FIGURE 1. From Theodore de Bry’s Americae Tertia Pars (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1593). Cf. Nashes Lenten Stuffe (1599): “A pipe of Tobacco to raise my spirits and warm my brain . . .” Photo: The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
Elizabethan Tobacco

Tobacco's first entry into English poetry doesn't strike the modern reader as a particularly auspicious one. In book 3 of *The Faerie Queene* (1590), during a hunt, the fairy Belphoebe discovers the unconscious body of Prince Arthur's seriously wounded squire Timias:

Into the woods thenceforth in hast she went,
To seeke for hearbes, that mote him remedy . . .
There, whether it divine Tobacco were,
Or Panachae, or Polygony,
She found, and brought it to her patient deare
Who al this while lay bleeding out his hart-bloud neare.

(3.5.32)

What could be more fleeting a reference? A plant growing in not only distant but fairy woods, and then only one of three alternatives for the herb Belphoebe actually does fetch, applied in the most unusual way, as a wound wart, not in a pipe—and Spenser's poetry never mentions the word, the novelty, again. Yet this seemingly offhand reference, and the newly introduced plant itself, had a surprising impact on later writers: no epithet for tobacco comes close to being as standard in later Elizabethan literature as Spenser's "divine," a fact almost as remarkable as the meteoric rise of tobacco smoking during the same period. In 1603, the first year for which official records of tobacco importation survive, 16,000 pounds of tobacco passed through official channels, perhaps that much again unofficially. And a year after that, marking the new power at once of tobacco and king, James issued his *A Counter-Blaste to Tobacco*, which denounced the "toy" as England's ruination. In fact, "As the literature of the day indicates," says tobacco historian Jerome Brooks, "[tobacco] was nowhere more heartily taken up, after about 1590, than in England." The paradoxical combination of triviality and power in both tobacco and Spenser's reference to it seems perfectly foreshadowed by Spenser's oxymoronic-sounding epithet itself—the weed's divine.

What makes tobacco's rise to power even more impressive, and helps in part to account for James's disgust, is the fact that the sole owner of the New World from which tobacco came was the enemy, Spain. One would have guessed the knowing Englishman to have shied away from tobacco as a constant reminder of the belatedness Richard Hakluyt in *Divers Voyages Touching the Discovery of America*
(1582) begins his dedication to Sidney by deploring: “I marvel not a little (right honorable) that since the discovery of America (which is now full fourscore and ten years), after so great conquests and plantings of the Spaniards and Portingales there, that we of England could never have the grace to set fast footing in such fertile and temperate places as are left as yet unpossessed of them.” Not only did Spain monopolize America’s land, souls, and especially gold while England settled for a New World weed, but Spain further increased her fortune, and decreased England’s, by selling that same weed to England. And yet tobacco in Spenser’s passage represents not an exacerbation of a bad case but its cure.

A brief consideration of Spenser’s allegory in the Timias and Belphoebe passage helps begin explaining how the English could accommodate tobacco’s representation of their own triviality. For tobacco is only one of many grand trifles that figure in Spenser’s passage. Neither Timias nor Belphoebe could be considered the most significant character in this or any other book of The Faerie Queene, and yet they represent what were in 1590 the two most powerful people in England—Spenser’s patrons, Raleigh and the queen. Oddly, the rise to power of these figures—Raleigh the fourth son of a country gentleman; Elizabeth excommunicated, “illegitimate,” and female—is itself as miraculous as tobacco’s, almost a pledge of England’s own potentiality. As a celebration of his small country’s enormous spiritual and imperial claims, Spenser’s poem matches the paradoxicality of its subject, here in the Timias and Belphoebe passage by the lowly pastoral meant “to insinuate and glance at greater matters,” and everywhere by the epic representation of “our sovereign the Queen, and her kingdom in” the nothing of “Faery land.” But then “divine” Spenser himself, the poor scholar turned poet laureate, testifies to the latent power of English trifles, producing with his contemporaries what generally has been considered “the greatest literature our language has known” at a time when it would seem that imperial-minded Englishmen had little reason to exult.

Insofar as literary historians have highlighted the paradoxical nature of Elizabethan England’s ebullience, they have tended to consider that expansiveness merely compensatory or wish-fulfilling, arising from the need to hide the truth about Elizabethan banality and impotence. For example, G. K. Hunter, whose evaluation of Elizabethan literature I’ve just quoted, assumes that what drove writers like Spenser to the heights of literary sublimity was precisely their “frustration”—with their own political careers, most directly, but also implicitly with England’s as a whole. Similarly, in a classic analysis of the extravagant praise these writers lavished on the queen, Frances Yates calls Elizabeth’s own “divinity” a sublimated expression of repressed anxiety about England’s fate: “The lengths to which the cult of Elizabeth went are a measure of the sense of isolation which had at all costs to find a symbol strong enough to provide a feeling of spiritual security in face of the break with the rest of Christendom.” Yet tobacco’s own

28 REpresentations
cult demonstrates that it is at least as accurate to say that the Elizabethans actively celebrated what they themselves considered overtly trivial.

Indeed, some Elizabethans expected tobacco not merely to exemplify by analogy the divine potential of other English trifles, but actually to help produce those divinities, even so far as to transform little England into a heaven on earth. Spenser’s association of tobacco with Raleigh and Elizabeth suggests the real basis of England’s hopes for an overseas empire, the American colony that Raleigh had already founded in Elizabeth’s name—Virginia. This English foothold in the New World would be different from Spain’s empire not only in location, as Hakluyt recommended, but in theory and practice. Thomas Cain has convincingly demonstrated that the Mammon episode in The Faerie Queene’s second book represents in part Spenser’s warning about New World gold; according to Spenser, the Spanish, in their typically idolatrous fashion, have blinded themselves by worshipping an earthly god. Cain oddly assumes, however, that Spenser is in particular warning Raleigh to “manage the gold of Guiana” temperately. The conclusion is anachronistic—Raleigh did not sail for Guiana till 1595—but more important misses Spenser’s contrast between the gold-feverish Spanish colonies and “fruitfullest Virginia” (2.proem.2.9; my emphasis). The point of this essay is to show what Spenser and his contemporaries take this contrast to mean, and why it gets elaborated by talk about a smokeable American “fruit.” The first section of the essay will briefly review the medical benefits tobacco was supposed to offer, and suggest why neither these supposed benefits nor tobacco’s inherent pleasures can alone account for tobacco’s popularity in the 1590s, again precisely the period when England owned no New World empire from which to import tobacco and so was forced to buy it from the enemy who did; the second section will outline Raleigh’s and Elizabeth’s crucial roles in tobacco’s popularization; and the third and fourth sections will examine English claims about tobacco’s divinity in relation to the literary tradition for tobacco inaugurated by Spenser and most fully worked out by John Beaumont’s mock panegyric, The Metamorphosis of Tabacco (1602). In general, tobacco’s advocates and critics agree that the materially poor English are nevertheless Spain’s ideological superiors, but disagree about whether tobacco will help or hurt this “fairy” superiority. The tobacco critic considers the imported weed pagan and earthly, qualities that infect England and lower its sights profoundly. A tobacco advocate like Beaumont counters that, with less persuasive claims to inherent value than gold, tobacco bespeaks the mind’s power to create value, and so continually alerts the English mind (even physiologically, as I’ll show) to its own abilities. Later, in Stuart England, this idealism centering on tobacco would help foster a new economics of imperialism, one that began to displace gold as an imperialist preoccupation in favor of commodities previously understood as trivial. But Elizabethan propagandists of tobacco—drawn to medical and economic rationales for smoking yet pursuing such ratio-

Elizabethan Tobacco 29
nales only confusedly or ironically—were finally less concerned with tobacco’s material than with its ideal import. Indeed, these writers believed that the immediate reward of gold had tricked the Spanish into equating imperial with economic success; tobacco was supposed to dramatize that, on the contrary, something like what we would now call ideology was true power. While the Spanish enslaved themselves to gold, tobacco taught the English to limit their ambitions to nothing—or, at least, to nothing but smoke.

I

Though Columbus sighted tobacco on his very first voyage, “the first original notice in English of the use of tobacco by the Indians” does not appear till 1565, in John Sparke’s account of Sir John Hawkins’s second slaving voyage:16 “The Floridans when they travel,” observes Sparke,

have a kind of herb dried, who with a cane and an earthen cup in the end, with fire, and the dried herbs put together, do suck through the cane the smoke thereof, which smoke satisfieth their hunger, and therewith they live four or five days without meat or drink, and this all the Frenchmen [Jean Ribault’s men, about to be massacred by the Spanish] used for this purpose: yet they do hold opinion withal, that it causeth water & phlegm to void from their stomachs.17

Such a report of tobacco’s double and, as Sparke’s “yet” signifies, slightly paradoxical power—at once to nourish and to purge—gets reiterated by English writers too many times to bother citing, though when William Harrison (1573) and the elder Hakluyt (1582) acknowledge that tobacco is now being planted in England, they naturally single out not its nutritional but its medicinal virtue as the benefit required by certainly well-to-do buyers: tobacco, they say, eases the rheum.18

Now the rheum—what we call an allergic reaction or the common cold—was enough of a worry in Tudor England to make a remedy for it seem marvelous indeed. Sir Thomas Elyot’s The Castel of Helth (1541), for instance, claims that “at this present time in the realm of England, there is not any one more annoyance to the health of man’s body, than distillations from the head called rheums.”19 Ever since the Tudor peace, Elyot believes, the disease has become more frequent, the English head more watery, as the English have increasingly devoted themselves to excess, like “banqueting after supper & drinking much, specially wine a little afore sleep” (80a). Indeed, in Elyot’s account the rheum’s symptoms—“Wit dull. Much superfluities. Sleep much and deep” (3b)—look just like its causes; one might conclude that the rheum not only mirrors but helps perpetuate the complacence and corruption of manners producing it.

Given this sociological understanding of the disease, however, tobacco seems an unusual choice for a remedy. If it is relatively easy to imagine a physical oppo-
ition between tobacco and the rheum, the rheum as cold and moist being driven out by tobacco as hot and dry, it is much less easy to see how an expensive novelty could help do anything but augment the intemperance Elyot decries.20 “A Satyrical Epigram” in Henry Buttes’s Dyets Dry Dinner (1599) mocks tobacco—though only its “wanton, and excessive use,” a qualification to which I’ll return—as simply the latest foreign luxury helping to drown the English character: “On English fool: wanton Italianly;/Go Frenchly: Dutchtly drink: breath Indianly.”21 Later, “Philaretes” in his Work for Chimny-Sweepers (1602) denounces tobacco not only as a foolish toy but as the devil’s invention, a fact amply demonstrated, he believes, by the herbalist Nicolas Monardes’ observations on tobacco’s American heritage:

The Indian Priests (who no doubt were instruments of the devil whom they serve) do ever before they answer to questions propounded to them by their Princes, drink of this Tobacco fume, with the vigor and strength whereof, they fall suddenly to the ground, as dead men, remaining so, according to the quantity of the smoke that they had taken. And when the herb had done his work, they revive and wake, giving answers according to the visions and illusions which they saw whilst they were wrapt in that order.22

(The devil aside, tobacco here even exaggerates the physical symptoms, the dullness and sleepiness, associated with the rheum: the priests fall down “as dead men.”) The odd truth about this kind of argument, however, is that Philaretes’ is the first full-scale attack on tobacco to be launched in English, some thirty years at the very least after its use in England begins.23 Even Monardes himself, in the herbal that proved to be “the most frequently issued book of overseas interest in the Elizabethan period,”24 concludes that tobacco’s superstitious application shows only how “the Devil is a deceiver, and hath the knowledge of the virtue of Herbs”;25 by Philaretes’ own account “Monardus” is one of the “many excellent & learned men” who “do commend this plant as a thing most excellent and divine” (A3r). What was there about tobacco that enabled it for so long not only to escape the censure one would expect but to receive such lavish praise instead?

One answer is provided by Philaretes’ anxiety about his pamphlet’s reception. So strong are the voices for tobacco, and so rare the voices against it—“many excellent Physicians and men of singular learning and practice, together with many gentlemen and some of great accompt, do by their daily use and custom in drinking of Tobacco, give great credit and authority to the same” (A3r)—that Philaretes feels he must embark on a disputation against Authority (citing Plato and Aristotle in his defense) before his tobacco argument can proceed (A4v). But to claim that tobacco prospered because the mighty took it under their wing is only to rephrase the question: what enabled tobacco to win such powerful favor?26 The two most obvious explanations, that tobacco is inherently likeable, not to say addictive, and that tobacco’s novelty added luster to its intrinsic charm, fail fully to account for the particular circumstances of tobacco’s reception in late sixteenth-century England. First, with the help of herbalists like Monardes,
tobacco came to be regarded as not just a rheum distiller but an all-round wonder drug; since tobacco was not the only American herb celebrated this way, its own virtues, whatever they may be, would seem to say less about its identification as a cure-all than about its eventual ascendancy over other New World candidates for Panacea like sassafras. Second, the English craze for smoking, like its taste for America in general, developed much later than on the Continent, later even than its introduction to England as a novelty.\textsuperscript{27} Here the demonstrably false legend about Raleigh introducing tobacco to England gains a certain kind of credence: just as Raleigh hardly invented the idea of English colonies in America and yet was the first to start one, so we might imagine the most powerful Englishman in 1590 not as tobacco's original but its most persuasive proponent.\textsuperscript{28} The legend about Raleigh in fact derives from the 1590s—Buttes says, “Our English Ulysses, renowned Sir Walter Raleigh . . . hath both far fetcht it [tobacco], and dear bought it” (P5v–P6r)—though James himself lends greater authority to the claim:

With the report of a great discovery for a Conquest, some two or three Savage men, were brought in, together with this Savage custom. But the pity is, the poor wild barbarous men died, but that vile barbarous custom is yet alive, yea in fresh vigor: so as it seems a miracle to me, how a custom springing from so vile a ground, and brought in by a father so generally hated, should be welcomed on so slender a warrant.\textsuperscript{29}

The denunciation makes sure that James's subjects understand tobacco's political significance: for tobacco to be attacked means for Raleigh to have fallen, and at the same time, though only implicitly here, for pathetic, unprofitable Virginia to have been confiscated by the Crown. I'd like to turn now to the surviving evidence about Raleigh and tobacco in order to determine the attractions tobacco held for the man who focused England's attention upon it.

II

The first description and commendation of tobacco one can safely associate with Raleigh is the work not of Raleigh himself—indeed, Raleigh is for the most part above speaking on the subject—but of his servant Thomas Harriot, in Harriot's A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia (1588).\textsuperscript{30} The purpose of Harriot's tract, to advertise and justify Raleigh's American efforts, helps in an obvious way to account for both Harriot's praise of tobacco there and the many other claims about tobacco's medicinal wonders in general: if one wants to convince potential investors that Virginia “may return you profit and gain” (5), then a miraculous Virginian herb will come in very handy. What is less obvious is the close relation between the specific properties Harriot claims for tobacco and the kinds of economic returns he and writers like him expected America would bring to little England. The historian D. B. Quinn has called what he considers the most important of these expectations the supplementary economy, the com-
plementary economy, and the emigration thesis. The first, the supplementary economy, meant “that America could produce many of the products which England herself produced but in greater quantities,” and so could bolster, expand the limited homeland; Harriot is thinking this way when he lists potential Virginian commodities like woad. “A thing of so great vent and use among English Dyers, which cannot be yielded sufficiently in our own country for spare of ground,” but which “may be planted in Virginia, there being ground enough” (11). The second model, though “of primary importance,” imagined the New World supplying the English, as Harriot says, “with most things which heretofo...
for Chimney-Sweepers (1602), Roger Marbecke traces to this cause even England’s peculiar susceptibility to the rheum: “But for that we are Islanders... we are by nature subject, to overmuch moisture, and rheumatic matter”.

Harriot’s captain Ralph Lane, on the other hand, writes to Sir Francis Walsingham from Virginia that “the climate is so wholesome, yet somewhat tending to heat, As that we have not had one sick since we entered into the country; but sundry that came sick, are recovered of long diseases especially of Rheums.”

While Marbecke immediately goes on to agree with Elyot that excessive eating and drinking produce rheum also, these factors too signal the anxieties of a country unable to produce for itself, taking too much in—as it were, drowning for want of land. With a whole world to themselves, the Indians, remarks Harriot, are moderate eaters, “whereby they avoid sickness. I would to god we would follow their example. For we should be free from many kinds of diseases which we fall into by sumptuous and unseasonable banquets, continually devising new sauces, and provocations of gluttony to satisfy our unsatiable appetite” (60). It is important to remember that in this dietic case, as in the case of the rheum, tobacco’s cure is not merely figurative, representing the extra world little England hopes to acquire; tobacco smoke, said Sparke, “satisfeth their hunger,” and Harriot classifies tobacco with other “such commodities as Virginia is known to yield for victual and sustenance of man’s life, usually fed upon by the natural inhabitants, as also by us during the time of our abode” (13).

But no matter how convenient for understanding tobacco in relation to England’s economic ills, this classification by Harriot actually forces consideration of some problems about Virginian tobacco I’ve so far overlooked. If America is to help England by freeing it from the twin dangers of excessive importation and unexportable surplus, one might have expected to find tobacco listed not only with the native foods that would support a displaced English population but with the “merchantable commodities” (7) that would feed and enrich home also—which is in fact where Harriot places that other panacea “of most rare virtues,” sassafras (9). Presumably Harriot knows something about the marketability of Virginian tobacco that he doesn’t want to say directly, something like the “biting taste” that prevented Englishmen from becoming interested in colonial tobacco until John Rolfe imported Trinidadian seeds to Virginia in 1610–11; most of the tobacco Englishmen “drank” before that time was indeed the enemy’s—Spain’s—so rather than alleviate England’s trade woes, tobacco actually only exacerbated them. Good reason for sticking to tobacco’s nutritional value, but the classification as food is problematic in its own way: Harriot never explicitly mentions the hunger-depressant power he could have found out about not only from the Indians but from such written sources as Monardes—to whom, oddly enough, Harriot refers the reader in sassafras’s case, not in tobacco’s. Whatever the real reason for Harriot’s enigmatic silence here, he himself wants the reader
to know both that his praise of Virginian tobacco has been cut short and that his reticence about it corresponds to his especially high regard for it: “We our selves during the time we were there used to suck it after their manner, as also since our return, & have found many rare and wonderful experiments of the virtues thereof; of which the relation would require a volume by it self.” It is a regard the Indians share. “This Uppowoe”—Harriot’s preference for the native instead of the well-known Spanish name is itself significant—

is of so precious estimation amongst them, that they think their gods are marvelously delighted therewith: Whereupon sometime they make hallowed fires & cast some of the powder therein for a sacrifice: being in a storm upon the waters, to pacify their gods, they cast some up into the air and into the water: so a weir for fish being newly set up, they cast some therein and into the air: also after an escape of danger, they cast some into the air likewise. (16)

If I’m right to say that Harriot has some difficulty placing tobacco in his colonial argument, this description of native or “natural” superstition, intended after all as a weak form of argument from authority, allows Harriot the liberty to speak of tobacco as a panacea without having to rationalize the claim in terms either of physiology or of England’s peculiar needs. Harriot doesn’t show the Indians believing, in other words, that tobacco has some chemical or synecdochical relation to storms, weirs, or danger; simply, the gods like it, one casts it on an action and it works.

Yet a more common colonial logic, more common even in Harriot’s own tract, makes citing Indians as any kind of authority on value look strange. For the most salient fact about savages is that they always hold the wrong thing in “precious estimation”—not gold, for instance, but trifles. One could find Harriot’s version of the first confrontation between Americans and Europeans in innumerable travel books:

As soon as they saw us [they] began to make a great and horrible cry, as people which never beforehand had seen men appareled like us, and came a way making out cries like wild beasts or men out of their wits. But being gently called back, we offered them of our wares, as glasses, knives, babies [i.e., dolls], and other trifles, which we thought they delighted in. So they stood still, and perceiving our Good will and courtesy came fawning upon us, and bade us welcome. (45)

When Harriot speaks elsewhere of the Indians’ powers of estimation, it is only copper “which they much esteem” (46), “which they esteem more than gold or silver” (71); in other words, they “do esteem our trifles before things of greater value” (25). While such proofs of Indian misprision are meant no doubt to tickle Harriot’s readers, and to demonstrate how cheaply Indian favor can be bought, the savage love of trifles speaks directly to England’s fears, once again, about its own trading habits. Worried as Elyot is with extravagances at home, Clement
Urmeston, for example, deplores the taste of his fellow countrymen for foreign "trifles, whereby all strangers in other realms hath work, and English men hath none"; what is worse, the stranger will not "take cloth nor English commodities" for his useless ware, but that which, for the sixteenth-century economist, constituted value itself, "rial, angels and other fine gold." If English economists could regard their European trade, then, as a delusion—the foolish English venting the solid good of bullion in exchange for mere pesterling trifles—the still more foolish American savage represented the hope of turning passive victimization into active victimizing. England would be able not only to import gold for next to nothing but to export all its own weaknesses onto America: Sir Humphrey Gilbert trusts that by western voyages Englishmen will "have occasion, to set poor men's children, to learn handy crafts, and thereby to make trifles and such like, which the Indians and those people [the Chinese] do much esteem: By reason whereof, there should be none occasion, to have our country cumbered with loiterers, vagabonds, and such like idle persons."

The only catch in Harriot's case is that his credulous Indians don't have any gold; his prefatory letter warns the understanding reader to discount "as trifles that are not worthy of wise men to be thought upon" the ill reports of such former colonists who "after gold and silver was not so soon found, as it was by them looked for, had little or no care of any other thing but to pamper their bellies" (6). In light of these disaffected gold hunters, with whom Harriot might reasonably expect a very large proportion of his audience to sympathize, Harriot's praise of Indian moderation takes on a colonial significance: if only Englishmen could regard America as the Indians do, and learn to live as colonists like them, "free from all care of heaping up Riches for their posterity, content with their state, and living friendly together of those things which god of his bounty hath given them" (56). Once again, in the displacement of gold as a measure of value, Indian tastes assume a kind of authority; looking back on Harriot's interest in their "precious estimation" of tobacco, one might say, then, that tobacco supplies the lack of the precious metal—or that by declaring a relation of tobacco's virtues "would require a volume by itself," as if tobacco were a New World all its own, Harriot builds both gold's missing value, and the fact that gold is missing, into tobacco.

It is a substitution that tobacco's critics later found the English people all too willing to make themselves. That is, not only a lack of Indian gold seemed to these critics to defeat expectations of happy returns from America: somehow even savages had managed to palm off a trifle on the ever eager English consumer. John Aubrey's life of Raleigh (c. 1669–96) records how near the turn of the century the exchange of a trifle for a precious metal was quite literal: tobacco "was sold then for its weight in silver. I have heard some of our old yeoman neighbors say, that when they went to Malmesbury or Chippenham Market, they culled out their best shillings to lay in the scales against the tobacco." Thomas Campion complains that such skewed powers of estimation yield the Spaniards profit:
Tobacco even clarified the old fears about England trading its solid commodities for nothing by dramatizing the exchange in a way never before possible: whenever an Englishman lit his pipe,49 he could be seen to demonstrate unequivocally how “the Treasure of this land is vented for smoke.”50

Yet a well-known anecdote about Raleigh, first reported by James Howell (1650), shows how, when Raleigh makes a bet with Elizabeth about the amount of smoke tobacco actually does hold, the substitution of gold for smoke could work in an Englishman’s favor:

But if one would try a pretty conclusion how much smoke there is in a pound of Tobacco, the ashes will tell him, for let a pound be exactly weighed, and the ashes kept charily and weigh’d afterwards, what wants of a pound weight in the ashes cannot be denied to have been smoke, which evaporated into air; I have been told that Sir Walter Raleigh won a wager of Queen Elizabeth upon this nicety.

In another version of the anecdote the queen adds in paying, “Many laborers in the fire she had heard of who turned their gold into smoke, but Raleigh was the first who had turned smoke into gold.”51 The story compactly illustrates so much of Raleigh’s relation to the queen, even down to the carefully staged destruction of his property, like his muddied cloak or his melodramatically desperate posturings, bringing him greater wealth. But this manner of enriching oneself via the New World and its products is crucially different from the colonial models and tobacco uses I’ve specified: unlike a chemical or alchemical transformation of the English body or body politic, Raleigh’s tobacco simply wins him a bet; the gold comes neither from the New World nor its inhaled representative but from Elizabeth. There seems nothing about tobacco’s place in the story, in other words, that some other inflammable object might not fill—the operative term is, after all, smoke.

But perhaps tobacco’s replaceability here is what helps make its appearance in the story, and in the story of Raleigh’s life, so inevitable: for the story must be about Raleigh, not tobacco, and it must show that what Raleigh does to tobacco, turning smoke to gold, is only what he has done to himself—as Stephen Green-
blatt reminds us about Raleigh in his prime, he was “perhaps the supreme example in England of a gentleman not born but fashioned.”52 Contemporaries did not miss the correspondence, famously dramatized by Raleigh before his execution, between Raleigh's smoking and his pride, his aloofness; whether or not Raleigh smoked at the execution of his rival Essex also, the story sounded so plausible and epitomizing that, at his own execution, Raleigh was forced publicly to deny it.53 Others quickly adopted the flourish a pipe could bring them. In his mock travelogue *Mundus Alter et Idem* (1605), Joseph Hall “discovers” Raleigh and tobacco in Moronia Felix or, in Hall’s own gloss, the “Land of braggarts, or of conceited folly.”54 Everyone in Moronia Felix, like Raleigh, pretends to noble birth, though their claims, like their sumptuous buildings, “are exceedingly flimsy, and whatever their external splendor promises, on the interior they are sordid beyond measure” (94). Lacking funds and good sense, “most of the inhabitants feed neither on bread nor on food but on the fume” of their own vanity and of tobacco:55 “And while their nostrils exhale smoke high in the air, their kitchens have passed completely out of use” (96). The wager anecdote captures very well both the insubstantiality of Raleigh's position as Hall sees it—“Without a power-base of any kind . . . Raleigh was totally dependent on the queen”56— and Raleigh’s irritating or enviable ability to capitalize on that insubstantiality, to give it weight, to turn the smoke of his own bravura, and of Elizabeth’s favor, to account.

If tobacco figures in the anecdote, then, as little more than the personal trademark of the Queen's Alchemist, Raleigh's America similarly distances itself from the national hypotheses about New World benefits that I’ve outlined. Even the primary advocate of such hypotheses, Richard Hakluyt, succumbs to the pressure of Raleigh's self-allegorizing vision of America; in dedicating to Raleigh the newly edited *De Orbe Novo* (1587) of Peter Martyr, Hakluyt praises Raleigh’s letters from Court in which you freely swore that no terrors, no personal losses or misfortunes could or would ever tear you from the sweet embraces of your own Virginia, that fairest of nymphs—though to many insufficiently well known,—whom our most generous sovereign has given you to be your bride[,] If you persevere only a little longer in your constancy, your bride will shortly bring forth new and most abundant offspring, such as will delight you and yours, and cover with disgrace and shame those who have so often dared rashly and impudently to charge her with barrenness. For who has the just title to attach such a stigma to your Elizabeth’s Virginia, when no one has yet probed the depths of her hidden resources and wealth, or her beauty hitherto concealed from our sight? Let them go where they deserve, foolish drones, mindful only of their bellies and gullets, who fresh from that place, like those whom Moses sent to spy out the promised land flowing with milk and honey, have treacherously published ill reports about it.57

The jolting reference to Virginia’s imputed barrenness not only demands that the possibly vague or nominal comparison between Elizabeth and Virginia be taken seriously, but that the analogy be extended into what one might consider
the most dangerous territory. Yet in similarly dwelling on the possible throwaway about Raleigh’s “sweet embraces” with his “bride,” the lavish sexual imagery that follows, the hidden beauty and the probeable depths, shows that taking liberties is precisely Hakluyt's point: the racy language is itself part of the dalliance between Elizabeth and Raleigh that Virginia enables.58 Like tobacco smoke, Virginia’s whole beauty here in relation to Raleigh lies in its essential malleability, the ease with which it stands for a marriage, and the fruits of a marriage, otherwise impossible. But it is crucial to see that in allegorizing Virginia as a substitute Elizabeth, the passage drives toward claiming what Virginia's critics claim also, that Virginia has no attractions per se. And indeed Elizabeth will allow Raleigh to probe her Virginia only if he stays “at Court”—near Elizabeth, certainly, but far from the vicarious deflowering.59

I don’t mean to argue, however, that Raleigh’s self-aggrandizing vision of America is entirely at odds with other more nationally oriented New World views, that Hakluyt himself, the writer here, does not desire and enjoy this vision, as others would desire and enjoy Raleigh's smoking, also. After all, Elizabeth’s virginity, or more negatively her barrenness, betokened national concerns not merely by way of analogy: since Elizabeth's foreign suitors represented the possibility of international alliances, her favor meant money and power, and her offspring would hopefully ensure a peaceful succession, the queen's maidenhead would seem more than merely symbolic of both national isolation and the “want of place” at Court.

But the continuation of Hakluyt’s allegory beyond the bridal motif demonstrates how the particular reduction of Virginia to a metaphor for an available queen only isolates a hidden tendency common to other more strictly economic colonial theorizing, a tendency to understand Virginia as only a substitution, not a different place and, possibly, a different home. Hakluyt's comparison of the English people to the Jews highlights the problem of Englishmen's finally exclusive attachment to England itself by ineptly running counter to that attachment: the switch from Raleigh and Elizabeth to Moses seems to leave Elizabeth behind, and Raleigh too even if he gets to be Moses, for Moses, of course, never entered “the promised land”; but then Virginia as the promised land neither complements, supplements, nor relieves England but leaves the island, like the Wilderness, behind altogether. In brief, the difference between Elizabeth and Moses in Hakluyt's allegory is the difference between regarding England or Virginia as home. Yet this puts the matter too cruelly. Hakluyt can hardly be intending to suggest that England be abandoned; in calling Virginia “the promised land” he clearly overcompensates for Virginia’s felt lack of intrinsic merit, a lack he at other times even helps, oddly enough, to publicize: the 1589 Navigations record the verdict on Virginia of one more Raleigh underling, Ralph Lane again, who affirms “that the discovery of a gold mine, by the goodness of God, or a passage to the Southsea, or someway to it, and nothing else can bring this country in

Elizabethan Tobacco

39
request to be inhabited by our nation.” On the other hand, Hakluyt can, of course, hardly mean that Englishmen should never settle Virginia; when in his address to Raleigh Hakluyt deplores as Harriot will those excolonists “mindful only of their bellies and gullets,” it is the profiteering English view—that gold in hand is the only thing worth leaving home and probing Virginia’s depths for—which he means, again like Harriot, to condemn. Hakluyt wants to say that Virginia supplies a “milk and honey” that satisfies something more than bellies, something like Raleigh’s impossible desire for Elizabeth, which hopes to “occupy” at once both Elizabeth and Virginia, though in a far from literal way. A manna made “of conceited folly,” of air—yet an air the Elizabethans thought substantial enough to “drink”—tobacco helps represent both the expansionist desire and its chimerical satisfaction. Harriot’s ambiguous position about tobacco/uppowoc, classifying it as nourishment to be exploited “there” while describing its use “here,” begins to make more sense: requiring a volume all its own, tobacco helps suspend the question of Englishmen’s true home, as if the metaphorical identification between England and Virginia were as good as, indeed better than, a solider settlement.

III

Tobacco enters The Faerie Queene carrying with it this question of mediation, posed once again in terms of Raleigh’s desire for Elizabeth. The “Letter to Raleigh” and the proem to The Faerie Queene’s third book identify Belphoebe in two ways, first as representing one aspect or “person” of Elizabeth—“a most vertuous and beautiful Lady” as distinguished from “a most royal Queen or Empress” (“Letter,” 737), or Elizabeth’s “rare chastitie” as distinguished from “her rule” (3.proem.5)—and second as fashioned after Raleigh’s “own excellent conceit of Cynthia” (“Letter,” 737); by removing the impediment of Elizabeth’s high station and presenting an Elizabeth after Raleigh’s own conceit, Spenser’s Belphoebe moves Elizabeth closer to Raleigh’s desires in much the way Hakluyt’s Virginian bride does also. Tobacco enforces the analogy to Hakluyt. With it, Belphoebe heals Timias’ spear wound (received in a battle reminiscent of Raleigh’s well-publicized Irish skirmishes), but inflicts a love wound she cannot bring herself to cure: “But that sweet Cordiall, which can restore / A love-sick hart, she did to him envy” (50.6–7). The cordial happens to be “that dainty Rose” (51.1), “her fresh owりng Maidenhead” (54.6) in both a literal and figurative sense (i.e., the rose is literal enough to be “disprest” in mild weather [51.9], and figurative enough to be lodged “in gentle Ladies brest” [52.7]). Though Spenser’s pathos here hardly figures in Hakluyt’s passage (nor, for that matter, in Spenser’s source), the general allegorical point is basically the same: Raleigh is dying for Elizabeth’s Rose, yet she grants him another flower, “divine Tobacco,” as at once

40 Representations
a compensation and demurral. At the same time, the pastoral landscape that supports two classical herbs and an American one, and that presents the choice between them as almost indifferent, ignores practical distances and distinctions (as far as Spenser might safely do so) in favor of one commanding distance, between not classes but states of mind, Timias’ “mean estate” (44.7) and Belphoebe’s “high desert” (45.7, my emphasis).63

But Spenser’s characterization of tobacco as “divine” seems, in some vague or esoteric way, to take the allegory further; if not to the second, theological part of Hakluyt’s own passage, his comparison of Virginia to “the promised land,” at least to some argument that would help explain, again, the surprising notoriety of this briefest of references to tobacco. In part that notoriety would seem due simply to Belphoebe’s, and therefore Elizabeth’s, association with this view of tobacco, especially since tobacco requires divinity in the episode so as to render it more commensurable to “the heavenly Mayd” (43.4), but this reinvokes the comparison to Hakluyt, and to tobacco as miraculous food and healer, as manna:64 what heavenly aspect of Elizabeth exactly do tobacco and Virginia complement? In part subsequent writers may echo Spenser’s term because they accept a Continental tradition Spenser himself seems to echo,65 but then what made Continental writers adopt the term? The influence of Indian “estimation” seems once again difficult to deny, as James demanded his subjects to consider:

Shall we . . . abase our selves so far, as to imitate these beastly Indians, slaves to the Spaniards, refuse to the world, and as yet aliens from the holy Covenant of God? Why do we not as well imitate them in walking naked as they do? in preferring glasses, feathers, and such toys, to gold and precious stones, as they do? yea why do we not deny God and adore the Devil, as they do? (B2r)66

If the charges against Marlowe and Raleigh and his followers may be believed, the king’s hysteria was not entirely unwarranted: the infamous snitcher Richard Baines reported Marlowe’s assertion “that if Christ would have instituted the sacrament with more ceremonial Reverence it would have been had in more adoration, that it would have been much better administered in a Tobacco pipe,” and a lieutenant of Raleigh’s was allegedly seen to “tear two Leaves out of a Bible to dry Tobacco on.”67 Philaretus comments, “Our wit-worn gallants, with the scent of thee,/Sent for the Devil and his company.” To the tobacco hater, tobacco doesn’t complement English values, it inverts them, hell for heaven; Philaretus too believes the comparison with Elizabeth explains tobacco, though not as her surrogate, a bride, but as her travesty, a whore: “O I would whip the quean with rods of steel, /That ever after she my jerks should feel” (Br).68

The problem is the same one posed by Elyot’s analysis of the rheum—how can a far-fetched luxury associated with the depths of superstition come to any good?—and yet some of tobacco’s advocates not only excused tobacco but exalted it as England’s “divine” savior from just that decadence and superstition it would
seem to exacerbate. A poem attributed in the earl of Essex’s lifetime to Essex offers the pathos Spenser associates with tobacco as its justification. The poem, “The Poor Laboring Bee” (1598), laments Essex’s singular and undeserved bad luck: “Of all the swarm, I only could not thrive, / yet brought I wax and Honey to the hive.” Even before any mention of tobacco Essex invokes the terms of Timias’ unhappiness—the other bees “suck” Elizabeth’s flowers, the “Rose” and “eglan-tynes”—but the poem’s conclusion makes Essex’s debt to Spenser unmistakable: “If this I cannot have; as helpless bee, / Wished Tobacco, I will fly to thee” (the Egerton MS of the poem reads “Witching Tobacco,” which moves the poem closer to Philaretes’ pessimism about the exchange). Yet tobacco’s cure works not by compensating for but by dramatizing and generalizing Essex’s disappointment as the fate of all worldly desires:

What though thou dye’st my lungs in deepest black.
A Mourning habit, suits a sable heart.
What though thy fumes sound memory do crack,
forgetfulness is fittest for my smart.
O sacred fume, let it be Carv’d in oak,
that words, Hopes, wit, and all the world are smoke.

Calvin says that “not only the learned do know, but the common people have no Proverb more common than this, that man’s life is like a smoke.” And so Essex transforms Philaretes’ attack on tobacco as “smoking vanity” (Br) into the very basis of tobacco’s claim to sacredness: that is, tobacco’s insubstantiality leads Essex to a sublime view of the world as itself insubstantial, to contemptus mundi, while in the same way the otherwise humiliating exchange of solid good for smoke—as a character in Thomas Dekker has it, “Tobacco, which mounts into th’air, and proves nothing but one thing . . . that he is an ass that melts so much money in smoke”—here proves tobacco a less delusory taste than love of precious metals, “sweet dreams of gold.”

Henry Buttes similarly turns tobacco’s deficits to spiritual advantage, though more optimistically than Essex. The title page of Dyets Dry Dinner oddly takes for granted that a meal should be “served in after the order of Time universal,” or to put it another way, that the ontogeny of one’s banquet should recapitulate the phylogeny of human culture; so the meal begins with the food “Adam robbed [from] God’s Orchard” (A7v)—fruit—then proceeds through dishes consequent on new developments in “humane invention,” until our itch for “voluptuous delight” (A8r) leads us to that most odious of luxuries, sauces. It is at this point, as in Elyot, that the rheum arrives, the bodily counterpart to a superfluity, a running over, on two oddly correspondent scales of time, of a meal and of a human history that have both lasted too long:

Thus proceeded we by degrees, from simplicity and necessity, to variety and plenty, ending in luxury and superfluity. So that at last our bodies by surfeeding, being overflowed and
drowned (as it were) in a surpleurisy or deluge of a superfluous raw humor (commonly called Rheum) we were to be annealed (like new dampish Ovens, or old dwelling houses that have stood long desolate). Hence it is that we perfume and air our bodies with Tobacco smoke (by drying) preserving them from putrefaction. (A8v)

Yet of course, as the phylogenetic scheme of the meal demands that we see, tobacco is the ultimate superfluity, and Buttes himself later spells out the rheumlike “hurt” tobacco can do: it “mortifieth and benumbeth: causeth drowsiness: troubleth & dulleth the senses: makes (as it were) drunk: dangerous in meal time” (P5r). Presumably his pharmacology is, then, homeopathic: a little more excess somehow eradicates excess altogether. But the moral is quite different from Essex’s, who prizes tobacco for dramatizing the true nature of all “voluptuous delight.” Buttes's homeopathy cuts two ways. Fire to rheum’s water, tobacco as after-dinner mint replaces the grand conclusion to our history, the Conflagration that follows our punishment by Deluge;75 in other words, as at once the latest luxury and earliest apocalypse, tobacco homeopathically cures, in Buttes's mind, both decadence and God’s judgment upon that decadence.

Though one is tempted to dismiss this conclusion, like so many other Elizabethan arguments about tobacco, as a particularly eccentric joke, Philarettes' theological view of England seems basically the same as Buttes’s, a belief that Englishmen are somehow in a peculiarly good position to mediate between worldly delights and a divine contempt for them. Philaretete's problem with tobacco is that it is too grossly of the world—its priestly user “dead sleeping falls,/ Flat on the ground”—and so threatens to undo England’s compromise between contemptus and carnality, heaven and earth: “But hence thou Pagan Idol: tawny weed,/ Come not with-in”—not our Christian but—“our Fairie Coasts to feed” (Br; my emphasis).74

Buttes defends tobacco’s role in preserving this compromise by sidestepping overt theology and invoking instead what he considers commonsense physiology. According to The Breviary of Helthe, for instance, rheum causes sleepiness by producing “great gravity in the head,” by weighing the head down: John Trevisa elaborates this analysis in terms of a clogged spirit:

For sometime rheumatic humors cometh to the spiritual parties & stop the ways of the spirit and be in point to stuff the body. Then cometh dryness or dry medicines. & worketh & destroyeth such humors. & openeth the ways of the spirit / & so the body that is as it were dead hath living.75

By this account hot and dry tobacco would seem, in other words, to oppose grossness, and so Marbecke argues even against Philaretetes' interpretation of Monardes' report on tobacco's superstitious usage:

For take but Monardus his own tale; and by him it should seem; that in the taking of Tobacco: they [the priests] were drawn up: and separated from all gross, and earthly cogitations, and as it were carried up to a more pure and clear region, of fine conceits & actions of the

Elizabethan Tobacco 43
mind, in so much, as they were able thereby to see visions, as you say: & able likewise to make wise & sharp answers, much like as those men are wont to do, who being cast into trances, and ecstasies, as we are wont to call it, have the power and gift thereby, to see more wonders, and high mystical matters, then all they can do, whose brains, & cogitations, are oppressed with the thick and foggy vapors, of gross, and earthly substances. Marry, if in their trances, & sudden fallings, they had become nasty, & beastly fellows: or had in most loathsome manner, fallen a-spewing, and vomiting, as drunkards are wont to do: then indeed it might well have been counted a devilish matter: and been worthy reprehension. But being used to clear the brains, and thereby making the mind more able, to come to herself, and the better to exercise her heavenly gifts, and virtues; me think, as I have said, I see more cause why we should think it to be a rare gift imparted unto man, by the goodness of God, than to be any invention of the devil. (58–59)

Now smoke for substance is a godly exchange: the mind comes to herself, though still clogged and hamstrung by the body; carried up in ecstasies to a more pure and clear region, though still on earth.76

Freening Englishmen from the body’s limitations as well as from their small, embattled, rheumatic island, tobacco removes a secondary curb on the English mind—particularly, on English poetry. In light of the Renaissance theory that warmer climates are more conducive to mind than colder ones,77 Harriot’s list of the warm countries, like Greece and Italy, to which Virginia’s climate is answerable takes on a new significance: Virginia can be understood as opening for England not merely economic but intellectual and poetic vistas, vistas to which tobacco’s own heat contributes. But to see Virginia’s and tobacco’s advantages in this light is to render finally untenable the reduction of tobacco’s powers merely to synecdoches for Virginia’s: in order to warm up Englishmen the Virginian way, one must ship them many miles and latitudes hence; yet tobacco brings to Englishmen Virginian heat—which Beaumont will call the “Indian sun”—without their having to leave the comforts of home. But then all of tobacco’s benefits, like its after-dinner annealing in Buttes, are immediate, and Virginia’s only anticipated; insofar as those benefits are taken seriously, tobacco does not merely stand for the New World but stand in for it, by transforming England into a New World all its own.78

Of course that is just the point tobacco’s critics make also: Hall’s name for Raleigh in Mundus’s tobacco passage, Topia-Warallador, buries Raleigh in the name of the Indian cacique Raleigh met in Guiana, Topi-Wari, and the Spanish word for discoverer, hallador, so as to suggest how an Englishman’s interest in America can un-English him. The physiological side to this argument is that tobacco smoke makes an Englishman as black on the inside (inside the body, inside England’s bounds) as the Indian is on the outside (on his body’s outside, outside England).79 But to the tobacco advocate smoke is precisely the key for proving that tobacco converts the New World into a disposable remedy—and now even Raleigh’s self-aggrandizing bet, in which tobacco’s smoke becomes his substance, seems to have its national correlative: tobacco purges the pent-up body, opens its pores, warms
its brain, helps it breathe, by itself going up in smoke. Opposing Philaretes’ fear that tobacco will instead turn the English body into a torrid zone, Marbecke even denies that smoke has the power seriously to alter anything:

The taking thereof, especially in fume, (which as your self gransteth, hath very small force to work any great matter upon our bodies) can cause no such fiery, and extreme heat in the body, as is by you supposed, but rather, if it do give any heat, yet that heat is rather a familiar, and a pleasing heat, than an immoderate, extraordinary, and an aguish distemperature (19)

The heat is familiar, so that England can become capable of New World powers without having to stop being England—alter et idem: tobacco only helps the rheumatic English mind “come to herself.”

IV

A commendatory epigram to Beaumont’s The Metamorphosis of Tabacco compares tobacco’s self-consuming influence to Beaumont’s poetry:

TO THE WHITE READER
Take up these lines Tobacco-like unto thy brain,
And that divinely toucht, puff out the smoke again.

(272)

Beaumont himself quickly implies that the primary metamorphosis of his title is tobacco’s transformation into his poetry, a transformation unabashedly evoking the savage practice Monardes describes and Philaretes abhors:

But thou great god of Indian melody . . .
By whom the Indian priests inspired be,
When they presage in barbarous poetry:
Infume my brain, make my soul’s powers subtle,
Give nimble cadence to my harsher style;
Inspire me with thy flame, which doth excel
The purest streams of the Castalian well.

(276–77)

Where Marbecke tries to reconcile savage to Christian value, Beaumont characteristically insists on celebrating those features of Indian smoking, the superstition and barbarity, that most stand in the way of such a reconciliation. Beaumont’s dedicatory poem to Michael Drayton had warned readers that Beaumont would prove irreverent, since it emphasizes that the dedication is meant to be as much an affront to the powerful as a compliment to a friend: Beaumont claims he “loathes to adorn the triumphs of those men,/ Which hold the reins of fortunes, and the times.” The Latin tag ending the dedication, from Catullus’ dedication of his own work, embraces the poet’s professed marginality less mili-
tantly, joking now about Beaumont’s intellectual poverty: who better should I dedicate my poem to, asks Beaumont, “namquam tu solebas/Meas esse aliquid putare nugas,” than you who used to think my trifles (nugas) something.81 Yet with the rigor of a puritanical antagonist Beaumont in his invocation completes the traditional assault on “trifling” poetry by allying his poem not only with poverty and nugacity but with superstition. For Beaumont subscribes to an alternative—in his view Spenserian—system of “estimation,” whose genius is “the sweet and sole delight of mortal men,/The cornu-copia of all earthly pleasure” (275).82 If poetry’s influential critic Henry Cornelius Agrippa declares that poets “super fumo machinari omnia,” or, in the Elizabethan version, “devise all things upon a matter of nothing [fumo, smoke]” (33), then Beaumont will celebrate the “Castalian well” of fumo—tobacco.83

Indeed, after its invocation, Beaumont’s poem embarks on two myths of tobacco’s creation that celebrate tobacco’s worth as against the religious and temporal orthodoxy separately scorned in dedication and invocation but now combined in the figures of the Olympian gods. In the first myth, Earth and her subjects frustrate their oppressor, Jove, by enlivening Prometheus’ subversive creation, man, with the flame of tobacco (277–86); in the second, less contentious tale, Jove courts a beautiful but standoffish American nymph who outsites Apollo: Juno angrily transforms her into a plant—tobacco—but Jove retaliates by further metamorphosing his former love into “a micro-cosm of good” (286–304). While both myths associate tobacco’s value with the victimized and profane, one last hypothesis about tobacco moves value closer to conformity, though only in order to attack still another kind of tyranny. This hypothesis takes the premise of the second myth further, and decides that the gods must always have been ignorant of tobacco, or else, “had they known this smoke’s delicious smack,/The vault of heav’n ere this time had been black.” The more the Olympians are imagined as prone to love “the pure distillation of the earth” (304), the more their powers and authority are blotted out, blackened; for their love of tobacco assimilates them to Harriot’s Indian gods, and by implication the pagan Greeks and Romans to the pagan Indians.84 In other words, Beaumont involves tobacco in a rebellion now against not only religious or temporal authority but “the purest stream of the Castalian well,” the authority of the classics. Even the gods’ ignorance of tobacco damns the classical world, by reminding Beaumont’s readers of one of the first and most powerful intellectual reactions to America’s discovery, the realization that the ancients had, for all their intimidating genius, proven profoundly benighted—“Had but the old heroic spirits known” (305)85

Yet Beaumont does not want the subversion of one orthodoxy to become a triumph for another: he now explicitly asserts that those “blinder ages” (306) were indeed wrong to worship Ceres, for instance, but only because they ought to have worshiped tobacco instead. Modern times, he claims, have not abandoned superstition but discovered improvements on it:
Blest age, wherein the Indian sun had shin’d,
Whereby all Arts, all tongues have been refin’d:
Learning, long buried in the dark abyss—
Of dunstical and monkish barbarism,
When once the herb by careful pains was found,
Sprung up like Cadmus’ followers from the ground,
Which Muses visitation bindeth us
More to great Cortez, and Vespucius,
Than to our witty More’s immortal name,
To Valla, or the learned Rott’rodame.

(314–15)

To keep his distance from both orthodoxy and superstition, Beaumont now orthodoxy eschews papist superstition, “dunstical and monkish barbarism,” yet in the name not of Humanism nor of the True Church but of Tobacco.

This last profanity derives a special bite from the fact that, to many of Beaumont’s readers, the distinction between Indian and papist paganism would have seemed a nice one indeed. We’ve already seen how Marlowe conflates the two kinds of “ceremonial reverence” (and apparently some Catholic priests overseas felt the same temptation: in 1588 the Roman College of Cardinals was forced to declare “forbidden under penalty of eternal damnation for priests, about to administer the sacraments, either to take the smoke of sayri, or tobacco, into the mouth, or the powder of tobacco into the nose, even under the guise of medicine, before the service of the Mass”). George Chapman’s Monsieur D’Olive mocks the similar views of Marlowe’s enemies—here, a Puritan weaver reviling tobacco:

Said ’twas a pagan plant, a profane weed
And a most sinful smoke, that had no warrant
Out of the word; invented sure by Satan
In these our latter days, to cast a mist
Before men’s eyes, that they might not behold
The grossness of old superstition
Which is as ’twere deriv’d into the church
From the foul sink of Romish popery.

(2.2.199–206)

The difference for Beaumont seems to be one of proximity: England has just escaped papistry’s “dark abyss,” while Indian superstition is at once too distant and too primitive a threat to be taken seriously. The superior status of a blest age freed from papist barbarism now leads Beaumont to affirm that

Had the Castalian Muses known the place
Which this Ambrosia did with honor grace,
They would have left Parnassus long ago,
And chang’d their Phocis for Wingandekoe.

(315)

Elizabethan Tobacco
The wit of the final line depends on perceiving the two place names, one Greek, one Indian, as equally outlandish and barbaric, on the suggestion, again, that the ancients were no better than the Indians, or still more wishfully, that the authority of the classics, as of the Indian “people void of sense” (315), depends on the playful attribution of that authority by the enlightened English reader.

One might say that the comical mixture of classical with Indian subject matter focuses power on England as the excluded middle, whose perfect representative would seem now to be “our more glorious Nymph” (315), the virgin more successful than tobacco in withstanding the encroachments of the powers that be, of superstition East and West—that “heretical” authority, Elizabeth. Earlier in the poem Elizabeth had enabled Beaumont to make a provisional act of obeisance to the status quo by his claim that, as tobacco has replaced Ceres in the heaven of the superstitious, so Elizabeth has replaced tobacco. Wingandekoe, the American home of the tobaccoan nymph, “now a far more glorious name doth bear/Since a more beauteous nymph was worshipt there”: as Beaumont’s note explains, “Wingandekoe is a country in the North part of America, called by the Queen, Virginia” (286–87). The moral would seem to be that Elizabeth outshines the dreams of the superstitious pagan, and indeed the Cult of Elizabeth as E. C. Wilson, Yates, Roy Strong, and Greenblatt, among others, have characterized it worked by substituting itself for the cast-off “superstitions” primarily of Catholic ritual so as to absorb Catholicism’s displaced authority. Yet here Elizabeth does not stand apart, virginal, from the superstition whose authority she absorbs. The terms of praise for Elizabeth that follow—the queen is, for example, “our modern Muse,/Which light and life doth to the North infuse,” “In whose respect the Muses barb’rous are,/The Graces rude, nor is the phoenix rare”—sound if anything indistinguishable from the ones Beaumont previously applied to tobacco; in his poem at least, Elizabeth’s authority, like the poem’s itself, depends on highlighting its inseparability from overt superstition. The comparison of queen to poet helps clarify the distinction: just as Beaumont refuses to name his own religion outright and instead presents his sophistication only negatively, masquerading as Indian or ancient barbarism, so Elizabeth’s accomplishments are defined only negatively, by the degree to which she does tobacco or ancient Muse one better, and so, as Beaumont says, “exceeds her predecessors’ facts.” Beaumont nicely captures the paradox of Elizabeth’s alliance to and difference from superstition when he asserts, “Nor are her wondrous acts, now wondrous acts.”

The obscure advantages of such definition by negation seem a little more explicable in an overseas context, as “the improvisation of power,” when the English want the natives both to love them and yet still look foolish; Raleigh’s lieutenant Lawrence Keymis (1596) reports how on his return to Guiana the year after Raleigh’s visit, he found the natives constant in the devotion Raleigh taught them:
Thus they sit talking, and taking Tobacco some two hours, and until their pipes be all spent... No man must interrupt... for this is their religion, and prayers, which they now celebrated, keeping a precise fast one whole day in honor of the great Princess of the North their Patroness & Defender.\(^9\)

Of course, Catholic polemicists like Nicholas Sanders could ignore the distinction between the savage and civilized “estimation” of Elizabeth as easily as antitobacco ignored the distinction between savage and civilized smoking;\(^92\) but this problem aside, and the problem aside also of the actual depth of Indian commitment to the queen, what practical benefits did this Indian chapter of the Cult of Elizabeth actually yield England? The purpose behind Beaumont’s own version of the Cult seems obscurer still when the one “fact” of Elizabeth upon which Beaumont decides to elaborate is perhaps the most dubious one he could have chosen: he extols the queen for having

uncontroll’d stretcht out her mighty hand  
Over Virginia and the New-found-land,  
And spread the colors of our English Rose  
In the far countries where Tobacco grows,  
And tam’d the savage nations of the West,  
Which of this jewel were in vain possest.  

(316)

The last anyone had seen of England’s single New World tamer at the time, the 1587 Roanoke colony, was more than fourteen years before, and the law presumed missing persons dead after seven: John Gerard’s Herball (1597) musters as bright an optimism about the Lost Colony as could be expected when he mentions “Virginia... where are dwelling at this present Englishmen, if neither untimely death by murdering, or pestilence, corrupt air, bloody fluxes, or some other mortal sickness hath not destroyed them.”\(^93\) As the poem now turns to more strictly imperialist talk, Beaumont himself contradictorily emphasizes the hardships that still await English New World enterprise: Jove hates tobacco “as the gainsayer of eternal fate,” and so “this precious gem / Is thus beset with beasts, and kept by them.” Besides, “a thousand dangers circle round / Whatever good within this world is found,” and not the least of the dangers England continues to face are the Spanish, “far more savage than the Savages,” who indeed “have the royalty / Where glorious gold, and rich Tobacco be” (317). Beside the possibly apocryphal exportation of Elizabeth-idolatry to a small tribe in Guiana, the “facts” to which Beaumont must be pointing when he claims that Elizabeth has already tamed America, then, are presumably speech acts like Elizabeth renaming Wimgandekoe Virginia, Hakluyt calling Virginia Raleigh’s Elizabeth-like bride, Spenser placing Belphoebe in a tobacco field, and Beaumont himself writing this
poem: in other words, the importation of barbarism, and especially of its representative “jewel” tobacco, into civilized discourse.

Again symbolic returns from the New World seem almost preferable to something more substantial, and again this preference gets elaborated, in the poem’s climax, as esteeming tobacco more than gold:

For this our praised plant on high doth soar,
Above the baser dross of earthly ore,
Like the brave spirit and ambitious mind,
Whose eaglet’s eyes the sunbeams cannot blind;
Nor can the clog of poverty depress
Such souls in base and native lowliness,
But proudly scorn ing to behold the Earth,
They leap at crowns, and reach above their birth.

(317–18)

The sentiment, the contemning of mere fortune, is the same one introduced in the dedication to Drayton, but now oddly transformed from an antipolitical and individualistic pose to a national, imperialist argument: tobacco is the key to England’s late and unlikely imperial hopes, “the gainsayer of eternal fate,” precisely because it signals that the Spanish “have the royalty” of both it and gold, while the English have no empire at all. Both Beaumont’s surprising metamorphosis and his peculiar theory here follow logically, however, from his disdain for those worldlings who, like Samuel Daniel’s Philocosmus (1599), declare of “trifling” poetry: “Other delights than these, other desires, / This profit-seeking age requires.” Indeed, what in a contemporary work, the last of the Parnassus plays (1601), represents a poet’s lament about contemptuous patrons, would in Beaumont’s poem constitute a patriotic brag: “We have the words, they the possession have.” (At one point in the plays another poet even imagines this envied “possession” to be “the gold of India”; as Dekker [1603] says, “Alack that the West Indies stand so far from Universities!”) Like the Virginia of Harriot and Hakluyt, poetry for Beaumont cannot please the material-minded, and by the same token Virginia requires “the brave spirit and ambitious mind” of the man professionally equipped to see the substance in what appears substanceless—the poet: “For verses are unto them food, / Lies are to these both gold and good.”

But what inspiration is to be had from one’s total outflanking by the enemy? A standard Christian explanation of the value of such trouble—here Calvin’s explanation, in the chapter where he notes that “man’s life is like a smoke”—seems at first miles apart from Beaumont’s probable response: “For, because God knoweth well how much we be by nature inclined to the beastly love of this world, he useth a most fit mean to draw us back, and to shake off our sluggishness, that we should not stick too fast in that love.” But in justifying the imperial difficulties for which tobacco stands, Beaumont simply lowers the sights Calvin sets. Gold
has tricked the Spanish into making the literalizing, bestializing mistake of filling their bellies, while tobacco teaches the English a limited form of contemptus instead: “the clog of poverty” that tobacco represents—in short, England’s limitation to its island home—does not “depress” Englishmen in their “base and native lowliness” because that clog is made of smoke (and imported smoke at that). Poor Englishmen harness the rarefying power of Apollo, the sun, create a new Golden Age, not by embracing as the Spanish do the “terrestrial sun” of gold but by attaching themselves to something as nearly nothing as possible.

It’s crucial to remember here, however, that in rejecting any binding, material correlative to its powers, the ambitious mind does not on the other hand appeal to a heavenly correlative either; though the idea of leaping at crowns and reaching above one’s birth certainly suggests an aspiration, in spite of original sin, for a heavenly crown, tobacco smoke does not ascend that high: true, “our sweet herb all earthly dross doth hate, / Though in the Earth both nourisht and create,” but when it “leaves this low orb, and labors to aspire,” it ends up only “mixing her vapors with the airy clouds” (318), which then drop “celestial show’rs” on English heads. Beaumont wants a crown somewhere between earth and heaven, both off the ground and of it, distinguished only from the frivolous low superstition that negatively defines its purview. Tobacco’s limited, homeopathic dose of contemptus, its minor and embraceable Conflagration, cures the pangs both of worldly trouble and of contemptus itself; it helps the ambitious mind, aware now of its own unfading substance, come to itself.

An alternative explanation of Beaumont’s resistance to articulating his theology more clearly would note his multiple convictions for recusancy a few years later,98 which raises the question whether any other tobacco advocate actually holds Beaumont’s possibly anomalous position. It has not been my intention to demonstrate, however, that the writers I’ve discussed hold any one position about tobacco at all. Rather, they share certain assumptions about tobacco that are based on prior physiological, economic, poetic, and theological claims, claims that are themselves analogous and cohere around the central premises concerning England the island, limited, rheumatic, and late: either the analogies may or may not be pursued, or the writer may or may not recognize the consequences of those analogies he does pursue. Indeed, the primary value of tobacco for these writers is its negativity, its ability to mediate between normally opposed terms—between purging and feeding, high and low, superstition and religion, home and away, heaven and earth—by displacing both terms and substituting its own neither material nor spiritual “essence” instead. The negativity of Beaumont’s theological argument, for instance, substituting tobacco worship for either Protestant or Catholic polemic, may suit both his rebelliousness and his fears about recusancy convictions, but its efficacy, or danger, does not stop there. How does the imperialist reconcile his earthly ambitions to his heavenly ones? Recent scholarship, most notably Richard Bauckham’s Tudor Apocalypse, has rejected the notion

Elizabethan Tobacco
advanced by William Haller that Elizabethans perceived the millennium of Revelations 20 as a prophecy that England would establish a godly kingdom on earth; rather, “the vast majority of Tudor Protestant writers . . . interpreted the millennium of that chapter as a period in the past history of the church.” Yet Bauckham notes that, especially after the Armada, an historical and even imperialist optimism began to exceed orthodox bounds. Beaumont’s tobacco argument both makes and unmakes a *contemptus* superiority to the “carnal” millennium that worried the Elizabethans, by characterizing both a worldly and an otherworldly estimation with the same figure, smoke.

Tobacco’s critics perceive this negativity simply as negation, a problem to which even Beaumont draws attention when at the end of his poem (in lines reminiscent of the end of *The Shepheardes Calender*) he asks his Muse, now ambiguously “clok’d with vapors of a dusky hue,” to “bid both the world and thy sweet herb, Adieu”—the poem too goes up (or down?) in smoke. But then the poem’s motto, from Virgil’s *Culex*—“Lusimus, Octave, &c.”; in Spenser’s version, “We now have played (Augustus) wantonly”—has already cast this apparently wanton and excessive use of tobacco as itself dispensable, a mere fledgling poetic attempt soon to be transcended by a more properly imperial invention; the tobacco pipe simply tunes the modern pastoral. Later, when England and the newly created Virginia Company begin to pursue their imperial goal more directly, colonists like John Pory try to make the same argument about Virginia’s own tobacco craze: while deploiring the idea of a settlement based on a commodity that “in fumu . . . evani-tio,” Pory asserts that “the extreme Care, diligence, and labor spent about it [i.e., tobacco], doth prepare our people for some more excellent subject.” Yet the conveniently replacing and replaceable tobacco, the baseless fabric of this vision, refuses to fade away. The Company’s repeated assurances that some more substantial commodity will soon arise sound less and less convincing, in fact, the more essential to Jamestown tobacco becomes, the more ambiguous becomes even James’s distaste. In 1619 the College of Physicians declared home-grown tobacco unhealthy, and James banned its production, ostensibly to protect both the English smoker and the Virginian grower, but James had a personal, highly lucrative stake in the ban: in exchange for it, the Virginia Company allowed the Crown much higher duties on their tobacco imports. The colony that was supposed to expand the English economy by providing material “otherwise obtainable only ‘at the courtesy of other Princes, under the burthen of great Customs, and heavy impositions,’” had been transformed by James, then, into simply one more foreign power, with James its extortionist lord—a king not of Fairyland but of thin air.
I’d like to thank the Graduate Division of the University of California, Berkeley, for a grant that enabled me to research this topic; and Paul Alpers, Stephen Greenblatt, Dorothy Hale, Steven Knapp, Walter Michaels, James Schamus, and Lynn Wardley for reading earlier drafts of this essay and providing indispensable advice.

1. I cite A. C. Hamilton’s edition of Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* (London, 1977) throughout. I have modernized all spelling excluding Spenser’s poetry and the titles of Renaissance texts—which I have nevertheless capitalized.


3. *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1603–1610*, 140; the figures actually cover Michaelmas 1603 to Michaelmas 1604.


7. Cf., e.g., George North in *The Stage of Popish Toyes* (London, 1581): “The whole course of her Majesty’s life is miraculous” (95).


11. These quotations derive from the first chapter of G. K. Hunter’s *John Lyly: The Humanist as Courtier* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), 34, where Hunter attacks the “Whig” notion that “the ‘spaciousness’ of Elizabeth’s reign is a setting for a new-found freedom of the human spirit” (3).


15. Carol Shammas, in “English Commercial Development and American Colonization, Elizabethan Tobacco

53
1560–1620,” in Kenneth R. Andrews et al., eds., The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America, 1480–1650 (Liverpool, 1979), 151–74, argues that Elizabethan imperialism was gold-centered, while its Jacobean counterpart moved toward commodities-centered schemes. Joan Thirsk’s Economic Policy and Prospects: The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England (Oxford, 1978) sees more Elizabethan interest in commodification than Shmmas allows. This essay, on the other hand, tries to highlight a strand of Elizabethan expansionism at once uneasy about gold and, finally, indifferent to commodification.

16. For Columbus, see Brooks, Tobacco, 1:17–18; for Sparke, see ibid., 1:45.
20. James’s Counter-Blaste asserts that some of the gentry have been “bestowing three, some four hundred pounds a year upon this precious stink” (C4v).
24. John Parker, Books to Build an Empire: A Bibliographical History of English Overseas Interests to 1620 (Amsterdam, 1965), 76, on Nicolas Monardes, Segunda parte . . . de las . . . Indias Occidentales (Seville, 1571), translated by John Frampton as Joyfull Newes out of the Newe Worlde (London, 1577). (For the complicated publishing history of Monardes’ work, see Brooks, Tobacco, 1:245–46, 263–64.) Parker, whose Books is a valuable starting point for research into Renaissance English travel literature, adds that “two issues in 1577, another in 1580, and still another in 1596 were not in keeping with the tendency of most English travel books of this period to appear in only one edition, even when they were vigorously imperialistic.” His explanation of Monardes’ exceptional popularity, “its utilitarian value to medical practitioners,” sounds plausible enough but skirts two problems. First, the timing of the various editions matches two small waves of Elizabethan propaganda about America, the earlier stimulated by Martin Frobisher’s Northern voyages (1576–78), the later by Raleigh’s Guianan expedition (1595). Second, the translator Frampton was, as Parker notes, a former victim of the Spanish Inquisition and an ardent imperialist: he translated five other exploration tracts, including Marco Polo, in hopes to spur his countrymen into action. Parker maintains that this first translation is “the only one . . . in which the political motive is not evident,” which is to say, perhaps, only that Frampton became increasingly explicit about his motives. Parker’s bibliography of travel literature (243–65) makes clear that his own definition of politics, like the definitions of so many other researchers into travel literature, does not include plants—no tobacco books, not
even James's, appear there. My own explanation of Monardes' popularity, which I hope this essay will make more convincing, is that his herbal provided the sort of information about America that most interested Elizabethans in general.

25. Monardes, Joyfull Newes, 86.

26. Even James, in his proclamation of 17 October 1604 that levied a heavy custom on the weed, distinguished between “the better sort,” who “have and will use the same with Moderation to preserve their Health,” and “a number of riotous and disordered Persons of mean and base Condition, who, contrary to the use which Persons of good Calling and Quality make thereof, do spend most of their time in that idle vanity . . . and also do consume that Wages which many of them get by their Labor”; quoted in Brooks, Tobacco, 1:406–7. Cf. Doctor Clement in Ben Jonson's Every Man in His Humour (1598; published 1601) pretending to hold a similar position and scaring Cob the tobacco hater:

What? A tankard-bearer, a thread-bare rascal, a beggar, a slave that never drunk out of better than pisspot mettle in his life, and he to deprave, and abuse the virtue of an herb, so generally receiv'd in the courts of princes, the chambers of nobles, the bowers of sweet Ladies, the cabins of soldiers—Peto, away with him, by god's passion, I say, go to. (3.3.108–14)

In C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, eds., Ben Jonson, 11 vols. (Oxford, 1925–52), 3:246. Whether or not Jonson and Chapman are mocking James in particular, as Brooks assumes (1:424), Chapman's D'Olive too claims to believe that tobacco’s “lawful use” should be “limited thus: / That none should dare to take it but a gentleman, / Or he that had some gentlemanly humor, / The murr, the headache, the catarrh, the bone-ache, / Or other branches of the sharp salt rheum / Fitting a gentleman” (Monsieur D'Olive, 2.2.290–95)—so the rheum itself has come to seem a high-class affectation, like spleen.

27. “On the Continent tobacco had been generally accepted as a panacea since 1560, and as such had been woven into daily life there. But in England, about three decades later (after its fairly limited reception as a wonder-working simple) smoking suddenly and triumphantly became a social force, developing into an almost national recreation”; Brooks, Tobacco, 1:43.

28. Ibid., 1:47–49; Dickson, Panacea, 170–74. It is Raleigh's authority that Philaretus seems to have particularly in mind when in a prefatory poem he anxiously tries to distinguish his special attack on tobacco from his general endorsement of Raleigh's American projects: “Let none deny but Indies soil can yield, / The sov'reign simples, of Apollos field. / Let England Spain and the French Fleur de Lis / Let Irish Kern and the Cold seated Freese / Confess themselves in bounden duty stand / To wholesome simples of Guiana land”; Chimny-Sweepers, A4v.

29. James, Counter-blaste, B2v; William Camden too, in his Annales (London, 1615), trans. Robert Norton as The Historie of . . . Elizabeth (London, 1630), says that Raleigh's colonists “were the first that I know of, which brought into England that Indian plant. . . . Certainly from that time, it began to be in great request, and sold at an high rate”; quoted in Brooks, Tobacco, 2:156.

30. For Raleigh, see Brooks, Tobacco, 1:68; Thomas Harriot, A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia (London, 1588), reprinted by Theodore De Bry in four languages as the first volume of his America (Frankfurt, 1590); De Bry added to the original text some engravings from the watercolors of Harriot's fellow colonist John White, along with Harriot's commentary on them. I cite Paul Hulton's edition of the De Bry text (New York, 1972) throughout.

Elizabethan Tobacco 55


34. [Roger Marbecke], A Defence of Tabacco: With a Friendly Answer to Worke for Chimny-Sweepers (London, 1602); on the identification of Marbecke as the author of the Defence, see Brooks, Tobacco, 1:389. Cf. William Barclay’s “To my Lord the Bishop of Murray,” from his Næpenthes, or The Vertues of Tabacco (Edinburgh, 1614), unpaginated: “A stranger plant, shipwracked in our coast, / Is come to help this poor phlegmatic soil.”


36. Marbecke cites idleness also in his etiology, which brings the following simile about English humidity even closer to descriptions of economic and social surpluses:

For as Conduits, if they had not vents for to spend their waste water, would in time, either break, or else become unprofitable: so in our bodies, this unnatural, and over great increase of unnecessary humidities and moistures, being made by those means which I mentioned before, would breed great annoyances, if they were not lessened and wasted, by some device, or other.

Defence, 34.

37. As “good Merchandize” Ralph Lane mentions only “Sassafras, and many other roots & gums”; Quinn, Roanoke Voyages, 1:273. For sassafras as the primary New World commodity garnered by Raleigh’s man Samuel Mace in 1602, and by Bartholomew Gosnold in a voyage unlicensed by Raleigh the same year, see D. B. Quinn, England and the Discovery of America, 1481–1620 (New York, 1974), 408, 414–16; tobacco is not mentioned.

38. See William Strachey, The Historie of Traveile into Virginia Britannia (MS 1612), ed. R. H. Major, Hakluyt Society no. 6 (London, 1849), 121, 31; quoted in Brooks, Tobacco, 1:525–26; and see ibid., 1:86. Ralph Hamor says Rolfe “first took the pains to make trial thereof” in 1612; A True Discourse of the Present Estate of Virginia (London, 1615; facsimile ed., Richmond, Va., 1957), D4b; quoted in Brooks, Tobacco, 1:524.


41. The continuation of Harriot’s sentence seems to mark a separation from Indian barbarity, as if the superstitious use of tobacco hadn’t been felt as entirely barbarous
before: “but all done with strange gestures, stamping, sometime dancing, clapping of hands, holding up of hands, & staring up into the heavens, uttering therewithal and chattering strange words & noises.”

42. These two quotations, from Harriot’s captions to John White’s drawings, are Hakluyt’s translations of Harriot’s Latin.

43. For example, “Deer Skins . . . are to be had of the natural inhabitants thousands yearly by way of traffic for trifles”; Harriot, Briefe and True Report, 10. Apparently Harriot came to be regarded as England’s resident authority on the subject of Indians misvaluing things. When Christopher Newport returned to England in January 1609 with one of Powhatan’s sons,

Harriot advised that no expensive gift be made to him but that he would be satisfied with copper decorations only, so that there duly appeared in the [Northumberland house] accounts of three shillings ‘for 2 Rings and other pieces of Copper given to the Indian prince.’ Similarly, we can identify as probably chosen by Harriot, amongst the goods sent to George Percy in July 1608, ‘for blue beads’ six shillings and ‘for Red copper’ nineteen shillings and sixpence, objects Harriot had long ago found the Indians anxious to have.”


46. Shortly before his disastrous second voyage in search of El Dorado, Raleigh reportedly boasted “that he knew a Town in those parts, upon which he could make a saving Voyage in Tobacco, though there were no other spoil”; quoted in Brooks, Tobacco, 1:68, n. 8, from A Declaration of the Demeanour and Carriage of Sir Walter Raleigh (London, 1618).

47. Quoted in Brooks, Tobacco, 1:50.


49. Though Englishmen had smoked tobacco before Lane’s men returned home (see, e.g., Brooks, Tobacco, 1:240, 298), Charles de L’Ecluse’s Latin abridgment of Monardes, Segunda parte, notes that “the English returning from thence [i.e., Virginia] brought the like [Indian] Pipes with them, to drink the smoke of Tobacco; and since that time, the use of drinking Tobacco hath so much prevailed all England over, especially amongst the Courtiers, that they have caused many such like Pipes to be made to drink Tobacco with”; Exoticum Libri Decem (Leyden, 1605), trans. J. R. in his edition of Gilles Everard, Panacea; or, the Universal Medicine (London, 1659); quoted in

Elizabethan Tobacco

57
Brooks, *Tobacco*, 1.417–18. Quinn explains that “what the colonists apparently introduced was the smoking pipe used in Roanoke Island as a model for English pipe-makers”; *Roanoke Voyages*, 345–46, n. 3.

50. C. T., *An Advice How to Plant Tobacco in England* (London, 1615), A3v. This most common of tobacco jibes could appear in the mouths of foreigners—“Both Spaniards & all other Nations say tauntingly to us, when they see all our goods landed (to use their own words) *Que todo esso sepagtaa con humo*; that all will be paid in smoke”; Edward Bennett, *A Treatise . . . Touching the Inconveniences that the Importation of Tobacco Out of Spaine, Hath Brought Unto This Land* (London, c. 1620), unpaginated—and of kings: a proclamation of Charles I (January 1631) prohibited the importation of foreign tobacco so that “our Subjects may not unthriftily vent the solid Commodities of our own Kingdom, and return the proceed thereof in Smoke”; cited in Beer, *Origins*, 82.

51. Quoted in Dickson, *Panacea*, 172. While it has long been recognized that Lucian presents a similar anecdote (*Lucian*, trans. A.M. Harmon et al., Loeb Classical Library, vol. 1 [New York, 1915], 163), Dickson sensibly observes that this coincidence alone doesn't prove the story apocryphal: “It is even possible that Raleigh, having read the story in the Greek or Latin edition of Lucian, carefully arranged the matter of the wager to amuse his royal mistress.” As it is, I am less concerned with the anecdote's authenticity than with the testimony it offers about contemporary opinions of Raleigh and tobacco.


53. See Dickson, *Panacea*, 174; cf. T. W. on the Gunpowder Plotters: “In the time of their imprisonment, they rather feasted with their sins, than fasted with sorrow for them; were richly appareled, fared deliciously, and took Tobacco out of measure, with a seeming carelessness of their crime”; *The Arraignment and Execution of the Late Traytors* (London, 1606); quoted in *Supplement*, 3:133.


55. Cf. the bragadocio Bobadillo in Jonson's *Every Man in His Humor*: “I have been in the Indies (where this herb grows) where neither my self, nor a dozen Gentlemen more (of my knowledge) have received the taste of any other nutriment, in the world, for the space of one and twenty weeks, but Tobacco only. Therefore it cannot be but 'tis most divine”; 3.2.70–75.


57. Taylor, *Original Writings of the Hakluys*, 1:367–68; quoted by John Seelye, *Prophetic Waters: The River in Early American Life and Literature* (New York, 1977), who comments: “So Raleigh's constancy to Elizabeth, his loyalty to his colony, the Queen's barrenness, and Virginia's ill repute are all spun into an ambiguous fabric of allusion, ending by associating the New World with the paradisiac promised land of the Mosaic epic” (43). Seelye also observes that “Hakluyt lifts himself to a level of expression which he seldom attained” (42); the quality may in fact be Raleigh's: Hakluyt writes to him that “if there be anything else that you would have mentioned in the epistle dedicatory, you shall do well to let me understand of it betimes”; Taylor, *Original Writings of the Hakluys*, 1:355.
58. The Latin in the original compensates to some degree for this raciness, as Hakluyt's characterization of Martyr's Latin suggests: “He seeks with a distinguished and skillful pen and with lively colors in a most gifted manner the head, neck, breast, arms, in brief the whole body of that tremendous entity America, and clothes it decently in the Latin dress familiar to scholars”; Taylor, Original Writings of the Hakluyts, 363.

59. Indeed, Raleigh is free to enter America only when he has been barred Elizabeth's presence. He pursued his Discoverie of the Large Rich, and Beaufiful Empyre of Guiana (London, 1596), Raleigh explains in his dedication, “that thereby if it were possible I might recover but the moderation of excess, and the least taste of the greatest plenty formerly possessed” (4)—as if, that is, he took Hakluyt's metaphor literally, and accepted in place of the lost Elizabeth her occupiable American body. But it was such a ‘vicarious’ intercourse with Elizabeth Throckmorton that lost Elizabeth the queen originally; Raleigh's point in the now famous assertion “Guiana still hath her maid-enhead” is that, as restitution, he has foregone the more substantial surrogate bride. Nor is his propitiatory restraint (which, incidentally, had been standard English policy before Raleigh's fall) simply economic or political: none of his men, he repeatedly emphasizes, “ever knew any of their women, and yet we saw many hundreds, and had many in our power, and of those very young, and excellently favored which came among us without deceit, stark naked” (44).

60. Quinn, Roanoke Voyages, 273.


62. Unfortunately I don't have the space to consider the question of Spenser's precise intentions here, but in a longer work on which I'm currently engaged I argue that Spenser writes this scene in part to try to correct misreadings, deliberate and otherwise, of Spenser's “April” eclogue. Readers of that eclogue like Thomas Blenerhasset and George Peele either ignore or eschew the fact that Colin has forsaken pastoral celebrations of Elizabeth of the sort that Hobbinol rehearsed. Spenser is anxious about complacency regarding Elizabeth's virginity and the anti-imperial stasis that complacency represents; in the Faerie Queene episode he wants to single out Raleigh's pathos in relation to the queen's virginity as a step beyond Colin's old views, but nevertheless pastoral and static in its own way.

63. Raleigh at least understood “Belphoebe” as the queen made approachable; he laments of the angry Elizabeth after his disgrace, “A Queen she was to me, no more Belphoebe,/A Lion then, no more a milk-white dove”; Xlth Book of Ocean to Cinthia (MS 1592), 327–28; ed. Walter Oakeshott in his The Queen and the Poet (New York, 1961), 193.

64. For James tobacco is the food of the belly fillers who reject manna; he sees the English “lusting after it as the children of Israel did in the wilderness after Quails”; Counterblaste, C4r:

And a number of people that was among them, fell a lusting, and turned themselves and wept (as did also the children of Israel) and said, who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely, and the cucumbers, and melons, leeks, onions, and garlic. But now our soul is dried away: for we can see nothing else but Manna.

Num. 11.4–6; Bishops' Bible (London, 1568; revised ed., 1572). God answers this intemperance by sending “quails from the sea” (31), which bring plague with them;
what makes the story particularly apt for James is not only this projected punishment for smokers but the chance for himself to identify with Moses, who warns the Jews that “the Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. Yet ye shall not eat one day, nor two, nor five days, neither ten, nor twenty days: But a whole month, until it come out at the nostrils of you” (18–20).

65. “It was before 1560, in or about Lisbon, that the gospel of tobacco as panacea was evolved”; Brooks, Tobacco, 1:236; see Dickson, Panacea, 57–80. The most influential publicists of tobacco’s divinity were Jean Liebault, in his edition of Charles Estienne’s L’Agriculture et maison rustique (Paris, 1570), and Pierre Pena and Matthias de L’Obel, Stirpium Adversaria Nova (London, 1570–71); see Brooks, Tobacco, 1:232–42. Frampton’s English edition of Monardes (1577) includes a translation of Liebault on tobacco’s “divine effects”; Joyfull Newes, 93; see Brooks, Tobacco, 1:232.

66. James I, His Majesties Gracious Letter (London, 1622) to the earl of Southampton, treasurer of the Virginia Colony, includes this similar appraisal by the master of the king’s silk works, John Bonoeil: “Sure there is some such sorcery in this weed; it was first sown (it seems) by some Indian Enchanter’s hand, with spells and Magic verses, or otherwise you could never so much dote on it”; Supplement, 5:206.


68. The most common way to represent fears about tobacco’s ill effect on the English character is to personify tobacco as a witch or whore: e.g., “that Witch Tobacco” (James I, The Peace-maker [1618]; quoted in Dickson, Panacea, 156); “that Indian whore” (William Fennor [1617]; quoted in Supplement, 4:158); “a swarty Indian [who]/Hath played the painted English Courtean” (Philaretes, Chimny-Sweepers, A4v); “The Indian Devil, our bawd, witch, whore, man-queller” (Thomas Scot [1615–16]; quoted in Brooks, Tobacco, 2:8). This particular stigmatization of tobacco is due in part to tobacco’s associations with fast living—“It is a thing his soul doth most adore,” says John Taylor (1614) of the tobacco taker, “To live and love Tobacco, and a whore”; Brooks, Tobacco, 1:522—but more generally to worries that tobacco will block the production of legitimate Englishmen; William Vaughan (1612) wanted smokers to memorize this rhyme: “Tobacco, that outlandish weed, / It spends the brain, and spoils the seed: / It dulls the sprite, it dims the sight, / It robs a woman of her right”; quoted in Brooks, Tobacco, 2:131. This physiological argument aside, writers often depict wives complaining about the greater affection their husbands feel for tobacco; the most elaborate diatribe occurs in John Deacon, Tobacco Tortured (London, 1616): e.g., “Why dost thou so vainly prefer a vanishing filthy fume before my permanent virtues”; quoted in Brooks, Tobacco, 2:12; for more references see ibid., 5:280 under “Smokers, wives of.” Uncannily enough, the first Englishman to begin growing commercially successful tobacco in Virginia was also the first Englishman to marry an Indian: in the same breath Ralph Hamor praises John Rolfe’s importation of tobacco seeds and his marriage to Pocahontas, both done “merely for the good and honor of the Plantation”; True Discourse, D4v; quoted in Brooks, Tobacco, 1:524. (Marlowe associates tobacco with a third un-English choice: he reportedly declared “That all they that love not Tobacco & Boys were fools”; quoted in Shirley, Harriot, 182.)

69. See Brooks, Tobacco, 1:352–58, and Dickson, Panacea, 198–99. I cite Brooks’s edition of the poem, one of thirteen extant MS versions. Ray Heffner, “Essex, the Ideal Courtier,” English Literary History 1 (1934): 23, notes that William Browne alludes to the poem in the course of his meditation on Essex’s career in Britannias Pastoralis, 1.4.685–760, in Works, ed. Gordon Goodwin (London, 1894); Heffner gives 1625 as the date, though book I was first published in 1613. What Heffner fails to note,
however, is Browne's allusion in the same passage to Timias and Belphoebe also: returning from war, Essex searches for Elizabeth in the hope that “her skill in herbs might help remove” a wound. Envy gave him, but she mistakes him for a beast and kills him. To Browne’s mind, Spenser’s Timias and Essex’s poem describe the same man.


71. Thomas Jenner turned this allegorical potential of tobacco-smoking into a very popular poem (1626):

   The Indian weed withered quite  
   Green at noon, cut down at night  
   Shows thy decay, all flesh is hay,  
   Thus think then drink Tobacco.  

   The Pipe that is so lily white  
   Shows thee to be a mortal wight,  
   And even such, gone with a touch,  
   Thus think, then drink Tobacco.  

   And when the smoke ascends on high,  
   Think, thou behold’st the vanity  
   Of worldly stuff gone with a puff:  
   Thus think, then drink Tobacco.  

   And when the Pipe grows foul within,  
   Think on thy soul defil’d with sin,  
   And then the fire it doth require  
   Thus think, then drink Tobacco.  

   The ashes that are left behind,  
   May serve to put thee still in mind,  
   That unto dust, return thou must,  
   Thus think, then drink Tobacco.  

Quoted in Brooks, *Tobacco*, 2:128; see ibid., n. 2, for a bibliography of the poem’s popularity. As if to emphasize the ambiguity of Jenner’s position here—does he approve or disapprove of smoking?—the poem was published “Answered by G. W. [George Wither?] thus, / Thus think, drink no Tobacco.” Incidentally, Wither came full circle on tobacco, and published a similar *contemptus* “Meditation Whilst He Was Taking a Pipe of Tobacco” (1661) lauding tobacco’s educative powers, which he composed during his third incarceration at Newgate; see Brooks, *Tobacco*, 4:421–23.


73. Cf. 2 Pet. 3. Buttes’s awkward comparisons of the glutinous eater to an empty oven and desolate house depend on this apocalyptic resonance for their coherence. Both occur in the Psalms as figures for God’s judgment upon David’s enemies (21.9, 69.25); Christ also warns the Jerusalem that will not recognize him as its Messiah, “Behold, your habitation shall be left unto you desolate” (Mat. 23.38; Geneva Bible [Geneva, 1560]). The most revealing allusion, one by which tobacco is made to seem a cure both for itself as luxury and for the punishment of luxury, may be to Revelations and the fall of Babylon: the sea-traders “cry, when they see the smoke of her

---

Elizabethan Tobacco 61
burning, . . . Alas, alas, the great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by her costliness: for in one hour she is made desolate” (19.18–19).

74. Once again I must defer to another study the question of Spenser’s connection to this interpretation of Fairyland.


76. For a different account of this process of sublimation, see William Vaughan, _The Spirit of Detraction, Contioured and Convicted_ (London, 1611), whose prefatory epistle has certain “Cavaliers and Gentles” simply aping Monardes’ Indian priest: after smoking, they fain themselves so long ravished as it were in an ecstasy: until after a thorough perambulation of their barren wits . . . they have coined some strange accident worthy the rehearsal among their boon companions. Then as though they started out of an heavenly trance . . . they recount tales of ROBIN-HOOD, of RHODOMONTING rovers, of DONZEL DEL PHOEBEO, of a new ANTI-CHRIST born in BABYLON, of lying wonders, blazing out most blasphemous news, how that the DEVIL appeared at such a time with lightning and THUNDRING majesty . . . and if they had not suddenly blessed themselves better, he had carried away with him men, women, houses, and all right into hell.

Quoted in _Supplement_, 4:158.


78. A satiric epigram from _Humors Antique Faces_ (1605) by Samuel Rowlands nicely illustrates, by way of mockery, the idea that tobacco as miraculous fare might alone cure the economic wants Virginia was supposed to supply:

A Poor Slave once with penury afflicted,
Yet to Tobacco mightily addicted
Says, they that take Tobacco keeps their health,
Are worthy fellows in a common wealth.
For if (sayth he) Tobacco were our cheer,
Then other victuals never would be dear.
Fie on excess it makes men faint and meek,
A penny loaf might serve a man a week.
Were we conform’d to the Chameleon’s fare,
To live by smoke as they do live by air.
O how our men oppress and spoil their sense,
in making havoc of the elements.
He can give reason for what he hath spoke,
My Salamander lives by fire and smoke.
Necessity doth cause him to repeat,
Tobacco’s praise for want of other meat.

Quoted in _Supplement_, 3:131–32. An imp in William Warner’s _A Continuance of Albions England_ (London, 1611) takes the opposite view, and celebrates the “Indian weed /
That fum’d away more wealth than would a many thousands feed”; quoted in Brooks, Tobacco, 1:436.

79. Hall’s account of the invention of smoking concerns “certain Indian chiefs of the Torrid Zone, so renowned for smoking that they had blackened their insides. It is clear that this color pleased them, for it did not seem right that the inner part of their bodies should differ from their outer”; Mundus Alter et Idem, 96. Marbecke believes on the other hand that tobacco compensates for any residue it may leave in the body by purging rheum: “It bringeth no more thither, than it carrieth away from thence”; Defence, B3r. James counters that what tobacco smokers take for rheum is really only smoke condensed, “and so are you made free and purged of nothing, but that wherewith you willfully burdened your selves”; Counter-blaste, B4v.


82. Beaumont and his friends subscribe to the Spenserian tobacco tradition with a vengeance: five times in the commendatory verses and poem is tobacco called “divine,” five times “sacred,” three times “celestial,” five times its effects are “blest”; and then it is also “ethereal,” “heavenly,” “metaphysical,” “immortal”—in short, a “god”; Metamorphosis of Tobacco, passim.


84. In his De Orbo Novo, Peter Martyr includes an epitome of a treatise on Indian rites by Ramon Pane, a friar who accompanied Columbus on his second voyage. Pane describes the superstitious use of the herb cohoba; the ceremony is very similar to the tobaccoan one Monardes reports, and in fact by the end of the sixteenth century commentators accepted cohoba as tobacco; Brooks, Tobacco, 1:196. Martyr adds to the future Charles V: “Now (most noble Prince) what need you hereafter to marvel of the spirit of Apollo so shaking his Sibyls with extreme fury? You had thought that superstitious antiquity had perished”; trans. Richard Eden (1555), in Edward Arber, ed., The First Three English Books on America (Birmingham, 1885), 101–2.

85. Cf. Samuel Walsall’s praise of tobacco in his commendatory poem to Buttes: “Sovereign Nepentes, which Tobacco hight, / Tobacco not to Antique Sages known, / Sage wizards that Tobacco knewen not?”; Buttes, Dyets Dry Dinner, Aa3v. For Beaumont on tobacco replacing moly, see Metamorphosis of Tobacco, 313.

86. Jose de Acosta, ed., Concilium timense (Madrid, 1591); translated in Supplement, 2:102.
Acosta “appears to have formulated the decrees and defended them against opponents” (ibid.).

87. Cf. W. B.’s commendatory poem: “There didst thou gather on Parnassus clift,/This precious herb, Tobacco most divine,/Than which ne’er Greece, ne’er Italy did lift /A flower more fragrant to the Muses’ shrine:/A purer sacrifice did ne’er adorn/Apollo’s altar, than this Indian fire”; Beaumont, Metamorphosis of Tobacco, 268–69. Nothing English figures in this account of the poem except Beaumont’s head, which W.B. compares to a tobacco pipe.


The clearest explanation of this process, and the terms I’ve used, are Green-blatt’s, in his discussion of an Accession Day celebration that seems to combine both classical allusion and Catholic ceremony: “The Roman mythology, deftly keyed to England’s Virgin Queen, helps to fictionalize Catholic ritual sufficiently for it to be displaced and absorbed”; Renaissance Self-Fashioning, 230.

89. Cf. The Masque of Flowers (London, 1614; E. A. J. Honigmann, ed., in A Book of Masques: In Honour of Allartyc Nicoll, ed. T. J. B. Spencer et al. [Cambridge, 1967]), produced by Francis Bacon for Somerset’s marriage in 1614, which stages a kind of mock Great Instauration celebration of modern times. The masque begins with a debate about the relative merits of wine, represented by Silenus, and tobacco, represented by an Indian god described by Harriot, “Kiwasa” or “Kawasha.” Part of Kawasha’s argument is that “Nothing but fumigation/Doth chase away ill sprites,/Kawasha and his nation/Found out these holy rites” (166). The joke on tobacco is first that Kawasha is himself an ill sprite, and second that no one wants to chase him away, not entirely: the scene of the masque is a walled city, before which sit “on either side a temple, the one dedicated to Silenus and the other to Kawasha” (161). The debate soon gives way to a more explicit account of Britain’s superiority to either classical or Indian barbarism, when James transforms some painted flowers—meta-morphosed gentlemen, we discover—back into men; a song helps explain the allegory:

| Give place you ancient powers,  |
| That turned men to Flowers,     |
| For never Writers pen          |
| Yet told of Flowers return’d to Men:  |
| Chorus: But miracles of new event |
| Follow the great Sun of our firmament. |

(168)

The apparent euhemerism of the allegory, in which the enlightening sun of James reverses the classical transformation of men into myths or “flowers”—poesies—does not demand that superstition be discarded; rather, the enlightened song is itself sung by twelve “Garden-gods,” also referred to as “Priests.” The masque wants Britain to retain superstition so that potentially heretical claims for Britain’s superiority, indeed for its millennialness, may be maintained, but negatively: Britain is here simply “fit to be” the millennial “fifth monarchy” of Dan. 7.27.

90. I refer to the title of the last chapter of Greenblatt’s Renaissance Self-Fashioning.

91. Lawrence Keymis, A Relation of the Second Voyage to Guiana, C3r; quoted in Dickson,
Panacea, 138. When Beaumont referred earlier to Elizabeth being “worship” in America, he may have been either misremembering this Guianan anecdote or alluding to the much less dramatic submission of the Virginian weroance or chief Menatonon, who ordered his vassal king Okisko “to yield himself servant, and homager, to the great Weroanza of England”; Menatonon seems to have been impressed less by Elizabeth’s virtues than by the fact that at the time Lane held his “best beloved son prisoner with me”; Quinn, Roanoke Voyages, 279, 262.

92. See, e.g., Yates, Astraea, 80–81.
95. Leishman, Return Part 2, 403; Return Part 1, 368; Thomas Dekker, The Wonderfull Year (London, 1603); quoted in Robert Ralston Cawley, The Voyagers and Elizabethan Literature (Boston, 1958), 298, n. 152. The Parnassus plays, when optimistic, also transform the scholar’s material poverty into his spiritual purity: on his way to Parnassus, Philomusus declares, “Though I foreknow that dolts possess the gold,/Yet my intended pilgrimage I’ll hold”; while Studioso adds the moral, “Within Parnassus dwells all sweet content,/Nor care I for those excrements of earth”; Pilgrimage, 5.594–97. In the later plays of the trilogy, however, after the scholars return to the quotidian world, this otherworldliness becomes more difficult to maintain, and tobacco soon surfaces as a correlative to ambivalence about poetical “spirit,” sometimes like ale inspiring mere vapors (Return Part 2, 160–62), other times representing a more positive but still jocular alternative to the gold scholars lack: Philomusus, pleased with Luxurio’s wit, prays that “long for a reward may your wits be warm’d with the Indian herb” (Return Part 1, 432–34).
96. Agrippa, Vanitie, 33.
98. Sell, Shorter Poems, 8–10.
100. Noted by Grosart, in Beaumont, Metamorphosis of Tobacco, 265.
102. For tobacco’s fortunes in the seventeenth century, see Edmund S. Morgan’s superb American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia (New York, 1975).
103. James’s silk master Bonoeil had warned the colony, “Do not then still Ixion-like, embrace a cloud, for Juno, and smoke for substance”; Letter, quoted in Supplement, 4:206; but even James soon had to admit that tobacco had truly become a miraculous nourishment: in 1624 he noted how “the planters of Virginia have implored consideration for their languishing colony, which can only subsist at present by its tobacco”; Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1623–25, 290.

Elizabethan Tobacco 65
