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A MATTER OF AUTHORITY: JAMES I AND THE TOBACCO WAR

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In the summer of 1604, only a year after acceding to the English throne, King James I implemented a daring, and some might say foolhardy, measure: complaining that, “at this day, through evil custom and the toleration thereof...a number of riotous and disordered persons of mean and base condition...do spend most of their time in that idle vanity,”¹ he raised the duty on tobacco from 2d. to 6s.8d. per pound, a staggering increase of 4000 percent. Given the enormous popularity of smoking at the time, his decree was bound to be unpopular. At roughly the same time, an anonymous pamphlet, *A Counterblaste to Tobacco*, appeared in the bookstalls, and was quickly, and correctly, presumed to be James’s handiwork.² The shared focus of James’s earliest fiscal policies and his first published work as king of England reflects a coherent political strategy. Just what that strategy was meant to accomplish, however, is less than obvious. Some have suggested that James hated tobacco in particular because it was the only vice to which he did not subscribe, and others that the plant became a means of focusing his hatred for its supposed “father,” Sir Walter Raleigh.³ But none of these admittedly worthwhile explanations seems sufficient in itself to account for his adoption of this particular cause. The vice argument is almost tautological; after all, it amounts to saying that James hated tobacco because he did not like it. Moreover, participating anonymously in a pamphlet exchange would have been a hopelessly oblique method of discrediting Raleigh.

In fact, despite the vehemence of the *Counterblaste* and traditional opinion to the contrary, it is not clear that James hated tobacco at all. On several occasions, roughly concomitant with the *Counterblaste*, for example, he closed letters to his “little beagle,” Lord Cecil, with affectionate salutations involving

¹Quoted in Jerome E. Brooks, *The Mighty Leaf: Tobacco through the Centuries* (Boston, 1952), 56.

²See Brooks, 70, and James Halliday, “Blast and Counterblast,” *Blackwood’s Magazine* 317 (1975): 327–338.

³Cf. Andrew Sinclair, *Sir Walter Raleigh and the Age of Discovery* (Hammersmith, England, 1984), who states the point most succinctly, “the king might hardly ever wash or change his clothes. He may drink too much whiskey, but he abhorred tobacco and the man who had brought it to England,” 98. More sophisticated discussions appear in Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature*, (Baltimore, 1983), 26, and Jeffrey Knapp’s fascinating examination of the Elizabethan tobacco issue, *An Empire Nowhere: England, America, and Literature from Utopia to The Tempest* (Berkeley, 1988), chap. 4.

tobacco. “I bid you heartily farewell,” one such letter reads, “having enjoined the bearer to drink good pipes of tobacco to all your company.”⁴ Another missive, referring to his trusted servant Roger Aston, reads:

Now that the Master Falconer doth return, I cannot but accompany him with these few lines, although indeed I might very evil have spared him at this time, as well for running of the hawks as for being so fit a man for trying our hounds. Yet, since he will needs be gone, I pray you let him be saluted with a good pipe of tobacco. And I pray you put him out of his new custom, which is to drink nothing but ale after supper.⁵

Intriguingly, James posits tobacco as a remedy for a vice of which he himself was often accused, overindulgence in alcohol. He playfully opposes the two substances, alcohol and tobacco, as vice and redeeming virtue, respectively. The jocular tone is a far cry from that of the *Counterblaste*, which appears to reveal a hatred of both the plant and the most notorious of smokers, Raleigh:

It is not so long since the first entry of this abuse amongst us here, as this present age cannot yet very well remember the first Author, and the forme of the first introduction of it amongst us. It was neither brought in by King, great Conqueror, nor learned doctor of Physick.

With the report of a great discovery for a Conquest, some two or three Savage men, were brought in, together with this Savage custom. But the pity is, the poor wild barbarous men died, but that vile barbarous custom is yet alive, yea in fresh vigor: so as it seems a miracle to me, how a custom springing from so vile a ground, and brought in by a father so generally hated, should be welcomed on so slender a warrant.⁶

The James of the *Counterblaste* is outraged that tobacco appears to exist outside the realm of accepted authority. It is the discovery, not of a king or a doctor, but rather a mere explorer who, significantly, relies on *report* rather than real conquest, allowing threatening icons—strange plants and savage men—to speak for him. Tobacco and Raleigh are undoubtedly linked, but in a far more intricate way than hitherto acknowledged.

This seeming disjunction between James’s public and private treatment of the subject of tobacco, however, can be resolved in part by recognizing James’s faith in the written document as a means of both forming and articulating his own power and identity. Of his absentee rule over the country

⁴James I, *Letters*, ed. G.P.V. Akrigg (Berkeley, 1984), 256. Spelling has been modernized in quotations from primary documents when possible, but, following Akrigg’s lead, Scottish dialect has been left intact.

⁵*Ibid.*, 252.

⁶James I, *A Counterblaste to Tobacco*, ed. Edward Arber (London, 1869), 100–101.

of his birth, James once said, “Thus must I say of Scotland...here I sit and govern it with my pen: I write and it is done.”⁷ Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that so many of his letters exist in holograph; for James, the process of active rule could be as simple as setting pen to paper. Indeed, James continued to write many of his own letters long after arthritis forced him to use a stamp to sign less important documents. His letters initiate or continue a process of exchange that both describes and determines the nature of James’s relationship to his subjects, hence shaping his own public identity. Telling in this light is his preference for the singular pronoun “I,” as opposed to the royal “We,”⁸ for it indicates an understanding of the written document as the extension of the individual.⁹ Thus, if “James did not write his letters as additions to his literary corpus,”¹⁰ his personal letters nevertheless illustrate the very technique used in the *Counterblaste*. That James continually resorts to devices like proverbs and sustained metaphor indicates the strong literary bent of his correspondence. If his letters are not public discourse in the way his pamphlets are, they are not entirely private, either. Composed with a self-consciously perceived audience, they thus serve as a means of self-presentation. James’s work, then, reflects an understanding that the world is constructed through language, or rather through the dialogic exchange of both utterances and material objects.

Consider James’s letters to Robert Cecil, the earl of Salisbury. Despite the intermittent tensions that reportedly plagued their relationship, James’s opening salutations invariably read, “My little beagle”: hardly, as many have noted, the expected or appropriate address for one’s Secretary of State. The letters sometimes simply continue a hunting motif, in keeping with their composer’s abiding interest in hunting, the reason for his absence and occasion for the letters in the first place.

Yet James often allows this hunting language to slip into a metaphor for his relationship with the State, and Cecil in particular. The term “beagle” establishes a sense of intimacy and affection, at the same time reminding Cecil of his inferior position with respect to the king: Cecil is a harmless, faithful servant who acts without autonomy in James’s interest. Indeed, Cecil

⁷Quoted in G.P.V. Akrigg, introduction and notes to *Letters* by James I, 11. Evidently, this absentee rule was quite successful; with the aid of adept advisors, James was able to maintain relative peace and stability without visiting the country from his accession as King of England until 1617, a period of about fourteen years. *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11, credits this success in large part to James’s establishment of an efficient mail system; a letter could travel from London to Edinburgh in approximately one week.

⁸*Ibid.*, 29.

⁹I am careful not to say that the written document *is* a totalizing substitute for the individual; rather, a written document is often *perceived* as such—hence, the fallacy of intent. The more accurate paradigm is far more complicated. A written document is a representation of the individual only inasmuch as the self exists in language, created (per Bakhtin) by dialogic utterance with an other.

¹⁰Akrigg, 30.

is not even one of the better sorts of hounds, and his endeavors are less noble than the ones James pursues while hunting bigger quarry at Royston and Newmarket. “I bid you heartily farewell,” one letter ends, “having so much mind for good large hounds in this rainy deep weather as I have forgotten all beagles till I come back to the chimney corner again to hunt a mouse.”¹¹ Similarly, one letter, addressed on the outside “To the little beagle that lies home by the fire quhen all the good hounds are daily running on the fields,”¹² apparently chides Cecil for neglecting his duties in the king’s absence. Yet another links hunting with political action: “I thank my patient Beagle for stopping the suit at Gray’s Inn....”¹³ James frequently reminds Cecil that the bearer of the letters is Sir Roger Aston, referring to the latter not in his role as courtier and courier, but as Master Falconer, blurring further the distinction between governing and hunting. Thus, with a slip of the tongue—or rather, pen—James effectively transforms the hunt into a better sort of statecraft.

This trick of the pen, of course, answers complaints, sometimes explicitly acknowledged, that some people do not approve of his diversions and resulting absenteeism.¹⁴ James once praises Cecil’s answers to the Bishop of York’s reprimands:

I am thoroughly pleased with your answer; and specially concerning my hunting ye have answered it according to my heart’s desire, for a scornful answerless answer became best such a senseless proposition.¹⁵

James seems to be aware of a dialogic protocol that insists that empty propositions be answered with empty words. Further references to Roger Aston both establish and belie the intimate tone of the letters:

Surely you have made a brave choice of him for presenting your ciphred letters unto me, for he himself can write nothing but ciphers. But in good faith he had almost put me in a fray at the receipt of them, for he came very grandie unto me while I was sitting at supper and whispered in my ear very quietly that he had letters from you unto me but he durst not give me them till I were all alone in my chamber, and left me to guess what kind of matter it could be.¹⁶

¹¹James I, *Letters*, 252.

¹²*Ibid.*, 260.

¹³*Ibid.*, 255.

¹⁴Cf. Akrigg: “Some historians have exaggerated the effects of James’s absenteeism at his sport; actually he was more in touch than they seem to realize. He had a Clerk of the Signet in attendance upon him, and papers despatched from Whitehall at the end of a day’s work normally reached the King at Royston early the next morning.” 13.

¹⁵James I, *Letters*, 255.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 252.

The king recounts a public display of his own need for privacy, aggrandizing himself and playfully deriding Cecil's "brave" choice of messenger. Aston essentially becomes a cipher for the letters themselves—after all, he is suited to the task because he can "write nothing but ciphers himself"—and so calls attention to both the medium and the means of exchange. Letter, letter writer, and letter bearer all become indispensable to this writer's self-presentation.

Clearly, then, the letters are an intricate process of negotiation. Simultaneously heaping praise and insult on his addressee, James asserts his authority through demeaning apostrophe, equivocal threats, patronizing jibes, and mock humility. He even manages to recognize his dependence on his subordinates, while at the same time turning his overspending into a courtly virtue and his hunting escapades into a type of penance. Of his financial problems, he writes,

It is true my heart is greater than my rent, and my care to preserve my honor and credit by payment of my debts far greater than my possibility. This cannot but trouble me at home and torture me abroad, for I confess though I have more exercise of body here, I have less contentment of spirit than at home, for there by conference I get some relief and here I do only dream upon it with myself...¹⁷

Giving up his hunting would be the easy way out; instead, he would rather do exactly as he pleases and be admired for refusing to share the burden of responsibility with his ministers. His customary address to Cecil is in itself an effort to shape through language the identity of the other, through dialogue, and so reflexively on himself. Implicitly, James recognizes, as he does in his published writing, that his image as king is as much constituted in others as in himself. After all, what he finds most gratifying about Cecil's answer to the archbishop is that it is the same answer that he himself would like to have given. The difficulty is one of decorum: if he were to offer the rebuke himself, it would lose effect. Only the speech of the other can effectively articulate the kind of sovereignty James desires. To be what he would be, he must have others to speak for him, and this desire is the same impulse that leads him to attempt to control the *vox populi* with his populist pamphlet.

Another reason other scholars have neglected the complexity of James's relationship to the tobacco industry is simply that they have underestimated the importance of that industry in contemporary consciousness. As Jerome Brooks, the pre-eminent tobacco historian states,

Four and a half centuries now contain the record of tobacco—a complex and vivid chronicle of which some parts, being unexpected, are all the more dramatic. It is a global history of so composite a character that the

¹⁷Ibid., 261.

subject of tobacco will be found in almost every field of intellectual and scientific inquiry. Indeed, no other product of the vegetable world has inspired such an abundant body of writing.¹⁸

His statement might seem hyperbolic, but today we live in a world in which tobacco is so much a part of the mundane that many of us no longer even notice its presence. Yet if one reads the literature inspired by tobacco when it was a marvelous new discovery, it quickly becomes clear that the commodity was a powerful part of the cultural moment. Nearly every major dramatist of the late Elizabethan and Jacobean periods mentions the tobacco user at some point,¹⁹ and representations of the plant abound in texts as varied as elite medical and botanical treatises, popular ballads, and paintings. If we are to understand why James would dedicate these two of the most significant public actions of his early tenure as king to tobacco, we must first recover the cultural moment when tobacco was as alien as a new world and as valuable as gold.

There is little disagreement among historians²⁰ that the vast and extremely rapid spread of the plant itself received impetus primarily from two quarters: initially, from the scientific curiosity of botanists and physicians and later, from the increasing popularity of the habit of tobacco use itself. Natural philosophers began to cultivate the herb in their own physic gardens before 1560, and by 1570, tobacco appeared in English gardens.²¹ The curiosity

¹⁸Brooks, 5.

¹⁹Ibid., 72. Jonson, Chapman, Marston, Nashe, Beaumont and Fletcher, Decker, Middleton, and Field to name a few—F.W. Fairholt, *Tobacco: Its History and Associations* (London, 1859), catalogues these references exhaustively. The conspicuous exception is Shakespeare, who seems to limit himself to less explicit social satire.

²⁰The most impressive study of European tobacco use is by historian Jerome Brooks, *The Mighty Leaf*. See also C.M. MacInnes, *The Early English Tobacco Trade* (London, 1926), and Joseph C. Robert, *The Story of Tobacco in America* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1964). Sarah Augusta Dickson, *Panacea or Precious Bane: Tobacco in Sixteenth Century Literature* (New York, 1954) examines numerous references to tobacco in literature, but performs very little literary analysis. The only recent literary study to engage the subject seriously is Knapp, *An Empire Nowhere*, which devotes a chapter to Elizabethan literary representations of tobacco. Knapp reviews the medical benefits tobacco supposedly offered, and attempts to account for the popularity of tobacco in the 1590's, when England had no real New World foothold. England, he says, tried to compensate for its belatedness in the New World by using a strategy of anti-materialism; the "paradoxical combination of inconsequentiality and power," (p. 135) enabled it to serve as a suitable synecdoche for Virginia, and allowed England to make claims to spiritual superiority in the New World. His argument is fascinating but problematic; he does not sufficiently account for tobacco's extremely high monetary value at the time. Furthermore, he rests a large part of his argument on a single passage in *The Faerie Queene* (3.5.32), without accounting for the ambiguity in the passage. When Belphoebe cures Timias with a magical plant, Spenser refuses to commit to the name of that plant, suggesting tobacco as only one of several possibilities. Although Knapp concentrates on Elizabethan literature and I discuss mostly the Jacobean tobacco phenomenon, I think in both cases it would be more accurate to say that rather than using anti-materialist strategies, the English simply substitute one kind of materialism for another.

²¹Brooks, 35–36.

about tobacco's scientific value was widespread; learned treatises touted the plant's curative value. Francisco Hernández, the Spanish court physician, had brought Philip II specimens from Mexico and there was a growing Portuguese interest in the weed's medicinal value.²² The French were especially aggressive in promoting its pharmaceutical use. Jean Nicot, ambassador to Portugal, was given credit for sending tobacco seeds to Catherine de Medici—then Queen Mother of France—in 1560 and was lauded for his use of tobacco poultices. This praise annoyed natural philosopher and explorer André Thevet, who had nurtured the plant in his own garden since his return from Brazil in 1556, and had hoped to turn his experience with the plant to his advantage.²³ Significantly, then, tobacco literature found its roots, so to speak, in the houses of European royalty; it is fitting in that sense that James would offer his contribution many years later as a means of solidifying his sometimes tenuous position in the community of monarchs. While the plant quietly made its way around the world, and sailors carried their pipes, cigars, and leaf along marine trade routes to Africa and Asia, conventional wisdom about the topic grew out of elite discourse. For better or worse, the tobacco issue became inextricably tied to issues of class, power, and authority.

Sometime during this period, tobacco use reached England. Although the exact date of its arrival is not known, its spread was obviously hindered by poor relations with Spain, by then the primary producer of the commodity.²⁴ The English were undoubtedly familiar with tobacco by the 1580's. In 1583, Edward Cotton asked the captain of his eponymous ship to bring some home from America,²⁵ and Sir Richard Grenville purchased some for Raleigh in 1585.²⁶ According to Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations*, Native Americans on the west coast of North America had presented tobacco to Sir Francis Drake's men, on the assumption that they were gods.²⁷ Ralph Lane comments that when he and his fellow Roanoke settlers were rescued by Drake, the latter had just come from Santo Domingo, St. Augustine, and Cartagena. Lane also notes that planting was going well before Drake's arrival.²⁸ Lane's account supports Joseph Robert's assumption that the ship

²²Robert, 4.

²³Cf. C.T.'s *Advice*, C3r., which says Nicot brought the queen tobacco, but "Thevet vaunts that he sent it into France 10 years before Nicot's Embassage." Brooks, 47, makes a convincing argument that the two men brought different species, Thevet bringing *Nicotiana tabacum*, used as commercial tobacco then and now, and Nicot, *Nicotiana rustica*, the more hardy plant used then medicinally but rarely grown today. Unfortunately for Thevet, history remembers his rival, for both the genus and its most toxic ingredient bear Nicot's name.

²⁴Brooks, 51–52.

²⁵Richard Hakluyt, *The Principall Navigations, Voiages and Discoveries of the English Nation*, facs. ed. (1859; Cambridge, 1965), 188.

²⁶Ibid., 735.

²⁷Ibid., 643.

²⁸Ibid., 746–747.

was heavily laden with tobacco when it finally arrived in England, marking the first major shipment of tobacco and the beginning of widespread tobacco use in the country.²⁹ Returned settler Thomas Harriot's words attest that both the habit and its fantastic reputation would be thoroughly appropriated by the English:

We ourselves during the time we were there, used to suck it after their manner, as also since our return, and have many rare and wonderful experiments of the virtues thereof: of which the relation would require a volume by itself: the use of it by so many of late, men and women of great calling as else, and some learned Physicians also, is sufficient witness.³⁰

In the fifteen years or so following Drake's return from Roanoke, tobacco became a fairly common commodity. Travelers' references to the herb during these years began to give fewer descriptions of its properties and methods of use. The novelty of smoking may have begun to wear off, but its use had increased dramatically. According to one report, "before the end of the century, the demand for tobacco had grown to such an extent that English sailors were beginning to regard West Indian islands as valuable or otherwise according to the amount of tobacco they produced."³¹ Demand continued to grow despite the fact that unadulterated commercial tobacco often drew its weight in silver, and could even draw its weight in gold.³² Tobacco clearly had become the precious commodity the Spanish had looked for in South America.

Obviously, Sir Walter Raleigh, commonly regarded as the father of English smoking, introduced neither the plant nor its use to England. Raleigh, however, was one of the first courtiers to take to smoking a pipe, and is seen as a major force in popularizing pipe smoking among the aristocracy.³³ Regardless of the accuracy of this perception, even Raleigh's contemporaries distinguished him with a special link to tobacco. A marginal gloss in Hakluyt reads, "Sir Walter Raleigh was the first that brought Tobacco into use, when all men wondered what it meant."³⁴

Many historians sensibly point out that no one person could possibly be held responsible for this popularization. The novelty of both the act of smoking and the plant itself, the sometimes exhilarating effects of smoking, and the feeling of social fellowship³⁵ produced by the sharing of tobacco made its popularity inevitable. Most obvious, and most overlooked by the

²⁹Robert, 5.

³⁰Hakluyt, 74–75.

³¹MacInnes, 29.

³²See Robert, 5, and Sinclair, 98.

³³Sinclair, 31. See also MacInnes, 31.

³⁴Hakluyt, 541.

³⁵Brooks, 29.

historians of tobacco, is the simple fact—which we are only beginning to acknowledge now—that tobacco is an extremely addictive drug, and thus a self-perpetuating commodity.

As recreational smoking became increasingly popular, fashion called for expensive, elaborate equipment, and although tobacco use spanned all classes, these apparatuses helped to signify those who belonged to a better class, much as certain types of dress did. Like the many upstarts who hoped to better themselves by breaking dress codes, many of those who adopted the practice of “cultured” smoking invited ridicule from those who felt they smoked by right of class. A properly equipped gallant would carry several “clays” (pipes) in a case, along with a special box containing tobacco, silver ember tongs, a pick, metal stopper, knife, scoop, and mirror.³⁶ Raleigh himself had a gold case set with candles for lighting up.³⁷

The better tobacco shops, often apothecaries, had separate sections for smokers, who could go sit behind a curtain and smoke a rented pipe for 3d. Because of tobacco’s Native American origins, the telltale figure of the midget blackamoor with a huge cigar tucked under his arm became the sign for tobacco. Whether American or African—the two apparently indistinguishable in a contemporary English mind—the representation of non-Europeans carried similar connotations; both evoked images of transgression, savagery, and sexual liberty. Simultaneously, because the pipe’s shape invited both phallic and vaginal associations, tobacco itself became a sign for something else: promiscuity. Tobacco use and sexual licentiousness were thought to be intimately linked; contemporary drama and pamphlets are riddled with tobacco users who smoke while wenching. This was one case where a cigar was not just a cigar; eventually, brothels even began to display the sign of the tobacco pipe.³⁸

As smokers’ habits became ridiculously extravagant, tobacco dealers fell into disrepute. At the same time, medical claims about tobacco’s efficacy as a drug became more and more outrageous. In response, a concerted voice of dissent with respect to tobacco use arose for the first time in England. Sensible thinkers decided that no substance could possibly cure all ailments, and medical men who felt their control of the tobacco industry slipping away sought to keep tobacco use strictly in the therapeutic realm. Whereas for Raleigh, as Jeffrey Knapp and Stephen Greenblatt both discuss, tobacco had been a source of authority and a means of authoring himself,³⁹ its rampant use now made it a means of undermining authority. The debate moved into popular discourse, and learned physicians found themselves either champi-

³⁶Ibid, 66.

³⁷Sinclair, 41.

³⁸Brooks, 83–84. For a fascinating discussion of the pipe as an erotic icon in seventeenth-century Dutch painting, see also Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London, 1987).

³⁹See Knapp, chap. 4, and Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago, 1980), chap. 4.

oned by common pamphleteers or forced to undertake their own defense in the bookstalls of Paul's yard. Tracts suddenly threatened that tobacco, if used without the appropriate supervision of a physician, could produce sterility, melancholy, vomits, and intestinal decay. They publicized the frightening results of autopsies of excessive smokers with oily, sooty lungs and blackened brains.⁴⁰

The growing protests against tobacco were further fueled by the English public's awareness that Spain controlled virtually all tobacco trade. Since trade with Spain was tightly circumscribed, almost all the tobacco imported into England came through illicit channels.⁴¹ Not surprisingly, English, French, and Dutch piracy aimed specifically at the precious substance abounded;⁴² Drake's seagoing exploits, however, only served to whet English appetites for tobacco. In the minds of many, tobacco posed a threat to social, political, economic, and even religious stability; James could not have picked a more apt focus for his own experiment in self-fashioning.

The establishment of the colony at Jamestown stoked the controversy yet again. At first, this settlement, like Roanoke before it, seemed doomed to failure. Initially the colonists found no suitable staple crop,⁴³ but John Rolfe managed to save the colony by importing seeds from the Spanish West Indies. Some intrigue must have been involved for Rolfe to have acquired the seeds. Spanish planters considered it treasonous to give away even a tiny number of the precious seeds to an Englishman; Spanish law by this time required that all Spanish tobacco be cleared through the port of Seville, and selling harvested leaf directly to foreigners was punishable by death.⁴⁴

Fortunately for Rolfe and his companions, the seed, when planted in the new soil, produced a distinctive and highly satisfactory leaf, but Virginian leaders continued to be wary of the new staple. Governor Thomas Dale, fearing famine, decreed that tobacco could be raised only if two acres of corn accompanied it. The fear of famine influenced Virginia's governmental policy well into the 1640's.⁴⁵ Rolfe's marriage to Pocahontas ensured the English the time and technology to perfect the crop; and when Rolfe returned to England, he too participated in the pamphlet war, apologetically addressing a treatise to the king extolling the virtues of Virginia, including "the principal commodity the colony for the present yieldeth."⁴⁶

Upon returning to Virginia, he found tobacco grown in every available nook and cranny.⁴⁷ Captain Smith commented with embarrassment upon

⁴⁰Brooks, 42.

⁴¹MacInnes, 54.

⁴²Brooks, 59.

⁴³Robert, 7.

⁴⁴Brooks, 58.

⁴⁵Robert, 10.

⁴⁶Ibid., 9.

⁴⁷By 1618, London yearly imports of Virginian tobacco had grown to 20,000 pounds. The colony

Governor Samuel Argall's arrival in 1617:

In Jamestown [Argall] found but five or six houses, the Church down, the Palizado's broken, the Bridge in pieces, the Well of fresh water spoiled; the store house they used for the Church, the market-place, and streets, and all other spare places planted with Tobacco, the Savages a frequent in their houses as themselves, whereby they were become expert in our arms, and had a great many in their custody and possession, the colony dispersed all about, planting Tobacco. Captain Argall not liking these proceedings, altered them agreeable to his own mind....⁴⁸

The threat of starvation was not the only aspect of tobacco that the governors of Virginia feared, then. Smith's account reveals a suspicion of commerce, a fastidious fear of the violation of boundaries: the threshold, the well, the altar, the border all undermined by tobacco, an American grotesque. Apparently, tobacco was a menacing tool by which the "frequent" Indians could corrupt an entire Christian community.

In Virginia, tobacco came to dominate every aspect of colonial life. In keeping with the interchangeability of tobacco and gold in London, tobacco became an alternative currency, and was even accepted in payment of taxes. Tobacco bought the first slaves and similarly paid the captain who brought a shipment of wives for the colonists who remained. Even clergymen demanded tobacco in lieu of a proper salary, giving Sunday sermons on the moral importance of raising and curing the herb correctly.⁴⁹ The significance of tobacco's widespread acceptance as a form of currency cannot be overemphasized. Tobacco was not, as Knapp argues, simply a morally viable substitute for riches; it *was* money. That it was not just valuable, but actually a form of currency, meant that those who coveted it, craved it, and burned it indiscriminately could be perceived as committing the same sin of avarice as those—like the stereotypical Spaniard—who single-mindedly pursued gold. That tobacco was a corruptive object of obsession, or on the other hand, something that could benefit many, stems directly from its monetary significance, and is apparent in much of the literature discussed below.

Since the controversy surrounding tobacco use obviously continues today, it is hardly surprising that no clear consensus of opinion regarding the propriety of its use was reached in the short time from tobacco's discovery in the Americas until the end of the reign of James I. Nevertheless, the abundance of contemporary published material on the subject reveals that the debate was not simply a stalemate; instead, tobacco polemic continually hovered around a number of recurrent themes, constantly reworking those

now could truly compete with Spain, and over the next ten years, Virginian leaf finally would take pre-eminence over Spanish; see Robert, 9, and Brooks, 55.

⁴⁸John Smith, *Complete Works, (1580–1631)*, ed. Philip L. Barbour (Chapel Hill, NC, 1986), 262.

⁴⁹Brooks, 92.

themes and recreating them anew as each polemicist sought to answer those who came before him. Thus, each pamphlet is both a product of its own agenda and a single utterance in a decades-long dialogue shaped by and shaping the discourse surrounding it.

Before tobacco was commonly in use in England—*i.e.*, before the 1587 return of the first Virginians—Englishmen relied primarily on the translated reports of continental authorities for their information on the subject. John Frampton's *Joyfull Newes out of the newe founde worlde*, a heavily revised translation of the Spanish doctor Monardes's work, was available in London by 1577. As the English title of Thevet's 1568 treatise, *The New founde Worlde, or Antarctike, wherein is contained wonderful and strange things*, suggests, these reports portray tobacco as a miraculous and divine gift whose esoteric properties were virtually unbounded. Thevet calls it a "secrete herb," which is "marvelous profitable for many things," and which the Indians use for "secrete talk or counsel among them selves."⁵⁰ These works capitalize on the very sense of "wonder" and "marvel" that Stephen Greenblatt suggests was cultivated to justify the exploration and eventual appropriation of the New World.⁵¹ The early accounts describe tobacco almost exclusively in positive terms; dissent on its use in these early works is conspicuously absent.⁵²

The minor poet Anthony Chute's treatise, *Tabacco*, published posthumously in 1595, is primarily a summarization of these earlier authorities; he relies mainly on the works of Monardes and Nicot to reveal tobacco's mysteries to an uninformed public. As with his sources, the mystical efficacy of the herb is a paramount theme. Adam Islip, the original publisher of the work, writes in his preface that Chute knew of tobacco both firsthand and "by private conference with men of learning, as by the strange and wonderful operations thereof..." Yet by this time, tobacco use had become common enough in England for Chute to write of the virtues of Indian tobacco:

Indeed it would seem somewhat much for any man to say, that if the drying of [tobacco] were according to the care of them, who here with vs make it their trade to gain by, that we might attribute so much power to it, being dried after such a manner; but surely I cannot thine, but that coming from those poor people, where covetousness hath not taught the child to cut his fathers throat for gain, or to dissemble with any for profit, we may esteem it either as good as the green, or at least as that green which grows here in our clime, which reason persuades us is unapt to bring forth the

⁵⁰André Thevet, *The New found worlde, or Antarcticke, wherein is contained many wonderful and strange things...* contemporary trans. from the French (London, 1568), 49.

⁵¹See Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago, 1991), for a full treatment of this argument. I credit his Clarendon Lectures, delivered in March 1988 at Oxford University, for starting me out on this subject.

⁵²Most notably, Phillip Stubbes's *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583) contains no mention of tobacco abuse.

herb in her natural heat and virtue being so hot and our soil so cold.⁵³

To decipher Chute's garbled prose is no easy task. In short, Chute says that the unspoiled Indians can cure tobacco better than greedy European traders, imparting some sort of implicit virtue to the commodity; and that this tobacco, although cured, is just as good as any fresh tobacco found in England. To these comments he adds that the older authorities do not often discuss pipe use either because it is a fairly new practice or perhaps because it has been used to such extremes, since "every extreme virtue is a vice."⁵⁴

Of this implied abuse and the dissent it had already aroused, he complains,

I doubt not but some hath both done themselves wrong, wronged vs, and done other injury, who (if They had not heard of some whom unrespective drinking had harmed) would happily have been soon drawn to use it for their health, who now remaining reared with examples shun it as an inconvenience, which else they had entertained as a public good.⁵⁵

The basic premises of the conflict over the tobacco trade had been established by this time, then; for although he praises tobacco strongly, Chute cannot ignore the avarice of the European tobacco trader, the corruption of the New World's innocence, or the growing problem of tobacco abuse.

By 1602, the offenses of tobacco users had become serious enough to prompt a full-fledged attack on tobacco use. *A Work for Chimney-sweepers: or A Warning for Tabacconists*, published anonymously, describes itself as a "vain discourse of the pernicious and vulgar use, or rather abuse of Tabacco."⁵⁶ The work outlines eight reasons for the author's "dislike...of the use and practice of Tabacco,"⁵⁷ and then gives a chapter supporting each with personal anecdotes and classical examples. *Chimney-sweepers* portrays vividly the stereotypical tobacco abuser, commonly known as a "tobacconist," for the author accepts that he will "draw...no small hatred among our smoky gallants, who having long time glutted themselves with the fond fopperies and fashion of our neighbor Countries: yet still desirous of novelties, have not stuck to travel as far as India to fetch [them]...."⁵⁸

Almost immediately, *A Defence of Tabacco: With a friendly Answer to the late*

⁵³Anthony Chute, *Tabaco* (London, 1595), 2. Chute's patron, Gabriel Harvey, was a long-time enemy of Thomas Nashe's. Thus it is no surprise that Nashe denounces Chute, in his "Have with you to Saffron Walden," (1596) for his "ignorance, his poverty, and his indulgence in 'posset curd' and tobacco" (*The Concise Dictionary of National Biography: from the Earliest Times to 1985*, 6 vols. [Oxford, 1992], 347–348). Chute's tortuous prose style makes him a deserving target for Nashe's derision.

⁵⁴Chute, 4.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶[Philartes], *A Work for Chimney-Sweepers: or, A Warning for Tabacconists* (London, 1602), A3r.

⁵⁷Ibid., B1v.

⁵⁸Ibid., A3r.

printed Booke called Work for Chimny-sweepers, etc. responded to the previous pamphlet by refuting its eight contentions one by one. At one point the author states in mock exasperation, “I must needs think, that you were very near driven to the hedge for a stake, when you picked out this argument.” This particular tract is thought to have been written by Dr. Roger Marbecke,⁵⁹ the queen’s chief physician and a former provost at Oriel College, Oxford; naturally, the text is written in the disputatious style of a university wit and so is not without humor. Its author recognizes that, for all the vivacity of the interchange, the debate was, thus far, rather conventional. A poem dedicates the *Defence* in this way, playfully creating its author’s name in an acrostic:

Much here is said Tabacco to defend,
 And much was said, Tabacco to disgrace:
 Read, mark, and scan: then censure in the end:
 Both you are men, most fit to judge the case.
 Esteem of me, as you in me shall find:
 Crave pardon, first I do: and that obtained,
 Know this, that no man shall with better mind,
 Each where declare to you his love unfeigned.

Come what shall come, to this poor Indian toy:
 Unto you both, I with immortal joy.

Marbecke, then, is not proposing a case as the champion of the irrefutable right to tobacco use. The plan is only a “toy” with which he performs an argumentative exercise; he then expects his readers to “read, mark, and scan,” to determine a winner. He calls his opponent “a man, well read, and of sufficient learning, and understanding,”⁶⁰ and his later remarks confirm the detached mood of the treatise:

Loath I am, I confess, to intermeddle in any such matters: nevertheless, for so much, as modest, and scholarly disputations, and conference between such, as have been civilly brought up in schools, are not to be disliked: for that oftentimes they do much good, and give great contentment to the Reader if they be done with due regard, of time, place and person...everything is, as it is taken: and my hope is, that nothing shall be ill taken there, where all is well meant.⁶¹

Marbecke is willing to inject his voice into the debate, but the stakes in the

⁵⁹[Roger Marbecke], *A Defence of Tabaco: With a friendly Answer to the late printed Booke called work for chimney-sweepers, etc.* (London, 1602), 57. See also the *Concise Dictionary of National Biography*, 1006–1007.

⁶⁰*Defence*, 5.

⁶¹*Ibid.*

contest do not seem to warrant raising his voice. At this point, the disputation reflected intellectual curiosity rather than social crisis.

But the intervention of the monarch in 1604 made playful detachment far more difficult, for James's *A Counterblaste to Tobacco*—his first, although anonymously, published treatise as king of England⁶²—posed the abuse of tobacco as a political issue, and one which jeopardized the State itself. The *Counterblaste* depicts tobacco use as the predictable but undesirable result of the recent arrival of peace and wealth:

Our peace hath bred wealth: And Peace and wealth hath brought forth a general sluggishness, which makes vs wallow in all sorts of idle delights, and soft delicacies, the first seeds of the subversion of all great Monarchies.⁶³

Many readers guessed the author's identity, for the pamphlet stressed the importance of the king as the physician to the body politic; and between the pamphlet and the king's controversial official policy towards tobacco, not to mention the establishment of tobacco plantations in England and Virginia, the immediacy of the issue became apparent in contemporary pamphlets. Pamphleteers could no longer afford to use their opinions on tobacco for mere entertainment. They had been warned implicitly that a public statement about the issue carried potential political consequences.

With the revival of the colonial endeavor in 1607, reports from Virginia described the Indian use of the plant with an invigorated sense of wonder, perhaps with a renewed need to justify the appropriation of new land. But given James's public position on the issue, these writers were forced to tread softly. John Rolfe's *A True Relation of the State of Virginia* (1615), deceptive in its hesitation to mention the crop, mentions first a store of other commodities from Virginia but later calls tobacco the "principal" one. His argument is constructed carefully, to counteract the familiar stereotype of the tobacco-crazed Virginian described by men like John Smith. He subtly seeks favor for tobacco by first combatting fears that Virginians might starve themselves in their greed for profit. He cites the many products of a fruitful land: maize, wheat, peas, beans, hemp, flax, silkworms, carrots, parsnips, and pumpkins, slyly adding, almost as an afterthought,

Likewise Tobacco (though an esteemed weed) very commodious, which there thriveth so well that (no doubt) after a little more trial and experience thereof, it will compare with the best in the West Indies.⁶⁴

⁶²Brooks, 70.

⁶³James I, *Counterblaste*, 96.

⁶⁴John Rolfe, *A True Relation of the State of Virginia*, ed. Henry C. Taylor, facs. ed. (1616; New Haven, 1951), 35.

In a similar vein, he later points out the Virginian law that required settlers to plant food as well as tobacco. Rolfe clearly emphasizes the fact that for the Virginians, tobacco is necessary for the very survival of the colony. Of the two-fold system of food and tobacco production, he says:

...the Magazine shall be sure yearly to receive their Rent of Corn, to maintain those who are fed thereof, being but a few, and many others if need be, they themselves will be well stored to keep their families with an overplus and reap Tobacco enough to buy clothes, and such necessaries as are needful for themselves and household.⁶⁵

Rolfe further states that, a short distance away from Jamestown, a group of twenty-five men "...are employed only in planting and curing Tobacco, with the profit thereof to clothe themselves, and all those who labor about the general Business."⁶⁶ By including these observations in his treatise on the state of Virginia as a whole, he makes a quiet case for tobacco to those at home, showing them that the herb can be transformed into the necessities of life.

But in the eyes of tobacco's opponents, the disease was growing uncontrollably. In *The Honestie of this Age* (1615), Barnabe Rich laments:

But amongst the trades that are newly taken up, this trade of Tobacco doth exceed: and the money that is spent in smoke is unknown, and (I thine) unthought on.... I have heard it told, that now very lately, there hath bin a Catalogue taken of all those newly erected houses that have set up the trade in selling of Tobacco, in London and near about London...upward of 7000 houses, that doth live by that trade.⁶⁷

Rich claims that tobacco is sold and consumed everywhere, in apothecaries, groceries, chandleries, and private homes. I have been unable to trace the accuracy of this catalogue; the report may well be exaggerated, in which case it simply affirms even more strongly the alarm that this new tobacco culture excited among some.

In light of the ascendancy of Spanish tobacco and the encouragement given Virginians for their alternative product, it is no surprise that the second decade of the sixteenth century saw a rekindled interest in the tobacco debate. *An Advice how to plant Tobacco in England* (1615)⁶⁸ proposes to keep English money out of Spanish pockets by encouraging Englishmen to grow tobacco themselves. Thus, most of the text is purely technical, specifying when to plant and how to care for the crop. But the treatise also identifies many contemporary misgivings surrounding the trade, most notably that of

⁶⁵Ibid., 47.

⁶⁶Ibid., 39.

⁶⁷Barnaby Rich, *The Honestie of this Age* (London, 1615), 20–21.

⁶⁸The author is identified only as "C.T.," but the Epistle to Brathwait's later "Solemne Jovial Disputation" identifies him as a "doctor of Physick."

tobacco adulteration:

Now besides these harmful mixtures [added to imported leaf], if our English which delight in Indian Tobacco, had seen how the Spanish slaves make it up, how they dress their sores and pocky ulcers, with the some unwashed hands with which they slubber and anoint the Tobacco, and call it sauce *per los perros Lutheranos*, for Lutheran dogs; they would not so often draw it into their heads and through their noses as they doe: yea many a filthy savor they find therein, did not the smell of honey master it...⁶⁹

Like many of the pamphlets before it, *An Advice* cites the “masters” of the use of the weed, Thevet and Monardes, and gives countless medicinal applications for it.

John Deacon’s *Tobacco Tortured, or the Filthie Fume of Tobacco Refined* (1616) attests that the English fervor for smoking was as avid as ever, for Deacon is vehement in his protest against it. He is not satisfied with castigating tobacco as an unclean and unhealthy habit; he insists, like James, that it represents a palpable threat to the State itself. The work is dedicated to the king, and directly echoes James’ dedication to the *Counterblaste*, asking the king, in his great knowledge of medicine, to prescribe remedies for the illnesses of the body politic. His tedious and dogmatic prose is arranged in the form of a classical dialogue and “proves” his thesis by a series of syllogisms. At the end, he sums up his argument in this way:

Now then...sith those the disordered courses of our graceless Tobacconists are every way exceedingly hurtful to their own proper persons, first by poisoning their bodies and souls, and then by procuring a prodigal dispending of their ancient patrimonies and other preferments; sith they are so unnaturally injurious to their own wives and children, by causing their needless poverty, and woeful complaints; sith they are so barbarously cruel towards their poor Tenants, for the chargeable supply of their unnecessary wants; sith they are so outrageously resolute upon the present spoil of other mens substance; with they are so fearfully opposite to the well settled peace of our country, with they are so stately repugnant to the good established laws of our land; with they are so dangerously occurring to the public peace of our sovereign Lord the King; sith they are so proudly rebellious to his Majesties sovereign power, sith they are such inevitable provocations to the untimely spilling of their own and other mens blood, of spoiling the present good blessing of God, of opening a fearful gap to foreign invasions of cruel massacres, of an extreme hazard to our happy Estate and most flourishing kingdom.⁷⁰

⁶⁹[C.T.], *An Advice How to Plant Tobacco in England: and How to Bring it to Colour and perfection, to whom it may be profitable, and to whom harmful. the vertues of the Hearbe in generall, as well in the outward application as taken in Fume. with The Danger of Spanish Tobacco* (London, 1615), B1r.

⁷⁰John Deacon, *Tobacco Tortured: or, the Filthie Fume of Tobacco Refined* (London, 1616), 176.

To the adversaries of tobacco, its use had become treasonous, for the most part because the king despised it. To them it became a contagious disease to the human body, the body politic, and the body of Christ. Deacon appeals to Christian sensibilities in addressing his audience as “good Christian Readers”⁷¹ and in expressing concern for those who carouse too often to devote themselves to the church.

In the midst of this flurry of tobacco pamphlets, the pamphlet form itself did not go unnoticed. In 1617, Richard Brathwait published his *Solemne Ioviall Disputation, Theoreticke and Practicke: Briefly Shadowing The Law of Drinking*. Brathwait, a poet and onetime lawyer educated at both universities, capitalized on the polemic quality of the pamphlets to satirize publications objecting to drinking and smoking. It is divided into two sections; the second, entitled “The Age of Smoking,” is devoted entirely to tobacco. Like the preceding pamphlets, it contains an epistle dedicatory, several introductory poems, Biblical and classical marginalia, and a number of anecdotes. The preface of the tobacco section is addressed “To Whomever, whensoever, or wheresoever.”⁷² One passage reads:

That the Light of the Law admonisheth us, that some things are to bee daily and duly learned of us. Seeing then, that there is nothing, (so far as I know) more familiarly practiced, nothing more solemnly observed, than the Ceremonies of Bacchus....⁷³

Brathwait thus mocks the pamphleteers’ dependence on classical and, even more notably, Christian learning to support their arguments. In a similar manner, he satirizes the pithy aphorisms which pervade the pamphlets, saying, “He that has lived to his time, is either a Fool or a Physician; he knows what is best for himself, which he observes as religiously as any Pagan in Christendom.”⁷⁴ In an oblique and not entirely flattering reference to James, the narrator tells his fictional companions—tobacco merchants trying to enlist him to speak in their favor—“Alexander Severus would have smoked...and Xerxes would have pulled their skin over their ears; if these smoky Merchants...had vended, or vented those commodities in their time.”⁷⁵ A Trinidadan tells him that tobacco seeds were thrown in a bed of gourds,

and in a months space the whole bed of gourds were into leaves of Tobacco changed. Whereat smiling, I have read [answered the narrator] all

⁷¹Ibid., A1v.

⁷²Richard Brathwait, *A Solemne Ioviall disputation, Theoreticke and Practicke: briefly Shadowing the Law of Drinking* (London: 1617), 87.

⁷³Ibid., 1.

⁷⁴Ibid., 67.

⁷⁵Ibid., 87.

Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, and I find no such transmutation. No marvel (answered he) those were fictions, there true and native relations: besides, you are to know that Travellers in their surveys, assume a privilege above the authority of Authors.⁷⁶

Both statements humorously reveal the faulty logic implicit in using classical authors as evidence for or against tobacco use, since the issue was so startlingly new.

Although neither side seems to have surpassed the other in the success of its argument, both share several recurrent themes. First, it is clear to both the proponents and opponents of tobacco use that the decision to plant, cure, trade in, or use the plant carries a real moral weight. As was shown above, John Rolfe went to great lengths to justify his choice to promote tobacco growth, while the authors of *Tobacco Tortured* and the *Counterblaste* make tobacco use tantamount to treason. Unlike James, and perhaps in direct response to his indictment, Rolfe proposes tobacco as an aid to the Commonwealth instead of a subversion of it. In aligning the crop with family values, hard work, and honest profit, he answers the fears of those who saw tobacco as an unnecessary luxury item.

In *An Advice*, even the simple act of pruning one's plants becomes a significant moral act:

...if you shall neglect [to prune], *coveting* to have many stalks, because many leaves, your Tobacco will be weak and worth nothing...

And yet *you must not so love your own* as to take it green...otherwise, it may prove equally harmful with that which is sophisticate. I must also advise you not to slubber your English with Melrosarum, and other *trumpery*, as many of our own Artificers do, thereby to bring it to the Indian color; it is an *impious practice* to play with the health of men, and make profit by their destruction.⁷⁷

The author's language goes far beyond the technical to project the ethical implications of such an act. He clearly illustrates the self-defeating nature of covetousness, an understandable admonishment given tobacco's value, and warns against vanity and self-love.⁷⁸

Moreover, almost all of the pamphlets were intensely chauvinistic. Tobacco remained primarily a Spanish product, and therefore one to be derided. The pamphleteers distrusted not just Spaniards, but all foreigners. *Tobacco Tortured* warns of trafficking with corrupt nations, but even the English do not remain unscathed. As with Captain Smith's description of a

⁷⁶Ibid., 90.

⁷⁷*An Advice*, B3r. (emphasis added).

⁷⁸The author is, of course, working within a long tradition, often represented in contemporary emblem books, that equates good husbandry with positive moral action.

tobacco-obsessed Jamestown, this chauvinism results from a fear of the grotesque violation of boundaries. True to the contemporary obsession with taxonomy, Deacon argues,

...from whence it cometh now to passe, that so many of our Englishmen's minds are thus terribly Turkished with Mahometan trumperies; thus treacherously Italianized with sundry antichristian toys; thus spitefully Spanished with superfluous pride; thus fearfully Frenchized with flaring net-works to catch English fools; thus huffingly Hollandized with ruffian like loom-works, and other like ladified fooleries.... According to the Italian proverb which portrayeth forth an Englishman thus.... An Englishman Italianate, is a very devil incarnate.⁷⁹

Coupled with this chauvinistic tendency is a desire for insularity, and the need to insure that the world remain in certain categories, and thus remain in the realm of understanding. To overexpose oneself to the culture of another nation is to risk becoming something strange and unknowable. Marbecke insults the author of *Chimney-sweepers* by accusing him, "What needed you to have fetched your proofs out of France, to persuade that ill smells do offend? Every dunghill in England, and something else too, can testify that well enough."⁸⁰

It is when the pamphlets extend their chauvinism to include this fear that they become positively xenophobic. The commonly held suspicion towards tobacco's Indian origins ties in with this particular brand of xenophobia. *Chimney-sweepers* reads, "...at all times, at all hours, and of all persons, this Indian stranger most familiarly is received..."⁸¹; and James complains in the *Counterblaste*,

...shall we I say, without blushing, abase our selves so far, as to imitate these beastly Indians, slaves to the Spaniards, refuse to the world, and as yet aliens from the holy Covenant of God? Why doe we not as well imitate them in walking naked as they doe? in preferring glasses, feathers, and such toys, to gold and precious stones, as they do? yea why do we not deny God and adore the Devil, as they doe?⁸²

The chauvinism and xenophobia of the pamphlets, then, are distinct, but often inseparable impulses.

Those two impulses do diverge, however, in *An Advice*. Its anti-Spanish sentiment is readily apparent in what has been shown so far of the pamphlet, but the author combines this sentiment with the belief in the noble Indian origins of the plant. *Natural* tobacco, he writes,

⁷⁹Deacon, 10.

⁸⁰*Defence*, 25.

⁸¹*Chimney-sweepers*, B2r..

⁸²James I, *Counterblaste*, 100.

...is a deep yellow, or a light tawny; and when the Indians themselves sold it us for Knives, Hatchets, Bells and the like merchandise, it had no other complexion, as all the Tobacco at this day hath, which is bought from the coast of Guiana, from Saint Vincents, from Saint Lucia, from Dominica, and other places, where we buy it but of the natural people; and all these sorts are clean, and so is that of St. Domingo; where the Spaniards have not yet learned the Art of Sophistication.⁸³

In contrast, the Spaniards “sophisticate,” or render impure and artificial, this natural, “wholesome” tobacco. The adulterated tobacco takes on a blackened color, which Englishmen in their ignorance see as a sign of quality; the connection between the older meaning of the adjective “sophisticated” and the more modern “culturally complex, fashionable,” is perhaps evident here. If they cannot obtain English tobacco, the pamphleteer advises his countrymen to use Indian leaf, “which colors are natural, and forbear the black which is foul, the dyed tobacco which is red, and the leaf brought in by the Portugals, and the like slubbered stuff,” for “he that wears the cloth to the end it was intended for, to wit, to defend himself from the cold, and wet, cares more for the goodness than the color.”⁸⁴ Thus the two types of tobacco, and more particularly their colors, yellow and black, become emblematic of the bright, innocent, unspoiled New World in contrast with the dark, artificial, and rotten practices of the Old World, and of covetous Iberians in particular.

The Spanish exchange the leaf, not for necessities, as do the Indians; rather, “...nothing (some Silks, and Cloth of Silver and Gold excepted) but ready Money, and Silver plate could content them.”⁸⁵ In saying so, the author, like Rolfe, aligns the Indians and the product with an ideology that values a Protestant work ethic above all else. In contrast, James, in asking of the “beastly” Indians, “Why doe we not imitate them...in preferring glasses, feathers, and such toys, to gold and precious stones,” considers them evil precisely because their ignorance of “civilized” ways leads them to pursue vanities. Contradicting his own policy regarding tobacco, he implies that the pursuit of treasure that has what he considers intrinsic value is in no way covetous.

Thus, a major contrast between the two camps becomes apparent. Both are well aware of the Indian origins of the plant; moreover, both seem to agree that those origins impart some quality, or lack thereof, to it.⁸⁶

⁸³*An Advice*, B1r.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, B4r.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, A3v.

⁸⁶As Knapp says, “the tobacco critic considers the imported weed pagan and earthly, qualities that infect England and lower its sights profoundly. A tobacco advocate like Beaumont counters that, with less persuasive claims to inherent value than gold, tobacco bespeaks the mind’s power to create value, and so continues to alert the English mind...to its own abilities,” 137.

Supporters, like Chute and the author of *An Advice*, then, identify that quality as a virtue inherent in the “noble savage,” while opponents see it as a vice untamed by civilization and a result of the Indians’ “devilish” religious practices. Marbecke answers the accusation made to this effect in *Chimney-sweepers* by implying that Englishmen, whose native drug is alcohol, are the real barbarians:

...me thinks it were a more charitable notion, to think [tobacco] came from God, who is the author of all good gifts, than from the devil.... Touching the taking of it by [Indian] priests, and by and by falling asleep thereupon & c. mark me but that whole discourse well: and ye shall see, it is taken & reported quite amiss; for indeed it maketh all for Tabacco. For take but Monardes his own tale: and by him it should seem; that in the taking of Tabacco: they were drawn up: and separated from all grosse and earthly cogitations, and as it were carried up to a more pure and clear region, of fine conceits & actions of the mind.... Marry, if in their trances, & sudden fallings, they had become nasty, & beastly fellows: or had in a most loathsome manner, falling spewing, and vomiting, as drunkards are wont to do: then indeed it might well have been counted a devilish matter, and been worthy of reprehension.⁸⁷

Marbecke’s sympathetic narrative anticipates the Rousseavian celebration of the noble savage, but his understanding of Native Americans is by no means anthropological. He does not offer an accurate assessment or representation of a alien culture. Instead, he merely considers tobacco against a background of theological, eschatological, and aesthetic concerns that are decidedly European. The entire conceit of the noble savage is an attempt less to understand a foreign culture in itself than to advance a favorable prejudice based on the cultural norms of the reader.

The pamphlets’ shared reluctance to discuss the subject of tobacco without the citation of European authorities who befit the humanist tradition from which their writing springs, illustrates the same point. Knapp, for example, notices *Chimney-sweeper’s* author’s preoccupation with authority,⁸⁸ and adds, “Beaumont involves tobacco in a rebellion...not only against religious or temporal authority but also...the authority of the classics.”⁸⁹ Participants in the pamphlet war can only establish the meaning of tobacco by calibrating it against familiar texts and discourses. Neither those who attack tobacco nor those who defend it wish to acknowledge the possibility of alternative forms of discourse, which might threaten established cultural paradigms. To step outside the classical canon, to allow discourse without authority, was to acknowledge an uncontrollable, unknowable aspect of the universe—a

⁸⁷Marbecke, 57-58.

⁸⁸Knapp, 140.

⁸⁹Ibid., 166.

prospect largely incompatible with Renaissance thought.

Yet, perhaps for the first time, an even obliquely reliable authority for a subject was impossible, for these men found themselves contemplating experiences without precedent. Although this aspect of their encounter with the New World thrilled those like Monardes, who found the experience “joyful news,” it also, as an unknown, inspired anxiety and prompted much of the retrenchment and xenophobia in the anti-tobacco pamphlets. Contemporary views of tobacco were, in many ways, a microcosm of the reaction to the New World as a whole; the tension between the impulses to embrace the discovery with joy and to run from it in terror continually played into the tobacco controversy. The very newness, the untouched quality that lent the plant and the world that fostered it their implicit virtue in the eyes of some, paradoxically denied the existence of both in classically oriented discourse.

The preface of the 1616 edition of James’s *Works*, in which James’s authorship of the *Counterblaste* was finally officially acknowledged, cogently illustrates the definition of authority that attaches itself to James. The bishop of Winchester, dedicating the volume to Prince Charles, invoked

...the King of Kings, God Himself, who, as he doth all things for our good; so doeth he many things for our imitation. It pleased his Divine wisdom to be the first in this Rank, that we read of, that did ever write. He wrote, and the writing was the writing, saith Moses, of God.

R.S. Rait claims that this may have been written “to confute the belief that writing became not the majesty of a king.”⁹⁰ But it is unlikely that, educated in the strongest humanist tradition, and thus practiced in composition, James felt the need to justify his already copious writings. Instead, the bishop’s preface aligns the king, as God’s anointed leader, in yet another way—he not only retains the power to govern his people, but also the God-like ability to create a new truth from chaos. The writing becomes the writing, or the word becomes Truth, simply from the power of the Utterer. Moreover, in writing as an example for imitation, God, and James, calls for a submission to these truths, allowing for no dissent among the faithful or loyal.

Both Jonathan Goldberg and David Norbrook note that James’s anger at the publication of Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, which allegorizes Mary Stuart’s execution in the story of Duessa, stemmed from his mistaken idea that it represented official Tudor propaganda. In short, James saw that any publication permitted by a monarch, as *author* of all things in that country, was, in effect, his or her personal opinion.⁹¹ Conversely, then, it was to

⁹⁰R.S. Rait, introduction to *A Royal Rhetorician: A Treatise on Scottis poesie, A counterblaste to tobacco, etc.*, by James I (London, 1900), ix-x.

⁹¹See Goldberg, 2, and Norbrook, 137.

James's advantage to publish the *Counterblaste* anonymously. Perhaps, in his eyes, a duplication of his opinion sent from elsewhere furthered the impression of his own authority over his kingdom. James probably would not have said that he needed those voices to support his cause, but rather that by illustrating proper submission to his authority, he could strengthen his own created version of the truth. This outside voice allowed James to create his own Other, obliterating all voices but his own.

James's attack on tobacco is among his most well-known and forcefully presented political causes precisely because of this understanding of the construction of power through dialogue. Although James's hatred of the habit may well have been genuine on a personal level, the tobacco trade also presented a dilemma that forced him to consider his own place as an authority figure. Goldberg certainly approaches this question in his study of authority and its representations in the Jacobean literary scene, yet he neglects to acknowledge explicitly and in all its richness the fundamental premise behind all of James's discursive practices—that James presented himself as an authority or author in *every* sense of the word. He presented himself not simply as one with a power to enforce obedience or influence the opinions of others, and not even simply as one entitled to power or entitled by God to acceptance by his subjects, but, in short, as one who is all of those things *and* a creative communicative force.

The tobacco trade, then, posed a number of threats to James's own sense of power. Here were an economic endeavor and a popular habit that, although widely known to displease the new king, threatened to continue indefinitely. As would be later pointed out in the 1616 preface to James's *Works*, one of the purposes of God's, and thus the king's, actions was to provide an example for imitation. In a country that had gone so long without a male sovereign, this ability would be a doubly conspicuous mode of establishing and maintaining power. Yet the culture that had grown up around tobacco use encouraged James's subjects to emulate others than himself, by definition conducting themselves in an ungodly fashion. A popular tradition that credited Sir Walter Raleigh with the establishment of this culture provided a personified, and thus more direct threat to the king's will; and Raleigh certainly did not escape unscathed from the *Counterblaste*.

Conversely, as smoking was happily (for James) a habit which he did not practice, it was certainly a safe subject for discourse.⁹² Goldberg sees the tract as a chance for James to "make the great out of small, to use the vice as a way of presenting himself as exemplary, the nation's savior, pure in his life, acute in his wit," by showing up the logic of those who supported tobacco use.⁹³ True as this point may be, James could prove himself exemplary only if he completely discredited tobacco use and users; to maintain complete

⁹²Cf. Sinclair, Brooks, and Robert.

⁹³Goldberg, 26.

authority, he could not allow for dual truths; he had to counter himself with himself. The tract is not, then, one of self promotion, but of negation and recreation of the other. In the end, in James's textual universe, only he remains.

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