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The Reformation of Salad: eating and drinking with immigrants in Elizabethan London

BY JOHN GALLAGHER

Introduction

In 1614, the Italian exile Giacomo Castelvetro finished writing his cookbook. Having been arrested by the Inquisition in Venice, the English ambassador's intervention had saved him, and he had fled back to England, a country he knew well. Castelvetro's Italian-language 'Brief account of the fruits, herbs, and vegetables of Italy' survives in multiple manuscripts, with Castelvetro dedicating the text to Lucy Harington, countess of Bedford, in the hope of securing her patronage. Castelvetro had a curious argument to make in the book's opening pages: he claimed that one unexpected consequence of the continental Reformation had been a significant improvement in the English diet. Over the previous 50 years, England had been introduced to a wonderful variety of 'good things to eat'. What had caused this change? 'The vast influx of so many refugees from the evils and cruelties of the Roman Inquisition', Castelvetro wrote, 'has led to the introduction of delights previously considered inedible, worthless or even poisonous'.[1] Over the manuscript pages which followed, the elderly Italian

[1] Giacomo Castelvetro, *The Fruit, Herbs & Vegetables of Italy (1614)*, trans. Gillian Riley (Totnes: Prospect, 2012), p. 43. On Castelvetro, see K.T. Butler, 'Giacomo Castelvetro 1546-1616', *Italian Studies*, 5:1 (1950), pp. 1-42; Eleanor Rosenberg, 'Giacopo Castelvetro: Italian publisher in Elizabethan London and his patrons', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 2 (1943), pp. 119-48; John Martin, 'Castelvetro, Giacomo (bap. 1546, d. 1616)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/50429 (accessed 1 July 2024); on the 'Brieve racconto', see Gillian Riley's introduction to her translation, and K.T. Butler,

exile mingled biographical reminiscences with recipe ideas, encouraging his English readers to embrace the ingredients and ways of cooking which were common in Italy.

Castelvetro was writing at a time when English interest in Italian foodways was high: there was good money to be made importing olives, watermelons, and wines from Italy and elsewhere on the continent in this period, and the Italian influence could be tasted at the banqueting tables of great lords like the earl of Leicester as well as among less powerful (though still wealthy) gentlemen like Castelvetro's former pupil John North, who left us an Italian-language diary of his London life full of purchases of Italian ingredients.[2] But Castelvetro's manual was much more than an account of rich food for rich people: it was a meditation on the ways that simple ingredients, often fruit and vegetables available in England, could be prepared in thoughtful and delicious ways. It offered new ways with turnips, carrots, onions, and spinach, a recipe for a cabbage salad, and reflections on the Italian tendency to eat more fruit and vegetables than the English or French.[3] Castelvetro encouraged England's market gardeners to follow Italy's lead and improve English eating and agriculture.

'An Italian's message to England in 1614: eat more fruit and vegetables', *Italian Studies*, 2:5 (1938), pp. 1-18.

[2] On English foodways in the early modern period see Joan Thirsk, *Food in early modern England: phases, fads, fashions 1500-1760* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006); Paul S. Lloyd, *Food and identity in England, 1540-1640: eating to impress* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); on John North and Italianate eating, see John Gallagher, 'The Italian London of John North: cultural contact and linguistic encounter in early modern England', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 70 (2017), pp. 88-131.

[3] Castelvetro, *Fruit, Herbs & Vegetables*, pp. 78.

Castelvetro called for an English culinary reformation while reflecting on the Reformation's impact on English food culture. This essay uses evidence of French and Dutch Protestant strangers' eating and drinking in Elizabethan England to ask what food and drink meant to early modern migrants. How did eating and drinking figure in their experiences of migration, and how far can we see a relationship between food and identity for these migrant groups? The question of what migration and mobility meant (and means) for English food culture has often been posed, but this article looks beyond figures like Castelvetro – well-connected, articulate, highly literate – to consider the importance of food and drink to Elizabethan England's more ordinary migrants. This means telling a story that is often less about artichokes and grapes, and more about food that might seem everyday. This attention to 'more mundane food-related activities' is essential if we are to understand what food meant in the context of early modern migration.[4] This is an exploratory essay, which uses edited correspondence and consistory records to argue for the fruitfulness of thinking about eating and drinking as everyday *and* extraordinary experiences for England's sixteenth-century migrants.

Bread and butter: everyday eating among England's strangers

When he wrote a letter from Norwich in 1567, Clais van Wervekin was probably a very recent arrival. The letter, probably written to his wife, was full of hearty encouragements to come and join him in England. Life in Norwich is pleasant, the cost of living is cheap, and

[4] Charlie Taverner, 'Feeding the community: London's immigrants and their food, 1650-1800', *Journal of Social History*, 56:2 (2022), p. 341; on foodways and national identity, see Ken Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 224-31.

‘you’d never believe how friendly the people together are, and also how well-disposed the English are to our nation’. He urged her to come as soon as she could, ‘and depart from that cursed popery’. In preparation for his wife’s departure, van Wervekin had instructions for what to pack, with particular attention to cookware. He encouraged her to bring ‘a dough trough for you don’t find any here; they knead everything in earthenware which is most disgusting’. Along with ‘our tall pots and your cord for hanging linen’, he asked her to purchase ‘two small wooden dishes for making half a pound of butter’, explaining that in Norwich ‘[t]he Netherlanders or Flemings make all their own butter, for here they only use lard’.[5] In many early modern households, in England as well as on the continent, butter and bread were often homemade, and van Wervekin’s complaints suggest that cultural differences could be palpable even when it came to these everyday ingredients. His enumeration of the equipment used for food preparation and storage indicate that differences in the material culture of food could have implications for identity too. Van Wervekin was obviously exaggerating when he said that the English did not use butter, but it was an area of difference which was remarked upon regularly at the time. Butter was commonly associated with the Dutch: terms of abuse included ‘butter-boxes’ and ‘buttermouths’, and in a play like Thomas Dekker’s *The Shoemakers Holiday* (1599), the language of Dutch stereotypes is slippery with

[5] ‘Private Correspondence between Flemish Strangers in England and their families and contacts in Flanders, 1566-1573’, ed. Alastair Duke, https://dutchrevolt.library.universiteitleiden.nl/english/sources/english_sources_janssen-correspondence/, (accessed 12 August 2024); see also Alastair Duke, ‘Eavesdropping on the correspondence between the strangers, chiefly in Norwich, and their families in the Low Countries 1567-70’, *Dutch Crossing*, 38:2 (2014), p. 127.

butter.[6] Chris Joby, reading the regulations for Norwich's Dutch weavers, has highlighted a use for butter beyond the culinary – the 'Book of Orders Concerning Wool and Bayes' of 1582 informed weavers that 'it is not allowed to grease the woof of the wool with oil or other bad grease, but only with butter', suggesting that when the much-prized cloth of the country's 'new draperies' was ready, it might have carried the scent of Dutch butter too.[7]

Among migrants, gifts of food were emotionally resonant, lessening the distance between giver and receiver, or even reaching across confessional boundaries.[8] A letter from Norwich in 1567, this time written by Joos Dateen to his sister and his brother-in-law in Ieper [Ypres], offers a gentle admonition, as he writes, 'I'm surprised that you so forget us that you don't write whether you are fine and well. It seems as if we're not related with one another because I and my wife have a different faith from you'. Dateen and Calleken, his wife, were Calvinist migrants living in Norwich; Maieken and Jan were Catholics still living in the Low Countries. Dateen's reminder that he had not forgotten his relatives had a sting in the tail, as he remarked that 'God shall judge who has the best faith'. Dateen finished with the following words: 'And I'm letting you know that I'm sending two cheeses with Wllfaert Boeteman. It's

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[6] Andrew Fleck, ''Ick verstaw you niet': performing foreign tongues on the early modern English stage', *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*, 20 (2007), pp. 210, 216; see also Marjorie Rubright, *Doppelgänger Dilemmas: Anglo-Dutch relations in early modern English literature and culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), p. 53.

[7] Christopher Joby, 'Early Modern Records in Dutch at the Norfolk Record Office', *Dutch Crossing*, 36:2 (2012), p. 133.

[8] On gifts of food, see Felicity Heal, *The Power of Gifts: Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 35-43; Lloyd, *Food and identity in England*, p. 141.

a small gift but the intention is good. No more at this time than that God may be with you, Amen'.[9] Dairy products seem to have been a relatively common gift sent between exiles – we see Peter Baro sending the physician and minister Guillaume de Laune [William Delaune] 'a jar of the best Suffolk butter' from Cambridge in 1580.[10] Dateen's gift of cheese could be understood as signalling an attempt to heal a rift or to indicate enduring affection in spite of confessional divisions – as Sjoerd Levelt writes, the North Sea in this period was a space 'where a gift of cheeses could serve to remind one of continued bonds in spite of physical distance'.[11] But we might also read Dateen's gift in light of the lines that immediately precede it, where he writes that 'God has granted me that I can earn my living [to pay for] upkeep and clothes, and, the chief thing, the Word of God which is a power for salvation for whoever believes it'. Not only do I have enough money to make my way in the world, he might be saying, I even have enough to buy and send a valuable gift across the sea. As well as a claim to independence and to a successful migration experience, a Calvinist writer might be tempted to see here an earthly indication of his own election – all in a package of cheese.

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[9] Duke, 'Private correspondence'.

[10] *Epistulae et Tractatus cum Reformationis tum Ecclesiae Londino-Batavae Historiam Illustrantes*, ed. J.H. Hessels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1889), pp. 667-75.

[11] Sjoerd Levelt, '"Also, I am sending you two cheeses": Dutch strangers, c.1470–c.1550', *Dutch Crossing*, 45:2 (2021), p. 117. Compare the cheese sent by Victor Kirstelot in 1570: A.E.L. Verheyden, 'Une correspondance inédite adressée par des familles protestantes des Pays-Bas à leurs coreligionnaires d'Angleterre (11 novembre 1569-25 février 1570)', *Bulletin de la commission royale de l'histoire*, 120 (1955), pp. 161-3. I am grateful to Charles Littleton for sharing this reference.

For these migrants, food clearly had emotional meanings, and could be a comfort at times of suffering or dislocation. A gift of butter had sustained the heretic Adrian Hamstedius after his excommunication from the London church – he wrote from Emden to Mayken, the wife of Jacob Cool, asking her to 'greet all of our friends, and especially the woman who gave us the butter'.[12] But feelings could run high around food too: as Charlie Taverner writes, 'While food could mark immigrants apart, it also forged bonds and raised tensions within migrant communities themselves'.[13] In June 1574, the consistory of the Dutch Church in Austin Friars summoned Lieven de Wulf to question him about a fight he had been involved in near Gravesend. De Wulf explained that he had gone walking with some other people nearby, but that when it began to rain, they had taken shelter in a house there, planning just to drink just a pot of beer and then be on their way. One of his companions, a man named Willem, wanted something to eat, and suggested they might have some eggs. Lieven agreed, and offered a suggestion – he wanted the eggs prepared 'in the manner that people call '*Kempensche stuer*''.[14] An early sixteenth-century Dutch cookbook, the *Notabel boecxken van cokeryen*, offered a recipe for eggs called '*Stuer van Uccle*', which elsewhere was called (as it is today) '*Kempense steur*' (Kampen sturgeon) – hard boiled and served with a sauce

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[12] 'Groet ons de vrienden alle, ende byzonder dat vrouke die ons de boter gaf': *Ecclesiae Londino-Batavae Archivum. Tomus Secundus. Epistulae et Tractatus cum Reformationis tum Ecclesiae Londino-Batavae Historiam Illustrantes (1544-1622)*, ed. J.H. Hessels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1889), p. 146.

[13] Taverner, 'Feeding the community', p. 327.

[14] *Acta van het consistorie van de Nederlandse gemeente te Londen 1569-1585*, ed. A.J. Jelsma and O. Boersma ('s-Gravenhage: Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis, 1993), pp. 416-17.

made of butter and mustard.[15] Willem, however, preferred a soft-boiled egg and plucked some of the eggs out of the water to eat before they had cooked to Lieven's taste. Lieven took this personally, and told Willem that if he could not wait until the eggs were ready, that meant that he was no pious man. Willem took this badly, striking him in the chest. Whether the dispute between Lieven and Willem really had its roots in the recipe cannot be known from this source, though it indicates that preparing and eating food together could be a source of tension and disagreement.

For many members of the stranger church congregations, poverty characterised their experience of life in England.[16] In a bilingual dialogue published in Jacques Bellot's *Familiar Dialogues* (1586), a book designed to teach English to newly-arrived French-speakers, one character asks about French refugees 'Is the number of them great, that are come over into this countrey?'. He receives the response 'Very great: and there be many of them whiche doe live very hard, so great is their povertie'.[17] Food – what to eat and how to get it – is a core topic in Bellot's book, reflecting this basic concern of England's French migrants. There are details of everyday London sociability, such as when the characters agree to drink a pint of

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[15] *Een notabel boecxken van cokeryen*, ed. Ria Jansen Sieben and Marleen van der Molen-Willebrands (Amsterdam: De Kan, 1994), p. 61.

[16] Andrew Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant communities in sixteenth-century London* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 200-14; Ole Peter Grell, *Dutch Calvinists in Early Stuart London: the Dutch Church at Austin Friars 1603-1642* (Leiden, 1989), pp. 93-105; Susan Broomhall, 'From France to England: Huguenot charity in London', in *Experiences of Charity, 1250-1650*, ed. Anne M. Scott (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 191-212.

[17] Jacques Bellot, *Familiar Dialogues, for the Instruction of them, that be desirous to learne to speake English* (1586), D8v.

wine before the market, 'At the Byshops head, or at the Cardinals hat'.[18] Following a breakfast of white wine and buttered rolls, Bellot's characters head to market to bargain with a poulterer, while a woman named Alice haggles briefly with a costermonger before buying some apples and putting them in her apron.[19] Later, there is a negotiation with a well-stocked fishmonger, and a butcher who boasts that 'I have the beast meate in this towne and the fatest'. Alongside that butcher's 'side of porke' and 'quarter of vealle', we find more humble ingredients – 'A calfes plucke' (this refers to offal), 'Calfes feete', 'A sheepes head' – perhaps more representative of the kind of diet available to newcomers who had left what wealth or possessions they had behind.[20] The need for thrift in shopping for food touched even more prominent members of the community. Jean Cousin, minister of the French church, found reason to complain about the poor wage he received from the church and the conditions in which it forced him to live. He refused a one-off payment, insisting on a larger

[18] Bellot, *Familiar Dialogues*, B4r; for strangers drinking at the Cardinal's Hat (an inn on Lombard Street), compare John Eliot's reference in another language manual to 'carroussing with the Flemings at the Cardinals hat': John Eliot, *Ortho-Epia Gallica. Eliots Fruits for the French* (London, 1593), p. 26.

[19] Bellot, *Familiar Dialogues*, B8r-B8v.

[20] Bellot, *Familiar Dialogues*, D2r-D3r. The Venetian merchant Alessandro Magno wrote of London that 'it is almost impossible to believe that they could eat so much meat in one city alone': Caroline Barron, Christopher Coleman, and Glaire Gobbi, 'The London journal of Alessandro Magno 1562', *The London Journal*, 9 (1983), p. 143.

regular payment, since the money he received was never enough even though he lived frugally, 'and even contents himself sometimes with just an egg for his dinner'.[21]

What of the relationship between food and religion in these communities? If eating was an activity which was laden with meaning for London's immigrants, so too was the choice not to eat. Fasting was a fraught issue in Reformation Europe, and Christopher Kissane has shown the importance of fast-breaking as a form of Protestant activism or protest in the early Reformation.[22] For some religious refugees, fast-breaking had been a way for them to perform their own rejection of Catholicism while still on the continent. Jehan Desmadry was an exile in England whose support of the Dutch Revolt had caused him to flee his home. When his nine- or ten-year-old son, who had not travelled with his father, was interrogated by the Catholic authorities, he told them that he had seen his father eat eggs and meat on Fridays and in Lent, even when his mother abstained.[23] While Giacomo Castelvetro offered advice on eating well within the constraints of Lent's restrictions, he also mocked Catholic foodways and Catholic beliefs together, writing that dried broad beans boiled and simply seasoned 'are seldom eaten by gentlefolk except on the day that superstitious papists dedicate to their dead, when custom has it that everyone prepares large quantities to give

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[21] '*et mesmes se Contente aucune fois dung oeuf a son diner*' : *Actes du consistoire de l'église française de Threadneedle Street, Londres, vol. I, 1560-1565*, ed. Elsie Johnston (Huguenot Society, Quarto Series (HSQS), 38), p. 117.

[22] Christopher Kissane, *Food, religion and communities in early modern Europe* (London, 2018), pp. 53-75.

[23] Verheyden, 'Une correspondance inédite', pp. 227-8.

away to the poor, in the fond belief that this will relieve the excessive torments of their ancestors, who are allegedly languishing in their imaginary Purgatory'.[24]

But while they commonly scorned Catholic fasting practices, most early modern Protestants engaged in some forms of fasting, and strangers arriving in England found that the question of fasting was a complicated one. As Eleanor Barnett argues, English reformers did not abandon fasting as a Christian practice, but sought to 'desacralize food' and to establish the distinctness of reformed fasting. There were earthly imperatives at work in the English context too: because of the threat posed to England's fishing industry of abandoning Catholic fasting periods and practices wholesale, restrictions on the eating of meat continued to be imposed on the population during the early modern period, with those who wished (or needed) to consume meat in these periods being forced to seek an episcopal licence.[25] Strangers were expected to work within these English constraints. The Dutch church relieved Philippus Garcy of his role as consistory scribe when it became clear that, among other offences, he had given attestations with the seal of the consistory to the bishop of London in order to secure licences to eat meat, when the consistory had never agreed to his doing so.[26] English practices of fasting seem to have been the cause of some tensions: in 1576, the mayor of London wrote to the Dutch consistory reminding them of the need to observe the laws of the realm around fasting, 'Not out of superstition or religion, but for the political utility of the

[24] Castelvetro, *Fruit, Herbs & Vegetables*, pp. 52-3.

[25] Eleanor Barnett, 'Reforming food and eating in Protestant England, c.1560–c.1640', *Historical Journal,* 63:3 (2020), pp. 507-27.

[26] *Acta van het consistorie van de Nederlandse*, p. 348.

kingdom'.[27] At the same time, holding their own fast days (a common practice among European Protestants) allowed the different stranger churches to come together and to reconfirm their closeness to their continental brethren while also responding to more immediate peril, such as in 1573, when all three stranger churches held a fast day 'to pray to the Lord by reason of the unfortunate state of the churches of France and the Netherlands, consternation in this kingdom of England, dearth, plague and others etc'.[28] As Silke Muylaert has shown, these fast days were ways for an exile population to do something about troubles both local and international, and fasting a means by which they could demonstrate their allegiance and solidarity with their brethren on the continent.[29]

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[27] *Ecclesiae Londino-Batavae Archivum. Tomus Secundus. Epistulae et Tractatus cum Reformationis tum Ecclesiae Londino-Batavae Historiam Illustrantes (1544-1622)*, ed. J.H. Hessels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1889), pp. 570-1.

[28] 'om den Heere te bidden ter cause van de jammerlicken staet van de kercken van Vranckrijcke ende Nederlant, consternatie van dese conynckrijcke van Ynghelant, durte, peste ende andere etc': *Acta van het consistorie van de Nederlandse*, p. 385. Compare the French church's record of a fast day in 1575, held to mark the afflictions of Calvinists in France and the Low Countries as well as the plague in London: *Actes du Consistoire de l'Église Française de Threadneedle Street, Londres, vol. II, 1571-1577*, ed. Anne M. Oakley (HSQS 48, 1969), p. 169.

[29] Silke Muylaert, 'Gods kerke voor hare vyanden bewaart': fast and prayer days in the English stranger churches (1560–1603)', in *Anglo-Dutch Connections in the Early Modern World*, ed. Sjoerd Levelt, Esther van Raamsdonk, and Michael D. Rose (Routledge, 2023), pp. 215-24.

Most strangers in early modern London were not distinguished by highly exotic differences in what they ate. But food could still be a marker of difference – what fat you used to cook with, what you kneaded your bread in, or how and for what reasons you chose to abstain from eating. Food was also emotionally meaningful among these migrant communities and their wider networks, showing up in expressions of friendship, reconciliation, and conflict within and beyond the stranger churches. And to be a stranger in years which saw dearth in England was to have one's ordinary eating politicised. The infamous 'Dutch Church libel' of 1593, which was posted on the walls of one of the stranger churches and caused consternation for the Dutch and for their political and religious protectors, accused strangers living in London of being treacherous and thieving, and of consuming the victuals of poor English people – 'with our store continually you feast' – while the English were left to starve. In a reference to the blood libel of which Jews were often accused in early modern Europe (and a nod to Christopher Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*), the libel said of the city's strangers that 'like the Jewes, you eate us up as bread'.[30] This image of cannibalistic strangers who ate up not only England's food store but also the English themselves shows ideas about food and consumption as preoccupations in contemporary conversations about migration.[31] The food of migrants did not have to be

[30] Arthur Freeman, 'Marlowe, Kyd, and the Dutch Church Libel', *English Literary Renaissance*, 3:1 (1973), pp. 44-52; see also Lien Bich Luu, '"Taking the bread out of our mouths": xenophobia in early modern London', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 19:2 (2000), pp. 1-22.

[31] Accusations and violence against migrants relating to dearth in England are central to the play *Sir Thomas More*: see Bernadette Myers, ''Strange roots': rereading food scarcity in *Sir Thomas More*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 72 (2022), pp. 25-51.

especially different for their ways of eating – and the fact that they were eating in England at all – to be seen as controversial.

Discipline and drunkenness: drinking among the stranger communities

Drinking mattered in England's stranger communities. It was an activity which could be imbued with religious and social significance, and which could bring strangers and the English together over a pot of beer. Dutch strangers especially were linked to the brewing trade, with beer providing some strangers a source of employment and even of riches.[32] It could also provide an excuse for illicit or impious behaviour, making it an activity of significant concern to the stranger church consistories who sought to prevent any scandal that might imperil their precarious position and their relative freedoms of assembly and worship.[33] This explains why drinking looms large in the records of London's stranger churches, with members of the congregations admonished for drinking too much, for their behaviour while drunk, or for drinking in bad company or seedy places. These were recurrent concerns: in a colloquy of England's French churches held in Norwich in 1619, the congregations were exhorted to reform the abuses which came of 'too much haunting of taverns and inns, which is repugnant to sobriety and Christian modesty'.[34] In 1564, the French consistory solemnly

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[32] Lien Bich Luu, *Immigrants and the Industries of London* (London and New York, 2005), pp. 259-99; Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance*, p. 230.

[33] On the stranger churches' concern with scandal, see John Gallagher, 'Migrant voices in multilingual London, 1560-1600', forthcoming (2024) in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*.

[34] 'la trop grande hantise des tavernes et cabarets, qui repugnent a la sobrieté et modestie chrétiene': *Les Actes des Colloques des Eglises Françaises et des Synodes des Eglises*

noted that from then on it would be better if their elders, when attending a wedding, could refrain from drinking to each other quite as often as they had done beforehand.[35] This section draws substantially on consistory records – these are disciplinary records which can reasonably be suspected of recording conflict more than coexistence, and offering a skewed picture of everyday life, but they are sources which (sometimes inadvertently) offer us glimpses into a city where communal drinking brought migrants and native Londoners together.[36]

London's migrants were like other early modern Europeans in seeing drunkenness as a failing. These were societies which had high levels of everyday alcohol consumption, and where the beer consumed during day-to-day life was not necessarily much lower in alcohol than its modern equivalent.[37] We get some sense of the everydayness of alcohol consumption from the memoranda books kept by the deacons of the Dutch church in the early sixteenth century, which show a constant stream of expenditure on beer of different kinds (alongside cheese, bread, meat, eggs, and fish including herring, another foodstuff associated with the Dutch at this time). Much of this may have been destined for the poor of the church, and there

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Etrangères refugiées en Angleterre 1581-1654, ed. Adrian Charles Chamier (HSQS 2, 1890), p. 59.

[35] *Actes du consistoire de l'église française de Threadneedle Street,* vol. 1, p. 67.

[36] On drinking and sociabilty in early modern England, see Mark Hailwood, *Alehouses and good fellowship in early modern England* (Suffolk, 2014).

[37] Susan Flavin, Mark Meltonville, Charlie Taverner, Joshua Reid, Stephen Lawrence, Carlos Belloch-Molina, and John Morrissey, 'Understanding early modern beer: an interdisciplinary case-study', *Historical Journal*, 66 (2023), pp. 516-49.

is no hint that beer here is considered anything other than an everyday staple.[38] Contemporary ideas of masculinity, even where they celebrated some consumption of alcohol, still condemned the loss of control that came with overindulgence and intoxication.[39] So, the French consistory remonstrated with Jan de Seran in 1575, accusing him of having been drunk on his arrival at the church door. He responded that his behaviour was not the cause of drunkenness (even though he admitted having had more wine than he normally would), but was the result of his having eaten 'a cured herring which stank'.[40] Another member of the French church, Nicolas Wilpin, was brought before the consistory and admonished for his drunkenness; he claimed that it was not that he had drunk too much, but that he had been hot after finishing work and had become intoxicated by accident.[41] This was a case which ultimately reached the ears of the bishop of London, who acted as superintendent to the

[38] London Metropolitan Archives, CLC/180/MS07400/001, Deacons' memoranda and petty disbursement book (Dutch Church).

[39] Alexandra Shepard, 'Swil-bols and Tos-pots': Drink Culture and Male Bonding in England, c. 1560-1640', in *Love, Friendship and Faith in Europe, 1300-1800*, ed. Laura Gowing, Michael Hunter, and Miri Rubin (Hampshire, 2005), pp. 112-26. On the economic and social changes reflected in shifting ideas around intoxication, see Phil Withington, 'Intoxicants and society in early modern England', *Historical Journal*, 54:3 (2011), pp. 631-57.

[40] 'un heren sore qui puoit': *Actes du consistoire de l'église française de Threadneedle Street,* vol. 2, p. 162.

[41] *Actes du consistoire de l'église française de Threadneedle Street*, vol. 1, p. 6.

stranger churches, since Wilpin in his drunkenness had spoken evil words about the consistory.[42]

Wilpin's case highlights that being drunk in and of itself was often less important than what happened while in that state. Drunkenness was a problem in the stranger church communities because it opened the door to other illicit and immoral acts, from debauchery or violence to heretical talk. In communities which were not without their own internal theological tensions (not to mention their religious differences with their English hosts), alcohol could be the excuse for vocal disagreements. A case in 1561 saw two men, Robert Questel and Robert du Worke, testifying to the consistory that they had been in the house of Glaude or Claude, 'the host of the Ball', to drink a pint of wine, but that after some discussion of the Word of God, Claude had said that there would be no wine for such people, and had taken the pint of wine he brought them and thrown it on the floor. This had escalated into a physical altercation which had seen the constable being called.[43] In the London journal kept by the Venetian merchant Alessandro Magno just a year after that incident, an Italian named Claudio is named as the host of the inn 'della balla', which provided the Catholic Magno and his companions with plentiful food and excellent wine.[44] While a London innkeeper could not have been openly Catholic, regardless of where he came from, there is the possibility that his ire against the two Reformed drinkers – and their choice of conversation topic – could reflect a deeper confessional rupture.

Drinking to excess could be both a cause and a means of defying the stranger churches. In 1571, the French consistory would investigate the injurious words spoken by

[42] *Actes du consistoire de l'église française de Threadneedle Street,* vol. 1, p. 30.

[43] *Actes du consistoire de l'église française de Threadneedle Street,* vol. 1, p. 29.

[44] Barron et al, 'The London journal of Alessandro Magno', p. 141.

Thomas Grin against the church and the minister, uttered among the company ‘at the tavern of the sign of the Old Bailey [*lensigne de Auld Bailly*]’, among a company of drinkers who were boozing together. What made these words and their presence in the tavern doubly controversial was that they took place at the same time as the Lord’s Supper: one of the company, Hely Marabot, confessed that he had drunk some wine there before returning with some of the others to the French church.[45] But while the consistories sought to have eyes and ears throughout the city so as to clamp down on bad behaviour, even the physical presence of authority figures might not call members of the congregations to reformation. A year after Thomas Grin and friends had scandalised the French church, the consistory sent one of the elders to speak to another three members who were known to have been drinking and making trouble together, but he reported back that ‘they did nothing but make fun of him’ while ignoring his admonitions.[46]

Drinking was perhaps especially problematic because of its associations with illicit and adulterous sex. Katerine Joene was a widow whose master came to the French consistory in 1565 to complain about her behaviour, saying that the previous Sunday he had given her money to go and buy wine for his wife, who was sick, but that she had not returned for hours. Called to account for her behaviour, Katerine told the consistory that she had run into people she knew who had made her drink some wine – the wine, she said, had gone to her head, and later she had been discovered engaging in lecherous acts (no specifics are provided beyond the term ‘*paillardans*’) together on the way home in the company of two men, one a member of the French church.[47] The consistory barred her from the Supper while they considered the

[45] *Actes du consistoire de l’église française de Threadneedle Street,* vol. 2, p. 35.

[46] *Actes du consistoire de l’église française de Threadneedle Street*, vol. 2, p. 50.

[47] *Actes du consistoire de l’église française de Threadneedle Street,* vol. 1, p. 123.

case. Unfortunately for us, it is shortly after this that the French church's consistory records break off for a couple of years, so the outcome of this case is unknown. But the link between drunkenness and sexual incontinence is clear throughout these records: Claude Briquet, a member of the French church who was repeatedly admonished by the consistory of the French church for his misdemeanours in the 1560s, was compelled to make a public confession in front of the congregation, admitting having got drunk at night and banging on the door of a female member of the church, such that the neighbours heard and he wound up being arrested by the constable, causing considerable scandal.[48] Drunkenness could also be cover for other kinds of illicit sociability, as in the incident in 1570 where the Dutch consistory learnt that in a house visited with the plague in the Minories, the community's visitor of the sick had been drinking alongside a surgeon and his son, a printer, a carpenter, and two drunken Englishwoman. Beatrice, 'the carer of the sick', told the consistory that those present had drunk eight or nine pots of beer and loudly sung the fifty-first Psalm, causing intense scandal among their English neighbours at such disorder.[49]

Beyond its everyday uses, alcohol had a more hallowed place in proceedings, as in the wine at the centre of the Lord's Supper as celebrated in the stranger churches. But even this was open to criticism by English opponents of the strangers' manner of worship. Some years after the period considered in this article, Archbishop William Laud embarked on a campaign

[48] *Actes du consistoire de l'église française de Threadneedle Street,* vol. 1, p. 66. Compare *Actes du consistoire de l'église française de Threadneedle Street,* vol. 2, p. 180, which sees Jehan Cotelle causing scandal in Southwark after drinking too much and staying the night in his English servant's house when he was discovered by an officer of the law '*en paillardise*' with a female servant, which he denied, claiming to have slept the night in the master's bed.

[49] 'de verwaester van de ziecke' : *Acta van het consistorie van de Nederlandse*, p. 71.

against the stranger churches, seeking to force them to worship according to the rites of the Church of England. In doing so, he was reported to have scorned these practices, saying 'that their Churches used irreverence at their communion, sate altogether as if it were in a Tavern or Alehouse, where one drunk to another the Minister beginning and the people following him'.[50] Here, the solemnity of the Supper, as the core moment in the communal life of these stranger churches, was satirised as equivalent to a drinking session in an English alehouse. The stereotype of the drunken stranger could be redeployed in a concerted attack on these communities' right to perform Calvinist worship in an increasingly religiously polarised England. Whether tippling in the tavern or drinking communion wine, strangers' drinking was an activity in which their communities' precarity in English society was keenly felt.

By bread and beer: food and drink between the everday and the extraordinary

On a December day in 1581, a woman named Mary Diericx from Ghent appeared before the consistory of London's Dutch church. She told them the story of what had happened between her and Heynderick Jacobsen two and a half years before. It was the afternoon, and they were in the presence of two other women – Mary Dierick van der Gauwe, whose house it was, and an Englishwoman called Elisabet Jansens. Mary told the consistory that Heynderick had said to her the words 'By that bread and by that beer, I shall nevermore leave you'.[51] The next day, Heynderick confirmed the promise, and while Mary said that they had not had sex, both understood that this was meant to stand as a betrothal. But just a month before she appeared before the consistory, Heynderick had come to her with two other men and asked to be set

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[50] Grell, *Dutch Calvinists*, pp. 228-9.

[51] 'Bij dat broot ende bij dat byer, ic en sal u nemermer verlaten': *Acta van het consistorie van de Nederlandse*, p. 613.

free of his promise. The consistory took it upon themselves to investigate what had happened on that day over bread and beer. They spoke to the woman who had hosted the meal, who helpfully recalled Heynderick having said 'I am not drunk now, because I have neither eaten nor drunk. By this beer and by God, I shall nevermore leave you'.[52] Questioned by the consistory, Heynderick prevaricated, recalling that he had said some different (though less meaningful) words, and that he had drunk some beer which had gone to his head.

Bread and beer: it is hard to imagine two more normal consumables in Elizabethan London, but these were the items that, if we are to believe Mary Diericx's account, were imbued with meaning through the words and ritual enacted by Heynderick, by her, and by their witnesses in that London house some time in the late 1570s. Her story, like the story of immigrant foodways in Elizabethan London, is not fundamentally one of innovation and introduction. Of course, there were outliers like Giacomo Castelvetro who took joy in introducing previously unheard-of delights to English elites. But this article has looked away from some of those elite interactions and tried to think about the more everyday experiences of eating and drinking and their importance to London's wider communities of migrants in a period when so many flocked to the city. Food and drink shaped the stereotypes through which strangers were understood, even where the differences between migrants' and English tastes and practices might seem minor. They offered newly-arrived migrants an opportunity to connect with their home, and could prompt strong emotions. Eating and drinking were activities that brought immigrants and their hosts together, in solidarity or in conflict. And they prompted anxieties on both sides about the strangers' place and role in England.

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[52] 'Ic en ben nu niet droncke, want ic en hebbe noch geten, noch gedroncken. Bij dit byer ende bij G o d , ic en sal u nemermer verlaten': *Acta van het consistorie van de Nederlandse*, p. 614.

Whatever Giacomo Castelvetro's lofty ambitions, most migrants to sixteenth-century London were not trying to reform English cooking. But these glimpses of food and drink in the records of London's stranger communities show the impact of migration on everyday lives, and how ideas about faith, morality, and community found their expression in bread, and in beer.