

“Some outlandish Fruits”: Foreign trade, Domestic spaces.

This paper comes out of the work of the Centre for the Political Economies of International Commerce at the University of Kent, so it seems sensible to begin by just outlining what we’re trying to do there; that will, hopefully, give you a sense of the broader context into which this work intervenes, and where it might be going.

We take as our starting point two parallel narratives of the seventeenth century – a global economic boom fuelled, among other things, by international trade (or exploitation); and the development of the English Constitution, potentially including its exportation to the rest of the world. We want to put those two together, and ask how the global trading company affected the development of the English Constitution.

In many ways this is not a new question – scholars have increasingly looked at the role of domestic corporate structures (such as city companies or livery companies) within state formation and governance. Yet global trading companies have often been overlooked in this discussion. These early multinationals link the global and the local via state finance, trade, and models of exchange, in ways that other forms of overseas governance (palatinates, crown colonies etc.) do not.

The project thus produces a new and (potentially) powerful field: corporate constitutionalism. We aim to capture the pro- and anti-corporate discourses of the seventeenth century, and assess this dialogue's influence on constitutional matters and the integration of global and local. In doing so, we can produce 4 interlinked narratives of the seventeenth century: [SLIDE]

1. Global century: ‘pre-colonial’ expansion, discovery and engagement
2. Corporate century: rise of the global trading company
3. Constitutional century: domestic narrative and international narrative, which depicts constitutional history in a very different light
4. Global century of corporate constitutionalism: integrates domestic and international narratives of constitutional change into corporate history

Clearly, I won’t touch on all of these themes today, and in fact none of them especially directly. What I want to investigate, in this, paper, is the broader question of local and global, and especially the mechanics of the exchanges and interactions

between those categories. Did the overseas encounters prompted and experienced by the companies lead to a change either in domestic self-conception? And did these new forms of commerce change what was understood by 'exchange'?

In 1632, the clergyman and self-professed traveller Donald Lupton produced a text called *London and the country Carbonadoed* [cut into pieces], which wittily described aspects of life and social groups. His description of merchants is especially revealing: [SLIDE]

Rough Seas, Rockes, and Pyrats, treacherous Factors, and leaking ships affright them: they are strange polititians, for they bring *Turkey* and *Spaine* into *London*, & carry *London* thither. Ladies surely love them, for they have that which is good for them, *Farre fetcht*, & *dearrly bought*: they may proove stable men, but they must first leave the Exchange. It is a great House full of goods; though it be almost in the middle of the Citty, yet it Stands by the Sea.¹

There are two striking things about this passage, leaving the misogyny aside. Firstly, the sense that merchants are able to transport geographies – London and foreign countries are commodified, in the sense that they become sets of values or ideas which can be transported and traded; secondly is the importance he places on 'exchange'. So much weight does he give to the term that he entitles the section on merchants 'Exchanges Old and New', pointing to places of exchange, types of commerce, and new goods.

We can see the same combination played out in the diplomatic sphere as well. In 1604, James I held a feast to celebrate peace between England and Spain, at which he [SLIDE]

handed to his principal guest, the Constable of Castile, a melon and six oranges still hanging on a green branch. These were the fruits of Spain, he said, transplanted into England.²

The orange, of course, is not native to Britain, and in a pamphlet of the same year was specifically identified as something foreign, belonging to Spain: 'for apples and such ordinary fruit England; for oranges, lemons, pomegranates and such like, Spain

¹ Donald Lupton, *London and the Countrey Carbonadoed and Quartred into Seuerall Characters*, (London, 1632), pp. 25-6.

² Op. cit. Mary Anne Caton and Joan Thirsk, *Fooles and Fricassees : Food in Shakespeare's England*, (Washington, D.C.: Folger Shakespeare Library), p. 21.

and other hot countries'.³ James is not here celebrating the newness or exotic nature of the orange, but rather re-exporting it as a kind of 'English' fruit. James' act reveals a nationalist pride in the ability of England to absorb, nourish and renew the domestic foods of other lands. Just as with Lupton's merchants, we have here both the sense that something is being brought back to England, and that it has a value in the fact of being exchanged – in this instance, a diplomatic gift, which also makes a nationalist point.

It is these two factors, when linked together by trade, which I wish to examine in this paper. Essentially, my question is this: does foreign trade create new meanings for 'exchange', and is there a shift around the culture of 'exchange' in the early modern period?

I shall return to the specific ways in which food can play a part in this exchange later. But the natural world continued to play a part in Stuart allegories of exchange. This [SLIDE] is Van Dyke's portrait of the Royal couple, commissioned in 1634 for the royal household, to replace an earlier portrait by Daniel Mytens (who was apparently so humiliated by the insult he left England). As Laura Knoppers has observed, Henrietta Maria is herself translated into an English queen in this portrait: 'the portraiture both represented the Stuart dynasty and mapped onto that dynasty the values of a domestic relationship'.⁴ Here, the King and the queen are equals, looking out onto a classically English setting with the trappings of state clearly visible. They are exchanging tokens, an olive sprig from Charles and a laurel wreath from Henrietta Maria, which represent their national dynasties. Yet at the instant the artist has captured, Henrietta Maria holds both of the tokens, albeit in a submissive pose; the exchange thus points to questions of nationality and national identity, and the way that is fashioned by contact with the foreign or overseas.

The trading companies combine economic and cultural exchange precisely because of their overseas locations. Sir Thomas Roe, the first official ambassador to the court of the Mughal in India, was acutely aware of the kinds of transactions and compromises he was forced to make in his new role and setting. Discussing a trade dispute with the Portuguese over Surat, Roe noted in his journal that [SLIDE]

³ Thomas Palmer, *An Essay of the Means how to make our Travels, into Foreign Countries, the more Profitable and Honourable* (1604), p. 84.

⁴ Laura Lunger Knoppers, *Politicizing Domesticity* (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2013), p.23.

I was enforced to see me content, because I had no way to see remedie, for Presents I had none, and the King neuer takes any request to heart, except it come accompanied, and will in plaine tearmes demand it.⁵

Here, Roe suggests that his job as an ambassador is to act for the company by gaining 'redress' from Jahangir, and to do so requires 'Presents'. Rupali Mishra has shown Roe's "difficulties in squaring what he saw as mercantile interests with what he understood as the courtly and state demands of his embassy."⁶ But here the interests overlap – the exchange of presents will, in this instance, be beneficial for the company, but they are also the broader way in which Roe gains diplomatic and cultural influence at court. This is a theme he returns to over and over in his journal, recording both the prodigious amounts of gifts he had to give, and bemoaning the cost of doing so. That frustration was felt on both sides, since the Company clearly grew tired of Roe's requests, and his spending of their money at the court of Jahangir: [SLIDE]

[I]t is thought he should not have power to make presents without advice; and that the chief factor at Surat should have management of all the Company's affairs, Roe is not to intermeddle with their business and merchandise.⁷

I'll leave aside the ramification of this for Roe's mission – though it was evidently less successful than he would like to portray in his journal. It is the company, not Roe, that seeks to keep business and diplomatic interests separate, and I would speculate that is because they do not have the on-the-ground experience that Roe does, and so cannot understand the power networks of the Mughal court, and exchanges, both literal and metaphorical, that they demand.

Though diplomatic gift-giving, or even bribery, is not new, Roe frequently makes a connection not to an exchange of gifts, or protocol, but the exchange of material for immaterial things. The 'Remedie' he seeks comes at the price of a present; indeed, Roe makes the same point to Jahangir: [SLIDE]

⁵ Thomas Roe, 'Observations Collected out of the Journall of Sir Thomas Roe, Knight, Lord Embassadour from His Maiestie of Great Britaine, to the Great Mogol', in *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas, His Pilgrimages*, ed. by Samuel Purchas (London, 1625), pp. 536-78 (p. 545).

⁶ Rupali Mishra, 'Diplomacy at the Edge: Split Interests in the Roe Embassy to the Mughal Court', *Journal of British Studies*, 53 (2014), 9.

⁷ CSPC Oct. 7-14, 1614.

the King would give me a Coat and money to beare my charges to the Prince. I returned answere, that I had no use of a Babylonish Garment, nor needed money; if his Majestie were pleased to consider the injuries offered, of which the Paper testified remayned in his hands, and to give me his Letter to the Prince with some Presents or else to write in my excuse, it was all I would desire, but for his gifts I expected none but Justice.⁸

Roe attempts to turn the diplomatic capital of gift-giving into trade benefits, exchanging the material object for more intangible benefits which he hopes will be exchanged again into material benefits by the merchants in Surat. Roe uses the exchange of presents to attempt to insert himself into the local power networks; note his refusal to go to the prince without Jahangir's letter – that is, decision on the trade dispute – suggesting that he well understands the power functions on the Indian subcontinent, and that he cannot perform the same exchange of influence for action outside of the Emperor's court.

Similarly, Roe attempted to imbue the gifts that he offered Jahangir with value precisely because they were exchanged. Roe tells Jahangir that he will not offer him things that might seem to have intrinsic value, because Jahangir is already wealthy enough: [SLIDE]

He asked what kind of curiosities those were I mentioned, whether I meant Jewels and rich stones. I answered, No: that we did not thinke them fit Presents to send backe, which were brought first from these parts, whereof he was chiefe Lord; that we esteemed them common here, and of much more price with us.⁹

Instead, Roe offers 'things for his Majestie, as were rare here, and unseene, as excellent artifices in painting'. At the New Year celebration, it was customary to offer lavish gifts to Jahangir, and the ambassador, for once, took part in the court ritual. He describes the scene thus: [SLIDE]

the place where the King comes out a square of fiftie sixe paces long, and fortie three broad was rayled in, and covered over with faire Semianes or Canopies of Cloth of Gold, Silke, or Velvet joyned together, and sustained with Canes so covered: at the upper end

⁸ Roe, p. 567.

⁹ Ibid. p. 544.

West, were set out the Pictures of the King of England, the Queene, the Lady Elizabeth, the Countesses of Somerset and Salisbury, and of a Citizens wife of London; below them an other of Sir Thomas Smith, Governor of the East-India Companie.¹⁰

The scene is sumptuous, and yet finishes with some presumably rather dull portraits of English grandees. What made Roe offer these paintings? Doubtless there was a degree of expediency; paintings were relatively easy to acquire and transport (unlike the horses Jahangir frequently requested). Roe clearly could not afford to match the excess of the court, and so had to create value in another way. The paintings take on a surplus value in India because, as Roe understands, they become exotic commodities by being exchanged out of England.

A later gift, a painting of Venus and a satyr, moved away from this policy, and in doing so caused great distress at the court. Roe reports that Jahangir told his interpreter to stop translating, and then [SLIDE]

asked his Lords what they conceived should be the interpretation or morall of that, he shewed the Satyres hornes, his skinne which was swart, and pointed to many particulars: every man replied according to his fancie; but in the end hee concluded they were all deceiued: and seeing they could judge no better, hee would keepe his conceit to himselfe, iterating his command to conceale this passage from me [...] I suppose, he understood the Morall to be a scorne of *Asiatiques* whom the naked Satyre represented, and was of the same complexion and not unlike; who being held by *Venus* a white woman by the Nose, it seemed that shee led him Captiue. Yet he revealed no discontent, but rould them up, and told me he would accept him also as a Present.¹¹

Roe tells this story ruefully, defending himself by noting “I had neuer seene the Picture, and by Ignorance was guiltlesse”; however, it also serves as a warning. Roe appears to believe that Jahangir has wilfully misinterpreted the painting, and warns those who follow him that “what they send, may be subiect to ill Interpretation: for in that point this King and people are very pregnant and scrupulous, full of ieaousie and trickes”. The point here is that Jahangir has room to interpret the painting - the earlier portraits were not ostensibly allegorical, simply symbols of ‘Englishness’ to be paraded in front of the Emperor. That is, the

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 543.

¹¹ Ibid. pp. 564-65.

terms of the exchange have slipped from Roe as soon as he cannot select the portraits.

Clearly, the concept of exchange is not new to the early modern period. We find references to 'exchanges' as far back as Chaucer, and there are numerous other witnesses in medieval texts, proclamations and laws. As far as I can ascertain, however, the word is generally used in the prosaic sense of a straight swap of one thing for another, either generally or specifically as a financial transaction. However, the connotations around the act of exchanging, the negotiations and contingencies that involves, and the ways in which exchanging itself might be profitable or valuable only fully appear in the early modern period. Indeed, according to the *OED* (which is, admittedly, not always reliable in this sort of matter), the verb form 'to exchange' only became current in the middle of the sixteenth century.

This is best exemplified by the building that bears that name – the Royal Exchange. Founded in 1571 by Sir Thomas Gresham, the Exchange quickly became a site not only for merchants to do business, but a place for booksellers and other tradesmen, and where the fashionistas and socialites of London could see and be seen. [SLIDE]

From the Pawn the stream of gay people flowed to Bucklersbury, where were the Indian shops with their scents and perfumes, and the Italian Confectioners, where they took their supper before going home to bed.¹²

Mason, infuriatingly, gives no source for this anecdote, though it is certainly true that Bucklersbury was known for its food and exotic goods: "This whole street, called *Buckles bury*, on both the sides throughout, is possessed of *Grocers* and *Apothecaries*".¹³

The Royal Exchange soon shifted in function from a place where sales of goods and merchandise could be agreed, becoming an arena where new forms of credit and financial transactions could be devised and take place. The diplomat and MP Thomas Wilson, writing the year after its foundation, outlines its new use as a place of loans and speculation: [SLIDE]

¹² A. E. W. Mason, *The Royal Exchange : A Note on the Occasion of the Bicentenary of the Royal Exchange Assurance*, (London: Royal Exchange, 1920), p. 25.

¹³ James Howell, *Londinopolis, an Historicall Discourse or Perlustration of the City of London, the Imperial Chamber, and Chief Emporium of Great Britain*, (London, 1657), p. 113.

[If a poor man] can put in good sureties, and wil be content to pay for the lone as hee may have of others, and as it goethe commonlye in the royall exchange, hee will lende hym thereafter, otherwise he cannot deale, for his [the merchant's] money ys hys lyvinge, and it shall not come home as it went oute, for so hee might have kept it stil, without all danger or losse whatsoever.¹⁴

Usury was becoming less of a moral issue in late sixteenth century Europe, as new laws reducing the maximum rate of interest also reduced the moral panic it produced. However, as this anecdote suggests, the attendant risk of mercantile capital also protected the merchants from charges of usury. As John Baker points out, "It was the element of risk which made financial investments lawful".¹⁵ The exchange, then, was a place of investment, where the risk of merchant and merchant capital legitimately created new wealth by the process of exchange and circulation, a theory eagerly propagated by the company-sponsored economist who wrote on the new trade and markets.

The growth in credit went alongside, and indeed helped form, new forms of exchange and enterprise. The merchant's money is his living, says Wilson, in capitalist terms that are normal to us now, but were startling and new then. Indeed, the economic theorist, and director of the East India Company, Thomas Mun noted that the growth of international credit and currency exchanges was taking the place of trade in goods: [SLIDE]

the benefit doth arise unto other Countries, who diligently observing the prizes whereby the monies bee exchanged, may take advantage, to carrie away the Gold and Silver of this Realme at those times, when the rate of our sterling money (in Exchange) is under the value of that Standard, unto which place they are conueyed; [...] the exchange is hereby become rather a Trade for some great moneyed men, then a furtherance and accomodation of reall Trade to Merchants, as it ought to be in the true use thereof.¹⁶

¹⁴ Thomas Wilson, *A discourse uppon usurye by waye of dialogue and oracions, for the better varietye, and more delite of all those, that shall reade thys treatise* (1572), p. 19.

¹⁵ John Baker, *The Oxford History of the Laws of England: 1483-1558*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 833.

¹⁶ Thomas Mun, *A Discourse of Trade, from England Unto the East-Indies Answering to Diuerse Objections Which Are Usually Made against the Same*, (London: John Piper, 1621), p. 52.

Credit and investment are beginning to take over from direct trade, a movement that found its zenith, at the turn of the seventeenth century, in the establishment of the joint-stock companies like the EIC – here, private investors provided short-term credit for voyages to the East-Indies, and the Company in return promised a return on that investment. For the first time, merchants could get rich from international trade without leaving the (relative) comfort and safety of London.

Non-merchants, too, felt the effect of these international exchanges, as material goods (and immaterial ideas and practices) began to enter London in greater quantities, and more consistently, than ever before. English cookbooks reflect the availability – and necessity of consumption – of the products of Oriental trade. Robert Markley notes the ‘changes in the diets, recipes and tastes of Englishmen and women to transform what were still luxury condiments into essential foodstuffs’.¹⁷ Spices were added to almost every dish, whether savoury or sweet. Just as with the Portuguese, Cinnamon was added to classic English desserts such as rice-pudding, but also used to create new desserts, such as spiced fruits. One recipe, for ‘strawberry’, called for the strawberries to be washed in red wine and then boiled in almond milk, to which should be added ‘raisins of Corinth, saffron, pepper, sugar great plenty, powder ginger, canell, and galingale’.¹⁸ In a manner reminiscent of Milton’s description of ‘spicy nut-brown ale’ (*L’Allegro*, 100¹⁹), Tobias Venner suggested mitigating the ‘waterish’ qualities of ‘Cider and Perrie’ [Pear cider] with ‘sugar, nutmeg, and especially ginger, which chiefly correcteth their crude and windy quality’.²⁰ Robert Burton, with a similar emphasis on humeral medicine, suggested that a drink of ‘nutmeg and ale’ before bed might help those with ‘dry brains’ avoid nightmares.²¹

Meat dishes, though, were where the English mainly used their spices. One recipe for white pudding spiced up the relatively bland dish considerably with the addition of ‘Nutmegs and Sugar’.²² Joseph Cooper, Charles I’s former personal chef, released a cookbook that, obviously trading on his royal status, professed that it

¹⁷ Robert Markley, *The Far East and the English Imagination 1600-1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008), p.40

¹⁸ Op. cit. C. Anne Wilson, *Food and Drink in Britain* (London: Constable & Co., 1973), p. 287.

¹⁹ John Milton, *The Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. by John Carey, 2nd edn (Longman, 2007). All references to Milton’s short poems are taken from this edition.

²⁰ Tobias Venner, *Via recta ad vitam longam, or A plaine philosophical discourse of the nature, faculties, and effects, of all such things, as by way of nourishments* (1620), p. 33-34.

²¹ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), 2.2.5, p. 358.

²² M. B., *The Ladies Cabinet enlarged and Opened* (1654), p. 206.

would bring 'so many uncommon, and undeflowered *Recipes* prostituted to the public view'.²³ Cooper's recipes themselves, though obviously not entirely everyday, are certainly within reach of at least the middle classes, dealing with cheaper cuts of meat, as well as preservatives, jellies and so forth. One recipe, 'How to farce [stuff] a knuckle of veal', tells the reader to [SLIDE]

Take half a pound of Suet and mince it very small, and put to it grated Bread, one grated Nutmeg, a little beaten Clove and Mace, a little Sugar, Salt, a pretty quantity of Time, Rosemary minced very small, and a quarter of a pound of Currants, mix all these together with an Egg and a little Verjuice, and stuff your Knuckle with it, and boil it; for the sauce, take some of the broth which boiled it, with Verjuice or Vinegar, a sliced Nutmeg, Currants and sweet Herbs minced, then boil it an hour, and put in some Lemmon, Butter and Sugar; beat it, and dish your Veale, then pour it on it.

Clearly it is the herbs and spices (as well as sugar) given precedence here - it is the confident use of these ingredients that mark Cooper's recipes as high-status, for the meat is treated in precisely the usual manner: stuffed, boiled and served. Around half of his recipes involve nutmeg, mace or pepper, and almost all of the meat dishes call for one or more spices. As Cooper's text seems to provocatively advertise, spices were no longer the expensive additions of the very wealthy (a 'Clerk of the Spicery' had been attached to the royal household for around 200 years before Cooper's text), but rather an everyday part of middle-class English kitchens. Cooper is actually fairly unusual in that he advises precisely how to use them – differentiating between grated and sliced nutmeg, for example – whereas other texts simply rely on the reader, telling them to 'take' a wide variety of condiments and assuming their own experience will inform them as to quantity and preparation.

Gervase Markham, who had written a number of tracts on the diseases and care of horses, many of which began to use spices in this period, extended his medicinal advice to women:

For the wind *Colic*, which is a disease both general and cruel, there be a world of remedies, yet none more approved then this which I will repeat: you shall take *Nutmegs* sound and large, and divide them equally into four quarters: the first morning as soon as you rise eat a quarter thereof; the second morning eat two quarters, and the third

²³ Joseph Cooper, *The Art of Cookery Refined and Augmented* (1654), A2v.

eat three quarters, and the fourth morning eat a whole *Nutmeg*, and so having made your stomach and fast familiar therewith, eat every morning whilst the Colic offend you a whole *Nutmeg* dry without any composition, and fast ever an hour at least after it, and you shall find a most unspeakable profit which will arise from the same.²⁴

Though there is a sense here that the nutmeg is a foreign commodity, it is the domestic body that must adjust, slowly increasing consumption until it is 'familiar' with the unusual plant. Markham, just like Almond, prefers this new remedy over the 'world of remedies' that had existed before, as well as notably figuring the result of the eating of nutmeg as a bodily 'profit'.²⁵

What is noteworthy about all these recipes (and cures) is precisely how normal spices have become, and how quickly they have integrated into quintessentially 'national' dishes. The exotic foods are presented not as interlopers, but as a kind of 'fusion cuisine' between Europe and its Others. Like the merchants who bring Turkey to London, chefs can bring the East Indies to their tables, to coexist with English recipes and foodstuffs.

In this way, the new exchanges overseas became something that everyone in the nation took part in. Charles Davenant, writing at the close of the seventeenth century, noted that the profit of the new trades [SLIDE]

did not, all of it, accrue to the Adventurers in the Company, but was National, and divided among many Thousands of the People. The Merchants, who at the Companies Sales bought Goods for Exportation, had their Share, and the Retailers here had their Proportion.²⁶

In Davenant's analysis, the circulation of goods and money creates wealth generally for the nation, and its people. Mercantile exchange brings in its wake domestic exchange, as tables, medicine-cupboards, fashion and even national identity shift in order to accommodate the outlandish fruits of trade.

²⁴ Gervase Markham, *Country Contentments, or the English Huswife* (1623), p. 27.

²⁵ There is some medical evidence for the efficacy of nutmeg in treating diarrhoea; see J. A. Barrowman et al., 'Diarrhoea In Thyroid Medullary Carcinoma: Role Of Prostaglandins And Therapeutic Effect Of Nutmeg', *British Medical Journal*, 3 (1975), 11-12.

²⁶ Charles Davenant, *An Essay on the East-India-Trade* (1696), p.17 and 51.