodily Things and Thingly Bodies: Circumventing the Subject-Object Binary,” in *Bodies and Things in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture*, ed. Katharina Boehm (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 17-41.

European, then Indian practices of feasting and fasting designed to protect peoples from hunger and other calamities. Europeans and Native peoples both had specific regulations on how and when to fast or feast. Rituals of eating and not-eating controlled unruly bodies, even if different communities disagreed on what constituted unruliness. Europeans and Native peoples alike marked the eve of wartime with feasting or fasting, in the hopes that communal eating or not-eating would protect the group from violence. Finally, the chapter turns to the example of minister and enthusiastic faster Jonathan Edwards to trace the decline of fasting as a communitarian process in New England as a result of the Great Awakening. In the chaos of the borderlands, even the rituals designed to keep chaos at bay began to collapse.

The Threat of Hunger

Hunger imperiled the borderlands across cultures. Among Algonquian-speaking peoples, the most gruesome threat took the form of a cannibalistic creature called the windigo.\textsuperscript{151} Living in seasonal cycles of feast and famine, these peoples were deeply familiar with scarcity, and feared what hunger could do to its sufferers.\textsuperscript{152} The windigo took possession of hungry people and turned them into monsters. Jesuit missionaries in Quebec in 1661 heard disturbing tales from a party of French and Native men traveling through Tadoussac. On their journey, several of the Native men developed a “disease” that gave them “a more than canine hunger” for human flesh.\textsuperscript{153} They were “unable to appease or glut their appetite” and “ever seeking fresh prey.”\textsuperscript{154}

\textsuperscript{151} This monster has different names in different languages, but is most commonly called windigo in English. Shawn Smallwood, \textit{Dangerous Spirits: The Windigo in Myth and History} (Toronto: Heritage, 2014), 22.


\textsuperscript{153} \textit{Jesuit Relations} 46, 263.

\textsuperscript{154} \textit{Jesuit Relations} 46, 263.
Suffering from this monstrous disease, the Native men murdered their French companions and, presumably, ate them.

The horrific potential of becoming a cannibal haunted non-Algonquian peoples, as well. The Jesuit missionaries Joseph Chaumont and Claude Dablon reported in the 1650s that one Onondaga man had a dream of hosting a cannibalistic feast. Because many indigenous peoples believed that dreams were “as real as waking experience,” the man feared the taboo implications of his dream. He called a meeting of community leaders and informed them “that he was ruined, as he had had a dream impossible of fulfillment.” Beyond fearing for himself, the man feared the terrible social and global implications of his desires: “his ruin would entail that of the whole Nation; and…a universal overthrow and destruction of the earth was to be expected.” Eating human flesh was so forbidden that cannibalism threatened the community and the entire world. To prevent this scenario from coming to pass, the community leaders devised a ceremonial solution for the man’s dream. The group arranged for a human sacrifice, choosing a female victim and ornamenting her body with jewelry, “bracelets, collars, crowns.” The man who had the dream made a move to strike the woman down, but instead declared, “I am satisfied, my dream requires nothing further.” Ritual reined in the man’s abnormal desire for human flesh. A community solution to the dream preserved “the whole Nation” and “the earth” from destruction.

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155 Smallwood, Dangerous Spirits, 24-25.
156 Jesuit Relations 42, 151.
157 Jesuit Relations 42, 153.
158 Jesuit Relations 42, 153.
The Jesuits could not comprehend these beliefs—“Is it not a great charity to open the eyes of people so grossly in error?” the missionaries who witnessed these events asked—but such fears also troubled the French and English. The French explorer and Huguenot minister Jean de Léry, who had an adventurous enough life that he witnessed starvation and cannibalism first-hand on two continents and at sea, shocked readers with his accounts of famine during the siege of the French fortified city of Sancerre. As Sancerre’s Huguenots withstood months of siege by the French crown’s Catholic troops, the people of the city ate their way first through larger animals such as donkeys, mules, and horses, all the way down to their hooves and the leather of their harnesses. The siege stretched on and people turned to more desperate sources of food: grass, shoe leather, and at least in isolated cases, human flesh. A couple whose toddler had recently died butchered her corpse and shared the flesh with a neighbor. De Léry describes the horror of the scene: in the kitchen, he looked upon the child’s “two thighs, legs & feet in a pot with vinegar, spices & salt, ready to cook & put on the fire.” Authorities violently punished the adult participants in the meal: the neighbor, an old woman, died almost immediately in prison, and her body was burned, while the wife was strangled and the husband burned alive. Sancerre’s leaders brutally punished the bodies of the would-be cannibals in order to deter others from looking hungrily at their neighbors. De Léry’s multiple experiences of starvation, famine, and cannibalism served as a worst case scenario for early modern Europeans.


161 Jean de Léry, Histoire Memorable de la Ville de Sancerre (np, 1574), 131, 139.

In response to such horrors, early moderns turned to fasting and prayer. In *The Sinner’s Complaint to God*, the English Catholic John Gother recorded prayers for times of “Publick Calamity,” which, like Protestant sermons and devotional writing, beseeched an angry God for forgiveness. “I Confess, O sovereign Lord, the Justice of the Scourge that is upon us,” began this prayer, before observing that “our own Sins are become our Punishment.” Like other commentators, Gother turned to metaphors of eating to illustrate humanity’s dire state, begging God, “Let not…thy People be consumed” by disaster. Similarly, the Anglican missionary William Andrews linked calamity and hunger when he translated prayers into Mohawk: “A Prayer in the Time of Dearth and Famine” appeared next to “A Prayer in the Time of War and Tumult.”

The Puritan John Norden’s writings on hunger distinguished between famine, which meant widespread starvation, and dearth, food shortage that largely afflicted the poor. He decried the ways that dearth widened the gap between rich and poor, noting that food shortage “pineth the needie, and filleth the wealthie.” Famine was a “grievous plague” and “greedie monster,” whose “violent furie” made people eat “lothsome” foods, the “basest” and “vilest things.” Because famine and dearth both signified God’s anger against sinners, it behooved the faithful to turn to “true repentance and faithfull prayer” to prevent or put an end to hunger. Norden’s

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164 Gother, *The Sinner’s Complaint to God*, 548.


“Prayer in the time of Famine and Dearth” noted that “the staffe of our sustinance is broken,” a reference to bread as the “staff of life” and the biblical famines in Leviticus 26:26 and Psalm 105:16. From this image of scarcity, Norden turned to invoking miracles of sustenance, from the barrel of meal and cruse of oil that kept Elijah alive in 1 Kings 17, to Jesus’s miracle of the loaves and fishes which fed five thousand. “Our flesh is weake,” Norden beseeched God, “and vnable to vndergo the want of necessary food.” Of course, this same weakness of body had tempted people into sin in the first place. Norden did not explicitly mention fasting in the regime of repentance and prayer the faithful would undertake in a time of scarcity, but paradoxically, it is likely that they would have fasted for an end to hunger. Some scholars have argued that fasting rituals developed in part to reduce pressure on food supplies.

This difference between intentional and unintentional hunger was crucial. Where unintentional hunger endangered all manner of social relations, the intentional hunger of fasting made wonders possible. Lawrence Hammond noted in his diary that with a drought threatening, the congregations of the Boston Old Church, Charlestown, and Dorchester kept a day of fasting and prayer on May 3, 1688. At the bottom of the page, Hammond later drew a pointing hand (a symbol called a manicule) and wrote, “Note that ever since ye fast on May 3d much raines hath seasonably & mercyfully fallen….praised be God.” A 1642 pamphlet entitled The

169 Norden, A Pensiu Soules Delight, 312.
170 Norden, A Pensiu Soules Delight, 312-313.
171 Norden, A Pensiu Soules Delight, 314.
173 Lawrence Hammond, diary, 1687-1694, Pre-Revolutionary Diaries, 5.3, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts.
174 Lawrence Hammond, diary.
Wonderful Effects of a True and Religious Fast credited Henry V’s remarkable victory at Agincourt to the fast day he declared the day before, which entailed “heavy humiliation, strict abstinence both in beast as well as in man,” and “devout praying.”175 The efficacy of fasting arose from its ability to discipline the body and mind. In turn, God granted miracles. Or so fasting communities hoped. Practitioners argued that fasting only achieved miraculous results under very specific circumstances. A “true fast” required the complete devotion of body, mind, and spirit. And English, French, and Native communities disagreed bitterly about how to do it.

European Feasts and Fasts: How (and How Not) to Feast and Fast

Lewis Bayly’s The Practice of Piety, first published in 1611 and reprinted dozens of times in the following century, tells us that there were no fewer than six kinds of “fasting” in Puritan early modern England. First, there was “a constrained Fast,” in which people did not eat because they lacked either the food or the appetite.176 “This is rather Famine than Fasting,” Bayly admitted.177 Next, the “Natural Fast” was a medical fast, carried out “for the Health of our Body.”178 The third type, the “Civil Fast,” called on citizens to eat a more spare diet in order to maintain “greater Plenty” for the commonwealth.179 Mose’s forty days in the desert typified the “Miraculous” fourth type of fast; “This is rather to be Admired than Imitated,” Bayly acknowledged.180 Bayly particularly urged authority figures such as “Ministers and Judges” to

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176 Lewis Bayly, The Practice of Piety: Directing a Christian How to Walk, That He May Please God (Boston: B. Green, 1718), 255.
177 Bayly, The Practice of Piety, 255.
178 Bayly, The Practice of Piety, 255.
179 Bayly, The Practice of Piety, 255.
180 Bayly, The Practice of Piety, 255.
partake of the “Daily Fast,” reducing their meat consumption “that he is not made heavier, but more cheerful, to serve God.” Finally, the “Religious Fast” rendered “Body and Soul the fitter to Pray,” particularly in “extraordinary” circumstances.  

Gother’s *A Practical Catechism* similarly sought to delineate the “many good Purposes of a Christian Life” that fasting could fulfill. Fasting was but “one Practice of Virtue,” one component of that good Christian life. But moreover, fasting could change the world. Gother wrote of fasting’s effectiveness for “overcoming the devil,” “moving God to…Mercies,” and “obtaining particular Grace and Protection.” Fasting could fight off evil and win God’s protection and forgiveness.  

These explications of fasting, both Protestant and Catholic, reveal that fasting held a wealth of meanings and took a number of forms. These fasts took place at the individual, household, congregational, or national level. They were famines and miracles and rationing, or fasts carried out for medical or religious purposes. They were means of vanquishing evil and seeking God’s favor. These definitions of fasts suggest that the word “fasting” was far more elastic in early modern Europe than in our own time. Fasting entailed a broad series of practices of disciplining the body as a means of changing the world.

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English Protestant religious writers imagined a practice of fasting that entailed far more than simple abstention from food (which was not, in fact, so simple). Bayly’s *The Practice of Piety* contained a very comprehensive definition of private fasting. Drawing on Leviticus 23:28, Bayly first declared that fasters must not work or engage in “worldly Business.” Second, fasting required complete abstention from food, or at least “so far as health will permit.” Fasters must deprive themselves of “good and costly Apparel” as well as adequate sleep. In addition to these restrictions, Bayly proposed a more wide-ranging series of bodily mortifications, arguing that a true fast encompassed all the senses and the whole body. Bayly urged fasters to keep “our eyes… from beholding vanities,” “our Ears from hearing Mirth or Musick,” “our Nostrils from pleasant Smells,” and “our Tongues from Lying, Dissembling, and Slandering” (or, of course, tasting). Moreover, “the use of the Marriage-bed” was forbidden. With work, food, sleep, sex, and any sensual pleasure prohibited, the hungry, uncomfortable, tired, perhaps sexually frustrated fasting person was primed to engage in the “inward” work of the day: first “Repentance,” then “Prayer.”

Over a century and a half later, Samuel Pike’s *Public Fasting* imposed similar requirements upon those participating in a public, not private fast. While the public aspects of

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188 Bayly, *The Practice of Piety*, 258.
193 Samuel Pike, *Public Fasting; Or, the Manner in which Christians Should Observe a Public Fast* (London: n.p., 1757).
these fast days—namely, going to worship and participating in public prayer—were important, the domestic aspects of fasting remained crucial to an effective fast day. As in *The Practice of Piety*, Pike noted that fasters must abstain from sin, labor, food, and sex, and devote their energies to activities such as “Bible study, “solemn Meditation and serious Consideration,” “humble Confession and Supplication,” and “Conversation with each other upon suitable Subjects.”

Catholic writers described the physical and mental work of feast or fast days in similar terms, but with key differences. Gother’s instructions for observing Lent laid out the regulations for Catholic fast days. Instead of the complete abstention from food that his Protestant counterparts urged, Gother told his readers “To eat but one Meal a day,” abstaining both from meat and “Whit-Meats.” The lone meal of the day should not “provoke to Gluttony” with “choice and expensive” foods, instead complementing the general theme of “Fasting and Mortification.” The fasting person must not “gratify, when it is a time to punish” fleshly appetites. Unlike Bayly’s comprehensive bodily definition of fasting, Gother’s focused simply on abstention from food, not from all comfort and pleasure.

While Catholic fasting regulations allowed consumption of food, the inner work of fast days—prayer and reflection—united Catholics and Protestants. Nevertheless, Gother’s rhetoric about this devotional work came off as milder than that of his Protestant contemporaries. To Gother, the fast day demanded that the faithful “keep a more than ordinary Watch on the Soul,”

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197 Gother, *A Practical Catechism*, 324.
and focus, “as far as Circumstances will permit,” on “Praying, Reading, and doing good Works.” A fasting person “ought to consider himself as an Offender, who is to make Atonement for his past Sins and sue for Mercy,” Gother wrote. Gother’s mandates, to “consider” oneself a sinner, to devote oneself to prayer only “as far as Circumstances will permit,” compared rather tepidly to Browne’s call that sinners reach into their hearts and slay their desires before the eyes of God.

The differences in Protestant and Catholic procedures did not end there. Both Pike and Bayly explained in detail why it was particularly important to “abstain even from your ordinary Food” on fast days. That writers argued repeatedly and vehemently for the necessity of not eating on fast days suggests that it might have been, ironically, one of the most-violated provisions of fasting. Not-eating served vital spiritual purposes, these writers insisted. A day of hunger “humbled” the body and soul, reminding fasters that God provided their sustenance. “We are Sinners before the Lord exceedingly,” Pike scolded readers, and the act of fasting demonstrated “that we have forfeited the very Food we eat” by repaying God’s beneficence with sin. Moreover, Pike argued that those experiencing the “deep Concern and Grief” that came with acknowledging their sinful natures would lose their appetites anyway. By contrast, Bayly explained that physical hunger also whetted the appetite for “spiritual and heavenly Food.”

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198 Gother, Instructions for the Whole Year, 9.
199 Gother, Practical Catechism, 324.
200 Pike, Public Fasting, 5.
202 Pike, Public Fasting, 7.
203 Pike, Public Fasting, 7.
204 Bayly, The Practice of Piety, 258.
Religious fasting made the body hungry for food, but also hungry for God, which is why Catholics fasted before taking the Eucharist.205

Besides these risks of physically breaking the fast, religious writers also inveighed against shirking the mental and spiritual work of fasting. Would-be fasters frequently fell short in their devotions: “There are certainly great Abuses in the keeping of Holy Days and Fasts, such as are very provoking to God,” noted Gother.206 Protestant fast day sermons frequently cited Isaiah 58-59, which read in part, “Is it such a Fast that I have chosen—wilt thou call this a Fast, and an acceptable Day to the Lord?”207 This passage warned that fulfilling the physical requirements of fasting, but not making a true reformation of one’s behavior, would render the fast day ineffective for regaining God’s mercy. “It is not the Vacuity of the Stomach, but the purity of the Heart that God respects,” declared Bayly.208 Ministers around New England agreed. Benjamin Colman decried the “monstrous Iniquity” and “Hypocrisie” of assuming that fasting and “Shews of Devotion” alone were evidence of the people’s “Righteousness.”209 Marston Cabot wrote that those who would “affect a gloominess of Countenance, Speech and Behaviour” fasted only for their own vanity and “not unto God.”210 Arthur Browne quoted from another verse of Isaiah to


206 Gother, Practical Catechism, 321.


208 Bayly, The Practice of Piety, 258.


underline the grave consequences of refusing to fast: “If ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be 
devoured with the Sword” of God’s judgment. Or worse, as Browne continued, quoting Amos 
8:11, rebellious sinners would face a hunger unlike the intentional hunger of fasting:  
“a famine…of hearing the word of the Lord.” Yet as writers stressed the dire necessity of 
mental and spiritual participation in fast days, their choice of biblical language veered back 
towards the alimentary: those who did not heed their words risked “famine” or being “devoured 
with the Sword.” The body, which fasting was supposed to hold at bay, crept back into their 
rhetoric all the same.

Just as not-fasting imperiled the body and soul, English writers agreed that fasting 
benefited spiritual and physical health. In An Ease for a Diseased Man, published in 1625, M.M. 
reminded readers that “all sicknesse of body proceedeth from God,” and advised people in poor 
health to fast, pray, and repent, so that God might “forgive thy sinne, and consequently take 
away thy affliction.” Roger Williams enumerated the useful spiritual effects of fasting, writing 
that it put distance between body and mind, the better for “devoting of the soul to 
heavenly considerations.” Just as eating too much caused the body to surfeit, Williams 
cautioned against “spirituall surfets,” when “feeding too much upon the comforts of yoak 
fellows, children, credit, profit” resulted in “bitterness, and loathing.” Similarly, just as fasting

213 Browne, The Necessity of Reformation, 12.
214 M.M., An Ease for a Diseased Man (London: W. Iowes, 1625), 1, 3.
215 Roger Williams, Experiments of Spiritual Life & Health, and Their Preservatives (London, 1652), 47.
216 Williams, Experiments of Spiritual Life & Health, 48.
purged the physical body, it also “cleans[ed] out our spirituall Humours.” On the other hand, William Forster cautioned against “fast[ing] too long,” as “preternatural,” and indicated that certain populations could tolerate fasting more than others: “Old Men can fast easily; Men of ripe Age can fast almost as much; but young People and Children can hardly fast at all.”

For Puritans, fasting was but one outgrowth of a religious culture that valorized adversity and asceticism. Anne Bradstreet told her son Simon that “Downey beds make drowsy persons, but hard lodging keeps the eyes open.” Life’s adversity was a spiritual test, Bradstreet wrote, comparing believers to grain which must be “ground to powder” before it could be made into bread; “God so deals with his servants: He grinds them with grief and pain till they turn to dust.” She compared the believer’s spiritual trials to the journey of a “weary pilgrim,” beset by thorns, “hungry wolves,” and a diet of “wild fruits, in stead of bread.” The reward for this suffering came in death, the peace when “This body shall in silence sleep,” waiting in turn for the final reunion of body and soul at the resurrection.

Despite rhetoric about bodily mortification, however, fasting did not necessarily entail a complete abstention from food. Puritans, Anglicans, and Catholics disagreed about what level of abstention constituted true fasting. An ideal ‘fasting’ diet in early modern Europe included fish,
beans, vegetables and fruits, and grains, but not meat or other animal products. Puritans fasted more austerely, denying themselves all food on fast days, although those too weak to go twenty-four hours without eating (children or the ailing) were allowed more leeway. Similarly, the Anglican writer Simon Patrick noted that for those of delicate constitutions, reducing food made an acceptable substitute for not eating at all. While “imperfect,” wrote Patrick, a fast of “abstinence from some kind of Food, which we most love; or in feeding sparingly of any kind,” would do the trick, so long as this partial abstention would “afflict” the faster, bodily affliction being the true goal of fasting. Gother likewise allowed exceptions to fast day rules “for particular Reasons” (which he did not list), in which case certain fasters might “have leave to eat Flesh at Dinner.”

Beyond these guidelines, however, lay a great deal of ambiguity. The pre-reform Catholic church’s dispensations for eating certain forbidden foods on fast days frustrated many. Gother chided Catholics who ate “Fruit betwixt Dinner and Collation, as if this did no injury to the Fast.” Patrick likewise warned against being too flexible with one’s fasting, decrying churchgoers who canceled out their abstemious day with a “Luxurious Supper,” or who on a fast day simply replaced their customary meals with “another kind of Diet.” These practices,

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223 Albala, *Food in Early Modern Europe*, 196.

224 Finch, *Dissenting Bodies*, 171.


226 Gother, *Instructions for the Whole Year*, 11.

227 Albala, *Food in Early Modern Europe*, 197, 200.

228 Gother, *Instructions for the Whole Year*, 7-8.

Patrick insisted, were “no more Fasting, than change of Apparel is going naked.” The Puritan Nicholas Bownde claimed that Catholic fasts were too lax, complaining that Catholics pared down their fast days to skipping the light evening meal, “so that they held it a very good fast, if a man went to bedde supperlesse upon their fasting daies.” With the material boundaries between a good and an insufficient fast so contested, it seemed that intention mattered more than action on a fast day.

**European Feasts and Fasts: When to Fast or Feast**

The Church of England’s calendar of feast and fast days required its members to feast or fast 195 days of the year, with fast days outnumbering feasts three to one. This was a simplification of the even more complex Catholic calendar of these observances, which included dozens of feast and fast days but also many days of abstinence, which meant abstaining only from meat. Anglicans and Catholics had the opportunity to take communion once a week or even more often. By contrast, Puritans sought to distance themselves from a calendar of such frequent celebration by restricting their feast and fast days to only a few days per year. Plymouth colony fasted three days for every feast. These ceremonies served as the “[t]he main civic ritual” of Puritan New England.

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235 Finch, *Dissenting Bodies*, 173.

236 Hall, *Worlds of Wonder*, 212.
In New England, fast and feast days were supposed to be declared only when necessary, but the observances became both increasingly routine and increasingly politicized by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{237} Try as they might to avoid the Catholic and Anglican calendars, Puritans often still mirrored them, declaring fast days in the lean springtime months and days of thanksgiving after harvest in the autumn.\textsuperscript{238} They also declared fasts in response to positive or negative events such as military victories, earthquakes, or attacks from the Indians or French.\textsuperscript{239} Underlining the regularity of these proclaimed rituals, in December 1696, the Lieutenant Governor’s Council of Massachusetts voted to set a fast day for January 14 and a day of thanksgiving for February 4, three weeks later.\textsuperscript{240} In doing so they unintentionally echoed Catholic practices of vigils the day before feast days—fasting one day, feasting the next.\textsuperscript{241} These two kinds of bodily discipline were intertwined across cultures.

Like the timing of feast and fast days, the language of proclamations of these days tended towards the formulaic in Massachusetts. Proclamations listed the visible signs of God’s mercy or displeasure; set a date for a day of thanksgiving or fasting and prayer; enumerated topics for prayers, either begging God for lenience or expressing thanks; and briefly instructed ministers and individuals about their responsibilities for the day. A broadside proclaiming a fast day in May 1691 noted that the province suffered under “\textit{many & heavy Judgments of Heaven}” because

\textsuperscript{237} Hall, \textit{Worlds of Wonder}, 171-72, 185.

\textsuperscript{238} Hambrick-Stowe, \textit{The Practice of Piety}, 100-101, 249.

\textsuperscript{239} Hambrick-Stowe, \textit{The Practice of Piety}, 101.

\textsuperscript{240} Fast Day Proclamation Manuscript, December 11, 1696, Massachusetts Archives Collections, 11:122-124, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston, Massachusetts.

\textsuperscript{241} \textit{Rituel du Diocese de Quebec}.
of the sinful behavior of its inhabitants, which were “provocations” to God.\textsuperscript{242} The proclamation enumerated the many “matters that call for most Earnest SUPPLICATION unto GOD”: the ongoing King William’s War with “FRENCH and INDIAN Enemies,” the necessity of a successful harvest and the “Husbandry of the Ensuing Year,” and the continued “Prosperity of Their Majesties” William and Mary back in England.\textsuperscript{243} Next, the proclamation instructed individuals and ministers about their tasks on the fast day: the “several Ministers and Assemblies” would enact the fast in their communities, and no one could engage in “Servile Labour” on the day of the fast.\textsuperscript{244} If these efforts were successful, God might see fit to “bring us up again from the Depths of the Earth.”\textsuperscript{245}

Despite the weighty rhetoric, the proclamations made use of the same template over and over, with official records hinting at the repetitiveness of these declarations. Resolving to declare a day of fasting in August 1701, the Massachusetts Governor’s Council noted several incidents of “awfull providence,” including the deaths of the governor and lieutenant governor, and “the blasting the fruits of the Earth.”\textsuperscript{246} The resolution ended, however, with the reminder to append “such other things as the Hon[ora]ble Council shall see cause to add.”\textsuperscript{247} Similarly, an April 1704 resolution to set days of thanksgiving noted only “various Occasions” of God’s providence,

\textsuperscript{242} Fast Day Proclamation Broadside, April 23, 1691, Massachusetts Archives Collections, 11:58.
\textsuperscript{243} Massachusetts Archives Collections, 11:58.
\textsuperscript{244} Massachusetts Archives Collections, 11:58.
\textsuperscript{245} Massachusetts Archives Collections, 11:58.
\textsuperscript{246} Massachusetts Archives Collections, 11:164.
\textsuperscript{247} Massachusetts Archives Collections, 11:164.
“which It is left to the Hon[ora]ble Board to Enumerate.”248 Puritans, Anglicans, and Catholics all observed a highly codified practice of fasting at specific times of year.

**European Feasts and Fasts: Fasting on the Eve of War**

When England and France declared war upon each other, or violence troubled the borderlands in ‘peacetime,’ English communities in New England gathered for fasting and prayer. They followed the same procedure when they sent militiamen off to war. English communities assembled to listen to their religious authorities, in the same distinctive jeremiad style that characterized fast day sermons.249 Ministers frequently mentioned the threats of hunger and violence in their fast day sermons, and of course preached upon these themes more explicitly when addressing soldiers about to set off on military expeditions. Arthur Browne preached to his listeners in Portsmouth, New Hampshire during the Seven Years’ War in 1757. He pointed to recent English defeats in western New York and the Ohio River valley as evidence that God’s wrath took earthly form: “When he is pleased to consign a nation or people to destruction, he distracts their councils, infatuates their commanders, and dispirits…their armies, so that they become an easy prey.”250

Following the outbreak of war between the Wabanaki Confederacy and the English in 1722, Benjamin Wadsworth reminded a crowd in Boston of Deuteronomy 23:9, “When the Host goeth forth against thine enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing.” He exhorted both soldiers and those who remained at home to be extra careful to avoid sin during the heightened stakes of wartime. Wadsworth noted that war destabilized society and brought its own “peculiar

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248 Massachusetts Archives Collections, 11:194b.


danger” of people “Indulging themselves in vicious practices.” Soldiers faced the greatest moral hazards, removed from the watchful eyes of their home communities and “their usual Neighbours.” Soldiers also, of course, faced the greatest physical dangers, from the weapons of their enemies to the illness that spread amongst men “crouded in Heaps,” and enduring “great Heats, Colds, Rains,” “Hard fare, Hard lodging,” and “Hard marches.” Wadsworth concluded that soldiers faced “unutterable, inconcealable” peril “If we fight against Men with our Bodies, and against GOD by our Sins.” Meanwhile, those on the home front also bore spiritual responsibility for soldiers’ well-being, lest civilians “expose and hazard [soldiers’] welfare by our own wickedness.” Finally, Wadsworth placed the eruption of war into a context of God’s continued wrath against “a professing but a very degenerate People,” pointing to a deadly smallpox outbreak, a drought, and skirmishes with “Pirates on the Sea” and “Indians on the Land” as evidence that the people had not reformed to God’s satisfaction. The community’s future, in light of these various misfortunes, remained frighteningly uncertain: “We are lately entred into a New War, we know the beginning but dont know the end of it.”

Samuel Wigglesworth preached in Ipswich in 1755 to soldiers about to embark on an expedition against the French at Crown Point. Wigglesworth told his listeners that “America is like to have a principal Share in the Confusions and Miseries, if not to be the bloody Seat, of the

251 Benjamin Wadsworth, True Piety the Best Policy for Times of War (Boston: B. Green, 1722), 5.
252 Wadsworth, True Piety the Best Policy for Times of War, 5.
253 Wadsworth, True Piety the Best Policy for Times of War, 10.
254 Wadsworth, True Piety the Best Policy for Times of War, 8.
255 Wadsworth, True Piety the Best Policy for Times of War, 17.
256 Wadsworth, True Piety the Best Policy for Times of War, 22-23.
257 Wadsworth, True Piety the Best Policy for Times of War, 22.
arising War.” Wigglesworth reminded the soldiers that this was a religious war, which must protect New England from the “monstrous Idolatries and detestable Errors” of the Catholic French. Unlike Wadsworth, Wigglesworth distinguished between the responsibilities of soldiers and those of “the Body of the People, who are to remain home.” But like Browne and Wadsworth, Wigglesworth criticized his listeners for religious failings, specifically the failure to qualify for the Lord’s Supper: “Few in the present Times [are] coming to do [God] Honour at his Solemn Feast.” Like other ministers, Wigglesworth fretted that the religious failings of New Englanders caused the violence that engulfed the borderlands.

Samuel Checkley sounded similar themes when he preached on February 28, 1744 at the New South Church in Boston on a public fast day “to ask in particular, that it would please God to succeed the expedition formed against His Majesty’s enemies.” Checkley warned his listeners that “War is an Effect of Sin,” and that the frequent conflicts in New England and New France’s borderlands served as evidence of the sinfulness of the people who lived there. Like other ministers, he entreated soldiers and civilians to resist the temptation to sin during wartime, for such “Iniquities” would surely bring down God’s wrath on military enterprises. Checkley also echoed Jeremiah 30:16, warning soldiers not to “delight in War, nor love to shed Blood, and

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258 Samuel Wigglesworth, *God's Promise to an Obedient People, of Victory Over Their Enemies* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1755), 16.

259 Wigglesworth, *God's Promise to an Obedient People*, 17.


prey upon and devour our Fellow-Creatures.” This alimentary warning against devouring one’s enemies contrasted with Wabanaki war rhetoric: “To you is given this hamlet to eat.”

Phillips Payson, the pastor of the church in Walpole (probably Massachusetts), preached to his congregation on February 26, 1740, a declared day of public fasting in response to the “present war with Spain, and other judgments.” God’s “righteous displeasure,” Payson declared, took the form of war, as in Jeremiah 25:29, “I will call for the Sword upon all the Inhabitants of the Earth.” In Payson’s telling, God’s judgment was ravenous: “He…Calls for the Sword and gives it Commission…to devour all Flesh, and to make his Arrows drunk with Blood.” God’s sword of judgment devoured, unless his people fasted. This rhetoric laid bare English anxieties about appetite and violence, demonstrating the high stakes of the fast day in times of war. Ministers hoped that fasting would maintain the social order in the hope of keeping the peace.

**European Feasts and Fasts: Controlling the Body**

Fasting was an important instrument of social control in early modern Europe, where gluttony stood in for many other kinds of sin and the stomach shaped moral life just as much as the soul. The writers of fast day sermons insisted that the body had to be prepared for the

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265 Checkley, *Prayer a Duty. When God’s People Go Forth to War*, 10. Jeremiah 30:16: Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured; and all thine adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil thee shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon thee will I give for a prey.

266 Jesuit Relations 66, 203.


meditative tasks of fasting and prayer, a preparation that writers over and over again described in
disciplinary terms. Writers repeatedly cited Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:27, “I keep under my body,
and bring it into subjection.”271 In the rhetoric of Protestant and Catholic writers, “by bringing
the Body into subjection, it helps to raise our Minds to Heavenly thoughts.”272 Abstaining from
food punished the “animal frame” until it became “subservient to the Frame of the Mind” of
humiliation and repentance.273 It was necessary to “subdue our Flesh to the Spirit,” to “beat
down our body to an holy…readines for Gods Service.”274 The flesh needed to be “chastened,”
the body “afflict[ed]” and “ke[pt] under,” the “animal Appetites” forced “into Subjection.”275
Fasting enabled the “Mortification of fleshly Lusts, Appetites, and Inordinate Passions,” as it
“mortifie[d] the Flesh.”276

Like his Protestant counterparts, Gother vividly described the same principles for his
Catholic readers in a section of his catechism entitled “Of Self-Denial.” “From what Head does
this Necessity of Self-denial arise?,” met the following answer: “the Corruption of Nature” urged
“our Soul and Body…with a sort of Violence, to Evil.”277 Only authoritarian measures could
preserve the body and soul from evil, Gother insisted. Believers must “kee[p] a strict Watch” and

239-247.

271 Patrick, A Treatise of Repentance and of Fasting, 105. Early Piety the Duty & Interest of Youth, As It was Shown,
in A Sermon Preached at Sherbourn, on May 10, 1727 (Boston: D. Henchman, 1728), 34.

272 Patrick, A Treatise of Repentance and of Fasting, 106.

273 Pike, Public Fasting, 7.


275 Joseph Sewall, Nineveh’s Repentance and Deliverance (Boston: J. Draper, 1740).


277 Gother, Practical Catechism, 271.
set “a Guard” upon themselves, in order to “brin[g] them into the Subjection to the Will of God.”

“All is to be kept in Government,” Gother elaborated, before giving a comprehensive list of the governed parts: “the Understanding, the Will, the Memory, the Heart, the Affections, the Desires, the whole List of Passions, the Eyes, the Ears, the Tongue, the Taste, the Hands, the Feet.” Believers had to monitor their entire bodies and souls against sin.

Beaten down, kept under, afflicted, chastened, subdued, subjected, subservient, mortified, guarded, governed: the unruly body threatened the spirit and needed to be tamed. In this, the body was yet another lowly rank below a vast patriarchy of God, kings, ministers, and fathers: “Govern well your appetites,” warned one minister in a fast day sermon in 1727. Gother echoed Browne’s image of monstrous lactation in a dire warning of his own: he declared that Christians who “favour” and “gratify” their “Senses and Appetite” were “nourishing a Monster within their own Breast.”

The allegorical woodcut on the title page of the 1718 edition of Bayly’s *The Practice of Piety*, printed by Benjamin Green in Boston, depicted the components of a pious life (FIGURE 1). At the top of the page, the “Pious Man,” flanked by the key Protestant verbs “Read” and

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280 *Early Piety the Duty & Interest of Youth*, 32. On gender relations and cross-cultural violence, see Little, *Abraham in Arms*. For an example of embattled patriarchy in the colonial period, see Isaac, *Landon Carter’s Uneasy Kingdom*.

281 Gother, *Practical Catechism*, 277.

282 Bayly, *The Practice of Piety*. The woodcut has been attributed to James Franklin, Benjamin Franklin’s older half-brother who apprenticed with a printer in London and took on Franklin as his own apprentice. Lawrence C. Wroth and Marion W. Adams, *American Woodcuts and Engravings, 1670-1800* (Providence: Associates of the John Carter Brown Library, 1946), 7, 17. This was the fifty-third edition of the wildly popular Puritan text.
“Pray,” knelt atop a series of three steps labeled “FAITH,” “HOPE,” and “CHARITY.” His eyes were turned piously towards heaven. The bottom of the page mirrored this tableau. Moses knelt in prayer, the words “FAITH,” “PRAYER,” and “FASTING” beneath his knees. Moses and the pious man were both aligned in the center of the page in the same kneeling pose, symbolizing the believer’s quest to optimize his or her life after that of the bible’s holiest men. At the base of the hill, at the very bottom border of the image, buried deep below the holy men and pious actions, lay the “SPIRIT” and “FLESH.” The flesh was literally of the earth, worldly, with fasting and prayer pinning it down from above. The pious man could not have been further from the body.

Figure 1. Title page of Lewis Bayly, *The Practice of Piety* (Boston: B. Green, 1718), woodcut attributed to James Franklin. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University. Image credit Emily C. Floyd.
Native Feasts and Fasts: How and When to Feast or Fast

Like the English and French, many Indian groups disciplined their bodies using rituals of eating and not-eating. However, where French observers sometimes noted commonalities between these practices and Catholic ones, the English did not necessarily recognize similarities between their own rituals of feasting and fasting and those of Indians.283 Several Indian groups held ceremonial meals at which attendees must consume either everything they had been served, or all of the food at the feast, “even should [they] burst.”284 A feaster who had reached his limits had to find someone else to finish his portion, pleading, “My brother, take pity on me; I am a dead man if thou do not give me life,” and “Eat what I have left.”285 Quentin Stockwell, taken captive by Wabanakis and Norwoolucks from Deerfield, Massachusetts in 1677, ran afoul of this rule during a meal. After running short of food near Lake Champlain in the winter, Stockwell’s captors finally caught “a company of raccoons” and “made a feast.”286 “The manner was that we must eat all,” but Stockwell became full and wanted to save some of the meal to eat later.287 The Indian man sitting next to him offered to hide a piece of meat under his coat for Stockwell, then “discovered” Stockwell’s deception to the rest of the group.288 As punishment, the group forced Stockwell to keep eating, then to drink raccoon fat until he vomited. Stockwell insisted that “I

284 Jesuit Relations 67, 165.
285 Jesuit Relations 67, 165.
286 “Of the Captivity of Quintin Stockwell,” in Tragedies of the Wilderness, ed. Samuel Gardner Drake (Boston: Antiquarian Bookstore and Institute, 1841), 64.
287 “Of the Captivity of Quintin Stockwell,” 64.
288 “Of the Captivity of Quintin Stockwell,” 64.
had enough,” and his captors denied him food for days, goading him that “I [still] had raccoon enough.”

The Jesuit missionary Sébastian Rales called this code of feasting “ridiculous,” and Stockwell complained that he “suffered much” after violating it. In a French-Abenaki dictionary, Rales recorded feasting words, perhaps taken from interactions during the same gut-busting feasts: “I take pleasure in eating, I eat willingly”; “I give to him to eat what I have been given to eat”; and “You over there want to finish my food? Well, I’ll give you everything!” It is possible that the practice of “eating all” grew out of adaptation to an intermittent food supply, gorging when food was available to stockpile calories against periods of scarcity. English and French observers did not recognize it as such, but the requirement “that we must eat all” also represented a kind of ritualistic bodily mortification not unlike fasting, testing the limits of the body’s powers to consume instead of deny. For European writers eager to accuse Indians of gluttony, however, the Indian body was not disciplinable, or if it was, Native peoples took bodily mortification to an extreme that Europeans found disturbing, as discussed below.

Despite these many failures in cross-cultural translation and understanding, French commentators also recognized Native dedication to Catholic feast and fast days. In the early 1640s, Barthelemy Vimont wrote that the Wabanakis he missionized at Sillery observed Sundays and feast days but did not necessarily fast. “They observe Sundays and Festival days by abstaining from hunting, and by saying longer prayers,” he reported. Like many Catholics, the

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289 “Of the Captivity of Quintin Stockwell,” 64.

290 Jesuit Relations 67, 165. “Of the Captivity of Quintin Stockwell,” 64.

291 “Je prends plaisir à manger, je mange volontiers”; “Je lui donne à manger ce qu’on m’avoir donné à manger”; “Tu me dis t’rs [toujours] q je te donne à manger, tu veux par-là faire finir mes vivres, hé-bien je te donne tout.” (My translation.) Sébastian Rales, A Dictionary of the Abnaki Language, In North America (Cambridge, Mass.: Charles Folsom, 1833), 481.
Wabanakis only observed fasts when they could, and Vimont seemed impressed that “Some of them, amid the great labors and fatigues of the hunt, observe the prescribed fasts.” Of course, aside from Catholic dates for fasting, many woodlands Native groups would have been accustomed to fasting “amidst…great labors and fatigues” during hunts and wartime. In 1647, missionary Jacques Buteux similarly related that the community at Sillery observed fast days by “abstain[ing] from work, save in case of necessity, and spend[ing] more time in prayer” than on a non-sacred day. During feast and fast days at another Jesuit mission at Norridgewock, the eldest person or Captain declared to the community that a particular day was “numbered among those that we honor.” Banned from work, and instructed not to eat or drink until worship had concluded, the community gathered in their finest clothing at a dwelling carpeted with spruce boughs. After prayer, the captain warned the community to be “very careful on that day, to do no unseemly deed, or any servile work” throughout the rest of the day. In some ways, every day was a fast day for the Wabanakis. The priest at the mission noted that their seasonal diet adhered to the rules of Catholic fast days: they “have no other food” but fish.

Jesuit missionaries likewise encouraged Indians going out on winter hunts to continue feast and fast days, and made calendars for hunters to keep track of their observances. One priest, while mass-producing calendars, garbled the dates, only discovering his error when hunting party members compared their notes: “It is very easy, in so many days and so many

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292 Jesuit Relations 25, 161, 163-5.
293 Jesuit Relations 23, 315.
294 Jesuit Relations 31, 217.
papers which must be given them, to miss a letter or a stroke of the pen,” he admitted.296 Another converted Indian asked Buteux for what amounted to a worship kit for religious life on the hunt, consisting of a crucifix and candles, a rosary, and a calendar “on which thou shalt mark the days when we must abstain from meat, the Sundays, and the festivals.”297 Wabanaki converts believed that feasting and fasting could bring them good hunting. A converted Wabanaki man, Charles Miaskewat, explicitly linked God’s grace to sustenance in his preaching: “He takes care of us in the forest; he gives us moose; he clothes and warms us; he lodges and feeds us.” Miaskewat called on his community to continue to observe feast and fast days on their hunts.298

Native peoples involved in Jesuit missions faithfully observed Catholic feasts and fasts. While the Jesuits wrote approvingly of these observances, they were not always comfortable with other Native rituals of bodily mortification.

Native Feasts and Fasts: Controlling the Body

Jesuit missionaries often expressed horror at Native rituals of bodily discipline, which they found Native peoples could bear much more easily than themselves. Jean de Brebeuf described one Wendat response to accidental death that he witnessed in the 1630s. Like Protestants or Catholics who fasted and attended religious meetings in response to what they interpreted as signs of their God’s displeasure, Wendats carried out ceremonies to “ appease” their sky spirit when a member of the community died accidentally, from exposure or drowning.299 Multiple villages assembled, feasted, exchanged goods, and finally, processed the

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296 Jesuit Relations 31, 233-5.
297 Jesuit Relations 26, 113-15.
298 Jesuit Relations 25, 161, 163-5.
299 Jesuit Relations 10, 163.
corpse of the deceased person.300 The group carried the body to the burying ground, and the family of the deceased selected young men to cut the flesh from the bones.301 As the men cut up the body, women encircled them and placed “Porcelain beads into their mouths,” telling them that processing the body and deflecting the gods’ anger was a “good service to the whole Country.”302 At last, the men burned the flesh and buried the bones.

While Brebeuf was horrified by this practice, calling it “butchery,” the ceremony had parallels to Puritan and Catholic fast day rites.303 Wendats, Puritans, and Catholics all worked to appease a higher power, by gathering as communities, disciplining bodies, and convening for religious ceremonies. Destroying a body that had died a “bad” death, the Wendat signaled to their sky spirit that they had heard this warning loud and clear.304 After feasting (instead of the Puritan and Catholic fasting that would happen upon such occasions), the Wendats processed and punished the anomalous body. As in the Mass, the participants took sacred material into their mouths, beads instead of the Eucharist.

Although they encouraged their charges to observe feast and fast days, Jesuits expressed horror at Native practices of bodily mortification that they felt went too far. Claude Chauchetière served as missionary to the Kahnawake Mohawks from the 1670s to 1690s. Chauchetière felt both inspired and concerned by the religious fervor of some of the Kahnawake converts, especially women, who fasted as part of a larger program of mortifying their bodies. He wrote

300 Jesuit Relations 10, 163.
301 Jesuit Relations 10, 163.
302 Jesuit Relations 10, 163.
303 Jesuit Relations 10, 163. A fuller explanation of violence and rituals of the consumption of human flesh follows in the next chapter.
304 Seeman, *Death in the New World*, 134.
that pious women “fasted rigorously,” on top of a diet that Chauchetière deemed “not sufficient to keep a man alive”; and despite their reduced calorie intake, the women continued to perform vigorous physical activity, such as chopping wood and farming. When these women did eat, they mixed ashes into their porridge as a further penance. Echoing the rhetoric of English and French texts about religious fasting, the enthusiastic converts of Kahnawake proclaimed the body “their greatest enemy.”

Instead of interpreting their asceticism as a recognizable part of Christian practice, Chauchetière found this religious enthusiasm disturbing, and worried that Satan inspired their zeal. Chauchetière concluded his narration of these practices by noting that the Holy Ghost “regulated” the behavior of the converts “without diminishing their fervor.” With this account, Chauchetière failed to recognize the ways these converts intertwined Christian asceticism with practices of mortification from their own indigenous traditions. By harming their bodies to liberate their souls, these women sought stability in an unstable world. Despite Chauchetière’s horror at Mohawk bodily mortifications, other Jesuits recognized similarities between their own ascetic practices and those of their converts.

Where English observers often critiqued the poverty of Indians, especially those who did not practice agriculture, some Jesuits placed Indian adaptations to scarcity into a more familiar

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305 Jesuit Relations 63, 219.
306 Jesuit Relations 63, 219.
307 Jesuit Relations 63, 219.
308 Jesuit Relations 63, 219.
category of Christian asceticism. François de Crepieul wrote that the Montagnais and Algonquian people he missionized lived a “wandering, penitent, and Humiliating, but patient, peaceful, and innocent life in the Woods.” He lauded their fortitude in the face of “Hunger, thirst, cold, and fatigue,” which he wrote that Native people “endure[d]… more bravely than” the Jesuits. Despite this tolerance for physical hardship, however, Crepieul noted that many of his charges “fasted in spite of themselves,” and that some starved to death. Whenever starvation loomed, Crepieul advised other missionaries to “avoid complaining of The food” within earshot of the Indians. Another Jesuit, Pierre de la Chasse, described the missionary lifestyle of Rales in much the same terms, noting that Rales ate whatever his Abenaki charges did, including “porridge” of “Indian corn-meal” or acorns, and that Rales was “far from complaining” about these foods. In his own writing, Rales claimed an even greater asceticism, telling his nephew that “I never could relish the meat and smoked fish of the Savages; my only nourishment is pounded Indian corn, of which I make every day a sort of broth.” Jesuit missionaries were ambivalent about Native visceral rituals, both marveling at and fearful of their power to mortify their bodies.

Native Feasts and Fasts: Feasting on the Eve of War

310 Cronon, Changes in the Land, 34-53.
311 Jesuit Relations 63, 253.
312 Jesuit Relations 63, 253.
313 Jesuit Relations 63, 255.
314 Jesuit Relations 63, 263. Over a decade later, Crepieul complained vociferously about every aspect of Montagnais lifeways in another letter; whether he voiced these complaints to the Indians is another matter. See Jesuit Relations 65, 43-49.
315 Jesuit Relations 67, 243.
316 Jesuit Relations 67, 95.
While Puritan communities enacted fast days in wartime, either to prepare themselves for sending soldiers to war, or to pray for English victories, northeastern Indians feasted to prepare for battle. This ceremony remained similar between the 1690s, when John Gyles witnessed it, and 1757, when Pierre Roubaud described it. Gyles, taken captive by the Maliseets from Pemaquid, Maine in 1690, wrote that when the Maliseets “determine for war or are entering upon a particular expedition,” they would butcher dogs for a feast and roast one dog’s head whole until “the lips have shrunk from the teeth and left them bare and grinning.”\footnote{317 Gyles, \textit{Memoir of Odd Adventures}, 120.} The leader of the expedition mounted the head on a stick, and sang that the dog’s head symbolized the head of the enemy that he would soon carry. The group passed the dog’s head from man to man to select members of the expedition. Rales, the Jesuit missionary to the Wabanakis, likewise noted in 1722 that when news arrived in Norridgewock that war had broken out between Britain and France, the Wabanakis “kill[ed] dogs for the purpose of making the war-feast, and to find out those men who were inclined to enlist.”\footnote{318 Jesuit Relations 66, 203.} Pierre Roubaud witnessed a similar feast among during the Seven Year’s War in 1757.

European observers did not recognize the parallels of indigenous war preparation to English fast days and wartime sermons. In English and Native communities, the community assembled, and male leaders instructed them on the necessity and spiritual responsibilities of war. In Native as in Puritan and Catholic fast days, proper spiritual preparation extended beyond eating. Wabanaki ceremonies were sex-segregated; men attended the feast, widowed and postmenopausal women and captive men were permitted to sit by the door, and married women ate in their dwellings with their children, for Wabanaki cultures saw female fertility, especially
menstrual blood, as dangerous to hunters and warriors. Eating or not-eating affirmed their commitment, as a community, to the war effort.

However, the indigenous war feast made far more tactical and nutritional sense than the Puritan prewar fast. Raiding parties traveled quickly over long distances with limited food supplies, and English soldiers frequently faced limited or spoiled rations. From a metabolic standpoint, stockpiling calories before such an intense physical undertaking would have been a more prudent choice than fasting. Just as Protestants and Catholics balanced feast days with fast days, Native peoples who feasted before setting out to war prepared themselves for hungry times to come. Returning from a successful raid, the Abenakis celebrated in a way that Hanson saw as analogous to the thanksgiving feasts the English made: “Dancing, Firing Guns,…shouting, drinking, and Feasting,” as “a Kind of Thanks to God put up for their safe Return and good Success.” Despite the many similarities between Native feasts and European fasts on the eve of war, European observers did not recognize feasts as a kind of bodily mortification, or Native bodies as disciplinable at all.

The Decline of the Communal Fast

Divisions within European communities also challenged the efficacy of the communal fast itself. The evolution of the minister Jonathan Edwards’s opinions on fasting show a growing disenchantment with the potential for communal fasting to enact change in the world. Throughout his life, Edwards wrote voluminously on fasting, distinguishing between public,

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communal fasting and what he called “secret fasting and prayer.” Like other ministers, Edwards fretted that people might keep up the appearances of “external religion” even as they engaged in “great degeneracy.” For evidence, he pointed to “Papists and heathens,” the Catholic and indigenous people with whom the English warred in the borderlands; “a person may be a zealous Papist or a zealous heathen and yet be a very wicked man,” Edwards declared, and Protestants could also exhibit such hypocrisy in their public religious behavior. Comparing the observances of his Protestant listeners to those of their sworn enemies, Edwards asked, “Are we zealous of fasts and thanksgivings any otherwise than the Papists are zealous of their saints days?” Worst of all, people who hypocritically engaged in public fasts did not shoulder their burden of the prayer and reformation a true fast required: “They have no sort of sense of their having contributed to the guilt of the land,” and as such “They have so little sense of guilt that they don’t think it worth their while…to pray in secret.” Despite these reservations, Edwards’s congregation observed the same days of fasting and thanksgiving as others across New England.

In Edwards’s view, secret, or wholly private, fasting and prayer did not present the same temptations to its practitioners. Where people could hide their hypocrisy from their neighbors,

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325 Edwards, “Fast Days in Dead Times,” 76.

they could not hide it from God in their private communication with Him. Edwards explained the procedure for private fasting and prayer. First, “set apart a day of fasting and prayer alone.”327 Edwards did not elaborate on what “fasting” entailed—it likely resembled the Puritan fasts described earlier in this chapter—but he had much to say about the contents of the prayer, which was different than “as is wont to be done in public prayer.”328 Secret prayer demanded something difficult and personal: “a very particular rehearsal before God, of the sins of your past life,” as well as “spreading all the abominations of your heart before him.”329 While ministers encouraged secret prayer, Edwards lamented that they did not instruct their communities frequently enough about the importance of secret fasting.330

Edwards himself felt a strong pull towards asceticism, routinely depriving himself of food and sleep, alongside his other devotional behaviors.331 In a diary he kept as a young man, Edwards resolved “to maintain the strictest temperance in eating and drinking,” and “to inquire every night, before I go to bed, whether I have acted in the best way I possibly could, with respect to eating and drinking.”332 He hoped that with “a sparingness in diet,” he would “be able to think clearer, and…gain time” for work.333 Often he did not meet his own expectations: “I do

327 Edwards to Hatheway, 94.
328 Edwards to Hatheway, 94.
329 Edwards to Hatheway, 94.
332 Jonathan Edwards, Diary, 754, 756. See also: “Memorandum. To take special care of these following things:….eating, drinking, and sleeping.” Diary, 771.
333 Jonathan Edwards, Diary, 786.
not seem so greatly and constantly to mortify and deny myself,” he observed, noting that “I am again grown too careless about eating, drinking and sleeping.” Edwards also tracked the effects of this ascetic regime upon his spiritual and physical well-being: “I think I find myself much more sprightly and healthy, both in body and mind, for my self-denial in eating, drinking, and sleeping.” Samuel Hopkins’s biography of Edwards, published soon after his death, emphasized both Edwards’s commitment to asceticism and his “tender and delicate Constitution.” While Edwards “made a Secret of his private Devotion,” Hopkins related that he “often kept Days of Fasting and Prayer in secret.” Despite his “delicate and tender…bodily make” and “comparative small Stock of animal Life,” Edwards practiced “great Self-denial,” Hopkins observed.

Banished from his congregation in Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1751, Edwards traveled west to Stockbridge to missionize the Mahican and Mohawk Indians there. Edwards faced banishment partly because he refused to accept the half-way covenant, the half-century-long compromise that had allowed people to become partial members of their congregations without a public admission of faith. The half-way covenant stressed the importance of community belonging over an individual conversion experience. Edwards and other leaders of

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334 Jonathan Edwards, Diary, 766. In a similar vein: “I have not been watchful enough over my appetite in eating and drinking.” Diary, 766. “This week I have been too careless about eating.” Diary, 768. “I find that when eating, I cannot be convinced in the time of it, that if I should eat more, I should exceed the bounds of strict temperance.” Diary, 784-85.

335 Jonathan Edwards, Diary, 761.

336 Samuel Hopkins, The Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1765), 40.

337 Hopkins, The Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards, 40.

338 Hopkins, The Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards, 40, 42.

the Great Awakening attacked the half-way covenant because they elevated a personal, not
communitarian, experience of God. While this stance led to Edwards’s dismissal from his pulpit,
this and other ideas from the Great Awakening profoundly shaped American Christianity.
Leaving Northampton, Edwards did not leave conflict behind, and the borderlands struggles
between different English factions, the French, the Dutch, Mahicans, Mohawks, and Oneidas
made missionary work complicated, and erupted into the Seven Years’ War by 1754. Edwards
wrote one of his most important works, _Freedom of the Will_, in a palisaded house quartered with
soldiers. Scholars have linked the apocalyptic tone of Edwards’s writings to the violent context
of his time. This world dramatically tested fasting’s efficacy, again and again.

The tension between public and private fasting and piety demonstrated one of the ways
that the Great Awakening transformed Protestant cultures in the colonies. Where compromises
such as the Halfway Covenant shored up communities of faith, the Great Awakening’s emphasis
on personal spiritual engagement challenged communal compromises. So, too, did Edwards’s
deep commitment to private fasting test the power of the communal fast. Private fasting
threatened not just the community, but the individual: it is possible that Edwards’s constant
fasting and sleep deprivation physically weakened him and contributed to his death from the
smallpox inoculation process in 1758.

**Fasting’s Failures**


Edwards: An Introduction to America’s Theologian_, ed. Gerald R. McDermott (New York: Oxford University Press,
2009), 18-19.

342 Many practitioners required patients to undergo severely restricted diets and treatments with mercury before
inoculation with smallpox. For an already weakened, fasting person like Edwards, these treatments alone could have
been deadly. Elizabeth Fenn, _Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82_ (New York: MacMillan,
2001), 33-35.
In the borderlands of colonial New England and New France, English, French, and Native communities carried out religious and ritual practices of bodily mortification through food that shared many similarities, including carefully codification and a desire for bodily control. However, most observers did not recognize these similarities, and continued to make religious war upon each other. European observers judged Indian bodies according to a double standard. While captives and missionaries had much to say about the eat-’til-you-burst feasts among the Abenakis, Maliseets, and other groups, English and French writers did not recognize these trials of eating as acts of mortification, as another way of disciplining the body. European medical writers emphasized the ways that gluttony took a toll on the body (a subject discussed in more detail in chapter 3), but because of their religious cultures did not see overeating as an act of contrition, of positive spiritual significance. However, when the Kahnawake Mohawks enthusiastically mortified their bodies through hunger, Jesuit missionaries were horrified at the lengths they were willing to go. In European eyes, Native bodies were simultaneously undisciplinably gluttonous and frighteningly austere. Either way, Native bodies never fulfilled European expectations of the body and appetite.

And finally, disciplining the body always remained an uphill battle, in an era when communities were embattled in many other ways. The cycles of violence in the borderlands, coupled with the increasing emphasis on private spiritual engagement represented by the Great Awakening, began to throw the efficacy of communal fasting into question. In spite of fasting and prayer, war and violence rippled through the borderlands for decades. Religious authorities insisted that these troubles continued because sinners had failed to reform themselves. Cabot

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343 This pattern held true across other religious ceremonies, as the next chapter argues.

decried those for whom “Repentance is only transient and temporary,” people who were “religious, sober, and devout” on a fast day, and the next day “drowned in sensual Excesses.”

With true reformation elusive, and borderlands violence rampant, religious authorities watched as fasting and prayer failed to bring an end to their communities’ calamities.

The Deerfield, Massachusetts minister John Williams expressed frustration at the lack of efficacy of fasting and prayer in the face of sin. In February 1704, a French and Indian raiding party attacked Deerfield, killing Williams’s wife Eunice and two of their children, and taking John and his five remaining children into captivity. Over half of Deerfield’s residents died or were captured in the raid. Williams and all but one of his surviving children eventually returned from captivity (his daughter Eunice was acculturated into the Kahnawake Mohawk and remained there until her death), but came home to a shattered community. In 1707, Williams published the wildly-bestselling narrative of his tribulations, *The Redeemed Captive Returning From Zion*. The account began with a warning: “The History I am going to Write, proves, that Days of Fasting and Prayer without REFORMATION, will not avail, to turn away the Anger of God from a Professing People.” For ministers like Williams, the internal lives of their charges must have often remained frustratingly out of reach, in the divide between clergy and their communities.

No matter how much people fasted and prayed, if they did not change their behavior or thoughts, they might simply be acting out piety without truly embracing it. Without

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348 David Hall has characterized the relationship between clerical and popular religion as one of “consensus and resistance, of common ground, but also differences.” Hall, *Worlds of Wonder*, 12.
reformation, Williams believed that the kind of disaster that struck Deerfield would only continue. He was right.

Sixty years later, in November 1764, the young Presbyterian minister Samuel Kirkland traveled to Kanadasaga to missionize the Senecas. His posting caused chaos in the community, especially after Kirkland moved into the home of a Seneca man who inexplicably died within days.\(^{349}\) Worse, Kirkland touched and examined the corpse, stoking fears of witchcraft. A tribal council convened to debate whether Kirkland should be allowed to stay in the village—or even to stay alive. This Seneca community had already faced tremendous upheavals in the past few years—life in a British refugee camp during the recently-concluded Seven Years’ War, resettlement, a bad harvest, a hungry spring approaching. This white stranger and the unexpected death he brought with him only added to the sense that something had gone terribly, even cosmically, wrong.

At the meeting, the “head Sachem” Saquamgwaraghton rose to give a speech.\(^{350}\) He argued that Kirkland, “the white man we call our Brother,” brought a “dark design” to the community.\(^{351}\) Accepting Kirkland and the “white people’s Book” he offered would jeopardize everything the Senecas held dear.\(^{352}\) Saquamgwaraghton reminded his listeners that the god Thaonghyawagon, “upholder of the skies,” had already given the Senecas a holy book of their own, inscribed “in our heads & in our minds.”\(^{353}\) In the “ancient customs,” the Senecas had

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\(^{350}\) Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 44.

\(^{351}\) Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 47.

\(^{352}\) Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 47.

\(^{353}\) Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 47.
honored Thaonghyawagon through “religious feasts” and offerings.354 “If we change or renounce our religion,” Saquamgwaraghton warned that the Senecas might become “a miserable abject people.”355 He pointed to other Indian tribes to the East who had converted, and now made brooms to sell to the English “to buy a loaf of Bread,” or became agricultural laborers like women or enslaved people: “hoe corn & squashes in the field- chop-wood- stoop down and milk cows like negros among the dutch people.”356 Giving up feasts for Thaonghyawagon in favor of farming and Christianity would be the death of Seneca culture, Saquamgwaraghton declared: “all- all will be gone.”357

Kirkland was not present at the council meeting: with his fate in the balance, his adoptive family whisked him away to a hunting cabin in the woods to await the council’s decision. A Dutchman who spoke some Seneca and some English attended the meeting and later summarized it for Kirkland.358 This fractured, mistranslated, third-hand retelling might partially explain why Saquamgwaraghton’s speech echoed the concerns of authorities across New England and New France, threatened by the same war, famine, and other calamities. At any rate, Saquamgwaraghton was overruled, and Kirkland stayed. It is unclear whether the feasts and offerings to Thaonghyawagon continued. Conowahare slid into a late-winter famine. The Senecas hungered against their will. The world remained in flux.

354 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 48.
355 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 48, 47.
356 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 48.
357 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 48.
358 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 43.
In Deerfield, Massachusetts, in the early eighteenth century, the Puritan congregation gathered in the meetinghouse. The minister stepped down from the pulpit to the communion table, where an array of silver glittered: beakers, a two-handled cup, and a flagon, the last taller than the rest. The deacons sat around the table, where a loaf of bread rested on a pewter plate, covered with a napkin. The minister removed the cloth, took the bread in his hands, and recited “prayers and praises for the Blessings of Redemption.” He tore the bread into pieces for each communicant and ate a piece himself. The deacons distributed the bread to the congregation; everyone chewed and swallowed. The deacons returned to the table. Next, the minister laid hands upon the flagon and said a blessing over the wine within. He lifted the flagon and poured its contents into the beakers and the two-handled cup. The deacons stood, and brought the cups of wine to the ends of the pews. One by one, the members of the congregation passed the cups of wine along the pews. They drank the wine. They meditated on the body of the congregation, on their own bodies and souls, and most of all, as they swallowed, they meditated on the body of Jesus Christ. Their “Souls now [fed] On, as well as with, a Crucify’d Jesus.”

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361 Puritan worship services are actually maddeningly difficult to reconstruct; while the texts of sermons have survived in large numbers in the historical record, accounts of the other parts of Puritan services are surprisingly rare. This textual reconstruction quotes directly from and is based on Mather’s *A Companion for Communicants*, 23-26; as well as Philip D. Zimmerman, “The Lord’s Supper in Early New England: The Setting and the Service,” *New England Meeting House and Church: 1630-1850, Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife Annual Proceedings 1979* (Boston: Boston University, 1979), 128-129; Hall, *Worlds of Wonder*, 156. The two-handled cup was made for the First Church of Deerfield around 1715. Sources do not indicate whether it or any other vessel was actually used.
In Quebec, in 1730, a Catholic congregation knelt or stood in pews facing the altar at the front of the cathedral, where the priest, with the assistance of servers, performed a complicated series of movements. A gleaming assortment of silver covered the altar: patens, a chalice, a basin, a ciborium. The priest recited blessings and prayers in Latin, alternating with dramatic silences. A server rang a bell to draw the congregation’s attention to steps of the liturgy. They stood, knelt, and murmured responses on cue. The priest lifted the paten of wafers just above the altar. He poured water and wine into a chalice, only enough for him to drain in a single drink, and raised this, too. He led prayers with his hands extended over the wafers and wine, prayers that climaxed in the consecration of the host. He elevated a wafer to the view of the congregation, “in Memory of Christ’s Body, that was lifted up on the Cross.” Then he did the same with the chalice of wine. At the corner of the altar, he washed and dried his hands so that he could handle the newly-consecrated wafers and wine with a purified touch. The priest carefully broke the wafers and placed the pieces into the ciborium. The priest took communion himself, in the sight of the congregation, eating the wafer, then draining the chalice of wine. At last, the congregation came forward to receive the Eucharist themselves, kneeling before the priest. He held fragments of the host above the ciborium and placed them on the tongues of each communicant, intoning, “Corpus Domini nostri Jesu Christi custódiat ánimam tuam in vitam aetérnam. Amen.” They swallowed carefully, their “Heart[s]… enflamed with love” as they ingested the transubstantiated body of Jesus Christ.


In Wendat homelands, in 1636, Jean de Brebeuf, a Jesuit missionary, watched Wendat men ceremonially torture Iroquois captives. They roasted a captive over a fire, cut open “the most fleshy parts” of his body, and burned him with “glowing brands, or red-hot hatchets.” Courageously, the captive sang even as he burned and bled. Some Wendat men sliced his flesh and then their own, pressing their skin to his, letting his blood run into theirs. Finally, they clubbed him dead, roasted his heart, and shared pieces of it with the assembled crowd. They cut up the body and boiled it in a large metal kettle over the same fire. The assembly ate the flesh from the kettle, some enthusiastically, some less so; no one wanted to taste any part of the head, and the priest would not eat at all.\(^{363}\)

On the banks of the Tabusintac river, sometime in the seventeenth century, M’ikmaq people buried one of their own. The body rested on a scaffold to dry, until flesh and bones could be separated and tucked into a small bundle. Mourners dug a narrow, deep hole in the ground, not far from the riverbank, and placed a sheet of birch bark and an animal hide at the bottom. They placed the bundle of remains on the hide. They covered the bundle with an upturned copper kettle, then stacked two more upturned kettles on top of this one, each one smaller than the one below. One of the kettles had spent time over the cooking fire—its sides were black with soot. The other two were shining and new, but the mourners took care to pierce the bottoms of the new kettles with metal tools. Finally, they covered the grave with soil, the clods of earth thumping on the round bellies of the kettles, the dry bones hidden far below.\(^{364}\)

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363 Jesuit Relations 10, 227-229. Seeman, Death in the New World, 142.

These three meals and a burial in a cooking vessel were all ceremonies of communion, designed to bring communities together and exclude outsiders through the ritual processing of real or imagined human flesh. These ritual feasts upheld order in communities in times of hunger. They did so by satiating particular hungers: for community belonging, the divine, even for flesh and blood. Each of these ceremonies centered around a vessel made of precious metals, and made to contain real or imagined bodily substances. For Protestants and Catholics, these vessels metaphorized the human body and made acceptable the consumption of human flesh and blood for those leery of cannibalism. In spite of the remarkably similar purposes that vessels played in these communal ceremonies, English Puritans, French Catholics, and Native groups such as Mi’kmaqs and Wendats fixated on the differences between their ideas about communion. The stakes of these disagreements were high: these bloody rituals took place in the borderlands in a time of brutal warfare.

This chapter examines the material culture of communion vessels, and debates over rituals of cannibalism and communion, to analyze the cultural similarities that peoples at war in colonial New England and New France shared yet refused to recognize. In the end, the English, the French, the Mi’kmaqs, and the Wendats resisted the striking similarities between their communion vessels precisely because these vessels and their uses were so similar. They feared becoming cannibals even though they were cannibals. The parallel material realities of communion vessels did not translate into parallel thinking about shared, ritual meals. Instead,
just as communion brought communities together, “the common pot” also drew the boundaries between us and them. 365

These debates took place amidst slippages between community, violence, food, art, medicine, and religion. Fascinated and frightened by ritual dismemberment, the peoples at war in colonial New England and New France spilled ink and blood to differentiate themselves from their enemies. They worshipped human bodies and blood, ate blood at dinner and drank it as medicine, argued over the plausibility of the miracle of transubstantiation, and accused their enemies of violating natural law by hungering for human flesh. This chapter will also explore religious and medical uses of blood, and the materiality of the vessels themselves, in an effort to situate communion debates more broadly in the cultural overlaps of the Atlantic world. 366

In the contested borderlands, English and French colonists and Native peoples including the Mi’kmaqs and Wendats used metal vessels in their rituals of communion as they attempted to keep their respective communities together. The Wendats provide some of the most striking accounts of rituals involving vessels, and scholars have pointed to these accounts’ significance to understanding relations between Europeans and Native peoples in early America. 367 While

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365 “The common pot” served as a metaphor for community among many Indian groups in the colonial Northeast. See Lisa Brooks, The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008). New Materialists have argued that objects have agency and can make the world around them. Finbarr Barry Flood cautions against relying on “semiotic models that treat material forms and practices [merely] as wrappings for immaterial concepts and ideas” in “Bodies and Becoming: Mimesis, Mediation, and the Ingestion of the Sacred in Christianity and Islam,” in Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice, ed. Sally Promey (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 484. Nevertheless, the similar material realities of communion rituals, and their users’ struggle to delineate differences between these rituals, suggest that the path from object to meaning can be very complicated. People can and do resist the agency of things.

366 “The aim is to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts; to support broad assertions about the role of culture in the construction of collective life by engaging them exactly with complex specifics.” Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 28.

Iroquoian cannibalism has received considerable scholarly attention, it appears, from the number and consistency of accounts, that the Wendats also practiced ritual cannibalism.\textsuperscript{368} While Mi’kmaq rituals did not involve cannibalism, the kettles that survive from their burial ceremonies provide vital material links to Wendat practices, since Wendat rituals also made use of copper trade kettles.\textsuperscript{369} Wendat and Mi’kmaq practices spoke to each other and to English and French rituals in provocative ways. Of course, to compare these practices is not to collapse the differences between them—cannibalism did not play a role in the Mi’kmaq burial ritual. Nevertheless, it seems like more than coincidence that the Mi’kmaqs ate out of these kettles and then buried their dead inside them, where the Wendats cooked the dead in kettles and ate from them.

While religious studies scholars define communion as the communal consumption of consecrated bread and wine, this chapter interprets communion more broadly, as the ritualistic consumption of the human body as an expression of community.\textsuperscript{370} Scholars of religion in the Atlantic world have pointed to similarities between various Indian groups’ ritual cannibalism and Protestant and Catholic communion; however, the materiality of these practices, and especially of the vessels used in them, has not been explored.\textsuperscript{371} This chapter pushes back against assertions that objects make the world around them, contending that in the face of tremendous material similarity between their objects and practices, colonists and Indians refused to create or even


\textsuperscript{369} Turgeon, “The Tale of the Kettle.”

\textsuperscript{370} Kilgour, \textit{From Communion to Cannibalism}, 4-5, 8.

acknowledge the possibility of shared cultures. In doing so, this chapter helps explain the persistence of borderlands violence in the colonial era, by pointing to the ways that colonists and Native peoples justified conflict with each other on the grounds of cultural difference despite evidence of cultural similarities. Symbolically or literally destroying the human body, communion was a violent way to show community belonging in the midst of conflict.

The Material Culture of Communion

Examining the material culture of three communion vessels used in the borderlands of New England and New France reveals suggestive parallels in their forms and uses: these precious, metal vessels contained, protected, and mediated real or imagined bodily substances. Nevertheless, their makers and users would have seen differences, illustrating that the objects themselves tell a more complicated story. The two-handled silver cup (Fig. 2) made by English silversmith John Dixwell for the First Church of Deerfield around 1720 was used in Puritan communion services. Dixwell made over twenty silver communion cups for New England congregations, pioneering the two-handled communion cup form in America, perhaps after seeing it on a trip to England. Simplicity and balance characterized the silver Deerfield cup, which was nearly cylindrical in form. Simple decorative bands encircled the shallow, narrow foot. A delicate S-curve handle protruded from either side. Minimal ornamentation on the cup drew attention to the sleek surface of the silver itself, and the plain inscribed letters with which the cup advertised its residence in the Deerfield church.

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373 Ward, “‘In a Feasting Posture’,” 6, 19-22. The original handles of the Dixwell cup appear to have been replaced, as the extant handles are of much cruder craftsmanship than the rest of the cup. A 1710 Dixwell caudle cup held at the Winterthur Museum showcases more ornate handles. John Dixwell, caudle cup, Boston, ca. 1710, Silver; H. 3 3/4”, Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, Del.
The second vessel is a silver and gilt ciborium made in Paris by Guillaume Loir in 1730, and used in New France for Catholic masses (Fig. 3). Loir, an influential silversmith in Paris, did
a brisk business in domestic and ecclesiastical silver commissioned in New France.\textsuperscript{374} The ciborium stood a little over eight inches tall. It was far more lavishly ornamented than the cup, with bands of elaborate decoration from top to bottom. At the top of the cover rose a finial in the shape of a flat cross. The bowl that held the Host was the least-ornamented part of the object, showing off smooth curves of silver that drew attention to the holy matter within.\textsuperscript{375}

\textbf{Figure 3.} Guillaume Loir, Ciborium, 1730. Silver with gilt; H. 24.1 cm. A56.2 (Collection of the New Brunswick Museum – Musée Nouveau Brunswick, Saint John, New Brunswick.)


\textsuperscript{375} Ross Allan C. Fox, \textit{Quebec and Related Silver at The Detroit Institute of Arts} (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978), 84.
The third vessel is a copper kettle with a cast iron handle, made in France, and buried in a Mi’kmaq grave sometime during the seventeenth century; a similar trade kettle would have been used in Wendat rituals (Fig. 4).[^376]

![Image of the kettle](image)

**Figure 4.** Brigitte Clavette and Rick Séguin, Reproduction Kettle, 1994. Patinated, hammered copper and wrought iron; H. 33 cm., W. 76.2 cm. R.1994.1. (Collection of the New Brunswick Museum – Musée Nouveau Brunswick, Saint John, New Brunswick.)

An unknown maker created the kettle in France before it traveled to Canada for trade with the Indians. Wider than it was tall, the kettle stretched over two feet in diameter. The kettle was flat-bottomed, with walls that flared gently at the rim. Two iron bands, riveted to the sides of the

[^376]: Kettle, copper and cast iron, c. seventeenth century, Collection of the New Brunswick Museum – Musée Nouveau Brunswick, Saint John, New Brunswick. Because the kettle is a sensitive cultural artifact under Canadian guidelines pertaining to First Nations objects in museum collections, only replicas or historic illustrations may be represented.
kettle just below the lip, affixed two loops to the lip. Through these loops threaded the handle, also made of iron. Unlike the glossy surface of the Dixwell cup or the bowl of the ciborium, the kettle revealed the violence of its making, its copper surface textured in concentric circles by the blows of a hammer.

These vessels performed similar roles throughout ceremonies of communion. Communion vessels united body and soul and joined the body of the communicant with the bodies in communion. The vessels were made to be handled, to respond to touch. The kettle, though large and heavy (especially when filled), had a sturdy iron handle, which would have enabled users to carry it from place to place and hang it on a trammel over a fire. The Dixwell cup’s smaller size and two handles enabled communicants to pass it down the pew. Other Puritan vessels of the time—tankards or standing cups—would have been more difficult to hand along the pew, as they either had only one handle or none at all. Many communicants easily handled the Dixwell cup each time they took communion, yet its delicate handles encouraged them to treat the precious wine within with care. By contrast, with no obvious places to hold it, the ciborium would have been the most difficult object to handle. It had to be carefully balanced to keep from tipping and spilling the precious host. To carry it, a person with specialized knowledge, a priest, had to hold the ciborium somewhat awkwardly around the stem with its several decorative knops. He would have to grasp it just below the finial’s cross decoration to remove the lid. Unlike the two-handled cup or the kettle, the ciborium did not openly reveal how it was meant to be handled. Only the priest was meant to touch it. The shapes of all three objects enabled users to touch the vessels without improperly contacting their contents. The distance

between user and contents would have been particularly important in rituals that involved a
sacred or purified substance, such as the Host in the Mass.

Thus, although these objects were made to be touched with hands and mouths, each of
these vessels carefully policed contact between the body of the consumed and the body of the
consumer. Even as the ritual of communion united the members of a community, the communion
vessels also enclosed and protected the body of the consumed. The ciborium, made to contain
the holiest of substances, was the only one of the three to have a lid. Catholic doctrine dictated
that only gold or silver could touch the Host, so the inside of the ciborium cup was gilded. The
ciborium enclosed the Host in a lidded chamber surrounded by gold, protected from the
contamination of the profane world. Where the ciborium could shelter only a handful of wafers,
the large kettle could hold an entire set of human bones. At the Tabusintac grave site, the
inverted kettle formed its own lid, protecting the remains from soil, digging animals, and
whatever other forces might come to harass the bones of the dead. Grasping the Dixwell cup by
its handles, communicants did not touch the body of the cup, much less the precious wine within.

While the forms of vessels separated their contents from the outside world, rituals of
communion relied on contact between the eaten and the eater. The body of the consumed needed
to be assimilated into the body of the consumer—these were meals, after all. In accordance with
the hierarchies in Catholic doctrine, the ciborium interacted the least with the body of the
communicant. Only a priest could reach into the ciborium and place a wafer on a communicant’s

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378 Elaine Scarry posited that the process of making objects inverts the “inside” and “outside” of the human body,
externalizing and then addressing human needs and desires in the material world. Most abstractly, these communion
vessels satisfied the desire for connection with community and god(s). They also enabled people to carry, contain,
and enclose sacred substances—even to heat them over a fire or bury them. Communion vessels contained bodies
(of the consumed), were bodies themselves, interacted with—sometimes even entered—other bodies (those of the
consumers), and were manifestations of the needs of bodies (the consumers’ bodies, again). *The Body in Pain: The
tongue. By contrast, the Puritan communion service, in a manifestation of the priesthood of all believers, granted the communicant direct contact: communicants raised the lip of the cup to their own lips and drank. The kettle, meanwhile, operated more like the ciborium, partly because its massive size prevented a user from stepping up and taking a drink and partly because its contents might be too hot to touch with lips or bare hands. One person might serve up the contents of the kettle into the hands or onto the dishes of others, as the Jesuit Sébastian Rale reported an Abenaki meal: “When they have filled their kettle with meat, they boil it, …after which they take it off the fire, serve it in basins of bark, and distribute it among all the people who are in their cabin.” The contents, however, were more widely available since an eater could reach into the kettle to take a portion, with a spoon or with hands if the contents were cool enough to touch.  

As each of these vessels made contact, they also made separate bodies for the body in communion. Touched with the heat of a human hand or a cooking fire, metal vessels became as living beings, blood or wine pulsing beneath their skins. When the Wendats cooked a captive in a kettle, they nestled one warm body inside another. The tools of smiths, melting and bending, released the living essence of metals, their power to transform. The flickering of polished metal implied a kind of liveliness. For this reason, miniature portrait painters layered foil beneath thinly-sliced ivory, or copper under enamel, to create the illusion of blood beneath skin. Alchemists believed that precious metals grew in veins under the mountains. The Puritan poet Edward Taylor compared Jesus’s “Humane Veans” to “Golden Pipes.” European and Native peoples considered blood and metals and wine all part of the same metaphoric register, the

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379 Jesuit Relations 67, 141.
flowing liquid of life. This sprawling system of metaphor would have consequences far beyond cups or kettles.  

**Debating Cannibalism**

Believers made explicit the connections between their own bodies and souls, the bodies of congregations, and the body in communion: as Cotton Mather wrote, “Many Grains make but one Loaf, (and many Drops make one Cup of Wine) even so, many Saints make but one Church, which is the mystical Body of the Lord Jesus.” Mather’s declaration implied a slipperiness between bread and wine, church and body that caused intense debate among Protestants and Catholics during the Reformation and beyond. Nevertheless, Christians expressed horror at Indian consumption of human flesh. Europeans lived in fear of needing to resort to survivor cannibalism, but acknowledged that in some dire situations, it was necessary. But actually craving the taste of other people was, to Europeans, the lowest form of savagery. Pierre Roubaud, a Jesuit missionary, alleged that the Ottawas “satiated” a “more than canine hunger” for the flesh of their prisoners “with a famished avidity.” Roubaud saw this hunger as animalistic, the hungry as “inhuman creatures.” “I have seen Savages in our Cabin speak with gusto of the flesh of an Iroquois,” reported Brebeuf, another Jesuit missionary, of his experiences among the Wendats. To discuss the particular tastes and textures of human flesh “in the same

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terms as they would praise the flesh of a Deer or a Moose” was “certainly very cruel,” Brebeuf declared. Indian hungers for human flesh provided colonizers with rationalizations for spreading Christianity and suppressing Indian ritual practices: “we hope…that the knowledge of the true God will entirely banish from this Country such barbarity,” concluded Brebeuf. But as the importance of communion rituals attests, the colonizers knew such hunger themselves.

It is impossible to discuss cannibalism without acknowledging how early modern Europeans produced and consumed stories of Indian cannibalism, then used these accounts to justify imperial expansion and settler colonialism. The word “cannibal” arose out of European exploration of the Americas and referred to the first indigenous groups to encounter the Spanish. Europeans profited from their caricature of the cruel, bloodthirsty, man-eating savage. At the fall of Fort William Henry in 1757, English soldier Jonathan Carver saw Indians drinking “the blood of their victims, as it flowed warm from the fatal wound.” At this same battle, Roubaud claimed he witnessed Ottawas washing down the flesh of English prisoners with “skullfuls of human blood,” which left them with “still besmeared faces” and “stained lips.” Roubaud asked

383 Jesuit Relations 70, 125; Jesuit Relations 10, 229.

384 Sugg, Mummies, Vampires, and Cannibals, 130.


386 Sugg, Mummies, Cannibals, and Vampires, 125, and Avramescu, An Intellectual History of Cannibalism, 10, 75-77.

one of the Ottawa men why they were eating their prisoner, and the man replied, “Thou have French taste; me Savage, this meat good for me,” before offering Roubaud a piece of the “English roast.” The Jesuit rejected the gift of meat and called the Ottawa man’s argument “worthy of a barbarian,” a cannibal who defended his unnatural hunger in broken French. It seemed that cannibals violated the ultimate human taboo, giving in to the violent “antisocial power of hunger.” For Europeans, sensationalized stories about cannibalism justified the violent suppression and displacement of Indians.

These stories of Indian cannibalism were pervasive and formulaic. For example, the trope of Indians threatening to eat English children recurred over and over in women’s captivity narratives. The Abenaki man that Elizabeth Hanson identified as her “master” sent her “to fetch him a Stick that he had prepared for a Spit, to roast the Baby upon.” He then undressed her child, and “felt its Arms, Legs, and Thighs” appraisingly. Hanson’s captor repeated this routine several times, but always decided that the child remained too thin to eat. “I could not persuade my self, that he intended to do as he pretended; but only to aggravate and afflict me,” Hanson concluded. In Mary Rowlandson’s account of her captivity during King Philip’s War, she reported asking an Indian for news of her son who was traveling with another group. The Indian replied “that such a time his master roasted him, and that himself did eat a piece of him, as big as his two fingers, and that he was very good meat.” Whether these Indians were teasing

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388 Jesuit Relations 70, 125.

389 Sanday, Divine Hunger, 102.

390 God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty, p. 74.

Rowlandson and Hanson, or Hanson’s captor actually intended to consume her child, or Hanson and Rowlandson completely invented these stories, this trope of threatened children and cannibalistic Indians pointed to a presumption of cannibalism that gnawed at the English imagination.

Moreover, the figure of the terrifying cannibal Indian exerted such power on the English imagination that writers often implied or invented cannibalism when it had not actually taken place. When Indians told the English captive Jemima Howe that her young children had died, she envisioned “the naked carcasses of my deceased children hanging upon the limbs of the trees.” Grieving and frightened, Howe imagined her captors treating her children like game, hanging up their bodies “as the Indians are wont to hang the raw hides of those beasts which they take in hunting.” In fact, the children were alive, and Howe reunited with them weeks later. For European observers, the menace of man-eating permeated even innocuous Indian actions.

Despite the sensational tone of many European accounts, the descriptions of ritual cannibalism among Wendat and Iroquoian groups suggest that they were based to some degree on actual practice. Ritual cannibalism performed a social function, constructing an “eating culture” that reinforced boundaries both within and across communities. Eaters are powerful; the consumed rarely are, though the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ makes a notable exception. The Wendats told their own tales of powerful cannibals among the gods, reporting to the Jesuit

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missionary Joseph François Lafitau that the goddess “Ata-entsic” “sucked the blood of men, causing them to die of illness and weakness.” In a world where gods were cannibals, eating someone, such as a captive taken in war, dramatically demonstrated power over one’s enemies. Eating other people dehumanized them, turning them into animals unworthy of humane treatment. Eating defined the borders of the community: a community member could not be eaten, but an outsider or enemy could. At the same time, consuming the flesh of another incorporated whatever power the enemy might have over the consumer. Witnessing the Wendat ceremony of torture and cannibalism, Brebeuf wrote that the Wendats believed that “since they have mingled [the captive’s] blood with their own they can never be surprised by the enemy, and have always knowledge of their approach, however secret it may be.”

The Wendats might have had particular reason to show this ritual to Brebeuf in 1636, as the 1630s saw tremendous cultural flux for the group. European colonization destabilized Indian communities’ social balance by introducing new economic, political, and environmental forces, such as the fur trade, wars and alliances, and devastating epidemic disease. Through a ceremony of torture and cannibalism, the Wendats sought to shore up their own social order, demonstrating to a European outsider the power relations within their culture. A decade and a half after Brebeuf wrote his account of this ritual, as war with the Iroquois uprooted and scattered Wendat communities, the Wendats tortured and executed him, drank his blood, and ate his heart.

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397 Jesuit Relations 10, 227-229.

398 Seeman, *Death in the New World*, 141-142.
In light of Brebeuf’s ritual death, it seems that however utilitarian cannibalism may have been in keeping communities together, it also forced different cultures farther apart. The many groups at war in New England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries eagerly accused other people of being cannibals. Algonquians told early New England colonists that the proper name for the group living just to their west was “Mohawk” based on the Algonquian term for “cannibal.” (The Mohawks call themselves Kanien’kehá:ka, the “People of the Flint.”) With the exception of the Ottawa man who matter-of-factly told Roubaud, “this meat good for me,” cultures tended to see cannibals everywhere but amongst themselves. While Europeans were quick to catalog what they deemed Indian atrocities, they also committed plenty against each other.

The English called all their enemies cannibals, and their accounts of cannibalism among both French and Indians shared provocative similarities. First, as in other English or French accounts of Indian cannibalism, eating people took its place in a liturgy of violence: torture, kill, consume. Second, cannibalism seemed almost addictive or contagious, as cannibals tried to convert others to a taste for human flesh. Dudley Bradstreet, a Massachusetts soldier at the siege of Louisbourg in 1745, related how Indians allied to the French tortured and killed an English soldier, then “Obligd one of our men to eat a part of him.” John Norton, the English minister


401 Avramescu, An Intellectual History of Cannibalism, 75.

402 Bradstreet, Diary, 27 May 1745.
taken captive by French and Indians at the fall of Fort Massachusetts in the Berkshires in 1746, 
told of how a group of Indians killed the fort’s watchman and mutilated his corpse. Next, “a 
young Frenchman took one of the Arms and flay’d it, roasted the Flesh, and offer’d some of it 
to Daniel Smeed, one of the Prisoners, to eat; but he refused it.”403 It seems particularly 
significant that neither Bradstreet nor Norton accused the Indians or French of actually being 
cannibals themselves; rather, the Indians of Bradstreet’s story and the “young Frenchman” of 
Norton’s tried to make other people become cannibals. As part of a routine of atrocity, captors 
forced (or tried to force) their prisoners to eat the corpses of their comrades. They used the fear 
of becoming a cannibal (however unwillingly) to torment their prisoners psychologically.

For Norton and Bradstreet, the fear of conversion to cannibalism echoed other conversion 
fears. In English eyes, the French, believing in transubstantiation, were not just cannibals 
themselves: they were trying to convert others to their ways. As a Protestant minister, Norton 
would have been a particular target of spiritual attack from the French. The narrative of John 
Williams, another Protestant minister taken captive and brought to New France, hinged on the 
peril of “spiritual seduction.”404 Over lavish dinners, Williams sparred theologically with Jesuits, 
and reported that one wrote a poem calling him “a Wolf, who was shut up,” to keep “the 
Sheep…in safety.” No, Williams was certain, the priests were the wolves, not he. He feared that 
they would tell other English captives “that I was turn’d, that they might gain them to change

403 Norton, The Redeemed Captive, 10. The same Frenchman, Norton reported, made a tobacco pouch of the 
watchman’s skin.

404 Teresa A. Toulouse, The Captive’s Position: Female Narrative, Male Identity, and Royal Authority in Colonial 
their Religion.” Williams and the Jesuits saw the battle for souls as a struggle to protect sheep from a hungry wolf. They worried that the enemy’s faith would devour and damn the innocent.

In this context of religious conflict, the English neither wanted to consume what the French were eating, nor to be consumed themselves. Again, even if Norton’s anecdote about the Frenchman offering human flesh to English prisoners were not factually true, his willingness to accuse the French of this kind of cruelty speaks volumes about the animosity between Protestants and Catholics in this era. The same denial of the humanity of the other that characterized cannibalism also marked the way Protestants and Catholics treated each other. Jonathan Swift was well aware of the irony when he wrote of English Protestants roasting Irish Catholic children like suckling pigs in “A Modest Proposal.” In a jab at the scarcity and violence in the colonies across the Atlantic, he credited this cannibalistic solution to hunger to “a very knowing American of my Acquaintance.”

**Debating Communion**

One of the most intense controversies over cannibalism did not directly concern Native peoples, but Protestant and Catholic Europeans. The debate, centered on what communicants consumed during the Lord’s Supper—wine or blood, wafer or flesh—defined the boundaries of white communities and threatened to dismember Europe and its outposts in America with

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405 Williams, *The Redeemed Captive*, 40, 48, 80-82. The reference to a wolf among sheep is from Matthew 7:15, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” Williams felt particularly vulnerable because his eleven-year-old son, Samuel, became interested in converting to Catholicism during captivity.


religious war. Moreover, the regulations dictating who could participate in communion not only divided Protestants from Catholics, but members of these communities from one another, divisions that Native rituals also echoed.

Believing in transubstantiation, Catholics took literally Jesus’s declaration in 1 Corinthians 24-25: “This is my body…This cup is the new testament in my blood.” A priest, channeling “the Divine Power,” transformed sacramental wafers and wine into Jesus’s actual flesh and blood. The Douay catechism decreed that the Eucharist was indeed “the Body and Blood of Jesus-Christ,” but disguised “under the forms or appearances of Bread and Wine.” By contrast, Protestants interpreted Jesus’s words as a metaphor. In their Westminster catechism, communicants partook of Christ’s flesh and blood “not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith.” In 1690, Cotton Mather likened the “Heresy” of transubstantiation to lascivious drunkenness and expressed the hope that Protestants would eventually triumph in Europe’s religious wars: “All the Wheels now move apace towards that Revolution,” he declared, “when mankind shall no more be Inebriated with the Cup of Abominations in the Hand of the old Scarlet Romish Whore.” Protestants argued that Christ spoke metaphorically and that communion bread and wine, while holy, did not change into Christ’s actual body and blood. For Protestants, the doctrine of transubstantiation implied a continuous dismemberment and destruction of Christ’s body. Transubstantiation “Crucifies over again Him that was to Dy, but once for all,” Mather


409 Gother, Instructions for Confession and Communion, preface. On transubstantiation, see Kilgour, From Communion to Cannibalism; and The Poetics of Transubstantiation: From Theology to Metaphor, ed. Douglas Burnham and Enrico Giaccherini (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2005).

410 An Abstract of the Douay Catechism (Douay: Mairesse, 1716), 57

fretted. The idea that Christ gave his actual body to his followers to eat at the Last Supper created “contradictions impossible to be defended by any rational Arguments,” wrote English minister John Williams: how could he “eat his own Body himself, whole and entire in his own hands; and after that each one of the Disciples eat him entire, and yet he sit at the Table whole, untouched at the same time”? More troubling still, unlike Christ’s body and blood, bread and wine were, according to Mather, “corruptible”—they could rot, or even be adulterated with poisons, a terrible profaning of sacred matter. Worst of all, the idea that Catholics consumed Christ’s real body and blood made them “so much worse than Canabals,” in Protestant eyes.412

Moreover, Protestants derided transubstantiation as superstition that relied on the ignorance and submission of communicants. The combination of bread and wine and a priest’s words could not possibly create God’s body in the flesh, Mather argued. The Catholic ceremony was the product of “a Baker, a Wafter, a Charm.” Moreover, transubstantiation flew in the face of sensory evidence: “whatever our Senses tell us, to the contrary, ’tis not Bread but Christ, which we have after a wretched Priest has consecrated.”413 Finally, the doctrine of transubstantiation interfered with what Protestants saw as a crucial aspect of the Lord’s Supper: because Catholics believed that “the blood is in the body,” communicants were partly excluded, partaking only of wafers, not the wine. Priests consecrated only a small amount of wine and drank it themselves. By contrast, Protestants prided themselves on their inclusiveness, offering both bread and wine to all communicants, as they saw this practice as more directly following the “Laws & Commands of Christ.”414

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413 Mather, *Companion for Communicants*, 8, 11.
Catholic writers rebutted Protestant charges, explicating the mystery of transubstantiation in as much detail as the Protestants who dissected it. John Gother, an English convert to Catholicism, saw the belief in transubstantiation as the foundation of his faith. “My Saviour Jesus Christ,” he wrote, “I firmly believe Thou art really present in the Blessed Sacrament; I believe that it contains thy Body and Blood, accompanied with thy Soul and Divinity.” Gother penned *Instructions and Devotions for Hearing Mass* to guide other converts and devoted the preface to debunking Protestant critiques of transubstantiation. Most importantly, he argued that “Divine Power” enabled transubstantiation, just as it caused many other miracles in the Bible, for God “has Power to make things be, what he says they are.” The writer of a French treatise on the miracle of transubstantiation also emphasized God’s power to transform: “one cannot have too grand an idea of the works of God.” Belief in transubstantiation was one of the fundamental requirements of Catholic identity.

Responding to the Protestant argument that transubstantiation implied a grotesque dismemberment of Jesus’s body in every communion, Gother concluded that Protestants had confused Christ’s “Corruptible, Mortal and Natural” body with his “Incorruptible, Immortal, and even Spiritual” body. The latter could be “contain’d under the Form of a Wafer,” and “divided” among communicants, without the risks of contamination, corruption, or bodily destruction that Protestants decried. Gother admitted that on the basis of sensory evidence alone, “the Sacrament

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416 “On ne pouvoir avoir une trop haute idée des ouvrages de Dieu.” *Traité de L’infini Créé avec l’Explication de la Possibilité de la Transsubstantiation* (Amsterdam: Marc Michel Rey, 1767), 3 (my translation). Scholars have attributed the book to no fewer than five different possible authors: Nicholas Malebranche (1638-1715), Henri comte de Boulainvilliers (1658-1722), Pierre Valentin Faydit (1640-1709), Pierre Varignon (1654-1722), and Jean Terrasson (1670-1750).
appears to be nothing, but Bread and Wine;” but maintained that the truly faithful trusted more in the Word of God than in their senses: since “God has reveal’d it in Holy Writ, . . . we confess our resolution of preferring God’s Word, before the Sences.” Gother pointed out that communion was not the only situation in which one could not always believe one’s senses. “[T]he Apothecary, the Chymist, the Perfumer,” and “even...Cooks” combined and transformed ingredients that took on “many qualities of Colour, Taste and Smell, which belong not to them.” For Catholics, “The words of the Consecration” channeled “the power of almighty God” to alter fundamentally wafers and wine.417 The Eucharist, then, was one of many “Mysteries” in a world of culinary, medicinal, and spiritual mysteries, where Protestants and Catholics alike routinely swallowed unknown substances.418

Countering Protestant criticism that the Mass excluded worshippers from meaningful spiritual engagement, Gother insisted that “the Mass is the Sacrifice of the whole Church, that is, both of Priest and People.” Instructions and Devotions described the priest’s actions during the Mass and, on the facing page, suggested silent prayers for members of the congregation to accompany the communion ceremony. As the priest purified the chalice with ablutions of water, Gother counseled worshippers to pray that “this Precious Body and Blood of thy Son...become a Heavenly Nourishment to my Soul.”419 For Catholic writers, the very complexity and pageantry of the Mass, and the priest’s performative role therein, encouraged worshippers to appreciate


419 Gother, Instructions and Devotions, 4, 87.
fully the miracles taking place at the altar. The 1703 liturgy for the diocese of Quebec urged priests to emphasize “the grandeur of our Mysteries” as they performed the Mass “with…pomp and magnificence,” in order to assure “the people’s respect and veneration for the Sacraments.”

The battles over the communion service extended to the question of who could take communion: Puritans and Catholics drew different boundaries around their communities of communicants. Catholic communicants faced relatively straightforward requirements. As long as they had confessed their sins, fasted since midnight, and believed in the miracle of transubstantiation, they were free to receive the Host. By contrast, the question of who should participate in the Lord’s Supper bedeviled Puritan clergy, who “fenced” the communion table, allowing only certain laypeople to take part. Because Puritans retained only baptism and communion from the rituals associated with Catholicism, they took these sacraments particularly seriously. As a result, Puritan congregants trod a much narrower path to the communion table. In the decades following Puritan colonization of New England, congregants publicly had to describe their conversion experience before being accepted into the community of full church members and allowed to take communion. By the mid-seventeenth century, partly because of these strict requirements, full membership within many congregations had dropped to all-time lows, and church authorities began to allow people who had not undergone a conversion

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420 “Pour servir à la grandeur de nos Mysteres, les faire paroître avec pompe & magnificence, & attirer davantage par là le respect & la veneration des peuples pour les Sacremens.” Rituels du Diocese du Quebec, 9 (my translation).

421 Gother, Instructions for Confession and Communion, 66-79, 90.
experience but who were the children of church members and lived godly lives to participate in
the two sacraments through the Half-Way Covenant.422

The rules that regulated participation in many Native American communion rituals are
far less clear to the historian. Brebeuf reported witnessing Wendat men torturing Iroquois
captives in ceremonies that lasted for days, slicing the flesh of their prisoners and burning them
with “glowing brands, or red-hot hatchets.” Brave captives would sing throughout this torment,
until their execution. If a captive had died honorably, the Wendats consumed his body, cutting
out and roasting the heart, drinking blood from his veins, and then placing the body in a kettle to
boil. In this ritual, some of the boundaries of participation are very clear: the Wendat ate and the
Iroquois were eaten. Nevertheless, internal divisions among the Wendats—who could eat what
part of the body, for example—remain vague in the historical record. From Brebeuf’s account, it
seems that only men consumed blood from the living body of the captive and ate the heart.423
According to Brebeuf, the Wendats believed that eating a “courageous” captive transferred his
strength and strategic knowledge to the eater.424 It is possible, then, that the Wendat ceremony
served particularly gendered purposes, allowing men to incorporate the power of their
vanquished enemies into themselves.

Whatever the gendering of the Wendat ceremony, eating one’s enemies transformed the
bodies of eater and eaten, just as Protestants and Catholics used the Lord’s Supper to transform
themselves and their communities. Consuming bodies together, communicants created

422 Stout, The New England Soul, 58-61. Hambrick-Stowe, The Practice of Piety, 245-246. See also, Robert G. Pope,
1969).


424 Jesuit Relations 10, 229.
communities. Disagreeing over what kind of bodies they consumed, and selecting different participants for their meals, communicants also marked members of their communities and excluded outsiders.

**Consuming Blood**

These heated debates over religious consumption of blood or blood proxies overlapped with other kinds of consumption of blood and precious metals. In religious ceremonies, Indians and Europeans worshipped the essence of life. In daily life, they cooked it. The early modern European kitchen dripped with blood. The wealthy ate numerous kinds and large quantities of meat. Recipes often assumed that the cook would begin with freshly-slaughtered animals. Cooks had to “pull” (defeather), “draw” (disembowel), and “quarter” their chickens, before washing them clean of blood. (Executioners also drew and quartered criminals in public.) Europeans ate blood and viscera in every possible preparation, in stocks, cakes, fritters, and pies. Most English cookbooks of the era contained one or more recipes for “black” or blood puddings. Gervase Markham’s version, first published in 1615, called for the cook to soak oat groats in “the blood of an Hogge whilst it is warme,” then after three days, “with your hands take the Groats out of the bloud” and drain them. These gory steps completed, the cook mixed

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the groats with cream and chopped suet, seasoned with herbs and spices, stuffed the mixture into
intestines, and boiled it until solid. While Markham and many others recommended hog’s blood
for this purpose, Robert May’s 1660 The Accomplish’t Cook (which reprinted Markham’s blood
pudding recipe) noted that one could adapt it to “sheeps blood, calves, lambs, or fawns blood” as
So often did cooks dip their hands in fresh blood that recipes used “blood warm” as a
descriptor, as cooks relied more on the look, smell, and feel of ingredients than on precise times,
temperatures, or proportions. Hannah Wooley’s 1660 recipe for “Lemmon Cream” in The Cook’s
Guide instructed the cook to simmer a quart of cream “till it be blood warm.”\footnote{Wooley, The Cook’s Guide, 93.}
Anne Burton’s 1742 recipe book contained a concoction to prevent miscarriages that the patient must drink
“blood warm in the morning before you rise.”\footnote{Anne Burton Recipe Book, 1742, 2, Sophie D. Coe Manuscript Cookbook Collection, 96-M73, Box
1, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.}
Even foods that did not contain actual blood
still made reference to blood. Sangaree, a popular red wine based beverage in eighteenth-century
America, originated from Spanish colonization of the Caribbean. Its English name was a
corruption of the Spanish word for “bloody,” sangria.\footnote{Andrew F. Smith, “Sangria,” The Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America 3, 2nd ed. (New York:
Oxford University Press, 2012), 197-98. Massachusetts lieutenant Cornelius Stowell partook of bowls of “sanger” or
“sangree” during his service in the Seven Years’ War. Cornelius Stowell Orderly Book and Diary, Diary, 29 May to
28 November 1759, Crown Point, NY, American Antiquarian Society, French and Indian War Collection, Octavo
Vol. 1. Due to the paucity of American cookbooks published in America before the late 18th century, the first printed
recipe for “sangaree” does not appear until Eliza Leslie’s 1841 Directions For Cookery. Eliza Leslie, Directions for
Cookery, In Its Various Branches (Philadelphia: E.L. Carey & Hart, 1840), 413.}

Cooking with or eating blood became the site of debate among some Europeans.
Apparently in response to controversy, Increase Mather saw fit to publish a brief pamphlet in
1697 entitled “A Case of Conscience Concerning Eating of Blood, Considered and Answered.”

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432 Anne Burton Recipe Book, 1742, 2, Sophie D. Coe Manuscript Cookbook Collection, 96-M73, Box
1, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
433 Andrew F. Smith, “Sangria,” The Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America 3, 2nd ed. (New York:
Oxford University Press, 2012), 197-98. Massachusetts lieutenant Cornelius Stowell partook of bowls of “sanger” or
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Deeply invested in following the Word of the Bible, the Puritans struggled to reconcile their culinary tastes for blood with the injunction from Leviticus 11:14: “Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof.” 434 Defending the consumption of blood, Mather noted that English food preparation methods did not follow biblical prescriptions to the letter. “If it be Lawful to Eat things Strangled,” he reasoned, naming the way that kitchen workers often dispatched fowl, which was explicitly banned in Acts 15:20, “then it is Lawful to Eat Blood.” 435 But most importantly, Mather claimed that the consumption of blood outside of the Lord’s Supper did not have ritual significance, precisely because Christ’s blood held such power: “since Christ has shed his Blood, there is no Sacredness in any other Blood,” he concluded. 436

The Puritans could justify tucking into their blood puddings, not least because they saw the many steps involved in the preparation of the dish—soaking the groats, stirring in cream, suet and spices, stuffing the mixture into intestines and boiling them—as a way to distance themselves from the newly-slaughtered animal and its warm blood. Drinking blood fresh from the source, by contrast, signaled barbarity in others. European observers—Roubaud, Brebeuf, Carver—published sensationalized descriptions of Indians drinking blood from the bodies of animals and humans. The English captive John Gyles watched an Abenaki man “split a dog’s

434 Hall, Worlds of Wonder, 22-29.


head with a hatchet and take out the brains hot and eat them raw with the blood running down his jaws."437

With the health of body and soul bound inextricably together, early modern Europeans saw blood as the foundation of good health.438 Adherents to Galenic medical theory conceived of blood as the most important of the four “humors,” a series of four bodily substances—blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile—each with particular qualities that regulated the physiology and emotions of individuals: heat, cold, moisture, or dryness.439 Blood’s qualities, not surprisingly, were heat and wetness.440 If the humors became unbalanced, if negative humors predominated, mind and body suffered.441 Early moderns believed that diet was an effective way to ensure the balance of the humors, because individual foods were different degrees of hot or cold, moist or dry.442 But the other most common tool used specifically for “purifying” the blood was the lancet.443 Bloodletting stood at the core of Galenic medicine, and patients routinely went under the knives of everyone from physicians to barbers in an effort to cleanse their blood and heal their bodies.444 Reaching New France after spending months among the Abenakis, the English captive Hannah Swarton was restored to the familiar practices of European medicine at

437 Gyles, Memoir of Odd Adventures, 120.
438 Camporesi, The Juice of Life, 14.
442 Appelbaum, Aguecheek’s Beef, 44-49.
443 Camporesi, The Juice of Life, 14.
444 Camporesi, The Juice of Life, 14.
“the hospital where I was physicked and blooded.”445 John Williams, another captive, suffered “an alteration in my body” which he attributed to his “change of Dyet” upon reaching New France after lean times with Indians; he, too, was “Physick’d, Blooded, and very tenderly taken care of” in a French hospital.446

Not only did early modern Europeans subtract blood from their bodies: they also added it. Corpse medicine—the use of parts of the human body for medicinal purposes—thrived in this period, as part of the nonconformist Paracelsian school of medicine.447 Blood took its place among an array of potent remedies made from semen, feces, urine, breast milk, bone (especially powdered skull) and preserved human flesh known as “mummy.”448 The ideal medicinal blood or flesh for mummy came from a young, hearty, red-haired man of ruddy complexion who had died suddenly. Red hair and the blood visible beneath his pink skin meant that he had strong blood, and a sudden demise ensured that the life essence in his blood did not have time to escape during a protracted death.449 Public execution of criminals created a steady supply of fresh blood. Medical practitioners applied powdered dried blood to wounds to stop bleeding, and epileptics crowded at the edge of the gallows to drink the blood that dripped down from executed


446 Williams, The Redeemed Captive, 31.


448 Noble, Medicinal Cannibalism, 3. Camporesi, The Juice of Life, 30. The term “mummy” might refer to Egyptian mummies, to travelers who had perished in Arabian sandstorms, to a pitch-like substance, or to the preserved flesh of ordinary criminals. Sugg, Mummies, Cannibals, and Vampires, 14-16.

prisoners. Increase Mather, defending the consumption of blood, noted that blood was a “wonderful restorative” with many “Medicinal Uses.” He did not specify whether such blood flowed from humans or animals or both.

Just as early modern Europeans consumed blood as food and medicine, they also ingested blood, or symbolic proxies, in their most important religious ceremonies. Whenever they drank blood, they did so hoping that it would make them well—mentally, physically, spiritually. Though Protestants and Catholics battled over details of the communion service, they both hungered after communion. Spiritual and physical hunger blurred together. Cotton Mather dwelt on the life-sustaining qualities of bread and wine, declaring that Christ’s love similarly fed the soul: “the Effects of Bread and Wine, most Elegantly answer’d the Effects of our Approaches to the Lord Jesus in the Sacrament,” Mather wrote. “If Bread nourish & strengthen the Body, much more will the Lord Jesus do so, to the Souls of them, who draw near unto Him.” Though Protestants were not consuming actual flesh and blood, a true believer would be able to “Discern the Lords Body in the Lords Supper.” But the importance of the Lord’s Supper went beyond discerning the holy in the seemingly mundane. Communion satisfied a particular kind of spiritual appetite. The Puritan minister Thomas Doolittle asked of communicants, “Do you love him, would you not desire to eat and drink at his Table, yea, to feast upon him? … Did you hunger

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after him, and thirst for him, would you not desire to be there, where you may be filled and satisfied?” Mather struck a similar tone, encouraging communicants to think on their faults to “raise our Appetite,” the better to “bring Hungry and Thirsty souls with us, to this Feast of our God.” Mather exhorted his readers to biblical levels of hunger and thirst: “get such a Thirst as will cause us with Sampson to cry out, I dy for Thirst! or with David, Long, O who will give to me to Drink of the waters of the well of Bethlehem!” Though they had much to say about hunger, neither Doolittle nor Mather discussed the taste of the Lord’s Supper, beyond Mather’s mention that those with “a sense of Truth” would be able to “Tast and See, that, The Lord is Good.”

But to some believers, the Lord’s Supper tasted very good indeed. Taylor wrote reams of devotional poetry, including several “Meditations” on John 6:53, “Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no Life in you.” Unlike Mather and Doolittle, Taylor did not belabor the distinction between wine and blood. He described the Lord’s Supper in literal, visceral terms: “Thou, Lord, Env’st me thus to eat thy Flesh / And drinke thy blood more Spiritfull than wine.” The Lord’s Supper tasted delicious. The consecrating words of the minister transformed plain bread and wine into “rich fare,” particularly sweets. Taylor compared the Lord’s Supper to “My Souls Plumb Cake”; “Sweet junkets,” probably referring to

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454 Thomas Doolittle, *A Treatise Concerning the Lord’s Supper* (Boston: B. Green, and J. Allen, 1700), 25.


sweetmeats; and “thy rich Florendine,” a pie “Made of the Fruits... (more sweet than wine).”

The Lord’s Supper, then, tasted like a whole fantasy world of sweets. It also provided a special kind of nourishment that secular food could not, nourishment without which believers would starve: “I must eate or be a witherd stem,” Taylor declared. Again, Puritans protested that they conceived only metaphorically of their consumption of the body of Christ, but Taylor’s gustatory metaphors were particularly vivid and sensual, similar to those of Catholic devotional texts. Much like Taylor’s sugary descriptions of the taste of the Lord’s Supper, Gother wrote of ingesting the host, “the Bread of Angels, the Food of Blessed Souls, that all that is within me might be delighted with the taste of thy Sweetness.”

Indeed, Taylor’s views on the Lord’s Supper would have presented a conundrum to Protestants eager to distinguish themselves from Catholic ‘cannibals.’ A physician as well as a minister, Taylor belonged to the Paracelsian school of medical thought. In contrast to the more mainstream Galenists, who believed the way to health lay in balancing the humors, Paracelsians sought to heal the sick by more “spiritual” means, using their remedies to attract the “World Soul” to the afflicted body part. Corpse medicine, including specially-prepared human flesh known as “mummy,” was particularly effective for this process. Paracelsians sought to harness...

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461 Taylor’s invocation of rich foods is also interesting in another context: this early modern era, when many people in Europe experienced hunger on a regular basis, gave rise to folk fantasies about magical lands of limitless food. The Italian literary historian Piero Camporesi wrote voluminously on the subject: Camporesi, Bread of Dreams; Camporesi, The Magic Harvest; Camporesi, The Land of Hunger; also see Darnton, The Great Cat Massacre, 23-34; and Appelbaum, Aguecheek’s Beef, 118-155.

462 Taylor, Poems, 234.

463 Gother, Instructions for Confession and Communion, 80.


the healing powers of the human soul through the ingestion of human flesh. Taylor read deeply in Paracelsian thought and used mummy and other human-derived remedies in his own medical practice. The rhetoric of Paracelsian corpse medicine—that consuming another body could heal one’s own—aligned with Catholic arguments that ingesting transubstantiated flesh and blood could remedy all spiritual and bodily ills. “I come to the Sacrament…as one sick to the Physician of Life,” Gother wrote. Ingesting the sacred made the holy part of one’s own body.

Protestants like Taylor hungered for the flesh and blood of Christ, used corpse medicines, and decried transubstantiation. Despite their eagerness to call Catholics cannibals, Protestants enthusiastically made use of human flesh for medicinal purposes. (For Catholics corpse medicine made a less problematic proposition.) Those who participated in the Lord’s Supper, and those who ingested human-derived remedies, sought to heal themselves, body and soul. This healing could take the form of balancing humors or receiving God’s grace, but either way, these rituals relied upon the power of the body. The Lord’s Supper was the supreme corpse medicine, but neither corpse medicine nor the Lord’s Supper had anything to do with cannibalism, in the eyes of both Protestants and Catholics.

Corpse medicine peaked in popularity in the same era when Catholics and Protestants most heatedly debated the possibility and mechanisms of transubstantiation. The enthusiasm of Taylor and other Protestants for corpse medicine stemmed in part from a hunger for the bloody,


468 Gother, Instructions for Confession and Communion, 88.
fleshly experience of the Catholic Mass they had foresworn. Consuming actual human flesh provided a “sensual communion” that the intellectualized metaphor of the Protestant Lord’s Supper simply could not deliver. Hence Taylor’s ecstatic and visceral description of communion with Jesus, of living bread that spoke as it crossed the communicant’s lips: “This Bread of Life dropt in my mouth, doth Cry. / Eate, Eate me, Soul, and thou shalt never dy.” Taylor recognized the tricky balance he had to strike between venerating the body of Christ, and being a metaphorically-minded Puritan. One of his meditations posed these very questions about cannibalism and communion: “What feed on Humane Flesh and Blood? Strang mess! / Nature exclaims. What Barbarousness is here?” Like a good Protestant, Taylor answered himself with the argument that Christ’s words were symbolic: “This Sense of this blesst Phrase is nonsense thus. / Some other Sense makes this a metaphor.” Protestants like Taylor had a vexed relationship to the embodiedness of communion. Nevertheless, the powers of miracle and metaphor convinced both Catholics and Protestants that they themselves were not cannibals. They were unafraid, however, to condemn their enemies for hungering for human flesh.

**Consuming Metals**

The precious metal vessels used in communion ceremonies materialized these conflicts. Like blood, metals circulated throughout the early modern world. As with blood, people turned to metals to transform their social status, their religious lives, and their diplomatic relationships.

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Metals were symbolically potent, mobile, and possibly dangerous. All of the communion vessels discussed here were made of metals that were valuable in the cultures that prized them. Metals are liquid and mutable. Their mutability makes them beautiful and useful. They lend themselves to many forms, which was a source of fascination and anxiety for early modern Europeans. Their users prized these objects precisely because of metals’ physical and metaphysical qualities. Like the bodies that communion vessels contained, the metals that comprised them had the power to transform themselves and to cause transformation.

Of course, these metals had economic worth, a kind of power that religious and social authorities wished to harness. The liturgy for the diocese of Quebec specified that the chalice that held communion wine must be made of “argent,” which means “silver,” but also “money.” For Europeans, silver’s value lay mostly in its weight, not its ornamentation. In a certain sense, a pouch of crudely stamped shillings or a delicately engraved fish fork were fundamentally the same, because, with the addition of heat, they could transform into liquid and then into another object altogether. Puritan elites who made a donation of a hefty tankard to their meeting house advertised their wealth as publicly as if they dropped a heavy purse down on the communion table. The same economic value and mutability that made silver so desirable, however, also made it alluring for thieves. In a smith’s hands, stolen silver could easily transform into an unrecognizable shape and be lost to its original owner. New England elites,


their status based on wealth instead of lineage, worried that their own place in the social hierarchy might be as unstable as the forms of their silver tableware.477

Just as owning silver demonstrated economic authority, so too did giving it away. In New France and New England, donors gave churches money for the purchase of communion vessels, or the silver and gold objects themselves.478 Donated vessels bore engraved inscriptions, sometimes hidden on the bottom of the object, sometimes in large letters in plain view on the side. Sometimes these inscriptions galvanized meditation among the communicants participating in the service, such as the 1744 chalice at Christ Church in West Haven, Connecticut, which instructed the communicant, using Jesus’ words at the Last Supper, to “Drink Ye All of This.”479 More often, though, inscriptions indicated the name of the donor. Such gifts served to demonstrate some sort of prestige within the community and to ensure that one’s memory lived on as long as communicants drank out of the silver cup.480 The unmarried schoolteacher Hannah Beaman gave a caudle cup inscribed with her name to the church at Deerfield for this purpose.481 Or, as in the case of the Dixwell communion cup, the inscription on the cup indicated the congregation where the cup made its home. Deerfield’s communicants could be proud to take part in the Lord’s Supper with such a valuable cup, and other silver cups like it.

479 Ward, “In a Feasting Posture,” figure 11.
481 William Pollard, caudle cup, silver, c. 1730, Henry Needham Flynt Silver and Metalware Collection, Historic Deerfield, Massachusetts.
In addition, Europeans treasured silver for its aesthetic qualities. It was smooth and shiny, capable of being shaped with graceful curves and delicate details. The ornamentation of a piece of finely-crafted silver set it apart from a mere pouch of coins. In the domestic sphere, a punch bowl might publicly display a family’s initials, seal, or coat of arms, which both illustrated the family’s prominence and prevented theft. The owner of a finely-crafted cup or bowl would certainly hesitate to melt it down, no matter his financial straits. The literal liquidity of silver held other, less worldly meanings as well. For Christians, the process whereby a silver spoon might be melted down and remade as a shilling, or vice versa, echoed the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the immortality of the soul. Cotton Mather made explicit this metaphorical connection in his manual for communicants, comparing self-examination and heavenly trial to metalsmithing. “The man is to Examine himself;” he wrote, a process like “the Action of a Goldsmith upon a Metal. The Word of God is compared unto, A Fire; and in this Heavenly Fire we are to make a Trial of our selves.” Believers needed to be their own metalsmiths, hammering their souls into brilliance.


486 In addition, silver’s durability compared to materials such as pottery also symbolized the immortality of the soul. Mark Peterson, “Puritanism and Refinement in Early New England: Reflections on Communion Silver,” William and Mary Quarterly (April 2001), 316-17, 320. Ironically, despite the European love of silver’s purity, divinity, and beauty, the raw material originated in brutal working conditions and coercive labor in South American mines. Peter Bakewell, Miners of the Red Mountain: Indian Labor in Potosi, 1545-1650 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 144-52.

487 C. Mather, A Companion for Communicants, 83.
Puritans also valued silver’s sheen and reflectivity. Like the inscriptions exhorting communicants to meditation, the gleam of silver served a devotional purpose. For Puritans, seeing their faces reflected in the polished surfaces of communion cups encouraged believers to look for God within themselves. In a devotional poem, Taylor compared himself to a mirror reflecting God’s image: “My person make thy Lookinglass Lord, clear / And in my Looking Glass cast thou thine Eye. / Thy Image view that standeth shining there.” No Puritan could be completely sure of his or her salvation—predestination had already sealed the fate of every person’s soul. Only through self-examination could each individual create a “spiritual self-portrait,” comparing one’s self to godly examples and meditating on whether one had received God’s grace. Invitations to self-reflection appeared throughout Puritan aesthetics. The death’s heads and angel’s faces staring back from gravestones, reminders of death, resurrection, and the immortality of the soul, encouraged viewers to consider the examples of those “visible saints” who had died before them. In the spiritually-charged moment of taking communion, as communicants passed the cup down the pew and saw their faces reflected within, the reflectivity of silver offered yet another opportunity for self-examination.

489 Taylor, Poems, 249.
491 Promey, “Seeing the Self ‘In Frame’,” 11-12, 15-16.
493 Peterson, “Puritanism and Refinement,” 341. Interestingly, Peterson does not explicitly discuss the reflective qualities of silver in terms of Puritan self-reflective practices.
In a world where physical appearance revealed inner moral quality, Europeans associated beautiful silver with divinity, which made it the ideal material for communion cups.\textsuperscript{494} So powerful was this metaphorical link between beauty and divinity that the Catholic Church required the chalice, paten, or ciborium—the vessels that actually touched the consecrated host—to be crafted only of gold or silver.\textsuperscript{495} The Loir ciborium was made of silver with the inside of the cup gilded. Puritan doctrine did not specify which materials should be used in the communion service, but congregations sought out silver vessels because they were beautiful, durable, and valuable.\textsuperscript{496} In rural New England and New France, where silver and silversmiths were both rare and expensive, procuring silver communion ware was a difficult task. Colonial churches relied upon often less talented local craftsmen, or imported their ecclesiastical silver at great expense from the metropole. The first silversmiths did not arrive in New France until the early eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{497} These smiths tended to emigrate because they lacked the skill to gain entrance to guilds in their home cities.\textsuperscript{498} Once in the colonies, they supported themselves with jobs besides silversmithing, including other kinds of metalworking and even gunsmithing.\textsuperscript{499} In an odd marriage of trades, the same craftsmen’s hands and tools that formed communion cups to hold figurative blood, also created weapons to draw real blood.

\textsuperscript{494} Bushman, ”The Complexity of Silver,” 5.


\textsuperscript{496} Ward, “In a Feasting Posture,” 3.

\textsuperscript{497} Trudel, Silver in New France, 21.

\textsuperscript{498} Fox, Quebec and Related Silver, 15-16.

\textsuperscript{499} Fox, Quebec and Related Silver, 15-16. Trudel, Silver in New France, 33-34. In Boston, even Paul Revere, a successful businessman and renowned craftsman, had money troubles. Ethan Lasser, ”Selling Silver: The Business of Copley’s Paul Revere,” American Art 26, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 26-43.
Indians, too, prized silver for its economic and aesthetic value. Silver played an important role in intertwined networks of trade and diplomacy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Dutch and later the English made an alliance with the Haudenosaunee Confederacy called the “Covenant Chain.” At first the allies envisioned their agreement as an iron chain, but by the eighteenth century, silver replaced iron. Both sides invoked “brightening” or polishing the chain through renewed negotiations and gift exchanges. The silver trade began when Europeans exchanged peace medals with Indians in the early days of colonization. Eventually, medals made especially for Indian trade depicted treaty negotiations, with engraved Indians and Europeans shaking hands. An entire industry developed in Europe and later in the American colonies to produce silver for trade. Trade silver took the forms of arm bands, brooches, hair ornaments, earrings and finger rings, crosses, and gorgets (vestigial armor that European military officers wore over the breastbone; Indians wore them the same way). European artisans mimicked Indian ornaments made of bone, wood, and other materials, and adapted Indian design motifs of flora and fauna. The same smiths who made communion ware produced trade silver cheaply, hammering out or melting down silver coins into small, thin

500 It is difficult to extricate the economic value of objects from other values when discussing Indian trade. David Graeber, “Wampum and Social Creativity among the Iroquois,” in Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 117-149. On trade and diplomacy, a classic text is White, The Middle Ground; for an argument that reframes trade, especially in foodstuffs, around English dependence on Indians, see LaCombe, Political Gastronomy, 90-108.

501 Frederickson, The Covenant Chain, 14-17.


503 Frederickson, The Covenant Chain, 33.


505 Frederickson, The Covenant Chain, 57-63.
ornaments.\textsuperscript{506} As evidence of Indian appreciation for silver’s aesthetics, portraits of Indian leaders from the period show them wearing trade silver in large quantities, according to both Indian and European fashions.\textsuperscript{507} George Romney’s 1776 portrait of Mohawk leader Thayandanegea (Joseph Brant) depicts the famed diplomat wearing an arm band, a gorget, several other neck ornaments, and a long earring trailing down from his right ear.\textsuperscript{508} Just as Puritan or French elites donated silver to their churches, communion silver also made its way across the Covenant Chain. Reciprocating a gift of wampum, Queen Anne sent a set of communion silver to a chapel built for the Haudenosaunee at Fort Hunter, New York.\textsuperscript{509} Indian interest in silver grew so great, it taxed European supplies of the metal. Because European silversmithing guilds regulated the purity of silver, the making of trade silver shifted to the American colonies in the 1750s, where smiths combined silver with base metals to make “German silver.”\textsuperscript{510} However, Indians rejected German silver because it was neither as weighty or valuable nor as shiny or beautiful as pure silver.\textsuperscript{511} By the late eighteenth century, at the height of the Indian silver trade, the Haudenosaunee had learned how to work their own silver to repair or modify ornaments, and the silver trade had spread to the far west of the continent.\textsuperscript{512}

\textsuperscript{506} Frederickson, \textit{The Covenant Chain}, 38-39.
\textsuperscript{507} Frederickson, \textit{The Covenant Chain}, 51-65.
\textsuperscript{508} Frederickson, \textit{The Covenant Chain}. George Romney, \textit{Thayandanegea (Joseph Brant)}, 1776, oil on canvas, 127x101.6 cm, National Gallery of Canada. See also Elizabeth Hutchinson, “The Dress of His Nation,” 209-228; and Muller, “From Palace to Longhouse,” 25-49.
\textsuperscript{509} Frederickson, \textit{The Covenant Chain}, 28-29.
\textsuperscript{510} Frederickson, \textit{The Covenant Chain}, 37. Fox, \textit{Quebec and Related Silver}, 15.
\textsuperscript{511} Frederickson, \textit{The Covenant Chain}, 33.
\textsuperscript{512} Frederickson, \textit{The Covenant Chain}, 65.
In trade, Indians also sought out “lesser” metals (in the eyes of the Europeans) than silver. They traded for European-made iron knives and hatchets, and brass and copper kettles, because these tools were brighter and more durable than their Indian-made counterparts, and saved the labor of crafting one’s own tools.\(^{513}\) During a 1701 conference between the Eastern Indians and the Massachusetts Governor’s Council, both the Penobscot and the Norridgewock requested kettles and hatchets along with food, gunpowder, and cloth: “We pray your Honor to send two sloops with Blankets and Provisions,” they asked, “That we may have supplies for our money, having many skins to trade.”\(^{514}\) Though they used them also for cooking, Indians favored copper kettles for ritual purposes and valued particular qualities of this metal. It was easy to work with: Indians cut kettles into jewelry and other ornaments, similar to those made of silver.\(^{515}\) A Jesuit missionary described a Haudenosaunee ritual mask, “a foot and a half long,” made of “2 pieces of a kettle” and “pierced with a small hole in the center” for the wearer’s eyes.\(^{516}\) Many Indian groups valued copper because it was red like blood. The color red symbolized life and fertility, hence the importance of copper kettles in rituals of life and death.\(^{517}\) (Indians also favored red European-made trade cloth.)\(^{518}\) Some even applied ochre to accentuate


\(^{514}\) Copy of a conference between the Council and a group of Eastern Indians, Boston, Massachusetts, December 27, 1701, Massachusetts Archives Collection, 30: 481-483, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston, Mass.

\(^{515}\) Turgeon, “The Tale of the Kettle,” 9-10.

\(^{516}\) Jesuit Relations 63, 289.

\(^{517}\) Turgeon, “The Tale of the Kettle,” 9-10.

copper’s redness. Mi’kmaqs buried their dead in kettles red as blood. English, French, and Native peoples all saw metals as metaphors for the stuff of life, and used them accordingly in their most important ceremonies.

**Vessels in Motion**

Even as Protestants and Catholics argued over the boundaries of the communion ceremony, communion vessels for Europeans and native peoples alike refused to stay within specific bounds, moving between domestic and ritual uses. Some vessels sat as easily on the communion table as on the mundane cooking surface: communion resembled other, less rarified meals. In both domestic and ritual settings, food was transformed and shared. At the table, diners ate from the same dish. For more liturgical ceremonies like the Last Supper, communicants turned meals into rituals and rituals into meals. Within communion vessels, miraculous transformations took place: chief among them, the symbolic or literal transformation of human beings into food.

French and English communion vessels had common origins in domestic use. While the Catholic ciborium was the only one of these vessels that was so specialized it lacked a clear domestic counterpart, it was still a container for serving food. In the early years of Puritan colonization of New England, the dearth of funds and available silver forced congregations to borrow silver or pewter tableware from their members for use in communion. By the second generation of the colony, Puritans adapted tableware forms as their communion cups to

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520 The transformative properties of cooking also signified “civilization” to imperialist commentators. Claude Levi-Strauss noted that all cultures in some way cook food and argued that certain kinds of cooking, such as boiling, necessitated “a cultural object” (a pot) and were thus more civilized than direct-heat methods such as roasting. “The Culinary Triangle,” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, ed. by Caroline Counihan and Penny van Esterik (London: Routledge, 1997), 29-30, and *The Raw and the Cooked*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).
differentiate themselves from Catholic material religion. Where priests manipulated cibori, chalices, patens, and other specialized objects, Puritans preferred to use domestic vessels such as two-handled cups, a form which did not appear in New England services until the early eighteenth century. The two-handled cup greatly resembled a caudle cup, named after the medicinal beverage served in it; Puritans believed this vessel most resembled the cup from which Christ drank at the Last Supper. Perhaps not coincidentally, the two main ingredients of a caudle were wine and grain: the fundamental components of the Lord’s Supper. The caudle cup form gained in popularity as congregations adopted more open communion policies and became wealthier during the early eighteenth century. The cup’s two large handles made it easy to pass from communicant to communicant along the pews. But the Lord’s Supper was not the only time the English drank out of the same cup: they often shared dishes, passing tankards and reaching into the stewpot during ordinary meals.

Indian kettles also served both in rituals and at mealtimes. In addition to being common pots at everyday meals, kettles played starring roles in a number of Indian ceremonies. During the Wendat kettle ceremony and Mi’kmaq burial process, kettles moved back and forth between sacred and more mundane uses, drawing together the bodies of the living and the dead. Like the Mass and the Lord’s Supper, Wendat and Mi’kmaq burial ceremonies were rituals of communion, in which kettles transformed bodies and communities.

At intervals of twelve years, the Wendat kettle ceremony used kettles to transform the remains of the dead, and to bring together communities. First, living participants prepared the

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remains of the dead for burial, taking remains down from village scaffolds, and bundling the bones in new beaver robes. Next, living participants attended ceremonial meals, where they feasted out of kettles, and exchanged gifts with each other, including more kettles. Finally, as many as five villages would come together to inter the bones in a large ossuary. Alongside the human remains, living participants placed grave goods, including jewelry, beaver robes, food, and kettles. At the center of the pit, they installed “three large kettles, which could only be of use for souls; one had a hole through it, another had no handle, and the third was of scarcely more value.” The Wendats spent the night beside the open pit and “slung their kettles” to cook the evening meal just above the kettles of the dead. In the morning, they folded more skins over the contents of the pit so that soil would not touch the remains, then buried the pit beneath a mound of soil and wooden poles.523

This ritual brought together not just the inhabitants of one village, or five villages, but the living and the dead, in a ceremony of communion. Kettles played crucial and diverse roles, as living participants both ate out of kettles and buried kettles with the bones of their ancestors. Much like Protestant and Catholic communion, the Wendat kettle ceremony used a metal vessel to enable miraculous transformation, in this case, releasing souls from bodies, and preparing these souls for the afterlife. The Wendats performed the kettle ceremony because they believed that each person had two souls: one that lived in the body and another that remained near the body after death and needed to be released to live in the village of souls. The grave goods of kettles provided cooking vessels for the souls as they made their journey to an afterlife that much

resembled the world of the living. The ritual of the kettle set free restless spirits, who flew away in the form of doves.\textsuperscript{524}

Mi’kmaq and Wendat burial ceremonies shared many commonalities: remains gathered into bundles, and buried with grave goods, including old or mutilated kettles. Where three kettles accompanied hundreds of sets of remains in the Wendat ossuary, the Mi’kmaqs buried one set of remains with three kettles. Though one kettle in the Mi’kmaq burial had been used for cooking, as evidenced by soot darkening its outside, the Mi’kmaqs obviously did not place the remains inside the kettles to cook. The preparers of the Mi’kmaq grave punched holes in new kettles with metal tools, which implies that the dead only received goods that were of no use (even if intentionally made so) for the living.\textsuperscript{525} While many grave goods would have served the dead in the afterlife, why would one person require \textit{three} kettles in the next world? The number of kettles suggests that they also served another symbolic use. Perhaps the Mi’kmaqs meant for these kettles not to cook, but in another manner transform the body of the dead, just as vessels transformed bodies in Wendat, Puritan, and Catholic ceremonies of communion.\textsuperscript{526}

**Conclusion: Miracle, Metaphor, and Meat**

What are we to make of the debates over communion and cannibalism and the violence of the borderlands? Communion vessels were crucibles of transformation and community. The

\textsuperscript{524} Jesuit Relations 10, 141-143. Brebeuf scoffed at these beliefs of the Wendat, but they were not so different than his own faith in the Resurrection. However, as worshippers of blood and bone, the Jesuits recognized some similarities between Wendat mortuary treatment of the body and Catholic veneration of relics. Seeman, \textit{Death in the New World}, 125-26. Turgeon, “The Tale of the Kettle,” 11.


\textsuperscript{526} The historical record about Mi’kmaq burial practices is scanty. Historians know about this ceremony only through the material traces it left behind, traces that late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Euro-Canadians disturbed with archaeological excavations that we now consider unethical.
individual body became communal, often by becoming liquid, in the sharing of a meal. Bodies had to change shape to fit into the vessels, through either figurative or literal dismemberment. The vessels provided another kind of body for the body. The human body turned into a source of sacred food, providing spiritual nourishment. Both Protestant and Catholic communion ceremonies made use of wine, symbolizing Christ’s blood, and bread or wafers, symbolizing His flesh. As Protestant critics frequently pointed out, neither wine nor bread really resembled the human body. The communion vessel, in combination with the words of minister or priest, changed bread and wine into something more than the sum of their parts—whether that something was the actual (spiritual) body of Christ, for Catholics, or a means of grace, for Protestants. Either way, the individual body of Christ became symbolically divisible, “contain’d under the Form of a Wafer,” loaf of bread, or flagon of wine, and shared among communicants.527

But both Protestants’ and Catholics’ discomfort with cannibalism and the vehement defenses of their own communion rituals as not-cannibalism point to a European need for communion vessels to do something more. Vessels created a symbolic space where the human body could become both food and a metaphor. For Europeans, communion was not cannibalism because of the application of specific ideas and the use of specialized instruments. Protestants and Catholics did not drink blood straight from Christ’s body. They distanced themselves from His flesh by drinking out of vessels in a transformative context. Writers such as Cotton Mather and John Gother could take refuge in the belief that either metaphor or miracle excused them from charges of cannibalism. Protestant and Catholic vessels wrought miraculous

527 Gother, Instructions and Devotions, preface.
transformations of flesh and blood, bread and wine. They also kept communicants from becoming cannibals.

Mi’kmak and Wendat believers also thought that metal vessels could transform bodies and communities. The kettle in the Mi’kmak ceremony, having served in a previous life as a vessel for food, metaphorically “cooked” or transformed the remains of the dead. Placing the body in the ground, surrounded by the second womb of a copper kettle, released the soul into the afterlife. Where the Mi’kmak ceremony relied upon metaphorical cooking, the Wendat ritual of torture and execution obviously did not. In contrast to Mi’kmak, Protestant, and Catholic metaphoric distancing, the Wendat ceremony did not use a vessel until late in the ritual, after the prisoner had died. When participants pressed their cut flesh to that of the captive and ate his heart, they made a direct body-to-body contact that was conspicuously absent in European communion ceremonies. The kettle, meanwhile, enabled the sharing of the sacred food with the entire community as the cooked body took a new, more liquid form.

The Wendat ritual shows that even though communion vessels permitted metaphorization of the body, they were also the sites of violence. Communion was an implicitly violent way to show love for one’s god. Communicants symbolically and sometimes literally dismembered sacred bodies, in a world where other kinds of dismemberment were familiar. Ciborium, cup, and kettle were the centerpieces of rituals of life and death during centuries of warfare. The communion vessels were not only “glistening reflections of stability,” but also actors in a drama.

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528 The rebirth implied in Mi’kmak burial practice is made even more explicit in other grave sites, where bodies were buried in the fetal position and surrounded by red ochre. Calvin Martin, “The Four Lives of a Micmac Copper Pot,” *Ethnohistory* 22, no. 2 (Spring, 1975), 114.

of faith, violence, and blood, in a time when Thomas Hobbes envisioned “the life of man” as “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.”530

In the borderlands between New England and New France, English, French, and Indians gathered as communities, in meetinghouse and cathedral and around the ossuary or sacrificial fire. They manipulated glistening, precious vessels of communion, filling them with blood, or wine that looked like blood, or wine that became blood; they witnessed marvelous transformations; they drank of the common cup or the common kettle or ate of the common bread to grow closer to God, and to make their communities whole. At these sacred meals, they ate to nourish body and soul. They made their most powerful rituals of life and death from humble meals, because simple food contained the essence of life itself.

Nevertheless, communion had the power to divide as well as to unite. Instead of recognizing the parallels between their vessels, ceremonies, and ideas about communion, English Puritans, French Catholics, and Native groups chose to see only the differences between their cultures. Communicants resisted the material resemblances of their communion rituals, and thereby rejected the possibility of shared meaning. “What feed on Humane Flesh and Blood? Strang mess!” wrote Edward Taylor.531 “Thou have French taste; me Savage, this meat good for me,” said the Ottawa man to Roubaud.532 Cotton Mather called transubstantiation “the Cup of Abominations.”533 This irony was not merely a missed opportunity for cross-cultural understanding. Instead, it reaffirmed the divisiveness of even minute cultural difference in a war-


531 Taylor, Poems, 231.

532 Jesuit Relations 70, 127.

533 Mather, Companion for Communicants, 10.
torn era. English, French, and Indians drew the boundaries of their communities in blood, and went out to draw the blood of their enemies.
Chapter 3
Arrows of Famine: Hunger Knowledges and Cultures

“[He] looked like a ghost. [He] was nothing but skin and bone.”
Stephen Williams, c. 1707

Taken captive by Indians from his home near the Susquehanna River in late 1763, the English colonist Isaac Hollister, along with a fellow captive, stockpiled ears of corn and cornmeal cakes and plotted an escape. The two set out in March 1764, and exhausted their stores within a week. Not knowing how to live off of the land, they starved. The situation became so desperate that Hollister’s companion proposed a cannibalism pact: “he told me, that if he died first, he would not have me afraid to eat of his flesh, for I am determined...to eat of yours, if you should die before me.” Accordingly, when the other man died, Hollister sliced “5 or 6 pounds” of flesh from the corpse, but hesitated to eat it. Soon afterward, the Senecas recaptured Hollister.

Less than a year later, near Kanadasaga, New York, a Seneca girl of “6 or 7 years old” became lost in the forest after wandering away from a hunting party. Unlike Hollister and his


536 Hollister, A Brief Narrative, 4.

537 Hollister, A Brief Narrative, 5-6.

538 Hollister, A Brief Narrative, 6-7.

539 Hollister, A Brief Narrative, 6-7.

540 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 32-33.
traveling companion, the child knew what the forest offered for food, and for two weeks she lived off of “deer’s legs” the hunters left behind, as well as “white oak acorns” and “winter greens” she foraged. The fare was paltry—when rescuers found her, the girl was “nearly exhausted” with hunger—but the child’s knowledge of wild foods saved her life.

Hunger pushed all of these people to physical extremes, but the Seneca girl’s knowledge of how to survive on wild foods, and Hollister’s ignorance, made the difference between life and death in a hungry landscape. The experiences of Hollister, his traveling companion, and the Seneca girl demonstrate that hunger in early New England was both a physiological drive and a signifier of rich cultural meaning.

Those who recorded their hunger in this era were privileged enough both to experience hunger only in times of violence, and to describe those experiences in the written record. This chapter argues that the physiological experience of hunger produced cultural coping measures, which I will call “hunger culture”—the different forms in which people experienced and conceptualized hunger. Hunger culture varied depending upon the communities that created it, and was closely tied to what I call “hunger knowledge,” the practical knowledge that communities developed to help them survive the material reality of hunger. Scholars have mapped the ways that knowledge circulated or failed to circulate in early American

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541 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 32-33.

542 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 32-33.

543 Robert Appelbaum has characterized the English as not recognizing themselves as part of a “culture of hunger” when they first encountered Native peoples in the Americas. Appelbaum, “Hunger in Early Virginia,” 214-216. By contrast, I argue that this lack of recognition does not mean that the English lacked a hunger culture: their disavowal of hunger was just a different kind of hunger culture than Indian hunger cultures, which tended to accept hunger as natural.
borderlands. The concepts of hunger culture and knowledge offer scholars a framework for understanding hunger as a cultural actor in early America.

This chapter tracks hunger cultures and knowledges from England to New England’s borderlands between 1675 and 1770. First, it explores English hunger culture in England. Because England was spared the scarcity that wracked much of the rest of Europe between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries, English colonists brought to America a hunger culture that was by and large characterized by a dearth of hunger knowledge. Next, the chapter explores the cultural products of English encounters with hunger in New England’s violent borderlands, particularly English reactions to Indian hunger culture, which ranged from ignorance to understanding. Finally, the chapter turns to Indian hunger cultures and knowledges. Northeastern woodlands Indians had broad and deep hunger knowledges that allowed them to cope with seasonal cycles of feast and famine. Despite encounters with Indian hunger cultures

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545 Anthropologists have cataloged the ways that hunger shapes culture; one influential example is Nancy Schepert-Hughes, Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

and knowledges, English hunger culture remained consistent across a long chronology. Born into a hunger culture ill-equipped to manage hunger or make sense of Indian approaches to scarcity, the majority of English colonists did not create new hunger cultures or knowledges in New England between 1675 and 1770. The consequences of this failure could be dire.

**English Hunger Culture and Knowledge**

The English who migrated to America brought with them a hunger culture of stability and a paucity of hunger knowledge, the result of particular English political, cultural, and physiological contexts in the early modern period. The problem of hunger shaped English politics throughout the era. From medieval times through the beginning of the eighteenth century, strict regulations about the size and pricing of bread shielded consumers from dearth, but were unable to keep pace with inflation in the latter centuries of that period.\(^{547}\) In the Tudor years, especially the hungry 1590s, scarcity mobilized peasants, whose food riots convinced elites to distribute food aid.\(^{548}\) Around the same time, innovations in agricultural technology enabled a stable food supply.\(^{549}\) As a result of these two factors, England did not see widespread famine or food rioting from roughly 1650 to 1740, the era when many English migrated to the American colonies.\(^{550}\) After 1740, market transition, population growth, and a plateau in gains from agricultural technology created a large population of hungry, landless workers.\(^{551}\)

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century which has been called the “‘golden age’ of food riots,” English peasants marshaled the “politics of provisions” to protest grain exports and demand access to food.\(^{552}\) However, the English who migrated to America between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth century carried with them a more placid legacy of the hundred years of relative plenty that preceded this riotous age.\(^{553}\)

Although famine reared its ugly head in England in the 1590s and 1620s, and widely-publicized “starving times” winnowed down the first inhabitants of Jamestown and Plymouth, the English, by and large, did not identify theirs as a culture of hunger from the mid-seventeenth to mid-eighteenth century.\(^{554}\) This dearth of dearth created a uniquely English hunger culture. While England had protocols of religious fasting, the English remained culturally ill-equipped for unintentional hunger. English observers did not recognize hunger as a medical problem, instead focusing on the dangers of gluttony. English hunger culture also largely lacked hunger knowledge, the material and psychological practices that allowed hunger’s sufferers to survive it. English hunger culture in this era reflected an unfamiliarity with hunger, and this unfamiliarity would shape English encounters with scarcity in New England.

Intentional hunger played an important role in English culture in the form of religious fasting, discussed in detail in Chapter 1. The Church of England’s calendar of feast and fast days


\(^{553}\) Despite the many material differences between the Old World and the New, “the preferred ways remained English ways.” Demos, *Circles and Lines*, 32.

\(^{554}\) Appelbaum, “Hunger in Early Virginia,” 214-216.
meant that its members observed fasts of feasts over half the days of the year, while additional fast days could be proclaimed as needed in response to war, disaster, or illness.\textsuperscript{555} Religious fasting primed its practitioners to engage in the “inward” work of the fast day: first “Repentance,” then “Prayer.”\textsuperscript{556} Fasting exposed even England’s wealthiest to hunger, but this type of hunger culture emphasized regular, predictable fasting (which usually did not mean complete abstention from food) over irregular, unpredictable scarcity.\textsuperscript{557} Religious fasting made meaning from a specific kind of hunger, but the hunger culture and knowledge of fasting did not carry over neatly to other experiences of scarcity.

Early modern English medical manuals were largely coy on the subject of hunger, for two primary reasons. First, starvation causes a wide spectrum of effects on the body, many of which could be mistaken for other illnesses. And second, medical authorities of the time, writing for amply-fed elite audiences, were more concerned with the health effects of \textit{too much} food, not the lack of it. In the rare event that writers acknowledged the possibility of unintentional hunger among their readers, they dismissed it as unusual and temporary. A brief survey of medical literature demonstrates that starvation was not a medicalized problem in England in the early modern period.\textsuperscript{558}

Semi-starvation and starvation cause a broad swath of physiological and psychological effects, as the body slowly consumes itself in order to stay alive. In a symptom that may have


\textsuperscript{556} Bayly, \textit{The Practice of Piety}, 260.

\textsuperscript{557} Appelbaum, “Hunger in Early Virginia,” 201.

\textsuperscript{558} Appelbaum, \textit{Aguecheek’s Beef, Belch’s Hiccup}, 239-247. Shapin, “How to Eat Like a Gentleman.” Anxiety about fatness was also common in the period; see Elena Levy-Navarro, \textit{The Culture of Obesity in Early and Late Modernity: Body Image in Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and Skelton} (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008).
confused early modern medical authorities, semi-starving and starving people suffer from diarrhea and other gastrointestinal distress. In terminal starvation, when the digestive system ceases to function, the starving have bloody diarrhea. Since “irregular and ill dyet” and the “Bloody Flux,” frequently occurred together, some starvation deaths in the early modern period may have been incorrectly recorded as dysentery. When observers did not recognize the varied symptoms of starvation or semi-starvation, hunger disappeared beneath other diagnoses.

In early modern England, hunger constantly appeared in medical texts, but it was hunger leading to gluttony that largely concerned these elite writers. Physicians agreed that overeating was a major cause of illness. After all, gluttony was one of the seven deadly sins, and as The Divine Physician warned in 1676, “Diseases are the interests of Sin.” The writers of medical manuals therefore advised their readers to restrain their appetites. “Meat and Drink…taken in too great measure…may be the occasion of many diseases,” wrote Daniel Sennertus in 1658. Six years later, Nicholas Culpeper advised that the proper quantity of food to eat was that “which the Stomach is able perfectly to concoct and digest, and withal sufficeth the due nourishment of the

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560 Keys, et. al., The Biology of Human Starvation 1, 587-90.
561 Raymundus Mindererus, Medicina Militaris, or A Body of Military Medicines Experimented (London: William Godbid, 1674), 74-75. Appleby, Famine in Tudor and Stuart England, 8. Keys, et. al. noted that “where famine and severe undernutrition prevail there are present numerous other factors which would tend to spread infectious diseases.” Keys, et. al., The Biology of Human Starvation 2, 1002.
562 Appelbaum has argued that colonization of the New World demoted gluttony on the hierarchy of dietary dangers, because of the more dramatic perils of starvation and cannibalism. Appelbaum, Aguecheek’s Beef, 245.
Body."565 “Take heed of surcharging thy stomach,” Raymundus Mindererus cautioned soldiers in 1674, noting that there was “nothing more hurtful to health” than an “extravagant” appetite.566 J.H., writing two years later, was more specific about the exact mechanisms by which overeating caused illness: overindulgence disrupted digestion, and “the imperfect Concoction of food” led to the formation of harmful compounds called “crudities” that could wreak havoc on one’s health.567 In 1698, Thomas Tryon agreed that “a little gentle Hunger” cleared “superfluous Matter” from the digestive system.568 William Forster’s 1738 *A Treatise on the Various Kinds and Qualities of Foods, with Aphorisms of Health* contained plentiful injunctions against overeating, among them: “so much may we eat or drink, till Hunger and Thirst be no longer troublesome to us; for whenever we exceed these Bounds, we sow the Seeds of various Distempers.”569 Medical practitioners also recognized specific, pathological forms of overeating, such as the “Doglike appetite,” which caused its sufferers to “deoure in meate without measure” before “vomiting like dogges.”570 For a curative diet, one physician prescribed stale bread, herbs, “fat & oily” meat, mallows, and most of all, wine, to “heate the stomacke, and destroy the


sharpnesse of humours” that provoked patients to a canine hunger. In these texts, gluttony troubled medical writers far more than hunger.

In a world where people constantly risked lapsing into gluttony, and suffering ill health as a result, lack of appetite was cause for particular concern. Medical writers identified several types and causes of loss of appetite. Sennertus described “Atrophy, or want of nourishment,” a condition that could arise from consuming food of insufficient quantity or quality, or from digestive dysfunction such as “weaknesse of the bowels.” Sennertus also offered many reasons why a patient might lose his or her appetite, reasons of anatomy and humors, including: because “many crude and watery humours compress the mouth of the stomach”; “because concoction and distribution is hindred in the stomach”; or “because aliment abounds in the body” due to ineffective excretion. Like Sennertus, Phillip Barrough agreed that physiological defects, humoral imbalances, and/or sickness could result in a loss of appetite. Peter Shaw wrote that a patient might experience “anorexia,” or a long-term distaste for food, “from hard drinking, great heat, a fever,” or “consumptions.” Medical writers agreed that lack of appetite did not spontaneously occur in a healthy person, but rather could be linked to a hangover, hot weather, sickness, or bodily dysfunction.

Writers also proposed ways to either make those who had lost their appetites find them again, or to nourish those who were “weak” or in need of “strengthening.” These remedies were


572 Sennertus, Nine Books of Physick and Chirvgery, 81-82.

573 Sennertus, Nine Books of Physick and Chirvgery, 82.


575 Peter Shaw, A New Practice of Physick 1, 170-71.
eclectic. To “prouoke appetite againe,” Barrough suggested exposing the patient to pleasant odors, such as “wine infused, or decoction of quinces, or peares,” and anointing the patient with fragrant oils “of roses, masticke, and such like.”\textsuperscript{576} After aromatherapy, Barrough prescribed a diet of “diuerse” foods “after the daintiest fashion,” including corn, eggs, “birds of the mountaines,” dates, and prunes.\textsuperscript{577} While medical writers blamed “variety of meats” and “curiously and daintily dressed” foods for gluttonous excesses, Barrough harnessed the appetite-stimulating powers of delicious smells and tantalizing nibbles to encourage those who had lost their hunger to find it again.\textsuperscript{578} Meanwhile, remedies also abounded for those suffering from generic “weakness.” One meaty “broth for a weak Stomach” called for a knuckle of veal, two chickens, and “a chop or 3 of a neck of Mutton,” in addition to a variety of herbs.\textsuperscript{579} A “strengtning drink” contained steel and ebony wood, the hard ingredients likely intended to reinforce the drinker’s weak constitution.\textsuperscript{580} A remedy for many conditions, including “any inward weakness of ye Stomack,” began with earthworms and snails.\textsuperscript{581}

Patients also might waste away from what doctors termed “consumption.” Consumption could refer to the wasting and coughing associated with tuberculosis, but was also used to refer to “general wasting of all the parts of the body.”\textsuperscript{582} It is unclear whether “consumption” could be another name for starvation, but in any case, recipe books abounded with nourishing concoctions

\textsuperscript{576} Barrough, \textit{The Method of Physick}, 109.

\textsuperscript{577} Barrough, \textit{The Method of Physick}, 109.

\textsuperscript{578} Culpeper, \textit{Medicaments for the Poor}, 10.

\textsuperscript{579} Recipe Book, 1600-1740, MS 72619, Trumbull Papers, Western Manuscripts, British Library, London, 22.

\textsuperscript{580} Recipe Book, 1600-1740, MS 72619, 95.

\textsuperscript{581} Mary Doggett, Recipe Book, 1682, MS 27466, Western Manuscripts, British Library, 20.

\textsuperscript{582} Shaw, \textit{A New Practice of Physick} 1, 109.
for consumptives. Mary Doggett’s 1682 recipe book featured fourteen consumption-related remedies, of which five specifically referred to coughing or consumption of the lungs, while three referred to consumption as causing loss of appetite, wasting, or other digestive or stomach problems.\footnote{The remaining six remedies did not specify which kind of consumption the remedy was intended to alleviate. Remedies that specifically mentioned the lungs or coughing: “A Sirrup for a Consumption for a Cough and Stopping,” “Pills for a Consumption or Cough,” “For the Consumption of ye Lungs,” “To cure a Defluxtion or Consumptive Cough,” and “The Consumption Plaister” (a plaster would have been applied to the chest for respiratory ailments). Mary Doggett, Recipe Book, 52, 53, 58, 90, 291. Remedies that specifically mentioned the stomach or wasting: “A good Rect agst ye Jaundice Consumpcon or any inward weakness of ye Stomack Liver or Heart,” “Snaile water good for a Consuption & Wasting of ye Flesh and to strengthen,” and “An Excellt drink for such as are in a Consumpcon or want stomach to theire meate.” Mary Doggett, Recipe Book, 20, 35, 90. Remaining recipes: “A milk water against a Consumption,” “A water for a Consumption,” “A water for all manner of consumpcons,” “A Jelly for a consumepcon,” and two recipes titled “For a Consumption.” Mary Doggett, Recipe Book, 7, 15, 21, 42, 47, 48.} Doggett’s “Snaile water good for a Consumption & Wasting of ye Flesh and to strengthen” began with milk and shelled snails, and the patient was to drink “half of a quarter of a pint of it” morning, afternoon, and night.\footnote{Mary Doggett, Recipe Book, 35.}

Only rarely did medical authorities acknowledge that their readers may not have enough to eat, and any lack of food was seen as an anomalous, impermanent circumstance. Soldiers, with their frequently “irregular diet,” might starve one day and stuff themselves the next.\footnote{Mindererus, \textit{Medicina Militaris}, 19.} In his 1674 manual on military medicine, Mindererus offered up ways to assuage hunger and thirst, while cautioning soldiers not to eat “unwholesome” food even if they were very hungry.\footnote{Mindererus, \textit{Medicina Militaris}, 19.} For soldiers forced to “stand some hours in battail,” Mindererus prescribed the herbs \textit{Carlina} and \textit{Imperativa}, which soldiers could hold in their mouths to stave off hunger and thirst.\footnote{Mindererus, \textit{Medicina Militaris}, 6. John Gerard’s \textit{Herball} identifies three kinds of \textit{Carlina} thistles, but does not mention appetite-suppressing qualities in any of them. John Gerard, \textit{The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes} (London: A. Islip, J. Norton, and R. Whitakers, 1633), 1157-60.}

\footnote{Mindererus, \textit{Medicina Militaris}, 19.}
Mindererus cautioned soldiers that no matter how hungry they felt, they were not to eat tainted food likely to cause illness: “stinking Venison, rotten cheese, musty bread, &c.”588 For Mindererus, hunger’s main threat to soldiers lay in spoiled foodstuffs, not starvation.

In a hunger culture that considered gluttony the primary food danger, and saw any unexpected food shortage as abnormal and short-term, the breadth of hunger knowledge remained small.589 Only a handful of English writers proffered ways to cope materially or psychologically with the effects of unexpected hunger in the early modern period. In the realm of material hunger knowledge, the search for edible substitute foods fascinated the “dearth scientist” Hugh Platt.590 Writing in the famine-plagued 1590s, as elites scrambled to address widespread scarcity, Platt experimented with finding cheap, portable substitutes for staple foods. His work ostensibly targeted the poor, as well as soldiers and sailors. His Sundrie New and Artificiall Remedies Against Famine considered “all manner” of possible foods “out of which [one] might by any probabilitie draw any kind of sustenance.”591 However, Platt did not consider all potential famine foods to be suitable, and he confined himself to foods that were “most plentifull in their quantitie, least offensive in their nature and most familiar with our soile and bodies.”592 In other words, Platt was most interested in foods that were abundant, not totally abhorrent, and suited to English soil and stomachs—rather an optimistic purview in times of scarcity, and of limited use to English colonists in the coming decades.

588 Mindererus, Medicina Militaris, 19-20.


590 A thorough analysis of Platt’s works can be found in Mukherjee, Penury into Plenty.

591 Hugh Platt, Sundrie New and Artificiall Remedies Against Famine ([London]: P[eter] S[hort], 1596).

592 Platt, Remedies Against Famine.
Because famine threatened England as a result of failed grain harvests, many of Platt’s suggestions focused on bread, a staple of English diet. He offered numerous substitutes for wheat, barley, or rye. Platt advised boiling “Beanes, Pease, Beechmast, Chestnuttes, Acornes” in several changes of water to remove their “ranknesse.” Dried and ground into meal, these substitutes could be made into bread when wheat was scarce. Other potential bread ingredients included lentils, pumpkins, and leaves from trees including apple, pear, oak, and beech. Platt tried making bread from wheat straw, but found it too “browne” and “grettie” to eat. As this failure suggests, such alternatives could not make perfect replacements for grain, and Platt acknowledged that substitution would not please every palate. If the “color, tast, or sauor” of substitute foods “happen to offend,” Platt recommended that cooks render them more palatable with herbs, spices, and other flavorings, from wine to honey, and saffron to cinnamon.

Platt published Remedies Against Famine when many of the poor in England faced crippling scarcity, yet there was something more than a little utopian to his experimentation: if people were so poor they had no wheat, they probably had no cinnamon, either. But among his famine foods, Platt also recorded (though noted he had not tried) grimmer concoctions than nuts and honey. A man could live by eating “a fresh turfe or clod of earth” once a day, or by “sucking

594 Platt, Remedies Against Famine.
595 Platt, Remedies Against Famine.
596 Platt, Remedies Against Famine.
597 Platt, Remedies Against Famine.
of his owne bloud” or drinking “his owne urine,” Platt’s sources claimed.\(^{598}\) It is hard to doubt that, unlike Platt, the desperately hungry may have resorted to these measures, and worse.\(^{599}\)

In part because of the famine that Platt sought to solve, many cultural historians have concluded that European peasants in the early modern period faced a harsh landscape of poverty, hunger, and consequentially, demographic collapse. From this hungry world grew both terrible and wonderful tales of food, a type of hunger knowledge that enabled peasants to pross the scarcity around them. Peasants told cruel fairy tales, in which wicked stepmothers cast out children as burdensome mouths to feed, and witches fattened up these same children for cannibalistic ends.\(^{600}\) But the peasantry also daydreamed of the Land of Cockaigne, where the houses were built of food and friendly roasted pigs offered up slices of themselves.\(^{601}\) Fairy tales enabled peasants both to grapple with and (at least imaginatively) triumph over a hungry world.\(^{602}\)

By contrast, England, somewhat uniquely within Europe, “‘slipped the shadow of famine’” between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth century, meaning that English peasants saw more plenty than their continental counterparts. It is no coincidence that English fairy tales are not nearly as bleak as French ones, which abound with hungry wolves in

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\(^{598}\) Platt, *Remedies Against Famine*.

\(^{599}\) Economist Cormac O’Gráda argues that rates of cannibalism during extreme scarcity are likely much higher than reported, given the taboo subject and the fact that famine largely afflicts those who leave the fewest records. Cormac O’Gráda, *Eating People is Wrong, and Other Essays on Famine, Its Past, and Its Future* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 11-37.


grandmothers’ clothing. Moreover, the English had few in the way of hunger jokes, which would have enabled them to laugh at hunger. A 1706 pamphlet entitled “The London Apprentices Complaint of Victuals: Or; A Satyr Against Hunger,” was a rare example of English hunger-based humor from the period. In rhyming couplets, a speaker identified as “a Prentice that is troubled with a Stingy Mistress” bemoaned his constant hunger, describing in detail the agony of his innards, the “Griping Pains which with’reth all my Guts.” The outside of his body also showed the effects of starvation, rendering him skin and bone, “a Skeleton of a Creature.” Hunger sapped the apprentice’s strength, and near the end of the poem, the speaker claimed that “my enervate Hand / So weak is grown, scarce can my Pen command.” The speaker’s litany of corporeal suffering was certainly melodramatic, but also accurate about hunger’s physiological toll upon the body.

Midway through the poem, however, the speaker identified the cause of his hunger, blaming the topsy-turvy gender relations of the household in which he apprenticed. The mistress, who was “despotick” in addition to “Old and Ugly,” wore the “Breeches” in her marriage, while her “foolish” husband was “baffled by a Petticoat.” This bullying wife forced her husband to be a “Miser,” and the apprentice was left to implore, “Heavens snatch me from this Hunger-starving Brood.” In the end, the “Complaint of Victuals” satirized only the tyranny of women

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603 Darnton, The Great Cat Massacre, 42-43.
605 “The London Apprentices Complaint of Victuals,” 2.
607 “The London Apprentices Complaint of Victuals,” 2, 3.
who browbeat their husbands and starved their apprentices. Hunger itself remained deadly serious. The relative lack of hunger in England from the mid-seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries created a hunger culture adapted to plenty, which resulted in a paucity of useful hunger knowledge. This hunger culture and knowledge, forged in times of abundance, would face very different circumstances across the Atlantic.

**English Experiences of Hunger in New England**

In the violent borderlands of New England, English colonists encountered hunger as they had not known it before. They fainted. They grew thin. Some of them contemplated cannibalism. The very detail with which English colonists described hunger suggests that they met dearth as an unfamiliar adversary. Indeed, borderlands violence forced hunger into the lives of ministers and missionaries. These were people privileged enough they did not experience hunger on a regular basis, and so struck by the experience that they recorded it visceral detail.

Hunger forces its sufferers to look inward. The world shrinks down to the physical limitations of the body and the need for food.\(^{609}\) While other physical processes decline in the midst of starvation, the senses remain sharp.\(^{610}\) In spite of this sensory awareness, the physical experience of hunger, like other kinds of suffering, in many ways defies description.\(^{611}\) The hungry colonists recorded their hunger in a physiologically and psychologically altered state, one that focused them upon themselves. The English had sought out hunger for religious purposes on fast days, but now struggled to make meaning out of the unintentional hunger that accompanied borderlands violence.

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\(^{609}\) Keys, et. al., *The Biology of Human Starvation* 2, 784-85, 833.


\(^{611}\) The literary theorist Elaine Scarry claimed that the physical pain of others is fundamentally “inexpressible.” Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 3-11.
The English did not just record their own hunger. They catalogued the ways that Indians experienced bodily suffering for very specific reasons, as a way of differentiating Indian from English bodies. As a result of both the psychological effects of hunger and of the larger project to sort out English and Indian bodies, English captives, soldiers, and missionaries described their own hunger with great specificity, but did not expend nearly as much descriptive energy on Indian hunger. The same hunger that made them deeply attuned to their own bodies drowned out the hunger of others. Often blind to Indian hunger, English colonists also failed to understand the hunger cultures and knowledges that Indians used to grapple with scarcity. The hunger English colonists described in themselves demonstrated that experiences of hunger varied based on gender, age, and status; and revealed the deadly effects that a lack of hunger knowledge could have for colonists in the borderlands.

English accounts of hunger recorded the physiological effects of hunger, but also variations based on age, gender, and social status. For colonists taken captive by Indians, hunger accompanied grueling travels. As lack of food sapped their strength and stamina, walking and carrying heavy loads became particularly difficult. The minister’s son Stephen Williams,

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612 Chaplin, Subject Matter, 255-77.

613 This section focuses primarily upon physiological experiences of hunger. However, hunger can mean not just a lack of calories but a lack of specific foods—which is to say that the English sometimes felt hungry because they did not like to eat Indian foods. The importance of specific foods to ameliorate hunger is discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Anthropologist Martin Bruegel notes, “If a key element goes missing, people may experience hunger, in the sense of want, even when calories and other nutrients are available in sufficient amount.” Bruegel, “From the Crisis of Food to Food in Crisis,” 42. English captives frequently lamented the rarity of bread in their diets among the Indians. “Three Weeks together I eat no Bread,” complained the Deerfield minister John Williams. Williams, The Redeemed Captive, 21. Stephen Williams likewise recorded French colonists giving him bread, “which I had not eaten in a great while.” Stephen Williams, “What befell Stephen Williams in his captivity,” 8, Williams Papers, Box 1, Folder 9, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library, Deerfield, Mass. John Gyles made note of “the first time I had tasted salt or bread” since being taken captive among the Maliseet six years before. Gyles, Memoir of Odd Adventures, 124. Whatever other sources of calories the English may have had, the lack of their staple food left them with a cultural if not biological hunger. Nevertheless, captives like Mary Rowlandson adapted to Indian foods they previously found disgusting. Herrmann, “‘Their Filthy Trash,’” 53.

614 Keys, et. al., The Biology of Human Starvation 1, 703, 739-740.
taken from Deerfield, Massachusetts, as a child in 1704, repeatedly recorded how little he had to eat and how much he had to “travail”: “I did not eat any thing in the morning yet must travail all day,” he reported on one day of his journey.\footnote{Williams also noted: “travailed till about 9 a clock at night with out one morsel of victual”; and after the group had “travailed about 50 mile,” “for my supper I had one spoonfull of indian corn,” and the next morning “must travail” on. Williams, “What befell Stephen Williams in his captivity,” Williams Papers, 4.} Williams’s complaints hinted at the food and labor norms of his life before captivity: he was accustomed to breaking his fast, but not, because of his age and social standing, accustomed to a full day of work and travel. Another captive, Mary Rowlandson, taken from Lancaster, Massachusetts in 1676, described traveling for an entire day with only “five Indian corns” to eat.\footnote{Rowlandson, The Soveraignty and Goodness of God, 151.} Rowlandson reported that even when she felt “very faint,” her Abenaki mistress “would not give me a taste” of cornmeal.\footnote{Rowlandson, The Soveraignty and Goodness of God, 146.} The two women, one English and one Abenaki, defined hunger differently—where Rowlandson felt weak, her Abenaki mistress believed that Rowlandson could withstand the hunger she experienced.

Elizabeth Hanson’s daughter and servant, taken from Dover, New Hampshire in 1724, traveled with their Indian captors for three days with no food; on the third day, “What with the Cold, the Wet, and the Hunger, the Servant fell down as dead in a Swoon,” her body rebelling against the elements and lack of food.\footnote{God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty, 70. Falling is a common side effect of fasting, because blood pressure drops in response to prolonged hunger. Russell, Hunger, 51. Keys, et. al., The Biology of Human Starvation 1, 638.}

Similarly, John Gyles vividly described the physical difficulty of living through Maine winters with limited food and extensive travel. Maliseet Indians captured Gyles from Pemaquid, Maine when he was ten years old. In his first winter among the Maliseet, Gyles “was put to great
hardships in carrying burdens and for want of food.”^619 Not all captives could survive in these harsh conditions. Two winters later, another English child, John Evans, went out hunting with the Maliseet, who gave him “a heavy burden” to carry although he was “extremely weak with long fasting.”^620 Evans fell through ice and cut his knee, then collapsed and was left behind. The next day the hunting party found him “with a dog in his arms, both froze as stiff as a stake.”^621 Another winter, Gyles and a young Indian lived through a similarly dangerous episode. Sent to retrieve a moose carcass “some miles from our wigwams,” the two became trapped in a snowstorm.^622 They built a fire “with what little rubbish we could find around us,” which along with their body heat melted the snow on their clothing. ^623 The next morning, as they journeyed back with their packs of moose flesh, Gyles’s “moosekin coat...froze stiff around my knees like a hoop,” and his shoes froze to his feet. ^624 “Thus I marched the whole day without fire or food,” Gyles concluded the story. ^625 In Gyles’s account, securing food in Maine winters was always perilous. Many captives were unprepared for the physical challenges of captivity, especially scarcity.

These accounts also reveal that the difficulty of traveling without sufficient food varied with gender and age. Stephen Williams and Gyles were both captured as children; Rowlandson and Hanson were both women in their childbearing years. Meanwhile, the adult male Nehemiah

^619 Gyles, Memoirs of Odd Adventures, 103.

^620 Gyles, Memoirs of Odd Adventures, 108.


How recorded a much easier journey on limited rations. How reported traveling with “Ease…, tho’ I eat but very little, our Victuals being almost spent.” How went on to emphasize his strength: he ate “heartily” when the Indians brought in “Meat enough” from hunting, and a solid meal made him feel “strong.” The next day, the party “travel’d very hard,” but How again found the going easy, so much so that “one of the Indians told me, I was a very strong Man.” How’s protestations of his bodily strength, like Rowlandson and Hanson’s protestations of their weakness, were gendered, but also evidence of how age and gender affected captives’ abilities to withstand hunger.

The experiences of several English men highlighted the potentially deadly and even cannibalistic outcomes of borderlands hunger. While some English observers believed Indian hunger was arbitrary and cruel, English narrators emphasized their own desperate circumstances in order to contextualize violence and cannibalism. Their accounts also unintentionally revealed the consequences a lack of hunger knowledge could have in the borderlands. Isaac Hollister’s narrative of his perilous escape from captivity, as discussed above, described a descent into starvation. Hollister and his traveling companion fled Indian captivity, but lacked

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627 How, A Narrative of the Captivity of Nehemiah How, 6.

628 How, A Narrative of the Captivity of Nehemiah How, 6.

629 On the ways that gender shaped captivity narratives, see June Namias, White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Toulouse, The Captive’s Position; Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Arthur Levernier, The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1550-1900 (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993). Gender, age, and overall health affect how the body responds to starvation or semi-starvation; however, scholarly understandings of this phenomenon are limited, as the majority of hunger studies have been conducted on young men. Keys, et. al., The Biology of Human Starvation 1, xviii.

630 Watson argues that these accounts of cannibalism both reveal “the lengths [English colonists] will go to ensure their success in the New World,” and an “Anglo-American masculine ideal that emphasized strength, sacrifice, and piety.” Watson, Insatiable Appetites, 151.
both the food and the hunger knowledge to survive their journey without resorting to cannibalism. Soon after cannibalizing his companion’s corpse, Hollister was recaptured and sent to live with the Senecas, where he continued to be “almost famished to death with hunger.” Somewhat unusually for an English narrator, Hollister also noted that the Senecas suffered alongside him: “Several of the Indians actually starved to death.” Hollister recorded the horrific circumstances of borderlands hunger, justified his near-cannibalistic actions by their context, and betrayed his lack of hunger knowledge.

Thomas Brown’s account of his capture, enslavement, and escape also demonstrated the dangers of a paucity of hunger knowledge. While serving as a scout with Robert Rogers in the Seven Years’ War, Brown was wounded and captured by French and Indian combatants near Ticonderoga in 1757. After spending some of his captivity in Canada, Brown and his Indian master traveled down the Mississippi, where Brown was enslaved until he and a fellow captive escaped. The two walked for twenty-two days, for fifteen of them surviving on “Roots, worms, and such like.” The landscape around them offered them little to eat. After three weeks, starvation rendered them almost too “weak and faint” to continue. At last, Brown’s companion begged Brown to travel on without him, and succumbed to starvation. Brown sat next to the man’s corpse, and in desperation, resolved “to make a fire….and eat his Flesh, and if no Relief came, to die with him.” He cut some of the flesh from his companion’s corpse, buried

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the body, and traveled on, catching three frogs to eat along the way. The next evening, Brown “sat down,” “weak and tired,” but could not bring himself to eat “my Friend’s Flesh.”636 Just as Brown had lost all hope and “was commending my Soul to God,” a partridge landed near him.637 Brown shot the bird, ate it, then shot two more, and heard the gunshots of some French Canadian hunters nearby. The hunters took him to the French-controlled fort at Crown Point, where he was imprisoned. Days after considering a meal of human flesh, Brown ate instead “a Bowl of Rice” sent by the commanding officer.638 Despite Brown’s happy ending, his near-cannibalism demonstrated the deadly consequences of an inability to live off the land.

Brown survived his perilous journey, but other colonists in the borderlands were not so fortunate. Stephen Williams’s narrative of his captivity related the tale of two other captives who starved to death. Williams, Deacon Hoyt, and Jacob Hickson were all taken captive by the Pennacooks in the midst of the winter hunting season.639 While Williams’s master Wattanummon intended to adopt the child Williams, the adults Hickson and Hoyt were enslaved.640 In the midst of a difficult hunting season for the Pennacooks, Hoyt, then Hickson, died from “want of provision.”641 Hunger rendered Hickson “like a ghost,” his body “nothing but

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639 Haefeli and Sweeney, *Captors and Captives*, 140-141. Hickson and Hoyt were likely enslaved because of two factors: first, they were adult males, which would make them difficult to acculturate and adopt (compared to women and children), and second, they were not particularly important members of their English communities, which made them less valuable to ransom. Haefeli and Sweeney, *Captors and Captives*, 155-63, 222-23. Axtell, “The White Indians of Colonial America,” 172-73.
640 Haefeli and Sweeney, *Captors and Captives*, 140-41.
skin and bone.”\textsuperscript{642} Starvation sapped his energy and he “could scarce go,” but the Indians did not have enough food to feed themselves, so Hickson “had no victuals but what he got himself.”\textsuperscript{643} Unable to find enough food to survive, Hickson succumbed to hunger. In the midst of food shortage, Hickson’s enslaved status and lack of hunger knowledge doomed him to starvation.

Although dramatic, the deaths of Hollister’s companion, Deacon Hoyt, and Jacob Hickson are all the exception, not the rule, in New Englanders’ writings of the period. Both of these accounts demonstrate how deadly the lack of hunger knowledge could be in the borderlands, where hunger imperiled both Indians and English. Indian hunger and English hunger received different amounts of attention in these narratives: Stephen Williams dwelled upon English but not Pennacook hunger (although scarcity among the Pennacooks by extension made their captives go hungry); Hollister’s admission that the Seneca also starved to death was likewise unusual. The cannibalism or near-cannibalism in Hollister’s tale constituted an extraordinary act of survival. English narrators such as Hollister contextualized their hunger to explain its sometimes violent consequences—a rhetorical move that the English did not often extend to Indian hunger, as discussed below.

Hunger was not exceptional in captivity narratives. Returned captives so often told stories of hunger that those who did not experience it went out of their way to explain why. Valuable male captives usually did not endure the same kinds of scarcity as others. John Williams, the minister of his town and an important hostage, never lacked for a “Meals Meat” in captivity, but he acknowledged that “some of my Children and Neighbours, were greatly Wounded… with the


Arrows of Famine, and Pinching Want.” Similarly, when John Norton, a minister like Williams, arrived in New France after being captured at the fall of Fort Massachusetts, he noted, “indeed I wanted nothing, having good fresh Provisions, and plenty of Wine to drink.” English experiences of hunger in the borderlands varied, but hunger always demanded description. Moreover, English colonists saw Indian hunger very differently than their own.

**English Attitudes Toward Indian Hunger**

While colonists wrote detailed accounts of their own hunger, they described Indian hunger more rarely, and with less attention to the cultures and knowledges that attended it. In these descriptions, colonists presented four different pictures of Indian hunger. In one version, Indian hunger was all-consuming and often dangerous. In a second, related version, Indian hunger was immoral, another form of the gluttony that English medical writers warned against so vehemently. Alternatively, some English writers saw Indians as immune to hunger. Finally, some colonists recognized that Indians felt hunger perhaps less deeply than they did, but linked it to specific practices the Indians used to keep hunger at bay—that is, hunger knowledge at work.

The English captive Elizabeth Hanson described what she saw as Indian hunger threatening to or exploding into violence. Hanson claimed that her Abenaki master became erratic and menacing when “he wanted Food, and was pinched with Hunger.” When he returned from an unsuccessful hunting expedition, “the Disappointment was so great, that he

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644 Haefeli and Sweeney, Captors and Captives, 165. The phrase “arrows of famine” comes from Ezekiel 5:16, “When I shall send upon them the evil arrows of famine, which shall be for their destruction, and which I will send to destroy you: and I will increase the famine upon you, and will break your staff of bread.”


646 On the stakes of cultural elision and the writing of history, see Lepore’s discussion of captivity narratives, in which she argued that English accounts obscured Indian suffering. Lepore, The Name of War.

647 God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty, 74.
could not forbear revenging it on us poor Captives.” He threatened to kill Hanson and her children, even claiming that he would eat her baby. Hanson concluded that he was tormenting her, only trying to “aggravate and afflict me,” and that her master’s mood became violent when he lacked “Bears, Beavers, Bucks or Fowls, on which he could fill his belly.” In Hanson’s eyes, hunger made Indians violent—though, as Hollister’s account attested, it did the same for the English.

English observers also characterized Indian hunger as gluttony, even in times of food shortage. Hanson criticized her Indian captors’ seeming lack of self-control around food: “when they have plenty, [they] spend it as freely as they can get it,” she complained. Instead of parceling out their food so that it would last a long time, they ate it all at once. Hanson declared that “They live, for the most Part, either in Excess or Gluttony and Drunkenness, or under great Straits for Want of Necessaries.” Too sated to eat another bite at an Abenaki meal, Quentin Stockwell tried hiding some food from his captors, but the group discovered his deception and punished him.

Where the Indians saw a pragmatic response to an unpredictable food supply, Hanson saw a physical and moral failing. Where Stockwell saw arbitrary cruelty, the Indians saw

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648 God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty, 74.
649 God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty, 74.
650 God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty, 74. Hanson’s insistence that her master behaved so erratically only when he lacked meat is curious, given Indian reliance on corn as a staple. Given the context of this anecdote, it is likely that Hanson’s reading of the incident stemmed from stereotypes of bloodthirsty Indians. See Lacombe, Political Gastronomy, 172-73.
651 God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty, 74.
652 God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty, 42.
653 “Of the Captivity of Quintin Stockwell,” 64.
foodways adapted to scarcity: eat when you have food, hunger when you have none. English observers frequently expressed surprise that Native peoples lived in what the English saw as “poverty” in the midst of seemingly plentiful land and resources. Ignoring the possibility that Indian practices might be an adaptation to resource scarcity, the English used this “poverty” as a justification for displacing Indians from their lands—and for ignoring the knowledges that led Native peoples to live in these ways in the first place.654

Where Hanson and Stockwell saw Indians as giving in to violence or gluttony in the face of hunger, Rowlandson witnessed Indian resilience to scarcity. She interpreted this resilience as evidence of God’s wrath against English colonists.655 Rowlandson conceptualized her captivity as a spiritual trial and her own hunger as God’s judgment, a forced fast. During her captivity, Rowlandson lurched from one debasement to another in her desperation to “satisfy my hunger.”656 She never described individual Indians suffering from starvation, though the sheer breadth of foods that she and her captors ate, and timing of their journey in late winter and early spring, both suggest scarcity. In addition, during King Phillip’s War, the English adopted a policy of destroying Indian corn plantings in the hopes of starving out their enemies: “It was thought, if their corn were cut down, they would starve and die with hunger.”657 Despite this policy, Rowlandson “did not see (all the time I was among them) one man, woman, or child, die

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655 On English conceptions of the hardiness of Indian bodies, see Chaplin, *Subject Matter*, 255-277.

656 Rowlandson, *The Soveraignty and Goodness of God*, 152. A thorough reading of food in Rowlandson’s narrative can be found in Herrmann, “‘Their Filthy Trash.’”

Rather than ascribing this feat of survival to Indian hunger knowledge, Rowlandson saw it as God’s will. The Indians, with their astounding ability to survive in a harsh landscape, could only be a punishment from God: “the Lord feeds and nourishes them up to be a scourge to the whole land,” she wrote. Rowlandson did not see Indian hunger around her, only her own, and interpreted Indian strength as divine retribution.

By contrast, the English missionary Samuel Kirkland’s journal of his first posting among the Senecas stands out as a largely sympathetic account of Indian hunger. Moreover, unlike many other English observers, Kirkland both recognized that Indians suffered from hunger, and catalogued the practices they used to cope with it. Kirkland arrived to Kanadasaga in November 1764, and as was common practice among Haudenosaunee groups, he was adopted into a family, which included a brother named Tekánadie. The Seneca had only recently settled at their village after spending several years in British refugee camps during the Seven Years’ War. The aftermath of war, combined with bad weather, wreaked havoc upon their food supply. By March 1765, the village had fallen into late-winter scarcity, exacerbated by crop failures the summer before. “Provisions are exceeding scarce,” Kirkland recorded. With no seed to plant in the spring and winter game sparse, “The appearance of things at present seems to threaten a famine among the Indians the ensuing season.” Kirkland tracked food scarcity in the community

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661 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 28.

662 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 29.
through hunger’s toll on his own body. In March, he described himself as “emaciated” with “some loss of bodily strength.”

The food shortage eventually became so severe that in April, Kirkland and his family began to travel from fort to fort to beg the English for food. They stopped at Caughnawaga to visit William Johnson, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the British in the Northern colonies, who had sent Kirkland on his mission. Johnson greeted Kirkland by exclaiming, “Good God! Mr Kirkland you look like a whipping post.” The Senecas had a more humorous take on Kirkland’s weight loss, with some young men teasing him “that I was so light and spry I could run like a deer—and before the wind I should scarcely touch the ground.” Despite his wasted appearance, Kirkland claimed that he maintained a “high state of health” and “good spirits.”

This cheery attitude elided Kirkland’s more desperate behavior only days earlier, when, offered a cordial dinner with the commanding officer of Fort Brewerton, Kirkland ate ravenously until he vomited.

Although Kirkland was sympathetic to Indian hunger, his journal nevertheless focused on his own physical experience. Kirkland’s sister-in-law fell ill during their journey from fort to fort, and eventually Tekânadie’s wife died of “consumption,” her body consuming itself, her illness no doubt worsened by hunger. Kirkland enumerated many of her qualities, calling her

663 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 58. Subjects in the Minnesota Starvation Experiment experienced a weight loss of 24% of their body mass, accompanied by reductions in muscle strength and endurance. Keys, et. al., *The Biology of Human Starvation* 1, 703, 739-740.

664 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 72.

665 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 72.

666 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 72.

667 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 62-64.

668 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 70.
“remarkable for her patiences” in the face of starvation, dangerous travel, and illness, but he did not record her name.\textsuperscript{669} Although Kirkland was a hybrid figure in the borderlands, who was sympathetic to Indian hunger and understanding of Indian hunger cultures and knowledges, he came from an English hunger culture that struggled to process scarcity. The English hunger culture of hungerlessness rendered Indian hunger cultures and knowledges incomprehensible to most colonists.

\textbf{Indian Hunger Cultures and Knowledges}

Not only were English colonists in the borderlands thrust into a new intimacy with hunger, but they encountered new approaches to it, in the food cultures and knowledges of Indians. Because of the paucity of Indian-authored written sources from this period, it is difficult to reconstruct how Indians lived hunger in their own bodies, without relying upon English voices to do so. From English accounts, it is clear that the English recognized that Indians felt hunger in different ways than they did. Certainly, English colonists worked to reify bodily and cultural differences between themselves and Indians, an effort that would ultimately lead to the “denigration of America’s natives.”\textsuperscript{670} But when surveying the differences in hunger cultures between English and Indians, it is also hard not to conclude that the English were in some ways correct: Indians \textit{did} have different hunger cultures than the English, which made them experience hunger differently.\textsuperscript{671} Unlike the English colonists, whose hunger culture had not made much use

\textsuperscript{669} Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 71.

\textsuperscript{670} Chaplin, \textit{Subject Matter}, 34.

\textsuperscript{671} Scholars long theorized that there was a physiological basis for these differences—that Native peoples had a “thrifty gene” that allowed them to metabolize food differently in order to survive scarcity. However, no evidence of this gene has been found, and researchers trying to explain high rates of obesity and diabetes in present-day Native populations have turned to analyzing the epigenetics of trauma. The author thanks Elizabeth Hoover for her guidance on this topic. Russel Lawrence Barsh, “Chronic Health Effects of Dispossession and Dietary Change: Lessons from North American Hunter-Gatherers,” \textit{Medical Anthropology} 18, no. 2 (1999): 135-151; Ann Bullock and Ronny A. Bell, “Stress, Trauma, and Coronary Heart Disease Among Native Americans,” \textit{American Journal of
of hunger knowledge in a relatively plentiful England, many Indian groups had sophisticated hunger cultures that accepted seasonal hunger as a way of life. They deployed a vast array of hunger knowledge to survive periods of scarcity. In addition to the cycles of feasting and fasting that Hanson and Stockwell observed, Indian hunger knowledge included familiarity with a large variety of wild plant foods; medicinal practices that mitigated hunger’s toll on the body; and psychological coping measures, such as humor. English observers only rarely seemed to understand or learn from Indian hunger knowledge practices.

One important form of Indian hunger knowledge was the practice of eating a wide breadth of wild foods, including substances that the English found disgusting or inedible. Indians consumed wild plants and fungi with tastes and textures that were unfamiliar to English palates. Rowlandson reported that as she and her captors traveled, their “chiefest and commonest food was ground nuts,” a staple tuber for the Haudenosaunees, Wendats, and Abenakis. She also ate “artichokes,” likely Jerusalem artichokes; “lily roots,” a relative of onions; and “ground beans,” a bean-like plant. Like Rowlandson, Swarton and her captors subsisted on groundnuts

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672 Appelbaum, “Hunger in Early Virginia,” 211-212.


675 “Artichokes” were likely Jerusalem artichokes. The “lily roots” were likely the plant now known as Canada onion or Canada garlic (Allium canadense). Ground bean (Ampicarpa bracteata) is now also known as Hog-Peanut. Kuhnlein and Turner, Traditional Plant Foods, 78-79, 188.
and acorns, as well as purslane and another plant called “hogweed.” Traveling through present-day Maine into New Hampshire, Swarton also ate “wortle berries,” which could refer to blueberries, huckleberries, or bilberries; and what she described as “a kind of wild cherry which grew on bushes.” In addition to the many plant foods that they could identify, both Rowlandson and Swarton consumed “weeds” and “roots” that were new to them. A food that stuck in most captives’ memories, perhaps because it seemed so extraordinary a food source to them, was tree bark: Hanson twice mentioned consuming “the Bark of some Trees,” and her daughter was “forced” by scarcity to eat nothing else “for a whole Week”; Stephen Williams also noted eating “bark of trees”; and Rowlandson expressed amazement that the Indians would eat “the very bark of trees.” Stockwell wrote that he and his Abenaki captors were “fain to eat touchwood”—the rotten wood used for starting fires—“fried in bear’s grease.”


677 Mather, “A Narrative of Hannah Swarton,” 150. The “wild cherry” was probably also one of these types of berries. Kuhnlein and Turner, Traditional Plant Foods, 174-187.


679 Stephen Williams, “What befell Stephen Williams in his captivity,” Williams Papers, 6. God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty, 70. Rowlandson, The Soveraignty and Goodness of God, 170. Of course, wealthy colonists would have consumed bark before, but perhaps not recognized it as such, whenever they ate cinnamon, made from the bark of trees in the genus Cinnamomum.

680 “Of the Captivity of Quintin Stockwell,” 64.
Colonists had a complex relationship with Indian herbal knowledge. They were intrigued by the potential of New World botanical remedies, nervous about the ‘paganism’ of Indian shamanic medicine, and increasingly eager to supplant Indians through colonization, rendering them strangers in their own lands. Although Indian women were the primary foragers in their communities, botanical familiarity seems to have crossed lines of gender and age. The famed Mohegan missionary Samson Occom recorded herbal recipes for a number of ailments, including digestive complaints: a treatment for “collick” consisted of a “hand full of each” of “Elder Root & Sweet farm Root,” boiled; “Indian flax R[oot]” was “good for Bloody flux” (dysentery). Young children also knew herbal lore, as in the case of the Seneca child whose hunger knowledge permitted her to survive on acorns and wild greens after becoming separated from a hunting party.

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The lists of many different plants that Indians foraged hint that as resources dwindled, Indians’ search for wild plant foods became more desperate and less rewarding.\textsuperscript{686} Plant adaptations to climate or predators meant that some foods needed extra preparation to make them edible. The fibrous textures of wood and bark meant that Indians had to fry or boil these foods before consuming them, though even with cooking, they probably remained fairly indigestible. Wild plant foods are often bitter, necessitating extra culinary labor: for example, acorns contain toxic quantities of tannic acid, and require soaking (as English writer Hugh Platt also noted in his writings).\textsuperscript{687} Again, proper preparation could render such foods edible but not necessarily pleasant to eat. In the end, the rewards of such effort could be meager. Besides nuts, most foraged plant foods would have been relatively low in calories, making it difficult to meet the caloric needs of people walking all day or carrying heavy loads, especially in cold temperatures.\textsuperscript{688} With each individual food contributing only scant calories or nutritional value, Indians gathered an increasingly broad variety of foods to meet their daily needs, which was a significant time investment.\textsuperscript{689} Indian familiarity with edible plants made up an important component of their hunger knowledges.

Hunger knowledge also extended to other bodily practices. While cataloguing his own bodily suffering, Kirkland recorded the specific bodily practices that his adoptive Seneca family used in times of hunger. The Senecas employed a series of strategies to keep the digestive system

\textsuperscript{686} Huss-Ashmore and Johnson, “Wild Plants as Famine Foods,” 91.


\textsuperscript{688} See Kuhnlein and Turner’s extensive tables of the nutritive value of wild plant foods. Kuhnlein and Turner, Traditional Plant Foods, 342-483.

\textsuperscript{689} Huss-Ashmore and Johnston, “Wild Plants as Famine Foods,” 91.
functioning smoothly when food was short and meals intermittent. In times of feast and famine, Kirkland’s brother Tekânadie explained that the Senecas drank liquid bear fat to “to open the outer door” and stave off constipation.690 Ignorant of this practice, Kirkland suffered “a severe cholick” after eating white oak acorns, until his adoptive grandmother counseled him to drink one and a half gills of bear grease.691 In particularly lean times, when there was no choice but to wait for food that might be days away, Tekânadie advised Kirkland “to take a notch up in my belt, every day or two,” only to loosen it “when I came to set before a large Kettle filled with good broth.”692 Kirkland reported that he “had found great advantage” with this practice, which allowed him to lose “a little flesh” but remain “in good spirits” despite hunger.693

Alongside these bodily practices, Indian hunger knowledges also contained psychological practices, such as making jokes about hunger as a coping strategy in hungry times. The English, however, rarely laughed at Indian hunger jokes. Rowlandson suspected a trick when she asked one Indian for news of her son, and he responded that he “did eat a piece of him, as big as his two fingers, and that he was very good meat.”694 Though Rowlandson felt “discouragement” at the possibility of her son’s cannibalistic demise, she took some solace what she called Indians’ “horrible addictedness to lying.”695 What Rowlandson saw as cruel deceit, we can interpret as a joke at Rowlandson’s expense. Similarly, Hanson’s master’s threatened baby-eating can be read

690 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 58.
691 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 57.
692 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 72.
693 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 72.
694 Rowlandson, The Soveraignty and Goodness of God, 155. Rowlandson’s son was still alive and she reunited with him a few months later.
695 Rowlandson, The Soveraignty and Goodness of God, 155.
as a joke she did not understand. She, too, saw the threat of cannibalism only as an attempt to “aggravate and afflict me.”  It seems unlikely that either of these Indians were really threatening cannibalism, but instead playing a joke on the English women’s fears and stereotypes about bloodthirsty Indians. Kirkland, on the other hand, faced a gentler hunger joke from the Senecas, who warned him that he might blow away in a stiff breeze when starvation rendered him “light and spry.” From Kirkland’s contention that he remained in “good spirits,” it seems that he alone understood this hunger humor. From eating a variety of wild plants, to drinking bear grease, to making jokes about hunger, Indian hunger knowledges helped their users endure the physical and psychological hardships of scarcity.

Conclusion

When Samuel Kirkland was starving alongside the Seneca, he met another Englishman who told him that he had “known what hunger was.” In New England’s borderlands, colonists like Kirkland began to know. Hunger menaced Indians and English. Hunger knowledge flowed through the borderlands. An Abenaki woman taught Elizabeth Hanson how to make a cornmeal pap for her hungry baby. Tekânadie taught Kirkland to tighten his belt. Native interlocutors shared hunger knowledge with English colonists, who had little to offer in kind. Colonists who did not have hunger knowledge, like Isaac Hollister and Jacob Hickson, suffered and starved.

696 “God’s Mercy Surmouting Man’s Cruelty,” 74.
697 While ritual cannibalism is well-documented among the Iroquois, Ottawas, and Wendats, it has not been ascribed to Abenakis. Abler, “Iroquois Cannibalism: Fact Not Fiction,” 309-316.
698 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 72.
699 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 72.
700 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 63.
The few colonists who began to understand Indian hunger knowledges, like Kirkland, learned to laugh in the face of scarcity.

English understandings of hunger culture and knowledge did not evolve, despite borderlands encounters with Indian cultures and knowledges that offered different ways to process hunger. Indian hunger knowledges did not always shield their practitioners from starvation: the deaths of Kirkland’s sister-in-law, and the Senecas among whom Hollister lived, showed hunger’s deadly impact on the borderlands. Nevertheless, Indian hunger cultures and knowledges were shaped by familiarity with hunger and attempted to overcome it. As borderlands violence exposed New England’s missionaries, ministers, soldiers, and civilians to hunger, it introduced them to new ways of grappling with scarcity. Raised in the plenty-minded hunger culture of mid-seventeenth to mid-eighteenth century England, however, generations of English colonists and their descendants did not recognize the utility of Indian approaches to hunger. The English saw hunger in the borderlands as brutal, senseless, and strange. Their hunger culture struggled to make sense of scarcity, and largely failed.

In New England’s borderlands in the generations after the starving times, English colonists had the chance to make a new hunger culture, shaped both by English hunger culture’s denial of hunger, and by Indian hunger cultures’ acceptance of it. The way Kirkland laughed at Seneca hunger jokes indicated the possibility of a hunger culture that could bridge Indian and English experiences of hunger. This hybrid hunger culture might have arisen on an individual level in cases like Kirkland’s. The violence of war and captivity, however, the very circumstances that made privileged English colonists encounter hunger, also prevented such a hunger culture from taking hold: “Ignorance is often not merely the absence of knowledge but an
outcome of cultural and political struggle."\(^701\) The extraordinary cross-cultural circumstances of
captivity or war rendered English hunger anomalous, and Indian hunger threatening, gluttonous,
or even invisible.\(^702\) The violence of settler colonialism obscured Indian hunger knowledges as it
displaced Indian bodies.

\(^701\) Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire.*, 3.

\(^702\) Lepore, *The Name of War*; Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors*. 
Chapter 4
The Violence of My Appetite: Disgust and Sustenance

“There is nothing which hunger will not devour.”
Sébastien Rale, 1722

Samuel Kirkland stared down into a bowl of rotten bear stew, the flesh riddled with “streaks and mortified parts.” Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 61. “I viewed the meat,” he wrote, torn between “the cravings of my appetite” and the “disgusting- forbidding aspect of the dish.” Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 60-61. The struggle between hunger and revulsion “forced tears from my eyes,” and he wept into his bowl: “the tears would now and then roll down my cheeks and drop into my spoon, as tho they would sympathize with me, or try to season my dish.” Finally, he forced down “a pint or more,” but almost immediately ran from the house to “unload my stomach by emitting.” He had reached a breaking point, hungry enough to “swallow” food that he found loathsome, but unable to keep it down.

It was a story to “offend a delicate stomach” and even a strong one. Kirkland ate the bear stew because he had no other choice. The Senecas were starving. Kirkland soon found himself “emaciated” with “some loss of bodily strength.” His adoptive older brother,

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703 Jesuit Relations 67, 223.
704 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 61.
705 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 60-61.
706 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 61.
707 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 61.
708 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 61.
709 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 59.
710 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 29.
711 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 58.
Tekânadie, set a “tree trap” for bear, but because of illness could not check the trap for days at a time.\textsuperscript{712} When he finally returned to the trap, he found a bear which “appeared to have been dead some days” in “sultry and warm” weather.\textsuperscript{713} Back at the English-built blockhouse where the Seneca family made their home, Kirkland watched his sister-in-law butcher a quarter of the bear. Maggots crawled through the flesh, and with horror, Kirkland “observed some white and living animalcules fall on the floor” and “scamper about like lusty fellows.”\textsuperscript{714} Kirkland’s sister in law filled a kettle with “corn smashed between two stones” and the flesh of the bear, “once dead,” “now come almost to life again.”\textsuperscript{715} In the evening, she served him “a double allowance” because he was a “stranger,” and Kirkland gazed with mingled longing and loathing at the “3 or 4 quarts” of broth and flesh.\textsuperscript{716}

The missionary “sat upon my bunk the back side of the house” and looked to scripture for guidance.\textsuperscript{717} He considered the story of Jacob’s blessed cattle, “which were \textit{spotted} \& \textit{speckled} \& \textit{ring-streaked},” and imagined them with “\textit{green streaks},” like the corrupted flesh before him.\textsuperscript{718} This meat was sustenance, God’s gift, a blessing, however ugly. But then Kirkland thought of “the apostle Peter,” who made “solemn declaration” that he had never eaten anything

\textsuperscript{712} Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 59-60.
\textsuperscript{713} Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 60.
\textsuperscript{714} Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 60.
\textsuperscript{715} Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 60.
\textsuperscript{716} Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 59, 60.
\textsuperscript{717} Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 61.
\textsuperscript{718} Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 61. In Genesis 30:31-31:14, Jacob tried to trick his uncle Lahan out of many of his livestock. Jacob told Lahan that he would watch over his stock, so long as he could take any of the animals that were spotted or speckled. Jacob then attempted to breed spotted and speckled cattle, goats, and sheep; these patterned livestock flourished, and Jacob became wealthy. Though Jacob thought his cleverness had produced the profusion of spotted and speckled animals, it was, in fact, all God’s doing.
“common or unclean” in his life. Kirkland could no longer be sure that he could say the same. But neither could he reject this food in front of his starving Seneca family. And he, too, was hungry. He closed his eyes, “filled my wooden spoon,” and swallowed the noxious flesh.

Food had grown so scarce among the Senecas that Kirkland’s family resolved soon afterwards to travel to an English fort to ask for assistance. Six days of travel, eating “principally fish and fish broth,” brought them to Fort Brewerton, “at the west end of the Oneida Lake.” Kirkland left the Seneca to camp outside the fort, and went up himself to meet with the commanding officer. Noticing that Kirkland was very thin, the officer offered him the leftovers from his dinner, which consisted of “rice soup” and a “great part of a leg of mutton or venison.” Kirkland turned down the offer of an alcoholic beverage, and “chose only water for my drink.” But as he “began moderately upon the soup,” he felt himself losing control. “My appetite soon became raging,” and he attacked the food on the table: “I cut one slice after another of the flesh & felt as tho I should soon devour all that was brought…, and not be satisfied.”

Watching Kirkland stuff himself, the officer told Kirkland, “with a very pleasant air,” that since

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719 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 61. Peter stated that “nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth” in Acts 11:8.

720 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 61.


722 Likely Lieutenant Henry Congalton. The Journals of Samuel Kirkland, 47, note 54.

723 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 62.

724 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 62.

725 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 62.

726 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 62-3.
he had been “next to a state of starvation” for so long, he should pace himself, lest he make himself ill.727 “I should advise you to eat but half a meal more,” and then return in the evening to “take a cup of tea,” the officer warned.728

To this “extraordinary kindness and great politeness,” Kirkland responded rudely, “with some warmth.”729 Unhinged by his hunger, he imagined that his host “grudged the food.”730 “Sir, I am willing to pay you for what I eat,” Kirkland snapped (though he later admitted “I had not a farthing”).731 The officer patiently told Kirkland that “he would feed me with pleasure till night if it would do me no injury,” but that he was acting on Kirkland’s behalf.732 From experience, the officer knew “what hunger was,” and that Kirkland would suffer the consequences if he ate too fast.733 Finally, Kirkland “dropped my knife and fork & come to my self.”734 He expressed gratitude to the officer for the meal. The officer promised to send food to Kirkland’s Seneca family, who were waiting, “hungry,” on the shores of the lake outside the garrison.735

Kirkland went down to the waterside. Within a few hours, he vomited up “my excellent dinner,” before returning to apologize to the officer for his “ingratitude.”736 The officer told

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727 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 63.
728 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 63.
729 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 64, 63.
730 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 63.
731 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 63.
732 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 63.
733 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 63.
734 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 63.
735 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 63.
736 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 63, 64.
Kirkland that the incident did not afford him the “least disgust,” but filled him with “compassion” for Kirkland’s suffering.\footnote{Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 64.} When Kirkland recorded this episode decades later, he could not remember whether he ate venison or mutton. The “violence of my appetite” had blotted out the specifics of the meal, but he vividly remembered his shame.\footnote{Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 63.} Meanwhile, the suffering of the Senecas down on the lake shore remained unspoken and unseen.

These two meals of broth and flesh are examples of what hunger wrought in early New England and New France. In the first meal, Kirkland choked down rotting flesh because he was ravenous, he did not want to offend his adoptive family, and he could find biblical parallels to his own situation. In the second meal, he berated his host and seemingly forgot about the distress of his relatives. Both episodes ended in vomiting. In the borderlands, in this war-torn era, hunger made people \textit{eat} terrible things, and by extension, \textit{do} terrible things.\footnote{Challenging the linear narrative of the frontier, borderlands history has situated negotiations between and within cultures in “ambiguous and often-unstable realms where boundaries are also crossroads, peripheries are also central places, homelands are also passing-through places, and the end points of empire are also forks in the road.” Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett, “On Borderlands,” \textit{Journal of American History} 98, Vol. 2 (September 2011), 338. Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett, “On Borderlands,” \textit{Journal of American History} 98, Vol. 2 (September 2011),} Hungry people experienced both physiological and moral disgust, but they ate when and what they could. When the hungry fed their violent appetites, they risked, as the officer observed to Kirkland, “injury” to themselves and to others.\footnote{Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 63.}
In cross-cultural spaces, in the realm of the violent appetite, European colonists experienced terrible eating.\textsuperscript{741} They felt intense, visceral disgust as they confronted Indian foodways in settings that were implicitly or explicitly violent: Indian and French raiding parties took English colonists captive in acts of war, while English, French, and Indian missionaries tried to avert Indian resistance to colonial incursion by converting them to Christianity.\textsuperscript{742} Colonists did not eat disgusting things alone: they ate with other starving people, with the Indians who were their captors, protectors, families, or flock. Colonists ate Indian foods and participated in their hunting and gathering, their preparation and serving.

As Kirkland’s repeated vomiting suggests, the violence of terrible eating also took place on the level of individual bodies. Colonists’ disgust was literal before it became a metaphor.\textsuperscript{743}

\textsuperscript{741} Philosopher Carolyn Korsmeyer has coined the term “terrible eating,” contending that “Even the most refined and delicate of meals presupposes a violent backdrop,” the death of someone (plant or animal) for someone else to eat. Carolyn Korsmeyer, Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 194. I have refined this definition to include the many kinds of violence terrible eating may inflict on bodies and social norms.

\textsuperscript{742} Captivity narratives make notoriously problematic sources, as many scholars have suggested: any factual reliability of these accounts is “filtered through extreme subjectivity, bias, editorialization, or ethnocentrism.” Derounian-Stodola and Levernier, The Indian Captivity Narrative, 119. On editorializing, see Toulouse, The Captive’s Position. However, Linda Colley argues that the narratives’ “overall factual anchorage can usually be tested” against other sources—if such sources exist. Linda Colley, Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850 (New York: Pantheon, 2002), 13. Moreover, these texts present an emphatically Eurocentric vision of Native peoples. Although numerous captives stayed with their native or French “captors,” few of these “unredeemed captives” wrote narratives of their experiences. Axtell, “The White Indians of Colonial America,” 168-206. John Demos, The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1994). The majority of the surviving captivity narratives tell only one side of the story, silencing Indian experiences of violence and captivity. Lepore, The Name of War, 125-149. Similarly, Linda Colley, Karen Ordahl Kupperman, and Andrés Reséndez have all pushed the boundaries of captivity studies by stressing that captivity was a global experience. Linda Colley, Captives; Karen Ordahl Kupperman, The Jamestown Project (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2007); Andrés Reséndez, A Land So Strange: The Epic Journey of Cabeza de Vaca (New York: Basic Books, 2004). Taking all of these concerns into account, the narratives still remain a valuable body of source material. The prevalence of intertwined images of hunger and violence in these texts suggests that, even if these preoccupations do not always reflect the actual experiences of captives, the symbolism of food and war was a potent rhetorical tool.

\textsuperscript{743} Food has received limited treatment in the literature on captivity, and two main readings of food in captivity narratives have emerged: one that assumes food is a tool of acculturation, and the other assumes that food is a metaphor. Some scholars interpreted captivity narratives’ emphasis on food as evidence of Indian attempts to acculturate their captives. This argument appeared in Axtell, “The White Indians of Colonial America,” 180-181; and Vanderbeets, “The Indian Captivity Narrative as Ritual.” Other scholars have argued for a more metaphorical meaning to captives’ obsession with food. The most complete analysis of hunger in captivity narratives can be found in Stein, “Mary Rowlandson’s Hunger and the Historiography of Sexuality.” Stein insisted that, because
Colonists categorized many, if not most, Indian foods as not-foods, substances that fell outside any familiar “gastronomic taxonomy.” These not-foods were disgusting, morally or physiologically or both. Read with food scarcity in mind, many missionary and captive accounts become litanies of desperate eating, in which colonists grappled with revulsion as hunger forced them to overcome cultural strictures against eating certain foods. From these sources, it is possible to construct a taxonomy of colonists’ disgust. Observers expressed revulsion at the prospect of eating many different not-foods: wild plants and fungi (discussed in chapter 3); strange meat; meat served bloody or raw; food served or prepared in unfamiliar ways; animal innards or excrement; food that had been in some way ‘contaminated’ by certain people or animals; garbage, leather, and dirt; and rotten or moldy food. The notion that any definitions of food or not-food are culturally determined would not have comforted these hungry people.

For colonists, terrible eating did violence to stomachs and guts, tastes and taboos, cultural and social structures. Eating disgusting things was both self-destructive—risking illness and death—and self-protective—dodging starvation. In the borderlands, food knowledge could ensure survival. Colonists were ignorant of Indian foodways, lacking Indians’ lifesaving

Rowlandson took the time to describe the tastes of the foods she ate, her hunger must be “deinstrumentalized from mere circumstances” and read as a metaphor. Stein, 475. Instead, Stein argued, we should interpret Rowlandson’s hunger as standing in for another bodily urge, the sexuality that repressed Puritan women would have never expressed in print. I contend that just because Rowlandson cared about taste, that does not invalidate the physiological grounding of her hunger. Even in the throes of hunger, people talk about taste—they talk about taste because they are hungry. Ulrich pointed to the primacy of food in Rowlandson’s “portrait of herself”; the disgusting food she ravenously ate was evidence for “Calvinist perceptions of the depravity of humankind.” Ulrich, Good Wives, 227-231. While the ritual-acculturation theory is in some ways persuasive, both this reading and the metaphorical reading of food in these texts fail to take into account the importance of hunger as hunger and disgust as disgust. While we can read food—and captives’ obsession with it—as evidence of social and moral tensions, in these accounts it is also, and in fact primarily, a physiological necessity. We do not need to seek elaborate metaphorical explanations for starving people’s hunger. The hunger itself is overdue for study. Also relevant, though not concerning captivity narratives specifically (or even the colonial period): Ellen Campbell, “Feasting in the Wilderness: The Language of Food in American Wilderness Narratives,” American Literary History, 6 (1994): 1-23; Reginald Horsman, Feast and Famine: Food and Drink in American Westward Expansion (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008).

knowledge about flora and fauna. The unfamiliar is disgusting, and colonists’ ignorance made them feel disgust at eating Indian survival foods. The stakes of eating unfamiliar foods went higher than disgust, however. Colonists believed that English or French food made English or French bodies, that you are quite literally what you eat. But in captivity or on mission, these familiar foods—sometimes any foods—were unavailable. When they answered to the dictates of their hungry bodies and ate Indian foods—and especially when they enjoyed them—colonists worried that they would lose themselves. Colonists ate disgusting things that threatened violently to transform their own bodily habits and finally their bodies themselves.745

The very particularity of their accounts of these trials and temptations, their catalogues of disgusting foods, attested to their subjects’ non-Indianness: they protested their ignorance of Indian foodways and rejected Indian food with mind and body. Expressing disgust in such stomach-turning detail was a way to insist that despite living among the Indians, they remained un-Indian themselves. Nevertheless, colonists often experienced satiety, even pleasure when they ate disgusting foods. Their struggles to circumscribe their violent appetites and disgusting experiences within familiar language demonstrate how the violent appetite threatened cultural boundaries. English and French voices dominate the history of disgust in colonial America. While English and French colonists wrote in nauseating detail about the revolting foods they forced down their throats, Indian disgust has remained more or less invisible. Colonists assumed that Indians would eat almost anything without feeling revulsion, and the historical record reflects this assumption. Reinterpreting these accounts shows that where colonists saw terrible

745 Chaplin, *Subject Matter*, 8-10, 149-152, 209-212.
eating, Indians saw necessity. In the midst of the violent collision of cultures, disgust tested, transgressed, and ultimately solidified cultural boundaries in colonial New England and New France.

**Theorizing Disgust**

Disgust has occupied scholars across disciplinary boundaries, from cognitive scientists to philosophers. The English word *disgust* first came into use in the early seventeenth century, around the time the English began to colonize the New World in earnest. While its etymological relationship to taste implies that disgust is primarily a response to flavor, a wide spectrum of substances, concepts, and behaviors can elicit disgust. The physiological disgust response is characterized by grimacing, spitting, and nausea and vomiting. Scholars in biology and public health theorize that the disgust response functions as a sort of behavior-based immune system that long predated the understanding of germ theory. Many disgust triggers—bodily fluids, dead people or animals, spoiled food, or bad hygiene—are also causes or carriers of disease.

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The desire to avoid these entities reduces the risk of exposure to pathogens, and perhaps, deep in human history, squeamish people lived longer because they did not contract deadly diseases, allowing evolution to select for this quality.\textsuperscript{752} Scholars also attribute a kind of “magical thinking” to the disgust response: we believe that disgusting things can contaminate other things, or that seemingly innocuous things can remain invisibly contaminated by disgusting origins.\textsuperscript{753} Humans held these abstract beliefs in contagion and contamination long before the discovery of the microbial world could confirm them.

Despite these insights, biology only partially explains the deep complexities of disgust. Scholars frequently point to the relationship between physiology and morality in the disgust response.\textsuperscript{754} Physiological disgust is the visceral reaction to a wide array of triggers—excrement, insects, vomit, dead things, and so forth. Moral disgust is triggered by more abstract concepts and behaviors—incest, cruelty, and the like—but could not exist, some argue, without the psychological pathways laid by physiological disgust.\textsuperscript{755} Other theorists have concluded that the origins of disgust lie in the human fear of being too much like animals, the fear of death, or the repression of taboo desires.\textsuperscript{756}

None of these sweeping theories of disgust have managed to solve the conundrum that not everyone finds the same things disgusting. Though some scholars have argued that disgust is

\textsuperscript{752} Curtis, \textit{Don’t Look, Don’t Touch, Don’t Eat}, 40.


\textsuperscript{754} McGinn, \textit{The Meaning of Disgust}, 38. Curtis, \textit{Don’t Look, Don’t Touch, Don’t Eat}, viii, xi.

\textsuperscript{755} McGinn, \textit{The Meaning of Disgust}, 38.

\textsuperscript{756} Rozin, Haidt, McCauley, and Imada, “Disgust: Preadaption and the Cultural Evolution of a Food-Based Emotion,” 70.

“objective” and “not...subjective or relative,” theorists have outlined general categories of disgustingness while admitting that most disgust is culturally mediated in the specifics.\textsuperscript{757} Disgust is “remarkably inclusive” as it varies from culture to culture and person to person.\textsuperscript{758} One’s categories of disgusting and not-disgusting are partially inborn and partially adapted during one’s lifetime.\textsuperscript{759} For the eater, many flavors, textures, and smells have to be learned—the burn of hot peppers, the funk of fermented foods, the creaminess of cheese.\textsuperscript{760} The unfamiliar is often repulsive, whether it is food associated with another culture, or simply a novel flavor.\textsuperscript{761} For example, most cultures eat only a small minority of the animals or animal products they

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\textsuperscript{757} McGinn, \textit{The Meaning of Disgust}, 61-62. Nearly everyone who writes about disgust feels compelled to enumerate and catalogue disgusting things. For example, McGinn divides disgusting entities into the following nine categories: rotting dead things and dismemberment; bodily fluids; anything that grows on the body (e.g., warts, pimples, etc.); the inside of the body; insects and a host of other creepy-crawlies; plants and plant-like growths, such as mold; dirt; bodily actions or behaviors; and behaviors that elicit intellectual disgust (everything from “corruption” to “bad grammar”). McGinn, \textit{The Meaning of Disgust}, 13-15, 16-17, 18-20, 20-24, 24-27, 27-29, 30-33, 34-37, 37-39. For other, similar lists, see Curtis, \textit{Don’t Look, Don’t Touch, Don’t Eat}, 9; Carolyn Korsmeyer, \textit{Savoring Disgust: The Foul and the Fair in Aesthetics} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 63; Rozin, Haidt, McCauley, and Imada, “Disgust: Preadaptation and the Cultural Evolution of a Food-Based Emotion,” 70, 71.

\textsuperscript{758} Miller, \textit{The Anatomy of Disgust}, 109, 50. The anthropologist Mary Douglas famously contended that the construction of certain substances or people as “clean” or “unclean” “create[s] unity in experience” for cultural groups. Douglas, \textit{Purity and Danger}, 3.

\textsuperscript{759} Schiefenhovel, “Good Taste and Bad Taste,” 62.


\textsuperscript{761} Korsmeyer, \textit{Savoring Disgust}, 81-82. Schiefenhovel, “Good Taste and Bad Taste,” 62.
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could eat if they so wished. In spite of this suspicion of new tastes, however, repeated exposure to unfamiliar foods can render them palatable or even pleasurable.

As the potential for the disgusting to become delicious suggests, the relationship between disgust and desire is also something of a puzzle. Disgusting things can be repulsive but also alluring. Some aesthetic theorists have placed disgust in the context of existing conversations about taste, both the physical sensation and the aesthetic judgment. In what has been termed “terrible eating,” people enjoy many initially ‘difficult’ or ‘unpleasant’ tastes, such as moldy cheeses, spicy peppers, offal, or alcohol. The argument runs that this impulse arises out of a

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764 The Freudian implications of this relationship have preoccupied some disgust theorists. Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, 109-142. McGinn, *The Meaning of Disgust*, 127-130. Strohminger, on the other hand, cautions that theorists have belabored this connection, which “lumps coitus and coprophagy into the same category, a move that seems suspect on a number of levels.” Strohminger, “Disgust Talked About,” 485.


desire to sample the “intense, bodily awareness” of proximity to death.\textsuperscript{767} This tendency to seek out painful yet pleasurable gustatory experiences is called “benign masochism.”\textsuperscript{768}

However, the recreational flirtation with death or suffering that these theories ascribe to the taste for disgusting foods does not apply to the already-heightened, often violent, experiences of hungry people in the borderlands of colonial New England and New France. Indians, French, and English ate disgusting foods not because they were disgusting, but because they were food. That is, they ate these foods in spite of, not because of, their disgustingness. Disgust theorists agree that hunger will in the end overwhelm the disgust response—in the end it is better to eat than to starve—but this phenomenon has received very little analysis.\textsuperscript{769}

Vulnerable to violence, captivity, and other kinds of catastrophe, colonists and Indians in the war-torn borderlands of New England and New France sometimes endured food shortage so severe that they were faced with a choice: eat something disgusting, or go hungry. They described their encounters with the disgusting in both physiological and moral terms; their disgust was a product of both viscera and culture. English and French missionaries and captives left behind vivid descriptions of the foods that they ate while living among Indians. They recorded the hunting or gathering, preparation, and serving of these foods; their tastes and textures; and the effects that they had on the bodies of their eaters. They were disgusted by bitter roots and squishy mushrooms, maggoty moose bladders and horse steak, leather bags and beaver intestines, and bread kneaded with dirty hands. It is more difficult to say whether Indians, too,

\textsuperscript{767} Korsmeyer, \textit{Savoring Disgust}, 85.

\textsuperscript{768} Other examples of benign masochism include hot yoga and roller coasters. Paul Rozin, Lily Guillot, Katrina Fincher, Alexander Rozin, Eli Tsukayama, “Glad to be sad, and other examples of benign masochism,” \textit{Judgment and Decision Making}, Vol. 8, No. 4 (July 2013): 439-447. Rozin has written extensively on the subject since 1980, beginning with Rozin and Schiller, “The nature and acquisition of a preference for chili pepper by humans.”

felt disgust as hunger forced them to eat increasingly desperate and meager foods. In the end, hunger triumphed over revulsion, threatening to destroy hallowed categories of food and not-food, and even the social order.

**Strange Meat**

As a matter of course, Indians consumed the flesh of animals that Europeans did not consider appropriate to eat under anything but life-or-death circumstances. They ate domesticated animals such as horses and dogs, but also hawks, bears, raccoons, and other game. Colonists categorized some animals as not-foods because abstaining from such flesh was a marker of their particular Englishness or Frenchness—the English, for example, earned a reputation for eating a great deal of beef at the expense of other meats.\(^{770}\) Eating only certain animals in specific preparations, Europeans saw themselves as civilized, removed from more animal appetites, such as those of the Indians, who did not discriminate so much about proteins.\(^{771}\) Nevertheless, hungry French and English often conquered their initial hesitation to eat these ‘foreign’ foods, but not without emphasizing the effects of these unusual meats upon body and soul.

The captivity narrative of Susanna Johnson neatly illustrates English attitudes towards consuming “novel” meats.\(^{772}\) When a party of eleven Abenaki men captured Susanna and her husband James from Charlestown, New Hampshire in August 1754, Susanna was heavily pregnant. As the Abenakis fed them breakfast before embarking for Canada, another colonist’s

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772 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 61.
horse, “known to us as Scoggin,” came along, and James caught him for Susanna to ride. The next day, Susanna delivered a baby, and then continued to ride the horse for five days, crossing west over present-day Vermont. On the fifth night, the raiding party reached Otter Creek, “the waters that run into Lake Champlain”; to continue to the lake would require the party to climb “over the height of land.” With provisions exhausted and hunting unsuccessful, “hunger, with all its horrors, looked us earnestly in the face.” The Abenakis chose to sacrifice Scoggin, who at any rate would have been more hindrance than help over mountainous terrain. “The horse was shot, and his flesh was in a few moments broiling on embers,” Susanna related with distaste. The Abenakis sliced and roasted horse flesh to eat that day, boiled broth for Susanna and her infant, then smoked and dried the rest of the meat for coming days. In the morning, the Abenakis broke “the marrow bones of old Scoggin” and boiled them with “every root, both sweet and bitter, that the woods afforded.” On the flesh and broth of a single horse, eleven Abenakis and eight English survived for days.

Susanna recorded a variety of responses among the party to the butchering and eating of Scoggin the horse. The Abenakis “satiated their craving appetites” without hesitation, which Susanna ascribed to “native gluttony.” She contrasted their hunger, which she found uncivilized, with their courteous treatment of the prisoners: “An epicure could not have catered

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773 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 57.
774 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 61.
775 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 60-61.
776 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 61.
777 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 61.
778 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 61.
nicer slices,” she claimed. The English had decidedly mixed reactions to the horsemeat. “Each one partook as much as his feelings would allow,” Susanna wrote, not clarifying what these “feelings” might be. It could have been simple disgust at eating horsemeat, which the English had long outlawed and associated with paganism; or, as Susanna’s repeated invocation of Scoggin’s name suggests a sentimental attachment to the animal, eating this particular horse may well have been uncomfortable. Whatever the cause, horsemeat was surely “novel” and not particularly appetizing, even in a time of scarcity: “Appetite is said to be the best sauce; yet our abundance of it did not render savory this novel steak,” Susanna concluded. Susanna’s three hungry children, however, did not share the same scruples, and “ate too much,” an overindulgence which made them ill for days. In the end, horsemeat was the only food the party had, and the need for nourishment overcame disgust at the meat’s origins: “Those who had relished the meal exhibited new strength, and those who had only snuffed its effluvia confessed

779 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 61.

780 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 61.

781 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 57, 61. The consumption of horsemeat had been banned in Britain since the suppression of the pagans, as eating horse was associated with paganism—a conclusion that English observers would have drawn about Indians, as well. Ritvo, *The Platypus and the Mermaid*, 204-206. The practice of pet-keeping evolved its modern contours in the nineteenth century, but eighteenth-century Americans also kept pets. Naming animals was a way for pet owners to “express psychological closeness,” but this closeness is difficult to measure in Scoggin’s case. Katherine C. Grier, *Pets in America: A History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 67-69. Ritvo, in her survey of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century natural history lessons for children, argued that horses were see as “noble,” “affectionate,” and “humble,” as well as beautiful and useful animals. This identification of positive human characteristics with horses would have made it disturbing to eat horse flesh. Harriet Ritvo, “Learning from Animals: Natural History for Children in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” in *Noble Cows and Hybrid Zebras: Essays on Animals and History* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 40.

782 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 61.

783 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 61, 62. Susanna’s daughters were “extremely sick and weak, owing to the large portion of the horse which they ate; but if they uttered a murmuring word, a menacing frown from the savages soon imposed silence.”
themselves regaled.”784 Despite her earlier reservations, and the monotony of “repetition of the same materials for our meals,” Susanna could not, in the end, “turn with disgust from a breakfast of steaks which were cut from the thigh of a horse.”785 She assured her readers that they would do the same, too, if they were in her position, “if my feelings can be realized.”786 She remained, however, devastated at the loss of her mount, fearing that she would not have the strength to continue the march: “By the assistance of Scoggin I had been brought so far,” she lamented, “but now, alas! this conveyance was no more.”787 Instead, Scoggin had become a different kind of conveyance, his flesh providing Susanna the sustenance she needed to move her own.

Despite her worries, Susanna arrived safely in Quebec, but not before eating other unfamiliar meats along the trail. This experience she shared with many colonists who became immersed (forcibly or not) in Indian foodways. Other captives, too, ate animals they would otherwise not have consider food. When provisions ran low, Stockwell wrote, “one bear’s foot must serve five of us a whole day.”788 Then, since the Indians had taken horses from Deerfield, “We began to eat horse-flesh, and eat up seven in all.”789 In more plentiful times, Stockwell ate raccoon flesh and drank the “grease.”790 Swarton ate dog, turtle, bear, and eel.791 Left with her “Indian mistress” while the rest of the party caught eels, Swarton “boiled” and “drank the broth”

784 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 61.
785 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson ,” 62.
786 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson ,” 62.
787 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson ,” 61.
788 “Of the Captivity of Quintin Stockwell,” 63.
789 “Of the Captivity of Quintin Stockwell,” 63.
790 “Of the Captivity of Quintin Stockwell,” 64.
791 Mather, “A Narrative of Hannah Swarton,” 149.
of a moose bladder “which was well filled with maggots,” “but the bladder was so tough we could not eat it.” 792 Rale’s Abenaki guides “killed a dog which was following them” for food. 793 Eating these foods provoked strong reactions in colonists: revulsion, satiety, and faith. For Susanna Johnson, “The broth of a hawk” and gruel made up one supper. 794 Contemplating an “unsavory” dinner of “duck’s head” and “a gill of broth,” Johnson pined for familiar foods and the comforts of home. 795 She daydreamed of when “from a board plentifully spread in my own house, I ate my food with a merry heart.” 796 Remembering times of plenty and contentment, she took her meal “emaciated by sickness,” “seated on a ragged rock,” and “surrounded by my weeping and distressed family.” 797 Like the unfamiliar tastes and textures of acorns, lichen, mushrooms, and bitter roots, the flesh of “novel” animals was a reminder of the disruption of war and the anxiety of hunger. “The contrast was too affecting,” Susanna wrote. 798 Where Johnson hesitated over this “unsavory morsel,” Rowlandson found that she was willing to eat foods that once had “made me tremble.” 799 Remembering bear “baked very handsomely among the English,” she noted that “some like it,” but “the thought that it was bear”

792 Mather, “A Narrative of Hannah Swarton,” 150.


794 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 60.

795 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 63.

796 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 63.

797 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 63.

798 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 63.

had always discouraged her. In captivity, by contrast, hunger made bear “savoury to me.”

For Rowlandson, the Indians’ willingness to eat so many foods, however unappetizing most of them seemed to her, was proof that King Philip’s War and other Indian attacks were signs of God’s wrath against colonists. She wrote that Indians ate every part of many different animals: “horse’s guts, and ears, all sorts of wild birds…bear, venison, beaver, tortoise, frogs, squirrels, dogs, skunks,” and “rattlesnakes.” The adaptability of Indian food resources, even in the winter woods, gave them such a tremendous advantage in war, it could only be God’s doing, Rowlandson concluded. “I can but stand in admiration to see the wonderful power of God, in providing for such a vast number of our enemies in the wilderness, where there was nothing to be seen, but from hand to mouth,” she wrote. “The Lord feeds and nourishes them up to be a scourge to the whole land.”

Where Rowlandson saw a divinely-ordained ability to survive on nature’s scraps, Indians saw themselves as part of a vast system, an animal cosmology. Like Europeans, Indians had complex beliefs structuring their relationships to animals, but they were far less alienated from animals than Europeans were in this period. When the Abenakis hunted, they did not just seek out meat, but made “spiritual preparations,” interpreted dreams, and observed taboos. Reliant upon moose as a staple food, the Abenakis adhered to cultural practices that prevented

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800 Rowlandson, The Soveraignty and Goodness of God, 152.
801 Rowlandson, The Soveraignty and Goodness of God, 152.
802 Rowlandson, The Soveraignty and Goodness of God, 170.
804 Merchant, Ecological Revolutions, 46-47.
805 Merchant, Ecological Revolutions, 46-47.
806 Merchant, Ecological Revolutions, 47.
overhunting. Other animals had more uses alive than as food: horses and dogs provided transportation or help with hunting. But desperation, like the hunger the Abenakis and their captives faced on the banks of Otter Creek, overwhelmed these scruples. Scoggin’s ability to bear a burden became less important than the animal’s nutritive value.

**Bloody and Raw**

English and French colonists frequently complained that the Indians ate their meat raw, or nearly so. The English colonist Nehemiah How, taken captive from the Great Meadow Fort (now Putney, Vermont) in 1745, ate “nothing…but Beef almost raw” for four days. Rowlandson begged an Indian man to give her a piece of horse liver, and “laid it on the coals to roast.” Then, “before it was half ready” an unspecified “they” took half of the liver from the coals. Protective of the half that remained, Rowlandson ate the liver “as it was, with the blood about my mouth.” Likewise, the Jesuit François de Crepieul grumbled that Montagnais offered him meat “only half cooked.” The repeated mention of incomplete cooking—“almost raw,” “half ready,” or “half cooked”—indicates that How, Rowlandson, and de Crepieul had a different standard of readiness or cookedness, one that involved roasting meat until it was no longer

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814 Jesuit Relations 63, 45.
bloody. English cookbook writers were vague about these standards; Gervase Markham merely insisted that a cook must know “when meat is roasted enough,” because while “too much rawnesse is unwholesome,” “too much drinesse is not nourishing.”

Another narrative suggested that Indians did not even know how to cook meat to European-approved “doneness,” but enjoyed the taste of thoroughly-cooked flesh. An Englishman, Sergeant Blake, lived at Epsom, New Hampshire in the 1740s and hosted a group of Abenaki men, led by their head man Plausawa, around his hearth. When Blake presented the Indians with “a quarter of a bear,” they “threw it whole upon the fire, and very soon began to cut and eat from it half raw.” Blake offered the Indians another variation on fire-roasted bear, “cutting pieces from it, and broiling [the meat] upon a stick for them,” which “pleased” the Indian visitors “very much.” It is not clear what, exactly, about Blake’s action so delighted his dinner guests—the spectacle or the product, the act of broiling or the broiled meat itself. The scene presented a contrast between Abenaki and English methods of cooking, the former of which produced meat the English again regarded as “half raw.” Like the bear carcass for

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815 Markham, *The English House-Wife*, 89.

816 The account hints at many differences in manners between Indians and English: the group of Abenaki, in this account, seems to have invited themselves to dinner, arriving at Blake’s house, and telling him “not to be afraid, for they would not hurt him.” They examined “all his bottles, to see if he had any ’occapee’—rum,” and then announced that “they were very hungry.” “The Captivity of Mrs. Isabella M’Coy, of Epsom, N.H,” in *North Country Captives: Selected Narratives of Indian Captivity from Vermont and New Hampshire*, ed. Colin Calloway (Hanover and London: University Press of New England), 20.


819 The most famous anthropological consideration of rawness and cookedness is, of course, Levi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*. Levi-Strauss noted that all cultures in some way cook food. In a reading that has been critiqued as colonialist, Levi-Strauss divided cooking methods into evidence of “nature” and “culture.” He argued that certain kinds of cooking, such as boiling, necessitated “a cultural object” (a pot) and were thus more civilized than direct-heat methods such as roasting. Levi-Strauss, “The Culinary Triangle,” 29-30.
Plausawa’s men, this story was an entertainment to its English readers, skewering—or inventing—Abenaki ignorance.

Broiling meat in thin strips or slices appears to have been the norm among other Indian groups. Kirkland, traveling west to missionize the Senecas, carefully recorded details about the meal he and his Seneca guides cooked together. While the guides gathered sticks and firewood and built a fire, Kirkland sliced ham. The guides “cut some sticks about two & a half feet long, sharpened one end & split the others part of the way down,” threaded slices of ham onto the sticks, and “tied the top with a strip of bark to prevent their falling out.” Kirkland marveled at the efficiency of this method of cooking: “These were new scenes to me,” he wrote, but “highly gratifying.” After sharing the meal with his guides, he concluded, “a better supper I have seldom made.” Since Kirkland did not speak the same language as his guides, their opinion of the meal is lost from the historical record.

Kirkland’s meal of meat roasted on sticks was the inverse of the dinner at Sergeant Blake’s house: the Englishman marveling at Indian ingenuity, and not the other way around; and Kirkland’s ham shed fat drippings instead of blood. And sometimes Indians ate raw meat out of sheer necessity. The little Seneca girl that lived for two weeks in the forest by herself survived by

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820 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 7.
821 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 7-8. Lafitau, too, reported a similar method of “roast[ing]” meat “on little spits of wood, one of which they stick in the ground.” Lafitau, Customs of the American Indians 2, 62.
822 Lafitau, Customs of the American Indians 2, 8.
823 Lafitau, Customs of the American Indians 2, 8.
“gnawing and sucking” on “some deer’s legs which had been flung out” of a hunting cabin.\textsuperscript{824} Nevertheless, European commentators saw Indians’ willingness to eat meat raw as evidence of utter savagery.\textsuperscript{825} The English naturalist John Josselyn claimed that Algonquians ate rattlesnakes not just raw, but wriggling: “The Indians, when weary with travelling, will take [rattlesnakes] up with their bare hands, …and with their teeth tear off the Skin of their Backs, and feed upon them alive,” he wrote.\textsuperscript{826}

**Innards and Excrement**

Several English writers found one kind of food particularly distressing: some captives complained they had to eat intestines still slicked with excrement. Intestines themselves appeared throughout English cuisine, but the waste they contained was another matter entirely.\textsuperscript{827} As an English child taken captive from Deerfield, Massachusetts in 1704, Stephen Williams “had little or any thing to eat.”\textsuperscript{828} When his captor caught a duck, Williams received “the guts, which I laid on the coals without cleaning them.”\textsuperscript{829} He was so hungry that unwashed duck intestines “seemed a sweet morsel to me.”\textsuperscript{830} In the 1720s, Hanson’s Indian captors gave her and her children the “guts and garbage” of beavers, but did not allow Hanson “to clean and wash them as they ought,” beyond “emptying the dung.”\textsuperscript{831} “In that filthy pickle we must boil them,” Hanson

\textsuperscript{824} Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 33.

\textsuperscript{825} Lacombe, *Political Gastronomy*, 172-173.


\textsuperscript{827} See the discussion of blood puddings in Chapter 2.

\textsuperscript{828} Stephen Williams, “What befell Stephen Williams in his captivity,” Williams Papers, 8.

\textsuperscript{829} Stephen Williams, “What befell Stephen Williams in his captivity,” Williams Papers, 8.

\textsuperscript{830} Stephen Williams, “What befell Stephen Williams in his captivity,” Williams Papers, 8.

\textsuperscript{831} *God's Mercy Surmounting Man's Cruelty*, 70, 74.
lamented, which “made the Food very irksome” and “unpleasant.” Nevertheless, “pinching Hunger” rendered the uncleaned intestines edible, and eventually, delicious: “what I had thought in my own Family, not fit for Food, would here have been a Dainty-Dish and a Sweet Morsel.”

While these “guts and garbage” seemed far distant from the puddings or sausages in which the English would normally have consumed intestines, the Indians were familiar with these preparations. Joseph Johnson, a Mohegan missionary, reported in February 1768 on the increasing late-winter scarcity among the Oneida he missionized. “At present they now begin to cook some good dried guts of Dear” he wrote, “and what is in it. (Dung if I may So call it.)” The intestines and their stuffing would “season” an otherwise monotonous diet of corn. Johnson felt the need to censor his account (“Dung if I may So call it”) for the English recipient of his letter, Eleazar Wheelock, but his account of “good” intestines did not betray the same naked disgust that characterized Hanson’s telling.

Contamination

Disgustingly was contagious, and certain people or animals could contaminate food with their touch. This anxiety informed the accounts of two very different missionaries: François de Crepieul, who missionized the Montagnais from 1671 to the beginning of the eighteenth century; and David Fowler, a Mohegan missionary who trained under Eleazar Wheelock and lived among the Oneidas from 1765 to 1767. De Crepieul recorded an extraordinary series of

832 God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty, 70, 74, 70.
833 God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty, 70, 74-75.
835 Joseph Johnson to Wheelock, February 10, 1768, 128.
complaints in a brief narrative entitled “The Life of a Montagnaix Missionary,” which he characterized as “a Long and slow Martyrdom,” “an almost continual practice of patience and of Mortification,” and a “truly penitential and Humiliating life.”

No aspect of Montagnais life escaped his criticism, written in the third person. He had to sleep on a bed of “Fir-Branches,” “which are very hard,” in the snow, which “chills his brain, and gives him toothache.” He had to share a wigwam with Indian men, women, and children (the latter upon whom lice “always swarm”), as well as dogs—“usually when he awakes he finds himself surrounded by dogs,” he related with horror. He suffered heat, cold, smoke, and snow-blindness. Indian children frequently “annoyed” him with “their cries, their weeping, etc.”

But worst of all was the food: de Crepiuel devoted over half of the words in this litany of “suffering and hardship” to his disgust with Montagnais foodways. Dishes were “very seldom clean or washed,” except “wiped with a greasy piece of skin,” or “Licked by The dogs.” While eating, the Indians wiped their hands on their clothing, shoes, or hair, or “the dogs’ hairy skins.” De Crepiuel shared communal dishes with people who suffered from scrofula, writing that “the stench” from their sores “caused me nausea, both day and Night.” He drank “very

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836 Jesuit Relations 65, 43.
837 Jesuit Relations 65, 43, 45.
838 Jesuit Relations 65, 45.
839 Jesuit Relations 65, 43, 45, 49.
840 Jesuit Relations 65, 47.
841 Jesuit Relations 65, 49.
842 Jesuit Relations 65, 43.
843 Jesuit Relations 65, 45.
844 Jesuit Relations 65, 47.
dirty” water from ponds, “in which I saw toads” (frogs) swimming.845 Traveling in Peokwagamý, de Crepieul wrote, “I have never seen Savages dirtier than these” in matters of food handling.846 “An old woman, with her long nails,” served up “handfuls of grease” into “very dirty” communal dishes.847 They ate food “covered with moose-hairs or Sand.”848 But like Rale, de Crepieul ate and drank in situations that he found utterly revolting because he had no other choice. “He suffers also from Hunger,” he reported, eating “a good meal only once” in a while.849

Fowler’s letters to Wheelock took a strikingly similar tone. Writing in 1765, soon after his arrival to Conowahare, Fowler noted the Oneidas’s kind reception of him, despite their seeming poverty: “I have been treated very kindly since I came to this place,” he said, and “I beleive I should want for nothing if they had wherewith to bestow it.”850 From there, however, Fowler launched into a series of complaints about the food and cooking habits of his hosts. Unlike Fowler, the Oneidas did not find sharing their food with dogs to be disgusting: “I am oblig’d to eat with Dogs, I say, with Dogs,” he complained.851 The Oneidas let their dogs lick “Water out off their Pales and Kettles,” or steal food straight from the dish: “I have often seen Dogs eating their Victuals when they have set their Dishes down, they’ll only make a little Noise

845 Jesuit Relations 65, 47, 49.
846 Jesuit Relations 65, 47.
847 Jesuit Relations 65, 47.
848 Jesuit Relations 65, 47.
849 Jesuit Relations 65, 49, 43.
851 Fowler to Wheelock, June 15, 1765, 94.
to show their Displeasure to Dogs and take up the Dish” again. These scenes apparently made quite an impression on Fowler, as when he wrote to Wheelock half a year later, he again noted that he “was oblig’d to eat with the Dogs” and that they licked the dishes.

While Fowler documented the disgust he felt at the contact actual animals had with food, he also compared the Oneidas themselves to animals. “My Cooks are nasty as Hogs,” he grumbled; “their Cloaths” were “black and greasy as my Shoes,” and “their Hands…as dirty as my Feet.” Fowler expressed revulsion that these same hands touched his food: “they cleanse them by kneading Bread.” Using further animal language, he called the Oneidas the most “lazy and inhuman pack of Creatures as I ever saw in the World.” In the same letter that Fowler compared his hosts to pigs, however, he also identified with swine. He insisted that “I determine to live better than a Hog,” and that “my Food now is not fit for any Man, that has been used to have his Victuals drest clean.” He dreamed of the “clean,” “nourishing” cooking of Wheelock’s wife, Mary, who made “Bread & Milk, little sweet Cake and good boild Meat” for Wheelock’s students. But these ‘civilized’ foods, prepared, served, and eaten so differently than his meals among the Oneidas, produced in Fowler an animal appetite. The pig imagery

852 Fowler to Wheelock, June 15, 1765, 94.
854 Fowler to Wheelock, June 15, 1765, 94. Ritvo noted that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers saw pigs as “defective in morality as well as taste”—their own taste in food, that is, not the taste of their flesh. Ritvo, “Learning from Animals,” 41.
855 Fowler to Wheelock, June 15, 1765, 94.
856 Fowler to Wheelock, January 21, 1766, 98.
857 Fowler to Wheelock, June 15, 1765, 94.
858 Fowler to Wheelock, June 15, 1765, 94.
returned, but now Fowler himself took the place of a hungry swine: “I could eat those things
greedy as a Hog that has been kept in a Pen two Days without it’s Swill,” he admitted.859

In this final identification with animals we see an important difference between Fowler
and de Crepieul. De Crepieul never mistook himself for one of the people he missionized—no
matter how long he ate their food and slept in their wigwams, he remained French and Christian,
wholly committed to changing every facet he could about the Montagnais. As a Christianized
and Europeanized Montauk Indian proselytizing the Oneidas, Fowler occupied a more
complicated position. Like de Crepieul, Fowler struggled to adapt to the language and culture of
an alien people, the Oneidas.860 With his palpable disgust at Oneida foodways, and his
comparisons of the Oneidas to pigs and dogs, Fowler worked to distance himself from what he
saw as Oneida animal appetites. Yet he confessed that he, too, felt a swinish hunger for English
food, which suggests that Fowler felt ambivalent about his origins and his mission.

Fowler’s revulsion helped to fuel his mission to Europeanize Oneida religion and
lifeways: “I am oblig’d to eat whatsoever they give me for fear they will be displeas’d with me,”
he wrote in his first letter, but “after this Month I shall try to clean some of them.”861 The process
would be slow, lest the Oneidas reject Fowler’s efforts: “I must move along by Degrees, if they
once get out with me it is all over with me.”862 The first chance he had, with financial support

859 Fowler to Wheelock, June 15, 1765, 95.
860 Fisher, The Indian Great Awakening, 149.
861 Fowler to Wheelock, June 15, 1765, 94.
862 Fowler to Wheelock, June 15, 1765, 94.
from Wheelock’s organization, he set up house with his wife, whom he called “the other Rib,” and lived “like a Gentleman,” with “a plancy of Corn, Flour, Meat and rotten Fish.”

**Garbage, Leather, Dirt**

When other sources of food had been exhausted, Indians and colonists consumed more emphatically not-foods: refuse or contaminated food, dirt, and leather. While Susanna Johnson and her husband were imprisoned by the French in Montreal, they had to cook their own “dirty crusts” in their cell. Jemima Howe recalled her captors bringing her to a French family, who refused to buy her because she had a babe in arms. While her captors and the French were discussing the matter, Howe looked into a nearby “swill-pail,” brimming with “greasy liquor,” with “crusts and crumbs of bread swimming on the surface.” She did not hesitate to reach into the slops and eat the food scraps intended for livestock, for “This was all the refreshment which the house afforded me.”

Mary Rowlandson lived for days off of a piece of cake “that an Indian gave my girl the same day we were taken”; the cake crumbled in her pocket for so long that it grew “so moldy (for want of good baking) that one could not tell what it was made of,” and then longer still, until the crumbs became “so dry and hard, that it was like little flints.” Hanson and her captors sacrificed garments, “old Beaver-Skin-Match Coats,” for food.

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863 Fowler to Wheelock, June 15, 1765, 94. The rib, of course, was a reference to Genesis 2:22. But it is also intriguing that Fowler turned to a bodily term in the same paragraph in which he repeatedly discussed hogs. Fowler to Wheelock, January 21, 1766, 99.

864 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 69.

865 “A Particular Account of the Captivity and Redemption of Mrs. Jemima Howe,” 159.

866 “A Particular Account of the Captivity and Redemption of Mrs. Jemima Howe,” 159.


868 “God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty,” 69.
the furs into “long narrow Straps,” then “singed away” the hair, and ate the skin that remained.869 Jacques Bigot, a Jesuit missionary traveling to treat with the English along the Maine coast, noted that food was running so short onboard the ship, that one converted Abenaki Indian “who had a good appetite” stole Bigot’s food supply, “ate the leathern bag in which I had put it, and did not spare the contents.”870 Rale’s Abenaki guides ate their “sealskin pouches,” though Rale confessed “It was not possible for me to touch them” as food.871 De Crepieul complained at being forced to eat food contaminated with non-food substances, consuming meat “covered with moose-hairs or Sand.”872

Rotten and Moldy

Indians also ate food that colonists considered spoiled. Lafitau noted that while Indians usually preserved or cooked meat before it had “time to spoil,” they still had few qualms about eating “almost spoiled” flesh that “smells bad,” or drinking rendered animal fat, “bear-oil, seal-oil, eel-oil, etc.” even if it was “rancid or infected.873 When food ran low among the Senecas, Kirkland traded one of his shirts for four cornmeal cakes. So great was his hunger, “At first sight I thought I could devour them all at one meal,” but he vomited up the first cake he ate.874 He kept the remaining cakes until they began to mold, then offered them to his adoptive nieces and nephews, “who devoured them instantly.”875 The hungry children could stomach what Kirkland
could not. It is unclear why the cornmeal cakes so disagreed with Kirkland—perhaps they were already moldering by the time he purchased them, or perhaps his digestive faculties were in poor form after months of near-starvation. Regardless, the fact that the cakes had begun to spoil did not deter the Seneca children from eating them. As Kirkland’s sister-in-law cut up the maggot-infested bear meat, she whispered to her husband that she feared “their brother white man could not eat of it,” which turned out to be true.876

From some accounts, it is not entirely clear whether Indians ate these “rotten” foods only when they had no other options, or whether they sometimes desired the potent flavors of fermented flesh.877 Joseph Johnson, the Mohegan missionary, wrote in February 1768 that the Oneidas kept “rotten fish” from the previous fall “to Season their Samps” (corn soups).878 While Johnson seemed repulsed by this practice, the Oneidas sought out the taste of fermented fish: “rottener the better they Say as it will Season more broth.”879 This pungent condiment added variety and flavor to an otherwise repetitive diet of corn.880 Where Johnson and the English saw rottenness, the Oneidas saw fermentation and flavor.881

876 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 60.


878 Joseph Johnson to Wheelock, February 10, 1768, 128.

879 Joseph Johnson to Wheelock, February 10, 1768, 128.

880 Mintz has argued that many sedentary indigenous cultures rely on “core” staple grains for the bulk of their caloric intake, and then add nutritional value, flavor, and variety with the use of condiments, or “fringe” foods. Sidney Mintz, “The Anthropology of Food: Core and Fringe in Diet,” India International Centre Quarterly 12, no. 2, Food Culture (June 1985): 193-204.

881 There is ethnographic evidence that some cultures actively seek out “the taste of rottenness.” Mintz, “The Place of Fermentation,” 27.
This is not to say that the English never ate spoiled meat. Recipe books abounded with household hints for preserving meat or camouflaging flesh that had passed its prime. “To Keep Game Sweet,” an eighteenth century manuscript cookbook prescribed “bind[ing] up the beak” and neck of game birds as soon as they were “kill’d,” in order to “prevent any air getting into the stomach.” To counteract “Putridity” in “Hash meat,” the recipe writer advised cooks to “put the tainted meat, covered with cloth, into a quantity of boiling water,” for five minutes. Meat “too long kept” could be “recovered” with a stint of “being buried a foot deep in fresh earth” while bundled in “coarse cloth.” Hannah Glasse’s cookbook instructed cooks that if a joint of venison “stinks, or is musty,” to rinse it multiple times with both water and a mixture of water and milk, then to “rub it all over with beaten Ginger” and hang it to dry. Gervase Markham also offered a formula for spoiled venison, that required the cook to boil “a strong brine” with a combination of “strong Ale,” “Wine-vinegar,” and salt, to let this mixture cool, and to soak the venison in it overnight. Next, the cook would remove the venison from the brine, “presse it well,” then “parboyle it, and season it with Pepper and Salt,” before roasting. These preparations of burying, boiling, washing, and salting to counteract or mask spoiled meat also


885 Hannah Glasse, The Art of Cookery, 10.

886 Markham, The English House-Wife, 113.

887 Markham, The English House-Wife, 113.
had their counterparts in Indian cuisine: Samuel Kirkland’s Seneca sister-in-law stewed rancid bear meat and served it with “half a spoonful of salt on one side.”

**Subnatural Eating**

Colonists complained about Indian foodways in part because they misapprehended Indian food priorities. For Indians, it was better to eat meat raw than to let it spoil. It was better to eat food when you had it than to carry it with you for the future and bear the energy burden of a heavy load. The difference between rot and fermentation lay in the beholder. Colonists’ visceral reactions to Indian food threaten to obscure the fact that like rottenness, disgustingness is culturally determined. Indians survived, even flourished, on foods that colonists saw as “subnatural”—wild plants where colonists saw weeds, fermented foods where colonists saw rot. Indians managed to live, however marginally, on these same foods, to make use of the wilderness that Europeans wanted only to “improve.” Europeans saw this Indian willingness to consider anything as food—rotten meat, a leather bag, tree bark—as an animal disregard for anything but nourishment, as a food system built on chaos. It was, in fact, resilience, a diet carefully calibrated to an unforgiving environment. Tekânadie’s family took Kirkland into their home when they had little food to spare. “Brother white man” had neither the skills nor the

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888 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 60.

889 Architectural theorist David Gissen has persuasively argued for the concept of “subnature,” the way in which people have categorized certain aspects of the built environment—pigeons, mud, dust—as “fearsome,” beyond “the limits in which contemporary life might be staged.” Gissen instead calls for an embrace of the subnatural, because of its potential as “another possible form of nature in which we can be something more or less than is currently possible within our conceptions of nature.” David Gissen, *Subnature: Architecture’s Other Environments: Atmospheres, Matter, Life* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2009), 23. Ashley Rose Young first introduced me to Gissen’s theory and its potential applications to food studies.


money to provide more, so they fed an extra mouth with what they had.\textsuperscript{892} That he could barely stomach it was not their fault.

\textbf{Forbidden Hungers}

In lean times, English, French, and Indians consumed a wide variety of substances they may have otherwise found taboo. But it is important to note that they did not eat everything that they might have. While cannibalism is often held up as the horrifying extreme result of food shortage, it did not often become a reality in colonial New England and New France once the starving times of the first ill-planned colonies had passed.\textsuperscript{893} While a few Indians may have threatened (rhetorically, it seems) to eat people, as in the case of Elizabeth Hanson’s baby above, the cannibalism that English and French sources depicted among Indians served ritual purposes, marking victory over an opponent.\textsuperscript{894} However, colonists described Indian hunger in almost identical language whether Indians were ritualistically executing and cannibalizing a prisoner, or eating other foods after a long period of hunger. Roubaud wrote that the Ottawa Indians “satiated” a “more than canine hunger” “with…famished avidity.”\textsuperscript{895} Susanna Johnson’s captors,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{892} Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 60.
  \item \textsuperscript{893} Historians long relied upon documentary evidence of cannibalism during the starving times at Jamestown, such as a letter by George Percy, briefly president of Jamestown, which includes an anecdote about the colonist who “murdered his wyfe Ripped the Childe outt of her woambe and threwe itt into the River and after Chopped the Mother in pieces and salted her for his foode.” Mark Nicholls, “George Percy’s ‘Trewe Relacyjon’: A Primary Source for the Jamestown Settlement,” \textit{The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography}, Vol. 113, No. 3 (2005), 249. R.B. Herrmann argued against the documentary evidence as proof that cannibalism really happened, citing political discord in the colony and England, in a 2011 article. Herrmann, “‘The Tragical Historic’: ” In 2013, archaeologists at Historic Jamestowne revealed that they had excavated a skeleton from a 14-year-old girl with knife marks on the bones, and argued that this constituted evidence of butchery. Joseph Stromberg, “Starving Settlers in Jamestown Colony Resorted to Cannibalism,” \textit{Smithsonianmag.com}, May 1, 2013, http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/starving-settlers-in-jamestown-colony-resorted-to-cannibalism-46000815/?all&no-ist.
  \item \textsuperscript{894} For extensive discussion of ritual cannibalism, see Chapter 2.
  \item \textsuperscript{895} \textit{Jesuit Relations} 70, 125.
\end{itemize}
in her account, “satiated their craving appetites” with “native gluttony.” In Roubaud’s depiction, the Ottawas were eating the flesh of English prisoners after a battle. In Johnson’s telling, the Abenakis dined on horse meat after days of meager rations. The nearly-identical language in these descriptions suggests that Roubaud and Johnson were disgusted not merely with what the Indians ate (two kinds of flesh that were taboo to Europeans), but also with the fact that it was Indians doing the eating.

**Feeding Babies in the Borderlands**

Colonists had a wide range of reactions to eating Indian foods they deemed disgusting. Where Kirkland recorded episodes of violent illness after eating Indian foods, many colonists not only consumed, but enjoyed, substances that were completely alien to them before they lived closely with Indians, as when Stephen Williams declared unwashed duck intestines “a sweet morsel.” For adults and older children, stomaching and enjoying not-foods challenged the very Englishness and Frenchness of colonists’ bodies. These possibilities became even more complex when the feeding of babies and toddlers was concerned. In lean times, mothers and caregivers faced the difficult task of providing for those too young to feed themselves. Often hungry themselves, caregivers confronted the cultural boundaries that separated food from not-food, boundaries that held far less meaning for babies and toddlers. The feeding of small children was a microcosm of both the food divisions between cultures, and the hungers that overcame these divisions.

Women’s accounts of captivity often fixated on the protection and sustenance of children. Babies, especially, occupied a fraught symbolic space in captivity narratives. The violent deaths

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896 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 61.
of babies in these texts sensationalized Indian cruelty, but also served as a metaphor for sexual violence against women.\textsuperscript{898} On a more literal level, Indian raiding parties, particularly the Haudenosaunee, often captured women and small children with hopes that they could be adopted into Indian communities.\textsuperscript{899} But the journeys required to reach these settlements were tremendously physically demanding, especially for women who had recently given birth or carried infants or toddlers with them.\textsuperscript{900} Food shortage and the rigor of travel, as well as perhaps the psychological anxiety of captivity, caused many women’s milk to fail, or exacerbated other breastfeeding difficulties.\textsuperscript{901} Hanson fretted as “my daily Travel and hard Living made my Milk dry almost quite up.”\textsuperscript{902} Unable to feed her child, she watched as the baby became “very poor and weak,” so thin that she could “perceive all its Joynts from one End of the Babe’s Back to the other.”\textsuperscript{903} “My poor child could have no sustenance from my breast,” reported Susanna Johnson.\textsuperscript{904} Howe’s child could barely breastfeed: “The lips of my poor child were sometimes so benumbed, that when I put it to my breast it could not, till it grew warm, imbibe the nourishment

\textsuperscript{898} Toulouse, \textit{The Captive’s Position}, 104.

\textsuperscript{899} These groups were also successfully adopted into French communities in Canada. Haefeli and Sweeney, \textit{Captors and Captives}, 155-163, 222-23. Axtell, \textit{“The White Indians of Colonial America,”} 172-3. For a famous example of an English child adopted and completely acculturated among the Mohawk, see Demos, \textit{The Unredeemed Captive}. The Abenaki, by contrast, captured colonists more frequently for ransom than for adoption. Ulrich, \textit{Good Wives}, 206.

\textsuperscript{900} One in five English women taken captive in northern New England between 1689 and 1730 was pregnant or had recently given birth. Ulrich, \textit{Good Wives}, 205.

\textsuperscript{901} Valerie A. Fildes, \textit{Breasts, Bottles and Babies: A History of Infant Feeding} (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1986), 136. According to modern medical knowledge, Fildes noted that food shortage, unless it reaches “famine conditions,” most likely has “only a temporary effect on the supply of breast milk.” Fildes, \textit{Breasts, Bottles and Babies}, 136.

\textsuperscript{902} “God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty,” 70. Outside of captivity situations, women in colonial New England rarely traveled while their children were nursing, if they could avoid it. Ulrich, \textit{Good Wives}, 139-142.

\textsuperscript{903} “God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty,” 74.

\textsuperscript{904} “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 60.
requisite for its support.” Early modern medical authorities recognized the urgency of infant feeding and the difficulty of nursing: while breastfeeding was physically taxing for women, infants separated from their mothers often perished.

At home, English women likely would have had access to remedies to help them. Gervase Markham’s *The English House-Wife* offered two concoctions “To increase a woman’s milk,” one that required the woman to consume “good store of Colworts,” a cabbage-like plant, that had been boiled “in strong posset-ale,” a drink of curdled dairy and beer; and another, which consisted of “the buds and tender crops of Briony,” a common wild vine, in “broth or pottage.” Adhering to early modern medical conventions that “like heals like,” some authorities suggested that remedies derived from cows, as milk-making animals, would be especially helpful: one midwife, Jane Sharp, recommended “the hoofs of a cow’s…hinderfeet” be taken in “powdered” form. If these remedies failed, other nursing women also suckled the children of women who could not nurse themselves. Women in captivity, however, were

905 “A Particular Account of the Captivity and Redemption of Mrs. Jemima Howe,” 159.


907 Markham, *The English House-Wife*, 39, 40. Gerard wrote that “Briony” had “an exceeding great force of cleansing and scouring,” serving to “purgeth and draweth forth” various “humours” and “also watrie.” From an early modern medical perspective, it seems reasonable that a plant observed to “draw forth” liquid from the body would be prescribed for nursing difficulties. Gerard, *Herball*, 869-870. About colworts, Gerard noted that when topically applied, “the leaves” would soothe “all inflammations, and hot swellings,” but did not link their consumption directly to nursing. Gerard, *Herball*, 317. Remedies for breastfeeding problems, whether inadequate milk, infections, or pain, were a staple of women’s recipe books. Centuries before the discovery of antibiotics, infections could be life-threatening, and the surgeries that some physicians carried out to cure breast ailments were both excruciatingly painful and dangerous. Salmon, “The Cultural Significance of Breastfeeding,” 260-262. For more difficulties that medical authorities identified among breastfeeding women, see Fildes, *Breasts, Bottles and Babies*, 110-111, and 139-141.


909 Salmon, “The Cultural Significance of Breastfeeding,” 257, 259, 262. Women provided nursed other women’s children whether or not they were formally wet nurses. The practice of hiring wet nurses was more common among wealthier classes, especially in England; the documentary evidence on wet-nursing is more scant in colonial
usually isolated from the social support networks that would have provided them with alternate sources of breast milk or treatments to increase their milk.

Instead, when their milk failed, women in captivity relied on substitutes to feed their children. For much of her journey, Hanson used “Broth of the Beaver, or other Guts,” to feed her child “as well as I could.” When those foods were not available, Hanson drank “cold Water” and then “let it fall on my Breast” for the baby to suck “with what it could get from the Breast.” Similarly, Susanna Johnson’s child survived on “water gruel” or the broth of whatever meat was available.

Captives like Hanson found alternative support networks, who offered substitute foods and fulfilled the roles that other women or physicians would have played in helping mothers at home. When Hanson’s baby became emaciated and barely able to eat with a “weak Appetite,” an Abenaki woman “perceived” Hanson’s “uneasiness” at the child’s frailty and offered to help. She instructed Hanson “to take the Kernels of Walnuts, and clean them, and beat them with a little Water.” The resulting mixture “look’d like Milk,” Hanson noted. Next, the woman told Hanson to add “a little of the finest of the Indian Corn Meal, and Boyle it a little together.”

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910 “God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty,” 70.
911 “God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty,” 70.
913 “God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty,” 74.
914 “God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty,” 74.
915 “God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty,” 74.
916 “God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty,” 74.
This gruel, to Hanson’s relief (and the child’s), was “palatable” and “nourishing to the Babe.”917

The woman explained to Hanson that “with this kind of Diet the Indians did often nurse their Infants.”918 Like Hanson, Abenaki women would have experienced periods of food shortage or had trouble breastfeeding for other reasons. The combination of water, walnuts, and corn in this pap would have provided invaluable hydration, protein, and carbohydrates to nursing children. Women who were in the process of weaning their children often would have fed them similar paps or gruels.919 Carried by Abenakis to Canada, Susanna Johnson reported that a “hospitable friar” observed that she was traveling with an infant and “ordered it some suitable food,” which she did not describe further.920 When the Abenakis “hurried us off before we could eat,” the “compassionate” friar followed them to the canoe with a servant carrying the baby food, and “waited till I fed it.”921

Hanson and Johnson’s narratives of providing substitute Indian or French foods to their children illustrate an important difference between the experiences of disgust in adults and small children. Where their parents wrote in detail about their revulsion at eating unfamiliar foods, small children in captivity narratives did not express distaste (or their parents did not record them expressing it). Children’s “Complaints” were of hunger, not disgust.922 Toddlers and infants experienced physiological but not moral disgust. They could find the tastes, smells, or

917 “God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty,” 74.
918 “God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty,” 74.
920 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 65.
921 “A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 65. Many colonial parents referred to their infants as “it,” not calling them by their names until they were older. Scholten, Childbearing in American Society, 61.
922 “God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty,” 70.
appearances of foods disgusting, but, unlike their parents, they did not reject foods merely because they were unfamiliar, raw, or contaminated. Such children were too young to stay within the margins of food and not-food that culture had drawn around their parents.\footnote{Rozin, et. al. theorized that there are three reasons why a person might reject any given food: 1) “undesirable sensory properties” of the food, 2) “anticipated consequences” of eating the food, or 3) “conceptual” concerns about the food (cruelty, contamination, etc.). While infants react to food’s sensory properties, the other two categories of “food rejection” must be learned throughout childhood. Rozin, Haidt, McCauley, and Imada, “Disgust: Preadaption and the Cultural Evolution of a Food-Based Emotion,” 66-67.} Johnson’s children became ill after dining on horsemeat, but only because they ate too much, not because they were horrified at eating Scoggin.\footnote{“A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson,” 61, 62.} The Haudenosaunee captured English children precisely because of their cultural malleability, their potential to take on new lifeways. Stephen Williams, captured at age eleven, returned to Massachusetts and wrote a captivity narrative of his experiences.\footnote{Haefeli and Sweeney, Captive Histories, 159-160.} His sister, Eunice, captured at age seven, forgot English, converted to Catholicism, married a Mohawk man, and lived as a Mohawk for the rest of her life.\footnote{Demos, The Unredeemed Captive.} For captives, the stakes of acculturation were high. But the stakes of hunger were life and death. The mixture that the Abenaki woman taught Hanson to make “look’d like Milk,” and helped the baby to “thrive and look well.”\footnote{“God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty,” 74.} It was an Abenaki recipe, but it was recognizably food fit for a baby, and it sustained the child—that, and not its origins, was what mattered most to Hanson.

The disruptions of war in the borderlands of New England and New France resulted in even more surreal dramas of hungry children. In 1757, the Jesuit Pierre Roubaud witnessed the fall of Fort William Henry and the Indian attack on surrendered English forces that famously
followed. Roubaud worried that there was little he could do to help the women, until a French officer approached. The officer told Roubaud that a Wendat man had taken an English child, “six months old,” and that the officer feared that this man would not be able to care for the baby, “whose death was certain” without Roubaud’s intervention. Roubaud hurried to the man’s tent, finding the man holding the baby, who “tenderly” sucked on “the hands of its captor.” The Wendat explained that he had found the child “deserted in a hedge” in the chaos of the retreat, and refused to give up the baby. What, asked Roubaud, did the Wendat plan to feed the baby, who was liable to starve “for lack of food suitable to the tenderness of its age”? The man replied that he would provide the child with “tallow,” or rendered animal fat. However, Roubaud remained unconvinced that the man would be able to adequately support the infant, and he hoped to return the baby to its English parents. He procured a scalp from the Abenakis he missionized to exchange for the baby, and the Wendat man acquiesced to the trade.

Now Roubaud was left with a baby for whom he did not know how to care. He folded the baby in his robe, but the child began to wail, “not accustomed to be carried by hands so

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929 Jesuit Relations 70, 185.

930 Jesuit Relations 70, 185.

931 Jesuit Relations 70, 185.

932 Jesuit Relations 70, 187.

933 Jesuit Relations 70, 187.

934 Jesuit Relations 70, 187.
unskillful as mine.”\textsuperscript{935} None of the women in the crowd at the fort claimed the baby as theirs. Roubaud “found” himself “in no slight embarrassment,” at his inability either to care properly for the child or to find its parents.\textsuperscript{936} He did not know what to feed the child, and worried that the child might die if separated too long from its mother. Then he began to panic, wondering not just what, but how to feed the baby: “how was it possible to feed a child of so tender an age?”\textsuperscript{937} Finally, Roubaud confronted an English officer, demanding that he “order one of these [English] women to take the place of its mother and nurse it.”\textsuperscript{938} A woman would know what to do with the baby, where Roubaud did not. In the end, the baby was reunited with both mother and father, a happy ending to a perilous situation.

Like mothers whose milk failed, both the Wendat man and Roubaud struggled to provide for a child’s needs. Their solutions were not so different than those that women would have provided: in the absence of the baby’s own mother’s milk, the Wendat man offered soft, nutrient-dense substitute food (tallow), and Roubaud sought out another woman to suckle the child. Nevertheless, women’s medicinal knowledge is conspicuously absent from this narrative. Roubaud was a missionary who had removed himself from familial responsibilities such as infant care, but European men who were not physicians rarely involved themselves in the rearing of infants in the early modern era.\textsuperscript{939} Nevertheless, Roubaud also experienced the gnawing anxiety of being unable to provide for a dependent child.

\textsuperscript{935} Jesuit Relations 70, 189.
\textsuperscript{936} Jesuit Relations 70, 189.
\textsuperscript{937} Jesuit Relations 70, 189.
\textsuperscript{938} Jesuit Relations 70, 189-191.
\textsuperscript{939} Salmon, “The Cultural Significance of Breastfeeding,” 255. Men, however, often had strong opinions about women breastfeeding--among upper-class men, many husbands were against it. Fildes, Breasts, Bottles and Babies, 102-105. Other men empathized with wives who struggled to breastfeed or suffered from mastitis. Salmon, “The
Unlike the mothers who accepted food from other cultures for their hungry children, Roubaud refused to allow children to be fed across lines of culture or gender. Where mothers recognized that food from the hands of a French priest or an Abenaki woman would nourish a child, Roubaud was not so certain. Dismissing the Wendat man’s confidence that he could feed the English baby with tallow, Roubaud sought an English woman to feed the child—ideally the child’s mother. Finally, Roubaud convinced an English officer to order an English woman to “take the place of its mother.” 940 The baby needed milk from an English breast.

Roubaud’s efforts to reunite the English baby with its mother, and, by extension, with proper English food, were the exception, not the rule, among caregivers of hungry children in the borderlands. Instead, hunger more often than not destabilized the social order in the borderlands, breaking bonds even between mothers and children. When her Indian captors separated Howe from her baby while they went hunting, she “preserved my milk in hopes of seeing my beloved child again.” 941 When they were reunited, Howe found the baby “greatly emaciated, and almost

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940 Jesuit Relations 10, 189-191.

starved.”942 The baby was so hungry that when Howe “took it in my arms,” and “put its face to mine,” the child “instantly bit me with such violence that it seemed as if I must have parted with a piece of my cheek.”943

If hunger made children bite their mothers, it also made mothers steal food from children. Rowlandson went into a wigwam to beg for food, and found two English children there. An Abenaki woman gave Rowlandson a piece of boiled horse hoof. Rowlandson, “Being very hungry,” ate hers “quickly,” and then looked over at one of the children struggling with the tough lump of meat.944 “The child could not bite it...but lay sucking, gnawing, chewing and slobbering of it in the mouth and hand,” Rowlandson observed, so she stole the food, “and ate it myself, and savory it was to my taste.”945 Like many women in captivity narratives, Rowlandson emphasized her role as a mother and nurturer, and her denial of sustenance to an English child (in the name of a stringy boiled horse hoof, no less) fell far outside of these cultural norms.946

Pious Protestant women were expected to be obedient to their husbands and to God, and captives like Elizabeth Hanson passively accepted the conditions of captivity.947 Of course, the dangers of captivity mandated that women transgress gendered behavior norms, as in Hannah

Dustan’s murder and scalping of her Abenaki captors. Rowlandson’s willingness to take the horse hoof, like Dustan’s taking up the hatchet, demonstrates the extraordinary measures to which captivity forced women. Rowlandson’s hunger transformed her from a nurturer to someone willing to steal food from a child. Dustan’s narrative implied that she had to kill or risk being eaten herself: her captors would “Bury their Hatchets in [the] Brains” of captives who could not travel quickly enough, and “leave their Carcasses on the Ground for Birds and Beasts to Feed upon.” Rowlandson did not attempt to rationalize her behavior, except that hunger consumed her. The first week of her captivity, “I hardly ate any thing.” By the second week, though growing hungry, she still could not stomach the “filthy trash” of Indian food. And in the third week, “though I could think how formerly my stomach would turn against this or that, and I could starve and die before I could eat such things, yet they were sweet and savory to my taste.” By then, she savored even meat stolen from a child.

Conclusion

At the end of her narrative, Rowlandson described how her spiritual journey as a captive resonated with her long after her homecoming. She lay awake at night thinking “upon things past, upon the awful dispensation of the Lord toward us.” While in captivity she ate moldy cake, horse hooves, and bear meat, but when she returned to her home among the English, she no

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950 Rowlandson, The Soveraignty and Goodness of God, 147.

951 Rowlandson, The Soveraignty and Goodness of God, 147.

952 Rowlandson, The Soveraignty and Goodness of God, 147.

953 Rowlandson, The Soveraignty and Goodness of God, 175.
longer had to resort to terrible eating. She compared her family to the Prodigal Son, who in his
wanderings endured scarcity, before returning home to plenty: “instead of the husk, we have the
fatted calf,” she wrote. Finally, Rowlandson invoked several more biblical metaphors of
plenty, but the plenty she described was a profusion of suffering. “The portion of some is to have
their afflictions by drops, now one drop and then,” she noted, but her “portion” was a flood of
sorrows, “the wine of astonishment, like a sweeping rain that leaveth no food.”

Something had changed in Rowlandson since her captivity experience, a transformation she struggled to
describe and thereby circumscribe with familiar biblical language. She tried to domesticate her
hunger and make it safe.

Ninety years after Rowlandson returned home, after Kirkland’s embarrassing dinner with
the commanding officer at Fort Brewerton, the officer sent “pork bread, and a few hard biscuit”
down to Tekânadie’s family by the lake. Kirkland’s sister-in-law had fallen ill with a “fever”
and “bad cough.” As her condition worsened, Kirkland begged her not to continue
breastfeeding her toddler, fearing that the strain of nursing on top of her sickness would kill her.
She refused, a decision Kirkland decried as “superstition.” Within a few weeks, Tekânadie’s
wife died of “consumption,” her body wasting away from illness and starvation.

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things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.” Proverbs 28:3: “A poor man that oppresseth the
poor is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food.”

956 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 64.

957 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 70.

958 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 71.

959 Kirkland, Diary Vol. 1, 70.
The captives and missionaries who wrote narratives of their cross-cultural experiences were not the colonists who were absorbed into Indian cultures. These authors, unlike many other colonists, failed to adapt to new and unfamiliar foods, to their tastes, textures, and preparations. Nevertheless, even the most initially recalcitrant colonists, like Rowlandson, ravenously ate these foods if hunger drove them to it. Where once these foods were disgusting, “filthy trash,” they became “sweet and savory to my taste.”

Hunger made the unpalatable palatable, the disgusting delicious.

But when colonists wrote their narratives of their experiences with terrible eating, they lingered on their disgust, as if itemizing their disgust canceled out everything else they may have felt about those foods. Their eagerness to disavow Indian foods betrays their anxiety about the effect of these foods, and of Indian ways more generally, on their bodies and souls. They feared hunger’s power to make them forget themselves: when Kirkland wrested control of his hunger during his dinner with the officer, he “dropped my knife and fork & come to my self.” His Seneca family starved on the lake shore. Hunger makes the body rebel. It trumps affection, overturns disgust, challenges culture, upends the social order. Or, as Sébastian Rale recognized, the violent appetite devours all.

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961 Kirkland, *Diary Vol. 1*, 63.
The diary of Luke Knowlton, a Massachusetts soldier in the Seven Years’ War, described a desperate hunt for sustenance on an arduous journey across New England. On November 2, 1759, in defiance of an order to remain in service past the end of their enlistments, Knowlton and two hundred other colonial militiamen deserted en masse from the English army at Fort Point. The men marched south into a late-autumn storm, and “Over Some of the Worst Mountains that Ever I Crost I think in my Life,” Knowlton recorded in his diary. The storm continued for three days as the group walked through eastern New York. By November 6, the group’s food ran “exceeding short,” ameliorated only by catching two turkeys. Two days later, the men reached Saratoga, boarded a small boat, and “Eat Some Bread and Meat.” The crew of the boat encouraged the militiamen to rest by the river until the following day, when they would return with more food, but on November 9 the men waited to no avail: the boat “Durst not come Ashoar to us and the Reason why I cannot Tell,” Knowlton remarked. Perhaps the crew had reconsidered the dangers of bartering with the surely-intimidating dozens of hungry deserters.963

The group continued on, ravenous. On November 10, a rainy day, they used up all their food. They halted and “Dug up some Ground Nuts And Eat,” Knowlton wrote, the syntax suggesting that the men scarcely finished digging the tubers before they ate them. They ate as fast as they could find food. When one of the men caught an owl, Knowlton reported, “we Eat

962 Jesuit Relations 67, 151.

963 Luke Knowlton, Diary (transcript—original has been lost), 1759, Box 1, Folder 5, Miscellaneous Documents, 1754-1763, French and Indian War Collection, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.
Very Suddenly.” The next day, the group perhaps euphemistically “found a horse” and “Eat very hearty.” The full, though possibly stolen, meal left them “quite Encourag’d,” until they spent the greater part of November 12 completely lost. On November 13, on the way to Hoosick, “we got to a Dutchman house where we got Some Provision to Eat,” Knowlton wrote, again vague on how the group “got” this food. For the next four days, Knowlton’s diary did not mention food. This absence suggests that the group no longer suffered from food scarcity. On November 18, after sixteen days of walking through New York and western Massachusetts, Knowlton arrived in his home town of Shrewsbury, in central Massachusetts, and “found my honor’d Parents well.”

Knowlton’s story had a happy ending, but he and his fellow deserters walked hundreds of miles, stole a horse, ate an owl, dug tubers, and possibly menaced boat captains and Dutch farmers. This was hunger run wild. It was also hunger born out of conflict, the Seven Years’ War that the men fled. The conflict tried to hunt them down: one scholar has described military efforts at recapturing deserters as “a war within a war.” Knowlton survived his journey in spite of violence and hunger.

The problem of hunger did not end in colonial America, and neither did the conflict that Knowlton escaped. In our own time, one in six Americans lives in a food-insecure household, with hunger especially concentrated in rural areas (particularly the South), homes with children,

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964 Knowlton, Diary.

965 Thomas Agostini, “‘Deserted His Majesty’s Service’: Military Runaways, the British-American Press, and the Problem of Desertion during the Seven Years’ War,” Journal of Social History 40, No. 4 (Summer, 2007), 959. See also Anderson, A People’s Army, 162-163, 187-188, 192-194.
single-parent homes, and among seniors, African Americans, and Latinx people. Hunger, then, is a matter of inequality, and it is impossible to address hunger without addressing the underlying conditions of poverty. Globally, despite decades of efforts to reduce food scarcity, nearly 800 million people live with food insecurity. Analysts fear that climate change will lead to “resource wars” over food and water in borderlands around the world. The borderlands of North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, where colonists and Indians killed each other and starved each other out and hungered side-by-side, offer a cautionary example as we navigate our own era of food crisis, refugees, and messy intercultural war.

The “food problem” has vexed scholars across modern history. The eighteenth-century pessimist Thomas Malthus, whose Essay on the Principle of Population theorized that people’s inability to contain their procreative urges would doom the world to overpopulation and famine, set the modern terms of debate over world hunger in 1798. Malthus blamed the poor for their misery, an attitude which remained a staple of British anti-hunger policy until the mid-nineteenth century (and which persists in the United States today). Finally, reformers “discovered” hunger as a humanitarian problem at home and abroad between the Victorian era and World War I. In the twentieth century, governments of many countries implemented policy to try to address

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970 Vernon, Hunger, 17-40.
scarcity on national, imperial, and global scales. It is no coincidence that many of these efforts arose in response to war or economic collapse. While these efforts have been in many ways successful, such policies have both faced and perpetuated serious problems, struggling to define hunger, demonizing the poor, and failing to address the root causes of scarcity, especially poverty. In the United States, the racialization of poverty and hunger has stigmatized efforts to help the poor.

Since Malthus, generations of observers, the majority of them white, Western, wealthy, and male, have prognosticated about the future of the world’s food supply, often predicting dire famine in the near future. Historically, fears of food shortage have spiked in response to increasing food prices, rising birthrates, and environmental problems, but also in times of broader anxiety about cultural difference, immigration, sexuality, race, and the like. Where Malthus assumed that hunger was an unavoidable consequence of poor people’s insatiable sexual appetites, critics have argued that injustice, not a shortfall of food, is to blame for most hunger, and that “there is, indeed, no such thing as an apolitical food problem.” The food problem, now as in colonial America, is also a problem of justice, environment, imperialism, and violence.

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971 Levenstein, Paradox of Plenty, 53-64, 144-160.
974 Leveinstein, Paradox of Plenty, 158.
976 Belasco, Meals to Come, 20-60.
Hunger has made both history and historiography. Scarcity presents an archival conundrum: the people most likely to starve, the marginalized and oppressed, are also the least likely to leave written sources in their own words.978 Reading sources against the grain, as I have done here, seeking hunger in accounts of eating, is only a partial solution to this challenge. These conditions have also had historiographical consequences: “The history of hunger is for the most part unwritten. The hungry rarely write history, and historians are rarely hungry.”979 Historians wrote this statement in 1991, but their words still ring true decades later. Much as English colonists expected hunger to be anomalous and temporary, today’s mostly sated scholars treat scarcity as “exceptional, out of order,” the anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup warned in 1993; “hunger has always been part of collective human experience.”980

The scholarly tendency to elide hunger, coupled with hunger’s faint traces in the archive, leaves many contemporary scholars with a paucity of hunger knowledge. But to face the challenges of the coming centuries, we need hunger knowledge, now more than ever. Such an effort demands a wider lens than the one I have used in this project. I set out to write about hungering, but this project mostly concerns eating—eating not enough, or the wrong thing. The problem of hunger, then, is really the problem of scarcity.


And it is a problem the academy cannot afford to ignore. The number of Ph.D.-holders receiving food assistance doubled between 2007 and 2010, and some universities have recorded rates of food insecurity among students that approach four times the national average.\textsuperscript{981} It is no coincidence that scarcity has pinched academia as marginalized people demand access to education, just as it is no coincidence that the history of hunger has blossomed as a field at the same time. Scholars are responding to hunger very close to home.

To face present and future challenges, we must look to the difficult past. Scholars of scarcity in early America, who are eager to apply their scholarship to current events, already have a model to follow. Historians have found the early modern period instructive to our own time where another global crisis is concerned: climate change. The field of early American climate history has exploded in recent years, owing to contemporary concerns about how to address this problem and all its global ramifications.\textsuperscript{982} Environmental historians argue that the climate history of early America is particularly instructive for two reasons: first, early modern people struggled with their own fluctuating climate, as a major climatological event, sometimes called the Little Ice Age, affected the world between 1300 and 1850; second, studying the preindustrial early modern world “will help us…[with] making a transition into, or out of, a carboniferous energy regime.”\textsuperscript{983} Examining how early modern people navigated both a harsh


\textsuperscript{982} The January 2015 issue of the \textit{William and Mary Quarterly} published a forum on climate in early America. \textit{William and Mary Quarterly} 72, No. 1 (January 2015). See also Anya Zilberstein, \textit{A Temperate Empire: Making Climate Change in Early America} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

climate and a world without fossil fuels may their descendants plot a course through an uncertain future. For historians of scarcity in early America, such histories have yet to be written, but they are timely. In a world with 800 million hungry people, including hundreds of thousands of starving refugees embarking on journeys even more perilous than Knowlton’s, hunger cries out for study and for solutions.
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