“Cannibalism and . . .”

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A 1780 print cartoon titled The Allies—par nobile fratrûm depicts a cannibal feast in the middle of the American War for Independence (1775–1783). At this gruesome meal, two Native American warriors from an unidentified, caricatured tribe crouch on the ground while another man stands to drain the blood from a dismembered corpse. The blood trickles down from the torso and into a skull that has been fashioned into a drinking cup. One of the Indian men gnaws one end of a long bone. Alongside him lounges a bewigged, non-Native figure—perhaps King George III or perhaps his prime minister, Lord North, whose name is scrawled faintly next to the man’s head. This gentleman sucks the marrow from the bone’s other end, while holding another blood-filled skull. The blood is still fresh; hot steam wafts toward his face. The fluid has come in all likelihood from the chubby, curly-haired child whose decapitated head lies at the Briton’s foot. Behind him, a Holy Bible stands upside down, its binding on the wrong side of the book, and beside him, a starving dog vomits up this feast, his skeletal frame rejecting the fare that the Indians and the non-Native man readily consume.

The scene is divided by a flagpole topped with a cross; it supports a disintegrating flag that proclaims the king’s role as “Defender of the Faith.” On the right side of the flag stand a corpulent bishop and a sailor. They approach the eaters, bearing scalping knives, tomahawks, and crucifixes as presents for the Indians, proclaiming “we are hellish good Christians.” The caption of the scene reads, “The Party of Savages went out with Orders not to spare Man, Woman, or Child. To this cruel Mandate even some of the Savages made an Objection, respecting the butchering the Women & Children, but they were told the Children would make Soldiers, & the Women would keep up the Stock.”
This image encapsulates the state of cannibalism studies today while hinting at the new questions the contributors to this volume answer. Currently, three overlapping strains of cannibalism scholarship exist. The first contends with the question of whether or not cannibalism took place at various times and in myriad locations around the globe. The second instead asks what representations of cannibalism meant at the time when those representations appeared. The third studies individual cases of cannibalism with the aim of categorizing peoples’ practical, religious, symbolic, and gendered ways of and motivations for consuming other people or for levying accusations of cannibalism. Each of these approaches might profitably be applied to this political cartoon.

People in the past and the historians who have written about them have debated the veracity of accounts that suggest that men and women ate each other. Using this frame of analysis, it seems reasonable to interpret this image as a rebel American argument that British soldiers and their Indian allies committed “atrocities” during the War

for Independence. Because American newspapers circulated stories of Indian and British war crimes—accounts of rape, attacks against civilian women and children, and mutilated corpses—it would not be surprising if an American artist had tried to claim that their enemies also cannibalized young toddlers. Nor would it be surprising if Britons levied similar charges against the American soldiers and their Indian allies, who fought against Great Britain. There was scope for both sides to accuse each other of what they called “savagery.” But the publisher of this cartoon was not American. John Almon was British, and he printed this cartoon in London.

Cannibalism scholars have also drawn conclusions about what cannibal representations meant to the people who produced, read, and viewed them. This approach to writing about cannibalism might suggest that a political cartoonist in the late eighteenth century showed the king or his prime minister eating non-Native children because he wanted to persuade the viewer that the act of allying with Indians had debased the country and its inhabitants. The Christians become “hellish,” Bibles get turned upside down, the king ceases to defend the faith, and the Crown spends too much money on maintaining destructive alliances. In some Englishmen's eyes, Indian-Anglo military alliances ran the risk of corrupting white men by turning them into metaphorical cannibals. This interpretive angle is less interested in asking whether people at the time believed that the British ate babies and more concerned with how depictions of baby-eating reflected contemporary anxieties about real events.

A scholar invested in the third and last type of scholarship might be interested in classifying the types of cannibalism taking place in this scene. Endocannibalism, or the consumption of members of one's own group, and exocannibalism, or the eating of enemies or outsiders, are both evidenced in the print, depending on how one interprets it. If the artist wanted to suggest that Indians and Englishmen were different, then either the Indians or the British are practicing exocannibalism. If the non-Native people in the print—the gentleman, the bishop, the sailor, and the dead toddler—belong to the same group, then the king or his prime minister is an endocannibalist. Both of these behaviors might also be considered warfare cannibalism. Further readings along these lines might suggest that people cannibalized each other...
for the practical necessity of dealing with hunger, the strategic reason that it made them more fearsome to their enemies, or because they believed that God wanted them to do so. An analysis like this might also undertake a survey of the people represented in the image, asking why women, children, and men are referenced but women left out of the print itself. These scholars might suggest that military conflicts exposed civilian women to traumatic sexual violence and that the documents produced by military leaders often glossed over women’s participation in war efforts.

All of these approaches have something to add to our understanding of “the allies,” but they miss an additional point that would interest food historians. The men in this print are cannibalizing a corpse, but they are also sharing it equally between them. If we consider this cannibal feast as an actual meal, it becomes clear that this alliance demanded specific food etiquette. And indeed, during the War for Independence, Indians expected their British and American allies to feast them at key moments, and while the combined forces of Natives and Britons were on their campaigns and took stores of food as plunder, Indians expected a fair share of the edible spoils. In considering cannibalism and histories of food and hunger, this interpretation makes an argument for the value of combining studies of cannibalism more seriously with other disciplinary questions. It is this volume’s main contention that cannibalism can no longer be studied on its own terms; incidents of cannibalism must instead be placed in conversation with broader questions about how we delimit the chronology of the early modern period and how we conceive of the geography of the Atlantic world.

In the summer of 2015, a group of scholars gathered at the University of Southampton for a conference called “Cannibalism in the Early Modern Atlantic,” which was generously funded with a grant from the Wellcome Trust. William Kelso, director of Jamestown Rediscovery, delivered the keynote address, in which he discussed his team’s recent archaeological findings about the seventeenth-century Jamestown colony, including a particularly controversial case of cannibalism.
during the Starving Time of 1609–1610. Conference attendees then linked cannibalism to Europeans’ quests for food, to stories about colonization, to Europeans’ interactions with Native Americans and Africans, to maritime famine, and to the Atlantic world paradigm. The most salient point that emerged from the conference was that analyses of cannibalism now nearly always appear in combination with analyses of something else. In shifting from asking whether cannibalism occurred to querying why it mattered, scholars placed the study of cannibalism in conversation with other topics such as literary theory, imperialism, the history of science, gender relations, and settler colonialism. Cannibalism scholarship is now scholarship on cannibalism and something additional. This volume’s contributors take important steps in discussing cannibalism’s implications for the wider Atlantic world and, in some cases, even beyond it.

In order to understand how contributors have approached the question of what mattered to people in the past, in addition to cannibalism, it is first necessary to examine what has been written on the subject thus far. It is important to differentiate cannibalism from anthropophagy, although most scholars—including many of the writers in this volume—use the two terms interchangeably. Anthropophagy connotes eating people, but during the early modern period the term cannibal came to mean someone who ate people and was also perceived as “savage.” Early modern observers who spoke of anthropophagites thought of mythical man-eaters during the classical period, but they came to associate cannibals with Caribbean peoples during their own time.

Anthropologists have traced actual and perceived instances of cannibalism among Australian Aboriginals, the Ashanti of Africa, Aztecs in Mexico, the Maoris of New Zealand, the Hurons and Iroquois of North America, the Uscochi of the Balkans, the Tupinamba in Brazil, and the Foré of Papua New Guinea, among others. Such work tends to fall on a spectrum between those who argue that people cannibalized other people for symbolic reasons (structuralists) and those who suggest that people ate each other for practical reasons (cultural materialists). The structuralists are perhaps best exemplified by Claude Lévi-Strauss, who discussed the different modes of preparing bodies, from boiling to roasting. He suggested that boiling was a more
primitive form of cookery than roasting and that methods for food preparation could thus demarcate the line between civilization and savagery. At the other end of this continuum, cultural materialists such as Marvin Harris interpreted cannibalism as a reaction to the physical need for protein. Harris contended that human flesh was little different from the flesh of other animals and eventually became “bad to eat” for economic reasons similar to those that explain taboos about eating pigs, cows, and horses.

We thus return to the three intersecting types of scholarship on cannibalism. The anthropologist William Arens sparked debate during the first wave of work that argued over whether or not cannibalism had occurred. The 1979 publication of his book *The Man-Eating Myth* examined a number of well-studied episodes of cannibalism and refuted their existence. Since then, numerous scholars have engaged with Arens’s conclusions. Marvin Harris went through all of Arens’s cases and re-examined each one of them in his 1985 book, *Good to Eat*. Peggy Reeves Sanday’s *Divine Hunger* argued for the existence of cannibalism in all of the Americas, Africa, and Oceania; its rarity in the Mediterranean; and its absence in East Eurasia. In 1997, Frank Lestringant’s *Cannibals: The Discovery and Representation of the Cannibal from Columbus to Jules Verne* also contradicted Arens by mapping incidents of cannibalism from Columbus to the nineteenth century while also explaining how cannibalism discourses changed over time. George Franklin Feldman’s 2008 *Cannibalism, Headhunting and Human Sacrifice in North America* reemphasized the practice of cannibalism among North American Indians. Thomas Abler made a similar point in an article about Iroquois cannibalism. Gananath Obeyesekere’s 2005 *Cannibal Talk* revealed a return to Arens’s original argument.

Situated within this work is Jamestown, the most recent topic of debate. In 2012, the Jamestown Rediscovery project uncovered human remains—a partial skull and tibia. A team of forensic anthropologists at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History analyzed them, and in 2013 various media outlets broke the news that Jamestown’s early colonists had cannibalized each other during Virginia’s Starving Time of 1609–1610. Later in 2013, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and Preservation Virginia published their
findings in a short book based on an exhibition on the same topic. In 2017, William Kelso published a longer monograph on this subject and on archaeological developments at Jamestown more broadly.

These two works chart the struggles of Jamestown’s colonists; their inability to establish peaceful diplomatic relations with the region’s Native peoples, on whom they depended for food; the deterioration of those already tense relationships; and the colonists’ shrinking food supplies. They quote the written sources describing the subsequent cannibalization of Englishmen and women and explain how the Jamestown Rediscovery team uncovered and analyzed the physical evidence of a female body bearing signs of butchering. Researchers performed a facial reconstruction of the skull and named the partial remains of this young woman “Jane.” The analysis of Jane’s bones echoed many of the written primary sources that historians have known about and analyzed for many decades. Numerous historians had written that Jamestown colonists cannibalized each other, but before 2012 no physical evidence existed to confirm this assertion. Kelso’s most recent book calls these findings “incontrovertible evidence that a girl, whom we came to call Jane, had been cannibalized” during the Starving Time.

In 2011—before the discovery of Jane’s bones and before this conference—I published an article in the *William and Mary Quarterly* that made two arguments about cannibalism and abundance. First, I voiced skepticism about some of the accounts of cannibalism in the written records of Jamestown, given the conflicting nature of the primary sources and the biases of the self-promoting men who penned them. Second, and more important, I argued that proving whether or not cannibalism occurred was less helpful than understanding what cannibalism stories meant to people at the time. The tales of English cannibals that circulated, first in 1610 and again in the 1620s, were crucial in pushing Virginia’s government to enact famine-preventing food laws and in reassuring colonial investors that the Virginia colony would not become a failure. The Starving Time encouraged colonists to secure the colony’s abundance, often to the detriment of the region’s Native inhabitants. For what my opinion is worth, I think that some cannibalism occurred but that understanding the meanings of cannibalism to people during the early seventeenth century is a far more
important aim than conclusively proving that English colonists ate each other during the early years of Jamestown’s existence.

With these caveats in mind, I feel compelled to lay out a few reasons for remaining skeptical that Jane’s bones offer conclusive proof of cannibalism. To be sure, Jamestown Rediscovery’s team offers some convincing evidence. The fact that archaeologists uncovered Jane’s bones in a trash pit along with the bones of snakes and horses is a point in support of cannibalism because the remains are the first human bones to appear alongside the refuse of other items that colonial observers recorded eating during the Starving Time. The Smithsonian’s analysis suggests that Jane’s remains, which made it into the trash pit during the winter of 1609–1610, were butchered postmortem. These pieces of evidence constitute a convincing argument that a woman was killed and butchered in early Jamestown. My main concern is that it is difficult to make the jump from proving that someone was murdered and dismembered to proving that someone else consumed her remains. It is troubling that the only scholarly publication to share these findings has been William Kelso’s most recent book, which references the forensic report produced by Douglas Owsley at the Smithsonian, but does not cite it—it cites the 43-page book produced by Colonial Williamsburg and Jamestown Rediscovery. To my knowledge, the forensic report and its findings have been neither peer-reviewed nor published. This lack of access to evidence makes it impossible for other scholars to assess the results, which makes suspect the claim about irrefutable truth. At the cannibalism conference, furthermore, other participants, such as Kelly Watson, cautioned against giving more weight to forensic evidence than to textual evidence. Forensic anthropology and history are different fields, neither of which should be considered more important than the other.

John Smith and George Percy, contemporaries who wrote about the Starving Time, did describe colonists eating each other. Percy charged men with drinking fellow colonists’ blood and digging up corpses and eating them. Smith said that one of these bodies belonged to a Native American that they had murdered, buried, and then disinterred. Smith and Percy both wrote about a woman who was killed, butchered, and then cannibalized. Yet the way they wrote about this
woman should encourage some cynicism. Their stories diverged at significant points. To the butchering and cannibalization of this woman, Percy added an unborn fetus who was ripped from the mother’s womb and thrown into a river uneaten. If the situation in Jamestown was so desperate, why did the man cannibalize the mother and not the child? This part of Percy’s story seemed calculated to invoke outrage. Although this craftiness does not prove the story false, it should encourage a cautious reading. John Smith was not physically present during the Starving Time, when cannibalism supposedly took place, so his account also lacks some credibility. He wrote jokingly about the woman’s fate, speculating about whether boiled, roasted, grilled (“carbonado’d”), or salted (“powdered”) corpse tasted better. He might even have told this story as a type of sailor’s sea yarn, knowing that people would not believe it all. A third writer, Thomas Gates, went out of his way to refute the cannibalized wife story. He argued that the husband only claimed to have eaten his wife because he hoped to avoid a hanging; in reality, Gates suggested, the man had murdered his wife to avoid sharing food with her. Gates supported this assertion by pointing out that when the community discovered her butchered body they also found food stores hidden throughout the man’s house.

Even if one believes Percy and Smith and discounts Gates, the question that arises is whether Jane is the same person as the wife that Gates, Percy, and Smith mentioned in their narratives. The Jamestown Rediscovery research suggests that Jane was about fourteen years old. Although young, she might have been the wife in these tales. If so, it seems just as plausible to suggest that Jane was killed, decapitated, and dismembered—but not cannibalized—so her husband could eat her share of stored food, as Gates suggested, and so her killer could make the mutilated corpse that much harder to identify. And if Jane is not the same person as the murdered wife, it seems odd that both Smith and Percy passed up the opportunity to sensationalize this additional death. The future of the colony rested on the capacity of Jane and other women to bear children, and Jamestown’s female population was disproportionately small. Both Smith and Percy had much to gain by making the whole winter seem as lamentable as possible. Consequently, I think that the research conclusively shows that a young woman was killed and dismembered, but I find it more difficult
to be certain that Jane was cannibalized. I will be especially interested in seeing whether evidence emerges that can confirm whether Jane had ever been pregnant. It would also be of particular significance if archaeologists were to uncover remains of Native American and non-Native male bodies bearing signs of cannibalism, because the sources seem to concur that colonists ate Indians. And I continue to believe that ultimately, it is less fruitful to prove that cannibalism did or did not occur than it is to ask why it mattered so deeply to people at the time.

Gananath Obeyesekere tended to agree that most writers exaggerated cases of cannibalism and that stories about cannibalism proliferated because early modern Westerners who arrived in South America, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific assumed that most of the peoples they encountered engaged in the practice. When they returned home, their writings institutionalized these assumptions. Obeyesekere’s monograph thus straddled two approaches; he reassessed whether cannibalism occurred while also asking what it meant to the people who wrote about it.35 His work was preceded by a monograph and two edited volumes—Peter Hulme’s Colonial Encounters (1986); Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen’s Cannibalism and the Colonial World (1998); and Laurence Goldman’s The Anthropology of Cannibalism (1999)—all of which heralded this second shift in analyses of man-eating.36 Hulme’s book was organized around the idea of encounters and was interested in the structure of the narratives that portrayed them, the meanings of single words in those narratives, and the repetitions that appeared over the course of three centuries. These encounters produced a colonial discourse that became an ideology.37 The writers who followed him, many of whom were postcolonial scholars of anthropology, art history, history, and literature, argued that early modern Europeans’ writings about cannibalism revealed more about Europeans than about the Natives they encountered. Accusations of cannibalism were intricately connected to broader imperial goals and anxieties.38 Other writers, such as Merrall Llewelyn Price and Heather Burton, have suggested that representations of monstrous, sexualized cannibals in the early modern and medieval periods were meant as political metaphors that became important in the creation of a cultural and national English identity.39 Cătălin
Avramescu’s *An Intellectual History of Cannibalism* (2009) asked comparable questions about political theorists’ and philosophers’ takes on cannibalism during the early modern period. Jennifer Brown’s *Cannibalism in Literature and Film* (2012) jumped forward in time to map representations of cannibalism in both the colonial novel and in Italian films and serial killer novels, concluding that representations of cannibals expose contemporary fears. Most recently, Kelly Watson’s *Insatiable Appetites* (2015) puts gender and sexuality at the forefront. Watson states that Europeans levied charges of cannibalism because it strengthened claims of patriarchy and masculinity in the Americas.

The last category of scholarship contains works that delineate various reasons why people practiced cannibalism. In cannibalism scholarship, work on medicinal cannibalism usually seems to be the odd topic out, but it fits in neatly when placed in conversation with other works that reckon with the contexts in which people deemed cannibalism appropriate. Richard Sugg’s *Mummies, Cannibals, and Vampires* (2011) and Christine Louise Noble’s *Medicinal Cannibalism in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (2011) trace the practical reasons why people thought it was beneficial to their health to consume pieces of mummified humans, powdered skull, and blood. Karen Gordon-Grube and P. Kenneth Himmelman have looked at corpse medicine in New England and medieval Europe, respectively. Frank Lestringant’s work, while predominantly engaged with refuting Arens, did so by suggesting some of the reasons why people saw cannibalism as a viable practice. Hans Askenasy described cannibalistic practices such as famine cannibalism, survival cannibalism, magic, ritual, and madness cannibalism. Later works expanded on these forms. Nicholas Constantine’s *A History of Cannibalism* (2006) added to these justifications with examples of cultural and disaster cannibalism. Daniel Diehl and Mark Donnelly’s *Eat Thy Neighbour* (2006), in addition to talking about some of these other practices, also discussed warfare cannibalism.

This survey of the extant literature should suggest some prevailing trends while also elucidating the problems that have yet to be solved. Earlier work spent time debating the existence of cannibalism. Thereafter, much scholarship homed in on violence and misunderstandings arising from European encounters with people they
assumed to be cannibals. This work revealed more about bellicose Europeans than it did about indigenous peoples. Efforts at classifying forms of cannibalism also became frequent. For the most part, observations about cannibalism continue to center on Latin America and the Caribbean. Much remains to be done on North America—especially British North America—and Africa and on what cannibal representations by Native Americans and Africans tell us about these peoples. Other areas for exploration include investigations of cannibalism and cooperation, or at least the absence of aggression. Finally, more written works would benefit from efforts to link histories of cannibalism with histories of food, histories of eating, and histories of hunger. In their treatment of different time periods and locations, the scholars in this volume bear these observations out while taking up some of these newer themes.

We begin by trying to understand how Native Americans conceived of cannibalism rather than how Europeans understood it. Gregory Smithers reads cannibalism tales as evidence of how Native peoples in Southeastern North America used oral traditions to define ritual and ceremonial eating practices. Such customs were shaped by a combination of syncretic food cultures wrought by settler colonialism and the epistemological and spiritual connections between living and inanimate beings. From there, three contributors revisit the most familiar accounts of New World cannibalism: the reports associated with Columbus, the writers who described his voyage, and the Spanish colonists who followed him. Elena Daniele examines how Italian merchants and diplomats were the first to generate, receive, read, and revise early reports of New World cannibalism. Her work provocatively shows that the information circulated in Italian mercantile networks tended to discount initial news of cannibals rather than reproduce such stories. Kelly Watson’s chapter places discourses of cannibalism in conversation with ideas about sexual partners, eating taboos, modesty, chastity, and power. Watson suggests that Europeans practiced what she calls “sexual diplomacy” with non-anthropophagite partners but felt few qualms about raping Indigenous women, some of whom were supposedly cannibals. Rebecca Earle argues that scholars who want to more profitably analyze the two tropes of drunken Amerindians and cannibal Amerindians would do well to consider the additional
context of the Christian sacrament of communion. Her focus on the significance of wheat bread and wine within Spanish religious and dietary regimes charts how these substances distinguished (and sometimes failed to distinguish) Amerindians from Spaniards.

We return to familiar Anglophone territory with chapters by Jessica Hower, Matt Williamson, and Julie Gammon, but these authors challenge our notions of cannibalism in the British Atlantic by exploring earlier and later chronologies and lesser-studied sources. Hower analyzes the connections between cannibal reports and British imperialism. Going back farther in time than most studies of the British Atlantic, she interprets cannibalism discourses formed abroad as evidence of political upheaval at the Tudor court, finding evidence of continuity over more than a century of early modern British history. Williamson performs a close reading of the play The Sea Voyage and links cannibalism to political debates, unruly European appetites, and an emerging capitalist system. The play’s authors, he suggests, figured cannibalism as the product of the New World and a reflection of excessive English appetites. Gammon reexamines the oft-told tale of Sawney Bean, demonstrating how English people used cannibal stories over time. In the early eighteenth century, representations of cannibals in English writing and print implied the savagery of non-English Celts, Irish, and Scots, but by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the English were using cannibal stories to promote the supremacy of the British Empire. Taken together, their chapters suggest the need to analyze cannibalism’s domestic meanings alongside its applicability to foreign and imperial affairs.

The last set of contributors engage with the Atlantic world paradigm. Their work implicitly seeks to broaden our understanding of cannibalism discourses, the geography of the Atlantic world, and histories of food and hunger. Robert Appelbaum goes back to Lestringant’s work to theorize a new form of cannibalism that he calls honor eating, or the use of cannibalism to move beyond biology while participating in a timocratic system of symbolic exchange. Jared Staller’s chapter picks up on this theme of symbolic acts of eating. He takes a look at cannibalism and conspicuous consumptions in Andrew Battell’s travels in late sixteenth-century South America, Angola, and Loango, interpreting cannibalism in Africa as a public, deliberate, and wasteful
demonstration of wealth. My chapter explores the ties between cannibalism and hunger on sea voyages, showing that hunger held multiple meanings to the enslaved peoples, sailors, and slave captains who crossed oceans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Sailors and slaves fought over food but also shared it, and at times the refusal of food could be an act of asserting power.

These contributions suggest a few ideas for the future of scholarship on cannibalism. The first, and I think most significant, is that the field has moved on from debates over whether or not cannibalism occurred. Although scholars will doubtless continue to ask this question, I would urge them to consider it in tandem with other lines of inquiry. The second point is that although the Caribbean has received the most attention, there is much to say about English cannibalism before and after Jamestown, about North American Indians, the African and Spanish Atlantics, and about bondpeople who were forced to cross the Atlantic Ocean before becoming embroiled in New World systems of slavery. The third point is that cannibalism studies continue to rely on interdisciplinary contributions: history matters, but so too do literature, theatre, anthropology, art history, and archaeology.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that studies of cannibalism have the potential to refine and develop our understandings of food history, histories of eating, and studies of hunger during the early modern period. Cannibalism studies have changed over time. Similarly, as the field of food studies has matured, scholars have reworked their approaches to food history, studies of eating, and histories of hunger. Culinary microhistories, or books on single commodities such as sugar or milk, have been joined by broader histories of food that pay special attention to gender, trade, power, race, and change over time. Recent work on hunger has explored state-sponsored attempts to prevent hunger in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This book’s authors, in pinning down the specifics of cannibalism in each of their case studies, offer scholars the opportunity to sharpen definitions of hunger, of food deprivation, and of food’s myriad meanings in the early modern Atlantic world.

By considering cannibalism and topics including the British, African, and Native American Atlantics; the early modern period; imperialism; cooperation; food history; diplomatic networks; and
theatre, new answers emerge in response to the question of why and how cannibalism mattered. Connecting cannibalism to the British Atlantic and to imperialism demonstrates that cannibalism concerned British people well before Jamestown and continued to inflect colonial thinking long after 1610. Looking at the topic alongside the African and Native American Atlantics shows how Indians and Africans pushed back against the assumption that they cannibalized peoples unlike them and used these discourses to critique European imperialism, settler colonialism, and the slave trade. Examining man-eating in tandem with cooperation makes power relations seem much more contingent than previously supposed. Studying it in conversation with food history makes scholars’ definitions of early modern hunger more precise. Analyzing cannibalism and diplomatic networks offers insight into the ways that people constructed knowledge, and looking at it in the context of theatre reveals early modern peoples’ economic anxieties in an ever-expanding world. In sum, the act of studying cannibalism and these other interdisciplinary questions has the effect of making the topic itself less odd and titillating and more relevant to adjacent and important fields of study.