**Michel Eyquem, seigneur de Montaigne** (1553-92), the renowned French essayist and somtime mayor of Bordeaux, published the first volume of his collected ***Essais*** in 1580; expounded editions followed in 1588 and 1595. **The essay on cannibals** was written in 1578-80 and is based in large part on information that Montaigne gleaned from one of his servants, who had spent several years among the Tupinambas, and to a much lesser extent on his own conversation, imperfectly translated, with a Brazilian Indian at Rouen in 1562. The **Essayes** were published in London, “done into English By… **John Florio**” (1545-1625), the Oxford-educated son of an Italian immigrant, and later tutor to Prince Henry. The following selection is taken from chapter 30 (31 in later editions) of Florio’s translation, pp. 100-7.

**“Of the Caniballes”**

… I finde [as farre as I have beene informed] there is nothing in that nation [Brazil], that is either barbarous or savage, unlesse men call that barbarisme, which is not common to them. As indeede, we have no other ayme of truth and reason, then the example and Idea of the opinions and customes of the countrie we live in. Where is ever perfect religion, perfect policie, perfect and complete use of all things. They are even savage, as we call those fruites wilde, which nature of hir selfe, and of hir ordinarie progresse hath produced: whereas indeede, they are those which our selves have altered by our artificiall devises, and diverted from their common order, we should rather terme savage. In those are the true and most profitable vertues, and naturall proprieties most livelie and vigorous, which in these we have bastardized, applying them to the pleasure of our corrupted taste. And if notwithstanding, in divers fruites of those countries they were never titled, we shall finde, that in respect of ours they are most excellent, and as delicate unto our taste, there is no reason, arte should gaine the point of humour of our great and puissant mother Nature. We have so much by our inventions, surcharged the beauties and riches of hir workes, that we have altogether over-choaked her; yet where ever hir puritie shineth, she makes our vaine, and frivolus enterprises wonderfully ashamed. …

… I think there is more barbarisme in eating men alive, than to feede upon them being dead; to mangle by totures and torments a body full of lively sense, to roast him in peeces, to make dogges and swine to gnawe and teare him in manmockes (as we have not onely read, but seeme very lately, yea and in our owne memorie, not amongst ancient enemies, but our neighbours and fellow-citizens; and which is worse, under pretence of piety and religion) then to roast and teare him after he is dead. …

… But there was never any opinion found so unnaturall and immodest, that would excuse treason, treachery, disloyalty, tyrannie, crueltie, and such like, which are our ordinary faults. We may then call them barbarous, in regarde of reasons rules, but not in respect of us that exceede them in all kinde of barbarisme. Their warres and noble and generous, and have as much excuse and beautie, as this humane infirmitie may admit: they ayme at nought so much, and have no other foundation amongst them, but the mere jealosie of vertue. They contend not for the gaining of new landes; for to this day, they yet enjoy that naturall ubertie and fruitfulnesse, which without laboring-toyle, doth in such plenteous aboundance furnish them with all necessary things, that they neede not enlarge their limites. They are yet in that happy estate, as they desire no more, then what their naturall necessities direct them: whatever is beyond it, is to them superfluous. …