Thinking through Hunger and Appetite in Renaissance England

In order to understand the depiction of hunger and appetite correctly, it is necessary to explore the historical conditions surrounding their representation; for the apparent universality of these drives masks the complex ways they both determine, and are determined by, social formations. Hunger, as Ernst Bloch notes, may constitute 'the oil in the lamp of history, but even this primary need looks different according to the changing ways in which needs are satisfied' (Bloch, 1995, p. 69). The precise significance of hunger varies depending on a vast range of material and ideological factors. This is not simply a matter of distinguishing between the passing pangs experienced by all and the profound hunger which affects those who starve. There are also significant differences in terms of both cause and perception, between a peasant who starves alongside their entire village and the outcast who is famished in the midst of plenty. To comprehend what is at stake in the representation of hunger and appetite, it is therefore necessary to consider the material factors governing the lived experience of these drives in the early modern period, and the ideological framework within which they were understood.

Grasping the material dimension to the existence of hunger and appetite involves acknowledging the power which these drives exert over society. In the first instance, they are defined by disruptive potential. Hunger, for example, constitutes a key manifestation of the power exerted by lived experience to challenge dominant ideologies, so that, as E. P. Thompson has argued, 'old conceptual systems may crumble and new problematics insist upon their presence' (Thompson, 1995, p. 11). When people starve, 'their survivors think in new ways about the market'; when they are imprisoned, 'they meditate in new ways about the law' (Thompson, 1995, p. 11). Yet hunger and appetite also play a significant role in the production and reproduction of social formations. Keith Wrightson notes that in this period 'agriculture was the dominant sphere of economic activity and levels of agricultural production governed the growth opportunities of the economy as a whole' (Wrightson, 2000, p. 160). If, as Terry Eagleton has argued, 'in the production of human

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society some activities are more fundamentally determining than others'
(Eagleton, 1989, p. 169), then few spheres of the English economy were
more important than the production of food. In a very real sense, hunger is
not simply a drive which might be compared to any other form of need or
desire, but instead constitutes the primary drive in this period. A correct
understanding of hunger and appetite thus requires an engagement with the
economic sphere. This is not a matter of identifying a single, unambiguous
mode of production since, as Perry Anderson has argued, 'societies are nearly
always a mixture of forms, and change in them is more usually the result of an
expansion of one of them at the expense of others' (Anderson, 1992, p. 238).
Instead, it is necessary to assert the contested, contradictory nature of the
economic base at a time of sweeping socio-economic change. Attention to the
material factors dominating the representation of hunger and appetite has
the potential to reveal the complexity of their political significance. Certainly,
they are implicated in moments of crisis, when the lived experience of
ordinary people threatens to overturn the existing social order. But they also
play a fundamental role in the processes of expansion and polarisation which
defined the early modern period.

The representation of hunger and appetite is therefore determined by
the material base of early modern society. But, as Raymond Williams has
emphasised, the concept of determination should be understood not as 'an
external cause which . . . totally controls a subsequent activity', but rather
as 'setting limits, exerting pressures' (Williams, 2005, p. 32). The material
activity of human beings defines the contemporary lived experience of
hunger and appetite. But in order to understand their complex ideological
function, it is necessary to consider the diverse ways in which contempor-
aries understood these drives. The playing companies and audiences of
early modern London had inherited a wide range of interpretations of, and
perspectives on, the issue of hunger and appetite. There exists an extensive
body of religious, medical and popular texts which explore the practical
and moral significance of these drives. Of course, this ideological frame-
work is also, like the material base, dynamic. It responds to the prevailing
material conditions, attempting to resolve contradictions at the base. But it
also determines how instances of hunger or appetite might be interpreted,
establishing a series of images and assumptions governing the political
significance of these drives on the early modern stage. Through attention
to these contemporary perspectives, it becomes possible to discern those
characteristics imbued in hunger and appetite which lent them utility as
a means of conceptualising the rupture between lived experience and
ideology which defined the period.

Lastly, however, it is necessary to acknowledge that these more general ideological structures are subject to a specific inflection in the context of the playhouses. To understand the dramatic significance of hunger and appetite, it is vital to move beyond the legacy of Cultural Materialist and New Historicist criticism, with its tendency to treat all forms of text as indistinguishable. The early modern theatres constituted specific superstructural entities, engaged in the production of both profit and ideology.[1] The theatre functions to make sense of lived experience, to lend it form and structure, and to query or legitimise the element of disjuncture which invariably exists between dominant ideological structures and individual lived experience. This act of definition makes possible a degree of intervention into ideological conflict, providing a rationalisation of social contradiction which invites praxis, rather than simply contemplation. In order to assess this process of intervention, it is necessary to explore the practical and theoretical implications of staging hunger and appetite. In doing so, it becomes possible to discern the role played by the representation of hunger and appetite in the ideological conflicts of a period defined by sweeping processes of material change and increasingly overt class struggle.

As such this chapter will move from the general to the particular. The investigation will begin with the seismic socio-economic changes which were both motivated by, and determined, the material reality of hunger and appetite in early modern society. It will draw on the vast body of medical and theological understandings of these drives, to outline the complex ideological significance which could be attributed to them. And it will define the characteristics of these drives in the context of the theatres. In each of these areas, hunger and appetite emerge as topics of profound political significance. Their existence is rooted at every level in the processes of social, economic and ideological change which developed in early modern England. But perhaps more significant is the extent to which these drives also constituted a medium for debate. By historicising hunger and appetite, it becomes possible to discern their profound utility for ideological conflict. The representation of these promotes a form of analysis which, like the society which produced them, is fundamentally dynamic.

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[1] In this, I differ from critics such as James Holstun and Gabriel Egan, who in practice tend to equate superstructure and ideology. Instead, I will follow Eagleton in reading superstructural forms as material, while using ideology to describe immaterial concepts. This enables a critic to avoid a liberal opposition of determined base to undetermined superstructure. Like the material base, superstructural forms are contested. It is for this reason that the representation of hunger and appetite on the early modern stage is defined by such ambiguity.

They provide a series of images and motivations which contain an unparalleled capacity to comment on a social formation in the grip of profound change. It is for this reason that the study of hunger and appetite in the early modern theatres constitutes a topic of pressing significance.

Profit and Polarisation

The availability of food, the specific types of food on offer and the degree of inequality in diet, exerted a determining influence over how hunger and appetite were experienced and represented. Of particular importance is the degree to which early modern England escaped the generalised subsistence crises which had tended to restrain population growth for much of human history. In previous centuries, European society had been characterised by a steadily increasing population, followed by periods of demographic crisis, in a pattern which broadly accords with a Malthusian belief that 'the power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man' (Malthus, 1959, p. 5). As Robert Brenner has noted, 'This two-phase cyclical pattern prevailed in the economy of most of Europe in the later medieval period (1100–1450) and continued to predominate over large parts of it into the early modern period (1450–1700)' (Brenner, 1985b, p. 217). Famine, defined by Roger Appleby as 'a crisis of mortality caused by starvation and starvation-related disease . . . measured by the increase in the number of deaths' (Appleby, 1978, p. 1), played a significant role in these demographic crises. Yet the sixteenth century in England was defined by socio-economic change which was to culminate in what Brenner has described as 'the final disruption of the Malthusian pattern and the introduction of a strikingly novel form of continued economic development' (Brenner, 1985a, p. 24). The period was defined by a marked increase in agricultural productivity coupled with sustained demographic growth.[2] England's population rose from 2.98 million in 1561, to 4 million in 1601 and 5.23 million in 1651 (cf. Wrightson, 2000, p. 159). In the face of these increases, inflation was high and periods of dearth were frequent.[3] But by contrast with the generalised demographic

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[2] Wrightson notes that 'Shipments of grain to London from the Essex ports of Colchester and Maldon rose from roughly 1,000 quarters in 1565 to almost 13,000 in 1624, while those from the specialist grain-producing districts of north-east Kent grew from 12,000 quarters in 1587–8 to over 57,000 in 1638' (Wrightson, 2000, p. 173).

[3] Appleby has demonstrated that between 1593 and 1596 wheat prices doubled, and he has argued that in 1597 the impact of shortages 'was substantial throughout all England' (Appleby, 1978, p. 2). A. L. Beier reports that 'Rises in food prices averaging about 4 per cent a year [were] sustained for nearly 150 years and had serious consequences' (Beier, 1985, p. 20). Wrightson notes that 'by the

crises of the thirteenth century, outbreaks of outright famine were local-
ised, and never applied the same restricting pressure on population growth,
even if they continued to exert a considerable psychosocial influence on
contemporary society.[4] Hunger remained a constant in the lives of the
mass of people in early modern England, but the country as a whole had
escaped the Malthusian trap. It is only by exploring the causes and conse-
quences of this shift that it is possible to contextualise onstage representa-
tions of hunger and appetite in the contemporary theatre.

   In the first instance, increasing agricultural productivity and the result-
ant elimination of demographic crisis were predicated on technological
development in the agrarian sector. Historians have differed extensively on
the degree to which changes in agricultural production in the period might
be termed 'revolutionary'.[5] But there can be little doubt that the period was
defined by a sudden and pronounced interest in putting land to more
efficient use. This involved not only an expansion in the acreage under
cultivation, but also an increased intensity. Keith Wrightson has noted that
there is 'much evidence of increased manuring to raise the fertility of the
land by spreading and ploughing in muck, lime or marl' (Wrightson, 2000,
p. 162). Perhaps more importantly, the period also saw increased use of
convertible husbandry. Whereas before, farmers had in general adopted
a three-year rotation of grain, peas and beans, and fallow, in order to allow
the soil to regain its fertility, convertible husbandry involved keeping
a larger acreage under pasture, allowing it to rest for longer and receive

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1570s, the price of a hypothetical "basket of consumables" constructed to reflect most of the basic
needs of a typical household was more than three times what it had been at the turn of the century'
(Wrightson, 2000, p. 116).

[4] Since the work of Appleby in the late '70s, most historians have acknowledged that the counties of
Cumberland and Westmorland were struck by famine in 1587–8, 1597 and 1623 (cf. Appleby, 1978,
p. 1). However, the fear of famine was far more wide-ranging. Mandrou has noted that one of the
defining features of early modern Europe was 'the obsession with starving to death' (Mandrou, 1975,
p. 26). Braudel argues that famine 'recurred so insistently for centuries on end that it became
incorporated into man's biological regime and built into his daily life' (Braudel, 1992, p. 73). Mennell
claims that 'what could not immediately disappear with general famines was the fear of going hungry
engendered by centuries of experience' (Mennell, 1985, p. 27).

[5] Prior to the 1960s, the historical consensus situated the agricultural revolution in the eighteenth and
nineteenth centuries, and tended to present it as a product of parliamentary enclosure. However,
a range of revisionist historians have emphasised the extent to which productivity increased prior to
this point. Eric Kerridge, for instance, argues that 'the agricultural revolution took place in England
in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', and asserts that the most significant changes in practice
were established by 1673 (Kerridge, 1967, p. 1). Eric Jones, by contrast, stresses a slightly later period,
emphasising the significance of the Commonwealth and Restoration periods (Jones, 1965). More
recently, Robert Allen has identified a range of overlapping revolutionary periods in English
agriculture, but argues for the existence of a 'yeoman's agricultural revolution' in seventeenth-
century England, which was 'marked by a doubling of corn yields' and a consequent rise in
England's national income (Allen, 1992, p. 21).

manure from livestock for greater fertility. The results were dramatic. Wrightson notes that 'evidence from five counties in eastern and southern England suggests that cereal yields rose by around 12 per cent in the second half of the sixteenth century and by a further 4 per cent in the early seventeenth century' (Wrightson, 2000, p. 163). John Walter similarly argues that agrarian innovation 'perhaps doubled gross yields between the early sixteenth and mid seventeenth centuries' (Walter, 1991, p. 80). Without these technological advances, it would have been impossible for England to produce enough food to feed its growing population, and they can therefore be said to exert a profound influence on the lived experience of hunger and appetite.

Nevertheless, the precise reasons for these sudden changes to agriculture have been the subject of wide-ranging debate. For many, technological development should be read simply as a consequence of demographic pressure. The contours of this argument were succinctly summarised, in an early article by H. J. Habakkuk, as a model of history whereby 'the long-term movements in prices, in income distribution, in investment, in real wages and in migration are dominated by changes in the growth of population. Rising population: rising prices, rising agricultural profits, low real incomes for the mass of the population' (Habakkuk, 1958, p. 487). An increase in population generates inflation, which provides an incentive for technological development. Yet as historians including Brenner and Wrightson have noted, similar trends in population growth across Europe manifested very different effects. Brenner, for example, notes that while in France increasing population prompted 'fragmentation of holdings, rising rents and declining productivity . . . the parallel growth of population in England in this same period has been used to explain precisely opposite developments' (Brenner, 1985a, p. 24). It should therefore be acknowledged that 'whatever population growth in England and Wales had in common with most of Europe in terms of its origins, it was being sustained by factors which were more peculiar to the English and Welsh situations' (Wrightson, 2000, p. 160). If population growth was a necessary cause of technological development, it was far from a sufficient one. To understand the material and social basis for the contemporary lived experience of hunger and appetite, it is necessary to move beyond demographic change and scrutinise the specific social characteristics of early modern England.

One significant perspective is provided by the work of Political Marxists such as Robert Brenner and Ellen Meiksins Wood, who emphasise the role played by class struggle as the determining factor in the diverse results of

population change across the European continent. As Brenner has noted, many of the period's agrarian innovations had been in existence for a considerable time.[6] But the feudal model of landownership had acted as a fundamental bar to their wider dissemination. The unfree nature of the peasantry within the feudal system had meant that 'the lord's most obvious mode of increasing income from his lands was not through capital investment and the introduction of new techniques, but through squeezing the peasants, by increasing either money rents or labour services' (Brenner, 1985a, p. 31). Not only this, but 'the surplus-extraction relations of serfdom tended to lead to the exhaustion of peasant production *per se*', since the peasants were left without any incentive to innovate for themselves (Brenner, 1985a, p. 33). They also lacked resources, such as animals for ploughing and as a source of manure, prompting a deterioration of the soil which would eventually lead to a loss of soil quality. In other words, as Brenner has argued, 'the breakthrough from "traditional economy" to relatively self-sustaining economic development was predicated upon the emergence of a specific set of class or social-property relations in the countryside – that is, capitalist class relations' (Brenner, 1985a, p. 30). For Brenner, the English peasantry occupied an ambiguous position in the wake of the class struggles of the late medieval period. Unlike the peasantry of Eastern Europe, they had resisted the re-imposition of serfdom. Unlike those of much of Western Europe, however, they had failed to establish freehold rights to their land. In this context, landlords were able to pursue aggressive processes of enclosure and the consolidation of holdings, marginalising the poorer peasantry in favour of large-scale tenant farmers.[7] These more extensive farms enabled 'the displacement of the traditionally antagonistic relationship in which landlord squeezing undermined tenant initiative, by an emergent landlord/tenant symbiosis which brought mutual cooperation in investment and improvement' (Brenner, 1985a, p. 51). In conjunction with inflation, the increasing capitalisation of agriculture worked to drive poorer farmers off the land. The result was 'the emergence of the "classic" landlord / capitalist tenant / wage-labourer structure which made possible the transformation of agricultural production in England' (Brenner, 1985a, p. 49). Furthermore, these parallel social changes contributed to each other, creating a cycle that fuelled the

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[6] Convertible husbandry, for example, had been 'systematically adopted on Battle Abbey's manor of Marley from the early fourteenth century' (Brenner, 1985a, p. 32).

[7] Wrightson has noted that, between 1600 and 1650, '40 per cent of the manors of Leicestershire and 18 per cent of the land area of Co. Durham were enclosed, while the period 1575 to 1674 saw the enclosure of some 17 per cent of the land in the south-midland counties, the heartland of open-field farming' (Wrightson, 2000, p. 162).

polarisation and marketisation of English society. As previously self-sufficient peasants were driven onto the market, they increased levels of demand for corn, which increased prices, which further increased the incentive for more efficient farming methods. The consequence was the creation of an ever more capitalised form of agricultural production alongside a surplus population which was highly vulnerable to market fluctuations.

This process of agrarian transformation provided the impetus for substantial shifts in the economy, prompting a growth in levels of expansion and consumption, constituting a factor of critical importance for the contemporary understanding of appetite. Greater profits for gentry farmers and increased lower-class reliance upon the market prompted a substantial rise in demand. Before long, 'urban economies were responding to a quickening of internal trade and the growth of rural demand for their products', in what Wrightson has characterised as a 'reciprocal relationship between agricultural development and urban growth' (Wrightson, 2000, pp. 165–6). The effects were dramatic. Wrightson has noted that the country's national income 'more than doubled in real terms between 1566 and 1641' (Wrightson, 2000, p. 181). Contemporaries were well aware that the economy was expanding, with John Hawkins claiming in 1584 that 'the substance of this realm is trebled in value' since Elizabeth's accession (Hawkins, 1888, p. 44). The consequences for overseas trade were no less significant. Brenner stresses the extent to which the 'remarkable secular rise of domestic demand for imports in England' prompted the 'extraordinary long-term growth and continuing high profits' of emerging merchant companies focussed on the Levant and the East Indies (Brenner, 1993, p. 5). Demand for luxury comestibles such as currants, for instance, was such that the Venetian Ambassador reported in 1628 that the English 'consume a greater amount of currants than all the rest of the world', desiring them so much that 'men have been said to hang themselves because they have not enough money to buy them' (Calendar of State Papers, 1916, XXI, p. 553; cited in Brenner, 1993, p. 43). England's hunger was fuelling its rapidly expanding economy. The result was the creation of new and, from the perspective of contemporary observers, frequently troubling appetites.

At the same time, there existed a number of impediments to the further expansion of England's economy. For the Political Marxists, the market is the primary force driving the period's process of class differentiation, so that, as Ellen Meiksins Wood has argued, 'the market dependence of economic actors, was a *cause*, not a result, of proletarianisation' (Wood, 2002, p. 60). Indeed, it is in large part this emphasis on the impersonal

force of the market that has prompted figures such as Chris Harman to condemn their conception of history as 'class struggle without any element of class consciousness' (Harman, 2008, p. 187). Yet, as Henry Heller has argued, 'it is a mistake to assume, as Brenner apparently does, that an already rational and competitive market imposed a strict market rationality on the emerging rural capitalists' (Heller, 2011, p. 95). While it is true that, as Wrightson notes, the very existence of agrarian specialisation and intensification implies 'the existence of larger and more integrated markets for agricultural produce', this process was far from complete at this time (Wrightson, 2000, p. 184). As Jane Whittle has noted, early modern England was defined by 'an economy in which market relations were taken for granted, and in which land was regarded as an investment as well as a livelihood, but it was not market-dependent' (Whittle, 2000, p. 315). On the contrary, 'the initial profitable windfalls of the sixteenth century, reinforced by unprecedented inflationary pressures, cannot be thought of as the way "normal" or established markets based on competition operate, but rather describe a process of market formation' (Heller, 2011, p. 95). In particular, the early modern state worked to restrict the market in a number of key ways. Institutions such as the Star Chamber, High Commission and Court of Wards, as well as practices of purveyance and feudal tenure, constituted a clear barrier to the further development of capitalist relations and marketisation. Issues of hunger and appetite were often central to these conflicts, with the state repeatedly acting to restrict a free market in grain, particularly in times of dearth. As Heller argues, 'until the English Revolution helped to sweep away many of these restrictions, there was nothing approaching a competitive market' (Heller, 2011, p. 95). Late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England can consequently be understood, in orthodox Marxist terms, as defined by a tension between an economic base increasingly dominated by nascent capitalist forces, and a state which, while initially conducive to their development, increasingly operated as a restraint on the further development of these forces.

Naturally, the ability of the population of early modern England to understand these tensions was fundamentally compromised. But as Wrightson has noted, 'if they were only dimly aware of the underlying causes of economic and social change, they were acutely aware of the more pathological symptoms of the process of change' (Wrightson, 1982, p. 157). Hunger and appetite were bound up with the contemporary experience of these 'pathological symptoms'. Most importantly, hunger was intimately related to the growth of what Wrightson has defined as 'structural poverty', or poverty that is:

Derived not so much from individual misfortune or default as from the fact that for a growing proportion of the population periodic hardship was inevitable, for the demand and rates of payment for their labour were such as to mean a diminishing capacity to meet their households' needs. (Wrightson, 2000, p. 197)

Extensive historical, Cultural Materialist and New Historicist work has testified to the severity of the threat which the period's new mass of landless poor was perceived to constitute to the status quo of early modern England, and the wide range of measures which the state adopted to deal with them.[8] Hunger was a defining feature of the lived experience of this section of the population and constituted an issue of central importance for the attempts of the early modern state to control them. The period saw a marked decrease in the quality of the average diet and left many at risk of starvation at times of harvest failure. The representation of lower-class hunger in the early modern theatre is inseparable from these wider issues of order and control. The possibility of violent resistance exerts a defining influence upon even the more ostensibly benign depictions of the hungry poor.

Moreover, if hunger was central to the life of the poor, considerations of appetite played a similarly significant role in changes at the top of society. Numerous critics and historians have emphasised the importance of conspicuous consumption as a fundamental constituent of ruling-class ideology in the period. Socio-economic change exerted a major disruptive force upon these groups, precisely because inflation 'threatened to erode their incomes and undermine their living standards' (Wrightson, 1982, p. 138). The most influential treatment of this pressure is Lawrence Stone's *The Crisis of the Aristocracy,* a text which argues that over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the peerage declined politically, economically and socially, in large part as a result of the pressures which inflation placed upon their traditional patterns of spending. Stone's more general conclusions have been widely criticised, particularly by revisionist

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[8] Seminal work in this respect includes A. L. Beier's *Masterless Men* alongside essays by Paul Brown, Steve Carroll, Stephen Greenblatt and Linda Woodbridge. Beier emphasises the severity of the punishments meted out against the masterless poor, noting that 'a statute of 1572 ordered [children aged 5 to 14] to be stocked and whipped. Those over 14 were to be gaoled, whipped and burnt through the ear; after 1597 children under the age of seven were exempted from prosecution' (Beier, 1985, p. 10). The literary accounts suffer from their emphasis upon subversive forces, with Greenblatt, for example, characterising vagabonds as the 'very types of Elizabethan subversion' (Greenblatt, 1994, p. 30). But their exploration of the manner in which texts embody and comment upon state action, including the 'regular modification and reissuance of the Poor' has productively highlighted the implication of contemporary texts within wider attempts at social control (Carroll, 1996, p. 4).

historians who emphasise continuity rather than rupture. Nevertheless, the underlying significance of rising prices has rarely been dismissed entirely.[9] Even beyond inflation, the changing nature of English agriculture contributed to a wider sense of crisis amongst the aristocracy, for as Corrigan and Sayer have argued, 'the growing commercialisation of landlord/tenant relationships and Tudor state centralization itself had progressively eroded specifically feudal bases of aristocratic power and authority' (Corrigan and Sayer, 1985, p. 74). As I shall demonstrate in Chapter 3, the consumption and distribution of food had always had a crucial role in the maintenance of these traditional, hierarchical structures of control. Appetite assumes a position of privileged visibility in the plays of the period, in large part because it enables the theatre to conceptualise these changes, becoming both a literal and metaphorical means of depicting those sections of the elite increasingly compromised by consumption.

For all that these changes caused suffering for some, for others they presented an opportunity. As Sir Francis Bacon noted, 'The improvement of the ground is the most natural obtaining of riches; . . . but it is slow; and yet, where men of great wealth do stoop to husbandry, it multiplieth riches exceedingly' (Bacon, 1985, p. 166). At the same time, the question of precisely who benefited from the increasing capitalisation of agriculture is an open one. For Brenner, the active agent in the process was undoubtedly the landowner class. As such, his work can be situated within a more general tendency within recent Marxist thought to marginalise the rise of a distinct bourgeois class, and to assert in its place what James Holstun describes as 'the internal transformation of the English ruling class' (Holstun, 2000, p. 121). According to this view, the period's process of polarisation is part of 'the reality of bourgeois revolution in England – a story of centuries-long embourgeoisement of England's dominant classes (and proletarianisation of the ruled, the two being inseparable) complexly facilitated by the protracted making of a nation state' (Corrigan and Sayer,

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[9] D. C. Coleman, for instance, disputed the economic basis of Stone's claims (Coleman, 1966). Barry Coward expanded upon this critique to dispute the extent to which the aristocracy was defined by a crisis 'of its political and social power and influence' (Coward, 1982, p. 54). Arguably, however, the tendency of more recent historians to eschew Stone's conclusions stems not so much from his specific argument, but rather from a wider acceptance of revisionist beliefs about 'the impossibility of ever *demonstrating* a strong enough link between society and politics to convince the sceptical reader' (Burgess, 1990, p. 611). In fact, as Karin Coddon has argued, although it is unwise to assert a 'direct causality between aristocratic excesses and the development of a revolutionary movement', it is nevertheless clear that 'the nobility's profligate expenditures and conspicuous consumption served to weaken the aristocracy both economically and in terms of cultural perception' (Coddon, 1993, p. 312). Likewise, J. A. Sharpe acknowledges that 'the period 1580–1620 does seem to have been one of financial difficulties for the peerage as a group' (Sharpe, 1997, p. 161).

1985, p. 11). To a degree, this perspective is supported by contemporary sources. Faced with rising costs, and in the absence of traditional routes to preferment, it was natural that many amongst the gentry and nobility turned increasingly to the profits of the newly capitalised agriculture. Sir Thomas Wilson, for example, noted in 1600 that gentlemen who previously were 'wont to addict themselves to the wars' now increasingly focussed on husbandry, and 'know as well how to improve their lands . . . as the farmer or countryman, so that they take their farms into their hands as the leases expire, and either till themselves or else let them out to those who will give most' (Wilson, 1936, p. 18). At the same time, it is surely questionable to what extent processes of innovation and the capitalisation of agriculture were led by this group. Marx himself noted that the model of property of large-scale English landowners in the period was 'in perfect harmony' with the bourgeoisie, and was in fact 'not feudal but bourgeois property' (Marx and Engels, 1975–2004, X, p. 254). But he also stressed the agency of tenant farmers, who, as a consequence of both inflation and the prevalence of long-term copyhold leases, 'grew rich at the expense both of their labourers and their landlords' (Marx and Engels, 1975–2004, XXXV, pp. 732–3). More recently, Terrence Byers has emphasised the importance of processes of differentiation amongst the peasant class, arguing that wealthy tenant farmers were not 'passive recipients' of change, but rather 'active agents in the process of transformation' (Byres, 2006, p. 27). Indeed, as Heller notes, it is significant in this respect that 'agricultural capitalism developed in areas where lordship was weak and peasant property rights were strong' (Heller, 2011, p. 122). The formation of an English bourgeoisie can consequently be read as a twin process of *embourgeoisement*, encompassing not only the elite but also the middling sort. In the literature of the period, patterns of consumption are bound up with this process of transformation. Appetite recurs as a means to encapsulate not only elite excess, but also the unrestrained expansive capacities of an emergent capitalist class, which appeared ready to swallow up what remained of the poor's property and rights.

The significance of socio-economic change for representations of hunger and appetite in the theatre is therefore multivalent. In the first instance, the way these drives are understood is contingent on how the food was produced, distributed and consumed. The types of food available, and the specific ranks and classes of people who were able to consume them, were governed by the basic processes of a society in change. But the role of this shift in the representation of hunger and appetite also extends beyond this. For hunger and appetite emerge with a stark clarity in this period as both

driving forces and symptoms of these underlying changes. Representations of these two drives constitute a central means through which the theatre conceptualised the widespread consequences of more general shifts in the socio-economic structure of early modern England. They play a fundamental role in the articulation of change and continuity in areas as diverse as service, hospitality, sexuality, empire and revolt. For this reason, the two drives assume a privileged ideological position. Ideology is conceived by István Mészáros, following Marx, as 'the imperative to become *practically conscious* of the fundamentals of social conflict – from the mutually exclusive *standpoint*s of the hegemonic alternatives that face one another in the given social order – for the purpose of *fighting it out*' (Mészáros, 1989, p. 11). It is precisely this element of practical consciousness which is inextricably bound up with the representation of hunger and appetite on the early modern stage. To represent hunger and appetite is almost invariably to discuss the forces of social change which produced them. Attention to the ways in which these drives were depicted is therefore invaluable for an understanding of the period's politics.

The Humoral Body

The early modern period was defined by what Ken Albala has described as an 'immense outpouring of dietary literature' (Albala, 2002, p. 1). The ideas of humoral theory permeated contemporary conceptions of the body and its drives, providing, as Michael Schoenfeldt has argued, 'a near-poetic vocabulary of corporeal experience', which contributed to 'a particularly physiological mode of self-fashioning' (Schoenfeldt, 1999, pp. 3, 12). In the first instance, it is therefore necessary to relate the depiction of hunger and appetite to contemporary ideas regarding consumption and the body. As Albala has noted, 'all dietary literature in this period depended on a common theoretical framework based on the work of Galen' (Albala, 2002, p. 5). It was argued that the body consisted of four humours: blood, which was hot and wet; phlegm, which was cold and wet; yellow bile, which was hot and dry; and black bile, which was cold and dry. An imbalance of these fluids was believed to affect both temperament and health, so that an excess of black bile might cause melancholia, while an excess of yellow bile could lead to aggression. The characteristics of hot, cold, wet and dry were believed to correspond to the properties of specific foods, so that diet constituted one of the most significant means by which the humoral balance was regulated. Black pepper, for instance, promoted yellow bile, while cold and moist foods like lettuce encouraged phlegm (cf. Albala, 2002, pp. 11, 13). Central to this

model was the belief that, as Fitzpatrick has noted, 'careful consumption might correct moral as well as physical shortcomings' (Fitzpatrick, 2007, p. 3). Cogan, for example, argued that 'meates and drinkes doe alter our bodies, and either temper them or distemper them greatly' (Cogan, 1636, p. vi). The theory, as Michael Schoenfeldt claims, possessed 'a remarkable capacity to relate the body to its environment' (Schoenfeldt, 1999, p. 3). By contrast with the post-Cartesian assumptions which dominate modern thought about the body, the population of early modern England was accustomed to thinking in terms of the interrelationship of body, mind and the surrounding world.

These theories also dominated contemporary understanding of hunger and appetite. As Albala has observed, 'The first stage of the entire [eating] process was thought to be the attainment of a sufficient appetite.' But the precise relationship between hunger and appetite was a matter of some scrutiny (Albala, 2002, p. 54). An early translation of the seminal dietary the *Regimen Sanitatis Salerni*, for example, distinguishes between 'very hunger' and 'feigned hunger', arguing that the former 'is whan a man nedeth meate: But fayned hunger is an appetite to haue meate thoughe the bodye hath no nede therof' (de Mediolano, 1528, sig. D2ᵛ). Humoral balance was central to determining the existence of these necessary or unnecessary desires for food, although the precise nature of these effects was a matter for debate. Thomas Elyot declares that 'the cholerike stomake, doth not desyre so moch as he may digeste, the melancholye stomake may not digeste so moche as he desyreth: for colde maketh appetyte, but naturall heate concocteth or boyleth' (Elyot, 1539, p. 17). Ruscelli, by contrast, gives advice on how to 'remedie the yexings of the stomacke and vomitings, & losse of appetite, occasioned through cold humors' (Ruscelli, 1569, sig. A4ᵛ). The properties of foods were likewise bound up with the regulation of appetite. A key component of the dietaries' numerous lists of food types is their effects on the appetite. Elyot argued that lettuce 'doth set a hote stomake in a very good temper, & maketh good appetite' (Elyot, 1539, p. 23). The 1607 translation of the *Regimen Sanitatis Salerni* claimed that vinegar 'lessens *sperm*, makes appetite to rise' (de Mediolano, 1607, sig. B4ʳ). In particular, as Albala has noted, 'complex sauces and elaborate presentations were also thought to overstimulate the appetite, provoking it beyond the stomach's natural capacity' (Albala, 2002, p. 55). Although the precise claims made regarding appetite vary substantially, the unifying theme of these texts is the attempt to understand the dissociation between hunger and appetite. In this manner, dietary literature raised the possibility of unnatural appetites, which extended beyond the simple requirement of feeding the body.

Of especial significance for an understanding of the politics of the Renaissance stage is the extent to which these ideas intersected with the issue of class. Fitzpatrick notes that 'early modern dietaries make clear the view that food and drink are not mere necessities but also indices of one's position in relation to complex ideas about rank, nationality, and spiritual well-being' (Fitzpatrick, 2007, p. 3). Albala argues that in the early modern period 'the social connotations of food are perhaps the most powerful determinant of dietary preferences' (Albala, 2002, p. 184). In particular, there is a pronounced tendency to associate the working classes with food that is 'difficult to digest' (Fitzpatrick, 2010, p. 22). Brown bread, for example, was considered 'good for labourers' (Cogan, 1636, p. 28), while bacon was believed to be 'good for carters and plowmen, the whiche be ever labouringe in the earth or dunge' (Boorde, 1547, sig. F2^v–F3^r). Thomas Cogan asserts that 'husbandmen and labourers are nothing hurt by eating of Onyons, but rather holpen both in appetite & digestion' (Cogan, 1636, p. 65). Puddings, which as Fitzpatrick has noted were constructed from the 'stomach or one of the entrails of an animal mixed with ingredients to bind it such as suet and then seasoned' (Fitzpatrick, 2010, p. 345), were believed by Philip Moore to be bad for the digestion, but he nevertheless acknowledged that 'labouryng men maye often use them without any great hurt ensuing, by meanes of their great bodily laboure & vehement exercises' (Moore, 1564, sig. C7^v). Albala has argued that these tensions increased as a consequence of England's changing society, so that 'as demographic pressure, economic specialisation and social stratification advanced, dietary prejudices based on class intensified' (Albala, 2002, p. 187). The resulting culinary anxieties were in no small part a consequence of a nutritional theory which assumed 'the literal incorporation of a food's substance and qualities into the consumer' (Albala, 2002, p. 184). Both on and off the stage, these ideas raised the possibility of upwardly and downwardly mobile appetites. A taste for a certain food might imply degeneration on the part of the elite, or aspirational desire on the part of the lower classes.

Contemporary understanding of appetite was also intertwined with the construction of gender. The dietaries argued that male and female bodies were characterised by differing humoral balances, with William Bullein, for example, declaring that 'as menne be hote & drie, so be wemen colde and moiste' (Bullein, 1595, p. 13). This could at times influence dietary choices. Thomas Cogan, discussing rue, declares that 'Because the nature of women is waterish and cold and Rue heateth and drieth, therefore (say they) it stirreth them more to carnall lust, but it diminisheth the nature of men, which is of temperature like unto the aire, that is, hot and moist' (Cogan, 1636, p. 44).

Fruits, widely considered to be bad for the health, were treated with particular anxiety in the case of women's bodies, with William Vaughan urging caution in their consumption 'least their effects appear to our bodily repentance, which in women grow to be the greene sicknesse' (Vaughan, 1612, sig. E4ᵛ). The consumption of food could also be associated with the attempt to attain physical beauty. Bullein comments that certain foods were favoured by those women who 'would fayne be fayre: they eate peper, dried corne and drinke vinegar, with such like baggage, to dry up their bloude' (Bullein, 1595, p. 74). The consequences could be severe, he argued, noting that 'a great number though not all, fal into weakenes, greene sickenes, stinkinge brethes, and oftentimes sodaine death' (Bullein, 1595, p. 74), prompting Albala to argue that it is 'quite possible that he is referring to a form of anorexia in the modern sense' (Albala, 2002, p. 152). Furthermore, the period's more general tendency to elide food and medicine is particularly apparent in the case of women. The dietaries highlight specific foods which were believed to stimulate the production of milk, regulate periods and enable the 'deliuerance' of women 'hauing the child dead within their bodyes', likely a covert reference to supposed abortifacients (Bullein, 1579, sig. B1ᵛ). Appetite, therefore, becomes a means by which the particularity of women's bodies could be categorised and defined by the predominantly male cultural and medical authorities of the period. Yet it also provides a way of imagining transgressive forms of consumption, through which women evaded or confronted the regimens which were imposed upon them.

Furthermore, food constitutes a significant means by which national identity could be defined. Albala notes that 'dietary authors had a strong sense of nationally based stereotypical eating habits and increasingly they warned against strange tastes and customs of neighbouring countries' (Albala, 2002, p. 224). Often, this sense of national identity was rooted in analysis of the climate of a country. Thomas Cogan, for example, began his text *The Haven of Health* by resolving 'first to declare the situation and temperature of this our countrey of England' (Cogan, 1636, p. ix), noting its relatively cold and moist climate, and arguing that 'this is the cause why Englishmen doe eate more, and digest faster than the inhabitants of hotter countries (*videlicet*) the coldnesse of aire enclosing our bodies about' (Cogan, 1636, p. xii). William Bullein argued that:

> Englishmen being born in a temperat region, enclyning to cold, may not without hurt eate raw herbes, rootes, and fruits so plentiful, as many men which be borne far in the South partes of the worlde, which be moste hoate of stomacke. (Bullein, 1579, sig. B2ᵛ)

Analysis of the climate was combined with patriotic insistence on the country's fertility. Cogan links the comparatively large appetites of the English not simply to the climate, but also to the 'plenty which our country yeeldeth' (Cogan, 1636, p. xii). He insists that 'we have as good Wheat in England, both red and white, as may be found in any Countrey in all Europe' (Cogan, 1636, p. 24), while in a similar fashion Bullein declares that 'the goodly fyeldes, and fruitfull groundes of England do bring forth to mans vse, as good Hoppes as groweth in any place of the world' (Bullein, 1579, sig. B6^v). Foreign foods and forms of eating, by contrast, were perceived as a dangerous source of corruption. Cogan gives an account of 'a gentleman who had beene a traveller in forraine countryes, and at his returne, that he might seeme singular, as it were despising the old order of England, would not begin his meale with pottage, but instead of cheese would eate pottage last' (Cogan, 1636, p. xiii). As I shall demonstrate in Chapter 5, these fears were particularly pronounced in the case of colonial expansion.

Humoral theory provides the early modern theatre with a complex range of properties and associations through which to depict hunger and appetite. The two drives are intimately connected to issues of class, gender and nation. While in modern society particular foods undoubtedly retain many of these associations, these tendencies are understood as largely socially constructed. In the early modern period, by contrast, they are seen as inherent properties of the foods themselves. At the same time, the humoral method provides the theatres with an overtly material understanding of the connections between sustenance and temperament. Indeed, at times, food can emerge as a source of vulnerability. Different understandings of the body undoubtedly reinforced perceptions of social difference, but the underlying understanding of the body as porous left open the possibility that the consumption of certain foods might destabilise these categories. As such, humoral theory has the potential to invert the conventional hierarchy of plenty and want, with hunger constituting a state of self-sufficiency, while the indulging of appetite is a source of profound weakness. This complex range of social connotations means that the representation of hunger and appetite can be deployed to conceptualise a complex combination of both similarity and difference. Different members of society might be expected to lead different lives, and to eat different foods in different ways, but they were all believed to operate within the same basic model of consumption. That ambiguous combination lends a profound political resonance to the representation of hunger and appetite.

Religion

Contemporary understandings of hunger and appetite were also defined by religious ideas, with texts ranging from ballads to sermons interrogating the moral stakes of issues of famine, charity and greed. Indeed, the centrality of food to the practice of Christianity, and of religion more generally, has been widely acknowledged. Food, as Jean Soler has noted, is mentioned 'in the very first chapter of the first book' of the Bible (Soler, 1997, p. 56). The consumption of food was central to the fall of man, and in the early modern period, as Albala has noted, gluttony 'was actually the first of the seven deadly sins, thanks to Eve's apple' (Albala, 2011, p. 43). Food was central to a number of the miracles which Jesus performed, and the Eucharist privileged the consumption of bread as the central ritual of Christianity. In the wake of the Reformation, these issues become one of the key sites of tension in a broader conflict between variant forms of Protestantism and Catholicism. Albala, for instance, argues that 'at the grass-roots level, fasting and feasting issues played just as great a role [as theological disputes] in fermenting anticlerical sentiment' (Albala, 2011, p. 42). Within this culinary context, it is possible to discern key ways that religious ideas both drew upon and determined the cultural construction of hunger and appetite in the period.

Without doubt, the key culinary issue of the period was the debate over the Eucharist, or the Lord's Supper. Within Catholicism, the doctrine of transubstantiation had asserted that the bread was literally and miraculously transformed into the body of Christ. Caroline Bynum notes that in the late medieval period, this belief prompted an increasing emphasis upon veneration, with contemporary texts describing various miracles in which consumption of the Eucharist was accompanied by sensory effect, including 'smelling sweet, ringing with music, filling the mouth with honey' (Bynum, 1987, p. 77). Protestantism marked a significant change in this respect. Luther introduced the concept of consubstantiation, whereby the bread was at the same time both Christ's body and bread. And the Calvinists had gone further, asserting the purely metaphorical nature of the rite. The consequences of these debates were complex. The centrality of the Lord's Supper to the practice of the reformed English Church lent a special significance to issues of commensality. Food was not simply a way, but the principal way, that people could be united in a single religious community. Indeed, Protestants criticised the Catholic tendency to prevent Communion for the masses, with John Foxe, for instance, declaring 'Christ took bread and dealt it to his apostles: the Priest because he is an

apostle himself, taketh bread and eateth it every whit alone' (Fox, 1844, II, p. 953). At the same time, the debates surrounding the precise significance of the rite introduced a degree of tension to considerations of hunger and appetite. An excessive emphasis on the latter might imply a potentially idolatrous veneration for the sacrament. But the consistent Protestant focus on the consumption of bread as a symbolic act of remembrance also enabled a relatively experiential emphasis. As Foxe noted, 'Christ gave it to be eaten: the priest giveth it to be worshiped' (Fox, 1844, II, p. 953). Indeed, perhaps the most significant consequence of the Reformation for the understanding of hunger and appetite was that it facilitated scrutiny of how and why food might function symbolically. Huston Diehl notes that 'the sacrament depends on the correspondence between earthly bread and Christ's body, between physical eating and spiritual nourishment' (Diehl, 1997, p. 106). Calvin, for instance, asserted that 'bread and wyne are signes, whiche represent vnto vs the inuisible foode, whiche we receyne of the fleshe and blood of Christ' (Calvin, 1561, IV, p. 119). But he also emphasised the precise symbolic significance of the food, noting that 'bread nourisheth, susteineth, and mainteineth the life of our body: so the body of Christ is the onely meate to quicken & geue lyfe to oure soule' (Calvin, 1561, IV, p. 119). Foxe, meanwhile, memorably declared that 'it feedeth, it tasteth like bread, it looketh like bread, the little silly mouse taketh it for bread, and, to be short, it hath all the properties and tokens of bread: ergo, it is bread' (Fox, 1844, II, p. 954). The repeated debates surrounding the Lord's Supper left early modern England with a marked degree of awareness of the extent to which a simple, readily available foodstuff such as bread could enshrine a complex range of symbolic associations.

A similar emphasis can be discerned in the contemporary representation of Carnival and Lent. As Bynum has noted, for the Christianity of antiquity, 'feast and fast defined the church' (Bynum, 1987, p. 33). In medieval Europe, this pattern had remained visible in the annual cycle of feasts and fast days and was at its most overt in the opposition of Carnival to Lent. In the days prior to Lent, the population engaged in what Albala describes as a 'riotous orgy of indulgence', culminating in a mock battle between personifications of Carnival and Lent, the latter frequently depicted as 'a scrawny woman armed only with a herring, some vegetables and dry bread' (Albala, 2003, p. 195). By the early modern period, these traditions were undoubtedly under threat. The rise of Protestantism introduced a series of restraints on traditional festivities. Albala goes so far as to argue that in Protestant Europe as a whole 'the cycle of feast and fast was definitively broken' (Albala, 2003, p. 202). While this is perhaps an

oversimplification in relation to England, it is undoubtedly the case that the nation's material move beyond the Malthusian trap is mirrored in a gradual ideological shift away from communal patterns of feasts and fasts, towards an emphasis on individual moderation. At the same time, numerous forms of both feasting and fasting persisted in the period, and the battle of Carnival and Lent recurred as a cultural trope, often imbued with overtly political implications. As such, it might be argued that as their specifically religious element became marginalised, the residual traditions of Carnival and Lent increasingly functioned as a means of providing a poetic and experiential vocabulary through which to conceptualise the opposition of hunger and appetite.

Furthermore, attention to the broader deployment of hunger in contemporary theological texts reveals its recurring metaphorical role within early modern religious thought. It constituted a key metaphor for the desire for scriptural knowledge. Bernard Gilpin deploys the comparison of material and spiritual hunger when he warns that God, in punishing a nation, may 'threat[en] hunger, not of breade, but of hearing Gods word' (Gilpin, 1581, p. 62). Thomas Cooper makes use of an extended culinary metaphor, declaring that, in order to feast at the Lord's table in the afterlife, it is necessary to have 'both a desire to eate stirred by a sense and feeling of true repentance, and also an assured faith to receiue and digest this wholesome and comfortable medicine of our soule' (Cooper, 1580, sig. B2 r). In a similar manner, Robert Bolton compares religious knowledge to a sumptuous feast, declaring that here 'the hunger is more importunate and important; the Feast-maker more faithfull and sure of his word; the fare more delicious and ravishing' (Bolton, 1631, p. 411). Likewise, John Donne uses the imagery of appetite and taste as a means to conceive of 'spiritual diet', noting that just as 'every man hath his *Appetite,* and his *tast* disposed to some kind of *meates* rather then others', so too 'man may have a particular love towards such or such a book of Scripture' (Donne, 1649, p. 159). In part, the recurrence of these metaphors might be interpreted as a consequence of the residual significance of practices of fasting, seeming to mimic the logic of chastising the flesh in order to encourage spiritual reflection. The metaphorical invocation of hunger simultaneously relies upon the invocation of the drive, and marginalises its significance. It has the potential to function as a tool of legitimation, asserting that bodily hunger is insignificant, compared to the pressing need for religious satiation. At the same time, however, the relationship between material hunger and spiritual hunger is complex. The demand for one can be read as the demand for the other, and vice versa. Indeed, this is a tension which

appears in the Bible itself, most notably in the conflicting accounts of the Beatitudes in Matthew and Luke. Where in the former Christ states 'Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled' (Matthew 5:6), in the latter he says simply 'Blessed *are ye* that hunger now: for ye shall be filled' (Luke 6:21).[10] It might be argued that the continuing, if restricted, role of fasting within contemporary faith encouraged this tendency to read the metaphorical invocation in a relatively literal manner, with the potential consequence that the poor might be interpreted as obtaining a closer connection to God than the rich. The metaphorical invocation of hunger can never be entirely detached from its material presence within society.

Theological texts not only drew upon contemporary constructions of appetite, they also influenced culinary practice. Gluttony, in particular, was treated with suspicion. The *Book of Homilies* declared that 'surfetting and drunkennesse bites by the belly, and causeth continual gnawing in the stomacke' (Church of England, 1571, p. 208). Humoral theory was deployed to assert that 'he that eateth and drynketh vnmeasurablye, kyndleth ofte tymes suche an vnnaturall heate in his bodye, that his appetite is prouoked thereby to desire more than it should' (Church of England, 1571, p. 206). Appetite could be created not simply by hunger, but also by excess. Indeed, one of the most significant images of appetite within both the theatre and the wider culture of the period is this notion of exponential increase, of appetite as a drive which cannot be satisfied. This element of uncontrolled consumption could rapidly be transferred to other forms of desire, prompting a turn towards 'whoredome and lewdenesse of heart, with daungers vnspeakable' (Church of England, 1571, p. 208). Moreover, excessive appetite could be identified as the cause of hunger in others, since consumption might prompt indifference to the plight of the poor. The 'Homily Against Gluttony and Drunkenness' declares 'Had not the riche glutton ben so greedely geuen to the pamperyng of his belly, he woulde neuer haue ben so vnmercifull to the poore Lazarus, neyther had he felt the tormentes of the vnquenchable fire' (Church of England, 1571, p. 204). It even ascribes the fall of Sodom and Gomorrah to the like indifference, declaring 'was it not their proud banquetting and continual idlenes, whiche caused them to be so lewde of lyfe, and so vnmercifull towardes the poore?' (Church of England, 1571, p. 204). Appetite thus renews itself by ensuring the continuing hunger of the excluded. It

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[10] Quotes from the Bible are to the King James version throughout (Carroll and Prickett, 1997), except where otherwise stated.

constitutes the fundamental Renaissance image of consumption in the face of need. As such, it constitutes a motif of profound political significance.

Nevertheless, self-inflicted hunger was also treated with a marked degree of unease. As Fitzpatrick has argued, 'excessive fasting was associated with the monastic life and was by some considered as indulgent as gluttony' (Fitzpatrick, 2007, p. 3). The 'Homily Against Gluttony and Drunkenness', for example, endorses 'abstinence and fasting', but does so in the context of an endorsement of 'sobrietie and moderate dyet' (Church of England, 1571, p. 212). The 'Homily of Good Works' notes Christ's condemnation of fasting by the Pharisees, who 'put a religion in theyr doyngs and ascribed holynesse to the outwarde worke wrought, not regardyng to what ende fastyng is ordayned' (Church of England, 1571, p. 177). Fish days were imposed by the government primarily for economic reasons and because a large fishing industry was believed to strengthen England's navy. They appear to have been particularly unpopular. Edward Jeninges, in a pamphlet on the fishing industry, comments that many declared them to be 'made and used in the time of Papistrie, and by ancient authoritie of the Pope, who we should not in anything imitate, but rather in all thinges by contrarie', although he himself asserted the potential economic benefits of secular fish days (Jeninges, 1590, sig. D3ʳ). The same opposition may underlie Kent's claim, in *King Lear*, that he will 'eat no fish' (I.iv.17), which as Gordon Williams has noted implies a resolve to 'avoid the ways of Roman Catholics' (Williams, 1994, p. 126). Throughout the period, religious texts tend to advocate moderation, stressing the need to avoid either the excessive indulgence of appetite, or a papist cultivation of hunger.

Hunger produced by famine and dearth is scarcely less troublesome in the eyes of many contemporary authorities. Here, hunger is inscribed within a providential discourse which operates across a wide range of sermons, pamphlets and providential tales. These texts ostensibly identified sinful behaviour as the cause of famine. Yet as Ayesha Mukherjee has noted, the purely religious explanation invariably intersected with 'social, political and literary arguments about the organization of resources' (Mukherjee, 2014, p. 29). A key example is the work of William Gouge, a puritan preacher and fellow of Cambridge University. Famine, for Gouge, is 'a judgement', one of 'three sharp mortall arrowes of the Lord which he useth to shoot as judgements against children of men' (Gouge, 1631, pp. 133, 134). Yet it is a punishment sent to afflict not individuals, but 'the wickednesse of a sinfull nation' (Gouge, 1631, p. 149). Consideration of sin consequently entails consideration of the state of the nation. Certainly, Gouge is at pains to make clear that the fault need not lie with the

authorities, since even 'The best Governours have many times most impious subjects under them' (Gouge, 1631, p. 147). But his recurring concern with the need for 'Moderation in diet', 'fasts' and care for 'the poore, the maimed, the lame, and the blind' implies a desire to redress the symptoms of socio-economic change in early modern society (Gouge, 1631, p. 142). The political dimension to these providential ideas intersected with the rise of apocalyptic thought within radical Protestantism. As Alexandra Walsham has noted, 'The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke . . . listed false prophets, wars, earthquakes, famine, pestilence, and empyreal sights among the forerunners of Christ's Second Coming', and the regular outbreaks of famine and dearth in this period came to be read as signs of the coming apocalypse by sections of the Protestant community (Walsham, 1999, p. 169). Once again, this had a profound political as well as religious dimension. Walsham demonstrates that 'Daniel and Revelation, along with the apocryphal book of 2 Esdras, insisted that occult phenomena would prefigure the overthrow of the present earthly order, the annihilation of Antichrist, and the vindication of the elect' (Walsham, 1999, p. 170). Indeed, it was precisely in the service of overthrowing the earthly ruling order that apocalyptic ideas would come to be used during the English Civil War and subsequent revolution. Religious ideas produce a tendency for the outbreak of famine to prompt questioning of social changes. The sheer breadth of famine's effects lends a political dimension to its association with sin.

This emphasis upon the social dimension to hunger and appetite is particularly pronounced in the popular literature of the period. Ballads such as 'A Looking Glasse for Corne-hoorders' (1631), and 'A Warning-Piece for Ingroosers of Corne' (1643) consistently place the suffering of famine and dearth in the context of the 'poore being abus'd / by the rich' ('Looking Glasse', 1631). Attention to these texts seems to substantiate the claim of writers such as Engels that, in this period, 'The sentiments of the masses, fed exclusively on religion, had to have their own interests presented to them in a religious guise in order to create a great turbulence' (Marx and Engels, 1975–2004, XXVI, p. 395). Claims that 'God will not let these long / alone, that doe his wrong, / Though ne'r so rich and strong / that are agressors' articulate a message of social and political change through a medium that is both popular and religious in nature ('Looking Glasse', 1631). Certainly, the message of these texts appears to endorse passivity, since God will avenge the crimes of the poor. But, as Alexandra Walsham has noted, 'the timing of such ephemera deserves particular scrutiny: many coincide with moments of

agrarian crisis and riot like the Midland Revolt' (Walsham, 1999, p. 107). These texts served to turn the scrutiny of vice typical of periods of famine away from the population as a whole and focus it instead on the actions of the rich. This was of particular significance in times of dearth and famine.

Religious difference exercised a central influence over contemporary constructions of hunger and appetite. At this time of profound theological conflict, both within and beyond the Church of England, food was a crucial issue. In the first instance, this was a period in which debates surrounding the Eucharist ensured that food emerged much more visibly as a sign and symbol. Residual traditions of Carnival and Lent provided a repertoire of images through which to personify the basic drives of hunger and appetite. And this tendency was accentuated as English society moved from the temporal experience of want to a more overtly class-based inequality. Indeed, the overt emphasis upon moderation to be discerned in most contemporary religious texts might be understood as manifesting an underlying recognition of the need to reconcile the constituent elements of an increasingly polarised society. Likewise, the focus of so many sermons on the need to satisfy the population's spiritual hunger testifies both to the absolute significance of the hunger drive within early modern society, and to an anxious wish to depreciate the significance of such issues, in a period of widespread want. At the same time, if religion provided a means of legitimation, or model of reconciliation, it also functioned as one of the key means through which oppositional class interests could be expressed. Puritan attacks upon the sinfulness of a nation retained the potential to function as a critique of its government. And popular ballads reveal a repeated tendency to imagine the providential application of God's wrath to the rich and powerful. Like the theatre, religious debate both manifested emergent contradictions within early modern society and provided one of the key spheres within which the resulting conflicts could take place.

Staging Hunger and Appetite

On the Renaissance stage, the representation of hunger and appetite was determined not simply by how these drives were constructed in society, but also by the specific characteristics of the contemporary cultural field, as it was manifested in the various institutions of the theatre. Playing companies were accountable both to upper-class patrons and to the interests and desires of their audiences. The former had been made necessary by the 1572 Act against Vagabonds, which as Janette Dillon has noted 'made it mandatory for players

to be attached to a noble patron', without which 'they were liable to be treated as vagrants and subject to the rigours of punishment routinely meted out to masterless men' (Dillon, 2000, pp. 1–2). Recent research on theatre history has emphasised the extent to which patrons could deploy their connections with playing companies for political capital and the dissemination of specific ideological material.[11] However, ordinary ticket sales represented a significant source of profits for the playing companies. Although critics have disputed the precise class make-up of early modern audiences, few would deny that they were in general defined by a pronounced heterogeneity.[12] The cheapest tickets in the public theatre cost one penny, approximately a tenth of an average day's wages in the period (Oates and Baumol, 1972, p. 152). Critical and historical work on the early modern theatres has increasingly acknowledged the diverse effects which this element of commercial reliance could have on both the content of the plays produced and a particular playing company's choice of repertoire.[13] Throughout this book, I consider the theatres as superstructural

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[11] The Queen's Men, for instance, as Sally-Beth Maclean has noted, made annual tours of England in order to perform 'plays informed by moderate Protestant ideology in the service of the Crown's interests during an unstable political era' (Maclean, 2009, p. 41). Roslyn Knutson, drawing on evidence from Record of Early English Drama (REED), argues that touring players were 'particularly welcome when their shows offered political advantage to the local VIPs such as looking good to the company's patrons' (Knutson, 2009, p. 65). The theatre could also be deployed for more oppositional ends, such as when the Essex faction commissioned a performance of a play, probably by Shakespeare, which depicted the fall of Richard II, as a means to inspire support for their own unsuccessful uprising (Knutson, 2009, p. 61).

[12] Early controversy regarding the class composition of the early modern audience centred on the work of Alfred Harbage and Ann Jenalie Cook. The former argued for an audience composed primarily of artisans, while the latter emphasised the comparatively privileged nature of much of the contemporary audience, even in the public playhouses. Gurr tends to reject both approaches, arguing that 'citizens were the staple, at least of amphitheatre audiences' (Gurr, 1987, p. 64). More recent research has built upon Gurr's insights. Levin, for example, claims that 'among those paying guests in the audiences there were many women', and argues that as a result they may well have been regarded by authors and playing companies as 'a constituency whose interests and feelings should be considered' (Levin, 1989, p. 165). Whitney draws on evidence from the commentary of early spectators and readers of Renaissance plays to assert the multifaceted nature of audience response, focussing in particular on the notoriety of characters such as Tamburlaine and Falstaff (cf. Whitney, 2006).

[13] As regards repertoire, Knutson, for instance, notes that 'in addition to acquiring multi-part plays, the Admiral's Men often marketed these serials by scheduling them in tandem', and hypothesises that a similar strategy may have been adopted in the performance of Shakespeare's first tetralogy (Knutson, 2009, p. 68). In terms of content, Cartelli sees the drive towards the fulfilment of the audience's subversive fantasies as being in tension with the structural boundaries enacted by the plots of the period, and claims that this prompts the creation of a 'theatrical economy of engagement and resistance', which is 'coordinated (though not finally controlled) by the choices the artist makes in the disposition of his fantasy material' (Cartelli, 1991, p. 27). Fitter argues that the complex class basis of the audience contributes to the generation of 'concealed ideological flexibility', with the result that 'the plays' stagecraft secrets harboured dissident subtextual dimensions that were readily triggered in the conditions specific to the public playhouse, with its distinctive horizons of expectation' (Fitter, 2012, p. 36).

phenomena, which act 'as a support to the exploitative or oppressive nature of social relations' (Eagleton, 1989, p. 174). But it is also necessary to acknowledge the extent to which the theatres constitute sites of struggle, with plays produced by the desires of their diverse audiences and the restrictions enforced by the early modern authorities. Hunger and appetite are not merely exterior to these issues but intertwined with them. The sale of food, the practicalities of staging and the role played by the lived experience of hunger and appetite for both actors and audience constitute factors which exert determining influences upon the representation of these drives in the theatre, in a manner which embodies the wider social and commercial forces operating on the London theatre scene. Attention to hunger and appetite provides the definitive instance of how the theatre 'responded to the market, even as it sprang from it' (Bruster, 1992, p. xi).

Indeed, the representation of hunger and appetite furnished a key means by which the theatres reflected upon these competing imperatives. This is evident in the recurrent tendency for prologues and epilogues to figure the act of watching a play as akin to the consumption of food. Farah Karim-Cooper has argued that this tendency is particularly characteristic of Ben Jonson's work, but similar examples can be found across the gamut of early modern theatre, from early work by Lyly, to Jacobean and Caroline dramas by John Fletcher and Philip Massinger (cf. Karim-Cooper, 2013). In Lyly's *Sappho and Phao*, for example, the prologue to the court provides a means of negotiating the unsettling necessity of appealing to the tastes of both the court and the first Blackfriars theatre. It expresses the hope that the Queen may 'resemble the princely eagle who, fearing to surfeit on spices, / stoopeth to bite on wormwood' (Pro. 6–7). Beyond the standard, self-deprecating tone characteristic of the prologue form, the image betrays anxiety at the notion that dramatic offerings might be served up to both the monarch and the comparatively less privileged attendees of the Blackfriars. In a similar manner, Ben Jonson's *Epicene* (1609–10) opens with the claim that 'Our wishes, like to those make public feasts, / Are not to please the cook's taste, but the guests' (Pro. 8–9). The image distances the playwright from the work produced, embodying Jonson's more general anxiety at his dependency upon the dramatic appetites of the public. The imagery of hunger and appetite becomes a characteristic strategy of the Renaissance prologue, a means to stress the particularity of taste and the playing company's purported distrust of excessive luxury, as well as delivering self-deprecating acknowledgements of the humble nature of their own dramatic fare. Above all, these prologues highlight the opposed imperatives of the theatre itself. Although they ostensibly compare these plays to either

delicacies or rough fare offered up to a courtly patron, the recurring emphasis on the theatre as feast announces its nature as a product for mass consumption.

Furthermore, hunger and appetite were connected with the competing imperatives of the theatre at a material as well as a metaphorical level. Eating 'proved a vital part of the theatre-going experience', with playgoers at both the public and private theatres enjoying 'ample opportunity to purchase food during performances' (Nunn, 2013, p. 101). The evidence suggests that selling food was considered a lucrative business. The grocer John Cholmley paid Philip Henslowe £102 a year for the right to sell food and drink at the Rose Theatre (Nunn, 2013, p. 101–2). Thomas Platter, a Swiss traveller who reported on a 1599 performance at the Curtain, noted that 'during the performance food and drink are carried round the audience, so that for what one cares to pay one may also have refreshment' (Platter, 1937, p. 166). The distribution of these foodstuffs raises issues of gender, for as Natasha Korda has argued, their sale in London 'was predominantly performed by market women' (Korda, 2011, p. 146). Excavations of the Rose Theatre revealed the presence of 'hazelnut shells, walnut shells, plumstones, figs, cherrystones, grape pips, remnants of apples and pears, elderberry seeds, plus seeds of blackberry, raspberry and sloeberry, along with remnants of rye, oat and wheat bread and marine and freshwater oyster shells' (Gurr, 2009, p. 161). Of the 138 pottery utensils unearthed at the Rose dating from the period 1587–92, 40 per cent were for cooking or serving food, while for the period 1592–1603 the figure is 35 per cent (Bowsher and Miller, 2009, p. 147). In the case of touring companies, the tendency to perform in inn-yards meant that an even wider selection of food might be available, since they sold 'a strikingly aromatic mixture of buns, cakes, and bread (which were often served toasted and steeped in ale), bacon, all sorts of salt meat, pottage, and roast meat' (Templeman, 2013, p. 82). The preponderance of fruit in the public theatres is significant, since as Albala has demonstrated, contemporary dietaries evince 'a fear of fruits bordering on the pathological' (Albala, 2002, p. 8). Elyot, for example, declares that 'all fruites generally are noyfulle to man, and do ingender ylle humours, and be oftetymes the cause of putrified feuers, yf they be moche and contynually eaten' (Elyot, 1539, p. 19). These foods may consequently have been the object of an illicit attraction, a contemporary equivalent, perhaps, of the modern cinema's popcorn and carbonated drinks. The sale of food marked the early modern playing space to no less an extent than did the sale of the tickets. The theatre's ability to satisfy, for a price, the appetites of its audiences constituted a visible indication of its implication within a market economy.

It can even be argued that the theatre's emphasis on the sale of food exerted a defining influence on the representation of appetite within the plays. Hilary Nunn claims that the theatre, particularly in the case of comedy, actively seeks to awake the appetites of its audience. She demonstrates the extent to which early modern writers believed that 'the mere sight of food … held the power to stimulate a viewer's appetite and provoke gluttonous indulgence' (Nunn, 2013, p. 106). As a consequence, 'watching actors feign hunger, and viewing the plays' tempting presentations of food, sets into motion the visual dynamics understood to cause increased appetite, drawing playgoers to a more immediate, bodily understanding of the struggles unfolding on-stage' (Nunn, 2013, p. 117). Nunn's essay persuasively argues for the interaction of playhouse practice and playtext content, but her tendency to equate on- and offstage foods seems to efface the disruptive potential of encouraging these appetites. Nunn argues that 'The similarities between the foods appearing on- and offstage allowed the plays and audience members to consider, together, profound questions about the nature of hunger, temptation and human desire' (Nunn, 2013, p. 117). Yet it could equally be argued that the luxurious feasts and elaborate banquets of the early modern stage threaten to awake in the audience appetites for foods which they could rarely have encountered. The relationship of individual audience members to the staging of appetite is influenced to a great extent by their material circumstances, in a manner which broadly conforms to the class make-up of an audience.

The issue of class is also of absolute significance in considering the relationship of the audience to hunger. Critics have tended to stress the satiation of dramatic audiences. Michael Dobson, for example, argues that the sheer quantities of food available means that the experience of the audience is liable to be defined by revulsion. He claims that:

> an audience that isn't hungry is liable to be distractingly sickened by the spectacle of eating. In practice, on-stage feasts exclude and repel spectators; they are meals which aren't appropriate to us, marking the action of the scenes in which they occur both as elsewhere and physically troubling[.] (Dobson, 2009, p. 64)

In a similar manner, Angel-Perez and Poulain highlight the 'well-fed' nature of the theatre audience, but introduce a moral dimension, noting that the opposition of satiated spectator to onstage hunger situates the former in the position of an 'uncomfortable voyeur' (Angel-Perez and Poulain, 2008, p. ix). However, the satiated nature of the early modern

audience is surely far from a foregone conclusion. The intersection of hunger and appetite in the audience is governed in the first instance by the temporal dimension to performance. Dobson argues that food is 'bound up with our perception of passing time', and emphasises the probability that performances in the public theatres would have 'taken place in the remaining daylight after a mid-day meal at a Southwark ordinary' (Dobson, 2009, p. 62). Yet the consequence of this is surely that the audience's experience may well have been defined by a progressive increase in hunger as the play was performed. Furthermore, while the privileged elite of the rear sections of the public theatres may well have experienced a sense of satiation which distanced them from the plight of the onstage hungry, the situation of the groundlings was necessarily more complex. If they did not directly experience hunger in the moment of performance, there is no guarantee that they did not experience it as a relatively frequent occurrence in their day-to-day lives.

Similar factors govern the staging of hunger and appetite. As Pascale Drouet has argued, dramatising hunger tends to raise the problem of representation, since 'hunger can only be successfully staged if the social field and the theatrical field interact, i.e. the discourse of experiencing hunger must be validated by the actor's thin and weakened body' (Drouet, 2008, p. 3). Although this argument tends to ignore the wider representational strategies of the early modern theatre, there is evidence to suggest that certain actors within the playing companies were renowned for their thin physique and that they specialised in the performance of hungry characters. Fitzpatrick notes that 'it seems that a single actor in the Chamberlain's/King's men took the role of the "thin man" in Shakespeare's plays, which suggests dramatic exploitation of a recognizable stereotype' (Fitzpatrick, 2007, p. 6). Baldwin Maxwell has similarly argued that during the later period of the company's existence, the actor John Shanke was given the task of playing the character of the 'hungry knave' in plays by John Fletcher (cf. Maxwell, 1926). If hunger is 'mere lack', the practicalities of drama ensure that its absence is frequently an embodied one. Furthermore, this has potential consequences for how hunger is represented. The very fact that a single actor might specialise in the performance of hungry characters tends to detach the depiction of hunger from lived experience, constituting the drive as a characteristic, rather than a temporary state. At times, therefore, the theatre has the potential to essentialise the problem of hunger, figuring it as an inherent characteristic, rather than a specific configuration of social or physical forces.

On the other hand, actors might experience hunger themselves. As Richard Helgerson has noted, there was 'a strong popular element in

both the play's production and reception. Its author was a commoner, its actors were commoners, the greater part of its audience were commoners' (Helgerson, 1992, p. 196). As such, it is unwise to stress the distance between actors and the hungry poor, without also acknowledging the parallel distance between the majority of the players and the onstage fictional elite that they frequently represented. The average wage for a hireling in Henslowe's companies appears to have been six shillings a week (cf. Oates and Baumol, 1972, p. 157). This was broadly equivalent to the average wage in London in the period, and as a consequence left these low-level actors and musicians in much the same situation as other Londoners in a period of rising food prices and periodic outbreaks of dearth. Hunger, indeed, could on occasion be specifically associated with actors. Thomas Rawlins's *The Rebellion*, for example, describes those audience members who 'exercise their dexterity, in throwing of rotten apples whilst my stout Actor pockets, and then eats up the injury' (Rawlins, 1640, sig. C1ʳ). The same was true of many playwrights; for example, Thomas Dekker frequently faced bankruptcy and spent large amounts of time in debtors' prisons. Dekker's writings on his own incarceration dwell heavily on the issue of food (Dekker, 1620). It might be argued that the process of ventriloquism applies as much to the representation of a satiated elite as it does to hungry characters.

Moreover, hunger and appetite are also portrayed by means of juxtaposition, in ways which have the potential to stress the social dimension to these drives. In the first instance, the staging of both hunger and appetite is, unsurprisingly, intimately connected with the representation of food. Evidence for the staging of food is, as with many stage properties, relatively sparse.[14] But research by Chris Meads has exposed the extent to which food was represented through a mixture of actual and replica comestibles. Stage directions, for example, are replete with references to trenchers, plates and covered dishes, prompting Meads to argue that 'given the visual splendour of the costuming in Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline theatre and the many references to table furniture, it seems safe to assume that sundry items were present on the table itself' (Meads, 2001, p. 47). Occasional references to the use of stage properties in dramatic texts and manuscripts imply that onstage food could be constructed from a variety of materials.

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[14] As Douglas Bruster has noted, 'where a play can easily contain thirty or more hand properties, a playhouse inventory will list only a fraction of these, an account or illustration of a production fewer still' (Bruster, 2002, p. 71). Even texts such as Henslowe's diary are of limited use, since clothing, as a 'more valuable' resource, 'largely supplants notice of other theatrical objects throughout his diary' (Bruster, 2002, p. 72).

Brome's *The Antipodes*, for instance, contains a description of proper-
ties in a theatre which includes reference to 'Our pasteboard march-
panes, and our wooden pies' (III.294).[15] Meads suggests that bread
would have constituted a useful substitute for many onstage foods,
and also argues that 'when they were available, it is not unreasonable
to assume that actual common fruits were placed upon stage tables
when unequivocally required by the story-line' (Meads, 2001, p. 61).
Beyond the literal representation of onstage food, both hunger and
appetite are conveyed through exteriorisation. The states are portrayed
linguistically, through extensive, hyperbolic lists of food which fre-
quently efface the distinction between appetite and hunger.[16] In both
cases, however, these techniques tend to stress the relational nature of
hunger and appetite, in a manner which implicitly accords with wider
popular tendencies to stress the connections between want and plenty,
hunger and unrestrained appetite.

The early modern theatre can therefore be said to embody many of the
wider tensions surrounding hunger and appetite in the material and
cultural life of early modern England. The theatre is a space of sale and
profit. Yet it is also a contested space, where class difference becomes
manifest and where the significance of this difference can be digested.
The positions of audiences, patrons and playing companies with regard to
their varying lived experiences of hunger and appetite exert a defining
influence on the form and content of these plays. But that influence is, of
necessity, both contested and multivalent, so that individual depictions of
hunger or appetite frequently produce multiple, equally legitimate read-
ings. The plays of the early modern theatre do not simply exemplify these
tensions, but are simultaneously aware of them, and as a consequence the
representation of hunger and appetite is frequently marked by a heightened
reflexivity, providing the playing companies with a means of exploring
their own implication within the processes of social change which they
depict and conceptualise. The theatre must be understood as a space which
creates performances that simultaneously reflect, and reflect upon, the
changes taking place within early modern society, and it is for precisely
this reason that the plays' myriad representations of hunger and appetite
assume a specifically political significance.

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[15] As Meads has noted, the former term 'could be artificial marchpane constructions fabricated in
pasteboard . . . or two separate items of stage property, namely pasteboards and marchpanes' (Meads,
2001, p. 65).
[16] This is particularly characteristic of the recurring character of the 'hungry servant'. See Chapter 2.

Conclusion

Hunger and appetite can therefore be read as drives which permeate every level of early modern society, assuming far greater significance than they retain in the developed countries of the modern world. They are inextricably linked to the processes of socio-economic change which determined England's transition from a feudal to a capitalist mode of production and are bound up with the contradictory nature of that transformation. On the one hand, an increasing population could only be sustained through widespread marketisation and increased levels of productivity. On the other, these very processes were in large part responsible for the systematic hunger and episodic subsistence crises to which the country was subjected. The cost of economic expansion was the creation of a new layer of landless unemployed labourers, subject to the whims of the market and consequently at risk of both long-term malnutrition and starvation. The development of England's productive capabilities was necessary to feed its growing population, but this would have been impossible to achieve without the processes of centralisation and polarisation which accompanied it. Hunger was the cost of these developments, but it was also their driving force, both creating demand which stimulated the production of grain for profit, and acting as a motivating force driving newly landless labourers to work for cash wages. Hunger and appetite are thus both root cause and overt symptom of the period's processes of change, and this imbues them with a profound significance as the subject of ideological struggle.

Moreover, the significance of hunger and appetite extends beyond this, for the two drives constitute the means as well as the matter of political debate. Attention to the ways hunger and appetite were conceived in the period reveals their unique capacity to function as a mechanism for conceptualising social change. The representation of hunger and appetite constitutes a form of political contestation which is enacted within the framework of a series of common assumptions determined by the period's medical and religious beliefs. The two drives therefore provide a significant example of the degree to which belief in society is challenged. They can be understood with reference to the concept of the ideologeme, defined by Fredric Jameson as 'the smallest intelligible unit of the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes' (Jameson, 2002, p. 61). Concern with excess, with want and with self-inflicted hunger recur in the theatre, but the precise inflection which is placed on these ideologemes is hugely diverse. In particular, a fundamental pervasive fear of uncontrolled

appetite dominates the contemporary stage. But it is an appetite which can be ascribed to the poor, to the aspirant middle classes and the aristocratic elite in more or less equal measures. Only by identifying the diverse means by which this central theme is situated in the period's various social discourses is it possible to discern the complexity of the cultural conflict over the basic human drives of hunger and appetite.

By rooting these ideas in the practice of the contemporary playhouse, it becomes possible to acknowledge the degree to which the early modern theatre was implicated in the very dynamics which it sought to represent. The nature of the audience, operating as a heterogeneous collection of classes and genders, serves to recreate the wider struggles of early modern society. The theatre's intervention into the cultural conflict of the period can only be understood by acknowledging the ways in which the playtexts engage with these various audiences, producing multiple and frequently conflicting readings. Yet the existence of this balance of forces is also significant for the extent to which it distinguishes the theatre from other forms of text. It is, therefore, necessary to qualify the traditional Cultural Materialist injunction to treat dramatic works as simply interventions into a generalised textual discourse, to assume 'the historicity of texts' and 'the textuality of history', in favour of an approach that asserts the specificity of the early modern theatre as a space in which wider historical forces were embodied according to a particular dynamic (Montrose, 1989, p. 20). The representation of hunger and appetite in the Renaissance theatre is both qualitatively different from that to be found in other texts of the period, and simultaneously a specific embodiment of the wider forces at work in contemporary society which, as a consequence of the peculiar characteristics of the theatre business, emerge in this context with particular clarity.