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IMAGINING CANNIBALS: EUROPEAN ENCOUNTERS WITH NATIVE BRAZILIAN WOMEN

In his "Introduction" to *Imagining Religion*, Jonathan Z. Smith contends that second-order reflection on religion—imagining religion per se—is a relatively recent human endeavor.[1] It is one, of course, that has engaged our group of essayists—indeed, as our life's work and preoccupation. It is also the issue at stake in this essay: how human behaviors and groups are distinguished and labeled. Smith goes on to warn scholars of religion—writers and readers of this collection of essays, for example—against our fascination with the exotic, noting that our studies might be well served by attention to the "ordinary" in religious life. In support of his admonition, he quotes the Scottish moral and political philosopher Francis Hutcheson, whose literary criticism includes a comment that collides with the very subject of the present essay.[2] In *An Inquiry into the Original of Beauty and Virtue*, Hutcheson decried the "monstrous taste" of those "readers and writers" of early modern travelogues who, rather than enjoying the more salutary evidence of the shared virtues of natural affection and stately honor, instead sated their appetites for the "wondrous barbarity of the

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[1] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), xi.

[2] Ibid., xii.

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Indians" and eagerly repeated the exaggerated accounts of human sacrifice and cannibalism.[3] Hutcheson admitted that the "ordinary employment of the . . . Indians" would not excite and horrify the readers as much: "But a human sacrifice, a feast upon enemies' carcasses, can raise a horror and admiration" for the distant barbarian. This, Hutcheson lamented, in spite of European readers' familiarity with barbarity much closer to hand; while horrified by the exotic horrors of Indian life, they regarded with something like "religious veneration" similarly perverse violence in "the massacres at Paris, the Irish Rebellion, or the Journals of the Inquisition."[4] As I turn here to consider the unnatural nature attributed to the Brazilian cannibals, the question lingers: who, then, is surpassing in barbarity—the consumers of human flesh or the voyeurs who are consumers of the tales of anthropophagi?

What Hutcheson condemned in 1728 was not the first emergence of the appetite for the exotic in travel tales. Indeed, the retelling of tales of cannibalism was the last of several steps in the creation of "otherness" in the people of the Americas. The recognition of that "otherness" was late in forming and represented a more radical view of difference than that adjudged for the "proximate other" or near neighbors. In either case, as Smith argues in "What a Difference a Difference Makes," the noting and marking of "difference" is "above all . . . a political matter," entailing "a hierarchy of prestige and the concomitant ranking of superordinate and subordinate."[5] Scrutinizing the discourse about the "new" world, Smith points out that fifteenth-century encounters with the Americas and Americans did not result in the immediate transformation of European sensibilities, simply because the place and its peoples were not first categorized as truly "other." Instead, Christopher Columbus and other Europeans attempted to "assimilate" the continents and inhabitants to the biblical cosmology and "classical cosmography" dominant in late medieval and early modern Europe and to extend the established "orbis mundi" to accommodate dissimilar flora and fauna.[6] But while Columbus and sixteenth-century writers such as Peter Martyr and José da Costa failed at first to imagine the otherness of the Americas, they soon began to label otherness in its inhabitants. Portuguese literature, in particular, failed to perceive the "multifaceted and polymorphic reality" of Brazilian Indians

[3] Frances Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (London: D. Medwinter, 1738; repr., Westmead, England: Gregg International, 1969), 206–7.
[4] Ibid., 207.
[5] Jonathan Z. Smith, "What a Difference a Difference Makes," in his *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 252–53.
[6] Ibid., 263, 270.

and resorted, because of the "linguistic impotence of the colonizer," to simple terms for them, such as "'savages' or 'nations.'"[7]

The naming and categorizing of the peoples of the Americas was, I would argue, central to the conceptualizing of "otherness" in America: it began when Columbus named the indigenous peoples "Indians" and deepened as sixteenth-century Roman Catholic authorities in the colonies distinguished their newly discovered realms. At first the emphases remained on likenesses, with useful differences noted; only the often-repeated claim that indigenous Brazilian alphabets lacked the letters *f*, *l*, and *r* indicated that the peoples—lacking "fé, lei e rei," or faith, law, and king—might be cultural blank slates on which new identities might be inscribed. Later, however, church and state alike articulated their problems with the unfamiliar, with "cannibals," and especially with "cannibal women." Then the beings who might have been "like us" become "other"; their stories serve not just to titillate the European readers but also to justify violence against them by the colonial powers in the New World and criticisms of them in the Old.

My recent studies on colonial Brazil have taken me to discussions of savages and barbarians—in particular, the gustatory preferences of the most alien of creatures that we or the sixteenth-century Portuguese and Spanish might imagine: the cannibal women of Brazil. In the earliest records of the colonial encounters between Europeans and native Brazilians are found the bases for the relationship that was to be fostered between them in the New World. As the scribes, ship captains, mercenaries, and missionaries wrote, they failed to perceive and describe the exotic in front of them and instead returned to the imagined exotics of Europe: they selected motifs from the European imaginary to fix and manipulate the alterity of America and its inhabitants. Authors and artists alike relied on the well-known conventions of the "wild man," witch, Amazon, and cannibal to convey the differences they discovered in—or constructed about—the New World. In those Spanish and Portuguese views, people of the New World were portrayed first as possessed of odd and discordant habits and customs but nonetheless compliant and ultimately malleable to the imperial will. As the land and its people presented more resistance to the Portuguese and Spanish missionaries and military leaders, the unfamiliar nature of native Brazilians was represented in increasingly violent terms: Brazilian men suddenly bristled with spears and arrows, and Brazilian women became Amazons, witches, and anthropophagi. In

[7] Roberto Reis, "Authoritarianism in Brazilian Colonial Discourse," trans. José Mauro Zonis, in *American Images and the Legacy of Columbus*, ed. René Jara and Nicholas Spadaccini (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 454.

this essay, I will focus on the violent imagery used in the portrayal of native Brazilian women; I contend that they are symbolic of Portuguese and Spanish attitudes toward the new land and offer a new look at the role of religious writing in the justification of violence in the colonial setting. In my conclusion, I will reflect further on the uses of cannibals as "others" in the essays of later European writers.

COLONIAL ENCOUNTERS

The Portuguese and Spanish accounts of the natives of Brazil reflected less their surprise at their outlandish discoveries and more their expectations about alien populations. Their representations of savages and barbarians in America drew on centuries of Western thought concerning the nature of humankind, the dichotomy between civilization and the wilderness, and the perceived differences—from the perspective of Christian theologians—between the saved and the damned.[8] These perceptions of non-Europeans served to justify the colonizers' views of and interactions with the native Brazilians. The Portuguese, it must be noted, simply assumed their own superiority, which "smoothed out the conquest, colonization, and catechesis. The natives did not know Christianity, much less gold and the idea of work such as the colonists conceived it. Therefore, they were considered degenerate, fallen, and in need of European intervention to take the bearings of better life, a life ruled by the same principles and values" inculcated by the Catholic Church.[9]

In their depictions of Brazilian Indian women, Europeans utilized a relatively small cluster of motifs to represent what they perceived. These may be summarized in two central, almost paradigmatic, images found in the colonial records. The first is of the innocent maiden, a naive, naked, and vulnerable woman, whose nudity is open to the penetrating eye of the European male. She is the passive follower, the willing slave, and the conquerable virgin land. The second is the resistant woman warrior; she is the savage cannibal, the unknowable other, and the unyielding wilderness. Each image carries a distinctive insight from the writer or artist, and the

[8] See, e.g., Fredi Chiapelli, ed., *First Images of America: The Impact of the New World on the Old*, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Harper & Row, 1984); Bernadette Bucher, *Icon and Conquest: A Structural Analysis of the Illustrations of de Bry's Great Voyages*, trans. Basia Miller Gulati (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Peter Mason, *Deconstructing America: Representations of the Other* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Ronald Raminelli, *Imagens da colonização: A representação do índio de Caminha a Vieira* (Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editora, 1996); and Roger Bartra, *Wild Men in the Looking Glass: The Mythic Origins of European Otherness*, trans. Carl T. Berrisford (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

[9] Raminelli, *Imagens*, 13 (my translation here and elsewhere unless noted).

change from the first to the second, that is, the addition of increasingly violent images of women, marks a dramatically changed attitude toward the New World.

The first set of images emerged in the earliest reports about Brazilian Indians in general, and Brazilian Indian women in particular, portraying them as pagan innocents living in a lost paradise. Pero Vaz de Caminha's first letter from Brazil in 1500 emphasized the ease expected in the conversion from savage to saved, but his detailed descriptions distinguished between the men and women. While he and his companions were wary of the men, noting their weapons, rapid travel, and knowledge of the coast, they gawked at the naked women, portraying them—like the land—as sensuous, accessible, and acquiescent. Later missionary writers concurred with Caminha in his assessment of Brazilian women, emphasizing their nudity and innocence, and hence their availability for whatever life and role the church and empire might select. The compliant women, once Christian and covered, would be suitable wives for male converts or servants for Portuguese immigrant men; their role in the early colony was integrated into the colonization process—seen then as easy domination of the people and the land.

The Brazilian Indians did not, however, all become devout Christian servants, and Brazilian Indian women clung to their most degenerate customs. After 1550, then, a second set of images emerged alongside that of the compliant maiden and began to replace it. More frequent in the letters and texts was the dangerous, armed woman who challenged the colonial intrusion into Brazil. An elusive and unsettling figure, she was both the Amazon, that ungoverned warrior who lived without men—or ruled over them—and the cannibal, a vile savage who relished human flesh. In either guise, the Brazilian Indian women became the "other" for the writers and artists and represented the alien nature of the Americas that so unsettled the European Christian cosmos.

Each of these images may be understood within Smith's proposed "three basic models of the 'other.' "[10] Amazons may be understood as part of the second model, the "other" "represented topographically," that is, away from the center where heroes, royalty, and royal institutions hold sway. Situated in opposition to the center of cultural values, peripheral creatures like the ancient Amazons and these more recently imagined phantoms are monstrous apart from civilizing forces; they are the "forest dweller[s]" and "savage[s]" "prowling the margins" of both ancient European and Brazilian colonial realms.[11] The more vicious and frightening cannibals

[10] Smith, "Differential Equations: On Constructing the Other," in *Relating Religion*, 231.

[11] Ibid., 237. The remaining model for distinguishing the "other" is the linguistic, which may be seen in the above-mentioned Portuguese maxim widely circulated during the first colonial century claiming that the indigenous alphabet lacked certain letters.

were the "other" "represented metonymically," that is, where the other has or lacks "one or more cultural traits."[12] Much like the Sumerians, who "distinguish[ed] themselves from the Amorites because the latter 'do not know barley,' . . . [and] eat 'uncooked meat,' " European missionaries and writers rhetorically isolated certain indigenous communities—the Caribs in the Caribbean and the Tupí or Tupiniquin—as those who might be characterized by their alien diet.[13] As part of the final alienation, however, it is cannibal women whose culinary abominations justified the seizure of lands and enslavement of peoples.

AMAZONS IN THE . . . AMAZON

The creation of the image of the Brazilian Amazon drew on the persistent Western mythology of those noble and ignoble warrior women. For medieval Europeans, Amazons represented the wholly other—unnatural women, female warriors, and human but with the wrong attitudes and attributes.[14] While the origins of the myth of the Amazons lay in ancient Europe, the immediate source was the 1541 report by the Dominican brother Gaspar de Carvajal, who accompanied Captain Francisco de Orellana on his first journey—of exploration and raids—down the then-named Marañon River (shortly to be renamed the Amazon River). Carvajal reported their early encounters with several great villages, one of which was subject to the inland "Amazons."[15] Carvajal described his imagined Amazons—with cues from European romance literature—as fierce fighters who were "very white and tall" with long hair "braided and wound about the head."[16] Later interrogations of a captive revealed more details of hidden lives of the Amazons—that they lived unmarried, in stone houses, holding men captive for their pleasure only until they were pregnant.[17] After giving birth, they then abandoned their male babies but raised their girls to be great warriors.[18]

In Portuguese Brazilian territory, the Jesuits also reported on the Amazons. Manuel da Nóbrega relayed a secondhand tale of fierce "warrior women" living deep in the interior. There, too, the Amazons—remarkably like their Greek predecessors—captured valiant men "and conceived by them. And if they give birth to a son, they gave him to his father or killed him, and if a daughter, they raised her. Because of their [warfare with] bows, they cut off their right breasts. And from among

[12] Ibid., 231.
[13] Ibid., 232.
[14] Bartra, *Wild Men in the Looking Glass*, 83.
[15] Gaspar de Carvajal, "Discovery of the Orellana River," in *The Discovery of the Amazon*, ed. José Toribio Medina and H. C. Heaton, trans. Bertram T. Lee (New York: American Geographical Society, 1934; repr., New York: Dover, 1988), 204.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 220.
[18] Ibid., 220–21.

these Amazons came the news of gold."[19] Jesuit historian Simão de Vasconcelos listed Amazons among the marvels and monstrosities of Brazil in 1563, placing them in northern Brazil just past the lands of dwarves and giants.[20] That "nation of [warrior] women monstrous in their way of life," he explained, dwell "alone with themselves and do not traffic with men: they inhabit great villages in an interior province, cultivating the land, and sustaining themselves through their own work." He added that they meet yearly with a neighboring community of men and raise only the females of their brief cohabitation, killing or exiling the infant boys.[21]

For the later authors as for Carvajal, these "women without fear and without husbands" represented not only classical challenges to the male and European conquest of that territory but also the hidden riches and perils of the barely accessible inland territory of Brazil.[22] The excursions against the Amazons led fighters and adventurers deeper into the coastal rain forest, to battle against an irrational society and its unnatural (if alluring) inhabitants; their efforts were spurred by the challenge of battle against vicious and pagan forces—and by the promise of fabled treasures.

While the discourse creating the warrior woman crystallized the dangers of advancing the social structures and relations of the European empires, the parallel discourse on cannibal women relayed the deep personal fears of the would-be conquerors. The Amazons were dangerous figures but remote from both coastal settlements and inland explorations. Much closer and more deadly, however, were the cannibal women of the Tupí or Tapuia tribes. The women in those nearby communities posed a different and more menacing threat—for they not only killed men, they ate them.

IMAGINING CANNIBALS

Although the first Portuguese record of Brazil reported no cannibals on the lands that Pero Álvares Cabral claimed, the expectation of cannibals had already been firmly established for the Americas. Columbus himself reported that he had been told by their enemies that the neighboring islands were inhabited by ferocious, dog-headed, one-eyed, and anthropophagous fighters. Although Columbus never witnessed the consumption of human flesh and never met the Caribs whose name he so misunderstood and behaviors so misrepresented, he, like so many travel writers after him, based the truth of his representations on well-known accounts such as

[19] Serafim Leite, *Cartas dos primeiros jesuítas do Brasil* (São Paulo: Commissão do IV Centenário da Cidade de São Paulo, 1956), 1:167–68.

[20] Simão de Vasconcelos, "Notícias antecedentes, curiosas e necessárias dos cousas do Brasil," in his *Crônica da Companhia de Jesus*, ed. Serafim Leite (Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, 1977), 1:49–166.

[21] Ibid., 1:64–65.

[22] Schuma Schumaker and Érico Vital Brazil, eds., *Dicionário Mulheres do Brasil de 1500 até a atualidade: Biográphico e ilustrado* (Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 2000), 43.

Isidore of Seville's seventh-century catalogs of "human monstrosities" in India and John Mandeville's fictitious medieval sagas of monstrous beings.[23] In his 1511 *Decades*, Martyr disseminated the cannibal lore further, expanding the threat of fierce neighbors to a sort of human husbandry, explaining that the "natives of Hispaniola . . . complained that they were exposed to frequent attacks from the cannibals who . . . pursued them through the forests like hunters chasing wild beasts. The cannibals captured children, whom they castrated, just as we do chickens and pigs we wish to fatten for the table, and when they were grown and become fat they ate them. Older persons . . . were killed and cut into pieces for food; they also ate the intestines and the extremities, which they salted, just as we do hams. They did not eat women, as this would be considered a crime and an infamy."[24] Strong fighters, the "cannibals" could easily capture ten times their number in battle, and the exploring Spanish found remnants of cannibal feasts in deserted villages on other islands.[25] Like Columbus, Amerigo Vespucci in his own travelogues referred to an island of cannibals "based on information gathered from the neighbours of these alleged anthropophagi."[26]

These varied reports echoed one of the key motifs of the European mythology of the wild man: that this alien creature ate the inedible, including rotting food, offal, excrement, raw meat, and human flesh. That intemperance appeared in other aspects of the appetites of the wild man, as well as in the related European stereotypes of witches; for both, the uncontrolled appetites led to the other cardinal sins of gluttony, malice, anger, and lust. Such new details in Spanish and Portuguese writings reflected their sense of the increasingly alien nature of the inhabitants of those increasingly alien lands; the changing European perspectives may be seen in other descriptive elements, so that customs considered naive or innocent, such as nudity, hospitality, and communalism, were soon characterized as persistent vices of luxury and indolence.

Maria Cândida Ferreira de Almeida has argued that cannibalism created the primary image of indigenous Brazilian culture: from the first moment of discovery, Brazilians were identified as cannibals. Indeed, cannibalism

[23] Ernest Brehaut, *An Encyclopedist of the Dark Ages: Isidore of Seville* (New York: Franklin, 1912), 219; see also Smith, "What a Difference," 265, 292 n. 107; Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Conquest of Paradise: Christopher Columbus and the Columbian Legacy* (New York: Plume/Penguin, 1991), 133–34.

[24] Peter Martyr D'Anghera, *De Orbe Novo*, trans. Francis Augustus MacNutt (New York: Franklin, 1970), 163. It is worth noting that the preservation and cooking methods reported were certainly European and not used by Taino or island Caribs for meat and fish preparation.

[25] Ibid., 63, 72. Martyr also entangles two legends, recounting the Spanish report that the cannibal men occasionally cohabited with Amazon women and fathered their children (ibid., 73).

[26] Mason, *Deconstructing America*, 54.

was used from the earliest colonial moment to "define, qualify, name, and classify" the Brazilians who were otherwise unknown to Europeans.[27] The discoverers and explorers in Brazil "privileged" the rituals of cannibalism, using them to define the indigenous populations there, and the accompanying iconography of barbarous cannibal women underscored and justified the identification of them as "other." For the earliest European writers, as for later anthropologists, cannibalism was a "mark of barbarism," interpreted and defined solely from the "strangers' point of view."[28] Columbus himself, in his first voyage to the Americas, rejected the ascription of anthropophagy to that nearby tribe, considering the practice too barbarous; he both accepted it and named it, however, in his creation of the term "cannibal" for the dog-headed Caribs who ate other humans—imagining a new term for a New World.

One of the primary sources for the imagery of cannibal women in Brazil was the narrative of Hans Staden, a German artillery expert working for the Portuguese near present-day São Paulo.[29] He was captured in 1552 by a Tupí raiding party whose custom it was, according to Staden, to retain enemy prisoners for ritual cannibalism. Captives were kept for up to a year, sometimes allowed to marry, but they—and sometimes their offspring—were purportedly slaughtered and eaten to mark the vengeful power of the village against their foes.

Staden wrote that, after his quick transfer to the interior village of Ubatuba after his capture, he was given to women who then danced around him with a song usually chanted to those about to be killed. Later, women again danced and sang in a ceremonial before the "hut where they keep their idols, their maracás," and dragged him into the plaza to shave his beard and eyebrows in preparation for death.[30] The main section of his narrative emphasized male dominance in war and ritual sacrifice and only briefly mentioned women's presence in food and drink preparations and their customary dress and care for children.

Another portion of Staden's text, however, included a macabre detailing of the torture, ritual death, and consumption of prisoners in which women played more prominent roles. According to Staden, the Tupiniquin women prepared the victim, began the procession to the sacrificial space, and, after the sacrifice, not only arranged the body for butchery but also paraded

[27] Maria Cândida Ferreira de Almeida, *Tornar-se outro: O "topos" canibal na literatura brasileira* (São Paulo: Annablume, 2002), 18, 19. This identification came full circle in the twentieth century, when Oswaldo Andrade embraced the epithet and its essential "Otherness" for modern Brazilians in his prose poem, "Anthropofagia."

[28] Ibid., 21.

[29] John Hemming, *Red Gold: The Conquest of the Brazilian Indians* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 31–34.

[30] Hans Staden, *Duas viagens ao Brasil*, trans. Giomar de Carvalho Franco, Reconquista do Brasil, vol. 17 (São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1974), 89, 91, 95.

victoriously through the village with the arms and legs before roasting them.[31] Women only consumed the entrails and sometimes bits of the brain and tongue in a stew also served to children.[32] Although most modern historians take Staden's account as an authentic report of his experiences, his emphasis on the central ritual role for women conflicts with other accounts of the Tupinambá—and is sometimes internally inconsistent. It bears a strong resemblance, however, to the mythology of European witches' secret rituals, to an anonymous account written about Brazil in 1587, and to the burgeoning literature—from Vespucci to André Thevet—sensationalizing the savagery of Brazilindians.

Staden's 1557 publication of his narrative was accompanied by a set of vivid woodcuts, whose design he apparently directed, featuring the dancing and feasting of the cannibal women. Later editions were accompanied by even more fanciful engravings created by Theodor de Bry, who added novel and gruesome details to what was eventually seen as the women's cannibal feast. De Bry altered the images significantly, embellishing and exaggerating the women's gestures and activities beyond the written account and suggesting both the barbarous despair of the cannibal women and the furtive and perverse sexuality associated with their perverse meal.[33]

In the Jesuit writings of that same era, the existence of cannibalism symbolized the degeneracy of the fallen people of the Americas. When the Jesuits undertook their conversion to Christianity, the most obstinate savages were, of course, cannibal women. Manuel da Nóbrega, who rarely wrote about Brazilian Indian women, included them in his 1549 portrayal of the "most abominable custom among those people."[34] He reported that when prisoners of wars were paired with young women, any offspring of that union were not spared and even the mothers might share in the feast because of their belief that mothers were not physically linked to their own children. And when, among baptized Indians who had forsworn their previous practices, one woman was found still eating human flesh, her husband beat her fiercely, to the approval of the attending missionaries.[35]

The Jesuit Antonio Rodrigues exemplified the Jesuit perspective in his 1551 letter to his colleagues in Coimbra, Portugal; he offered only glimpses of the tribes he had visited, but in each account he presented the question of cannibalism as a classificatory paradigm. He reported that, in his first days of travel, he and his companions "found those heathens called the Timbos, who are many. They do not eat human flesh." Nearby were

[31] Ibid., 177–88.
[32] Ibid., 183–84.
[33] Almeida, *Tornar-se outro*, 135–37.
[34] Manuel da Nóbrega, *Cartas do Brasil e mais escritos*, ed. Serafim Leite (Coimbra: Universidade da Coimbra, 1955), 48.
[35] Ibid., 63.

"the Mereatas, who brought to our ships fish cured in the sun, and much sustenance, for this is how they sustain themselves. They are a people who do not eat human flesh."[36] Of the Carijós, he warned that they were cruel and "ate human flesh," but the Paris and Cameri, who were great agricultural workers and "docile to receive the faith of Christ," were generous and "did not eat human flesh."[37] In other Jesuit records, it became clear that while the men of the "cruel" tribes initiated war and cannibalistic rites, women were the more greedy and bloodthirsty participants.

By 1573, the Jesuit chronicler Vasconcelos had concluded that while God had bestowed many natural gifts to the land of Brazil, the people themselves "were wild, savage, rustic, and inhuman: they lived according to . . . nature, [and] in them the light of reason was so dim."[38] Their brutishness was evident in their vengeful attacks against their enemies, which ended in cruel death and the eating of the corpse following dances by a coven of naked "old women who collected and drank the blood of their victims."[39] Vasconcelos also recounted the partial success of one missionary, who converted a "very old Indian woman, at the end of her life." Frail and barely eating, she resisted food until the padre offered her a bit of sugar; she then begged for a morsel of human flesh to sustain her.[40] The stereotypes of ferocity and cannibalism were well adapted to the colonial interests of war and conquest, but the invention of the cannibal women was more—it was an extension of the European habit of misogyny. In Staden's tale, the Jesuit records, and the later engravings illustrating both, the images of cannibal women, particularly as ancient hags craving human flesh, not only represented "the strangeness of the New World" but also portrayed the inhabitants as inhuman monsters.[41]

We can glean from these accounts of the "presence and enthusiastic participation of women in cannibal ritual" the narrators' growing disgust with the Brazilian world.[42] By the end of the sixteenth century, the Jesuits had written themselves into a new epic drama, and their heroic struggles with the Amazons and cannibals were part of a great battle against a demonic empire in Brazil.[43] At the same time, the Portuguese colonists began to reconceive their colonial enterprise, rationalizing both the use of

[36] Serafim Leite, *Páginas de história do Brasil*, Biblioteca Pedagogica Brasileira, Brasiliana, vol. 93 (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1937), 125, 127.
[37] Ibid., 127, 129.
[38] Vasconcelos, *Crônica*, 1:96–97.
[39] Ibid., 1:102.
[40] Ibid., 1:199–200.
[41] Raminelli, *Imagens*, 98.
[42] Neal L. Whitehead, "Hans Staden and the Cultural Politics of Cannibalism," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 80, no. 4 (2000): 739.
[43] Raminelli, *Imagens*, 23–25.

"just war" to gather and enslave prisoners and the capture and relocation of Brazilians in order to convert and civilize them. The strategies for the "integration" of native Brazilians into the Portuguese colonial empire were rooted in the dominant mercantilist economy and "primitive" capitalism of early modern Portugal.[44]

The Portuguese colonists generally viewed Indians as a readily available workforce and developed elaborate systems for indentured servitude, based in two distinct rationales. The first was that enemies in a just war might be enslaved, and so any Indians resisting the necessary conquest and conversion offered by Catholic Portugal could be captured and sold as slaves for extraction, domestic, or agricultural work. The second rationale depended on a similar viewpoint—that native Brazilians were in desperate need of the conversion and civilization offered by the Portuguese. On this analysis, the colonial enslavers captured the Indians and then released them to the custody of individual Portuguese colonists. The Brazilindians were then designated the "wards" of the colonists, to be managed and educated. Most Portuguese, while making full use of the discourse of protection for their "wards," nonetheless treated them as slaves, counted their monetary value for tax credits, and passed them to their heirs as part of their personal property. In this setting, tribal anthropophagy was actually encouraged by some colonists, who incited intertribal warfare not only to reduce the indigenous population but also to "rescue" and enslave both the captives held by enemy tribes for ritualistic cannibalism and their anthropophagous captors.

These rationales relied heavily on religious justifications, based in the writings of missionaries and other colonists who created, from their experiences in the New World and the motifs of the Old, a most astonishing portrait of Brazilian Indian women. The perversity of the Brazilian Indian women—whether as Amazon or cannibal—served to justify the full range of oppression and dispossession of the indigenous peoples during conquest of Brazil by the Portuguese: the seizure of lands by farmers, herders, and colonial officials; the enslavement and indoctrination of coastal inhabitants under Jesuit tutelage; and, ultimately, their deaths at the hands of the imperial government—all these might serve the ends of eliminating cannibalism and the cannibals.

CONCLUSION

As the writers told their tales, then, they imagined not just the exotic but what they considered the extremities of human behavior in barbarity. But their sources are dubious at best: as I noted earlier, even Staden's recital is suspect. The others were (to return to Hutcheson) reciting

[44] Ibid., 13–15.

"entertainment" that was quite familiar to the European reader already, from "common stories" of the deviant appetites of wild men and of witches' feasts; there was, in fact, "no need to travel to the Indies" to imagine what they thought they found there.[45]

Subsequent authors of travelogues, commentaries, and essays used the Brazilian cannibals and their bestial appetites to signify a paradoxical range of qualities and characteristics, to a variety of ends. In them, the imagery of cannibal women is increasingly distorted but then eventually disappears. French authors in particular—with fewer colonial claims, it must be noted—reexamined the discourse about cannibals in Brazil and offered more complex if not contradictory interpretations. The mid-sixteenth-century French traveler André Thevet, for example, drew sharp geographic and cultural distinctions between the vengeful but still "valorous" Brazilian warriors who merely ate the bodies of their slain enemies and the cannibals who killed for pleasure and enjoyed the consumption of human flesh. While his descriptions do not include the horrors of cannibal women, he notes that the "entrails are commonly eaten by women" and provides an accompanying engraving with a foreground image of a woman disemboweling a human carcass.[46]

Writing only twenty years later about his experiences in the French colony that failed to take root near present-day Rio, the Calvinist missionary Jean de Léry similarly marked the dualities of cannibalism and began to move the discourse into metaphor and cultural criticism.[47] Léry championed the valiant Tupinambá warriors in their quest for victory over their enemies and excused men's anthropophagy as part of a more noble ritual of revenge. At the same time, he deliberately recreated the images of old women whose perverse longings for human flesh provoked men to war, degraded the nature of their children, and perpetuated the most sinful of indigenous customs. These two authors, Catholic and Huguenot respectively, both utilized anthropophagous analogies in their discursive attacks against their own godless enemies in the Wars of Religion and to articulate their conflicts over the meaning of the Eucharist.[48] In their writing, then, the alterity of Brazilian women's anthropophagi served a different end: not

[45] Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 207; see also Smith, *Imagining Religion*, xii.

[46] André Thevet, *Les Singularités de la France antarctique* (Paris, 1558); Frank Lestringant, *Cannibals: The Discovery and Meaning of the Cannibal from Columbus to Jules Verne*, trans. Rosemary Morris (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 56.

[47] Jean de Léry, *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil* (La Rochelle: Antoine Chuppin, 1578).

[48] In his most daring challenge, Léry condemned his compatriot Villegagnon who, during his stay in Brazil, failed to repudiate transubstantiation in the Eucharist and wished—like a cannibal—"not only to eat the flesh of Jesus Christ" but to "chew it and swallow it raw" (ibid., 77, 78).

just to alienate the newly discovered worlds but also to denounce other Europeans and their increasingly divergent religious views. Léry concluded his denunciation of brutal massacres and anthropophagy in France by noting that there was no need to "go as far as America . . . to see such monstrous and prodigious things."[49]

Essayist Michel de Montaigne, whose call to tolerance Smith quotes in "The Devil in Mr. Jones," also found the Brazilian cannibals useful far beyond their own lands.[50] Relying on the writings of Thevet and Léry—among others—Montaigne imagined the native Brazilians in an idealized Nature, still part of a Providential Golden Age of artless freedoms and ease.[51] He extolled the men's unmatched bravery and insisted that their consumption of enemies' corpses signified only "extreme revenge."[52] Ultimately, however, Montaigne introduced the cannibals in order to expose and exorcise a selection of anthropophagous episodes in Europe and to criticize the polity of his own Rouen in 1560; cannibal women are absent from his text, replaced by docile maids and matrons who welcomed their husbands' polygyny—a quite different "otherness" for Montaigne's arguments!

As I have examined these and all my other sources on the nature and customs of Brazilian Indian women, I find the facticity of their lives receding before me, replaced by religious and philosophical allegories, used for political arguments and the justifications of condemnations of one or another "other." In this house of mirrors, the images of their barbarity vanish, while barbarity of the European colonizers looms larger, as they used the reflected presence of cannibal women as the ground of their ultimate exploitation. From Columbus to Cabral, Nóbrega to Montaigne, the creation of the "other" through the women of Brazil ends only with the establishment of the European imperial government that dominated them and with their final elimination from others' commentaries and their own country.

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[49] Ibid., 258.
[50] Smith, *Imagining Religion*, 104–5.
[51] Lestringant, *Cannibals*, 95–106.
[52] Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1958), 155.