

Eating and Ethics in Shakespeare's England. David B. Goldstein.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. xiv + 280 pp. \$99.

Goldstein's beautifully crafted monograph on eating and ethics in early modern England aims to approach early modern food studies through a communal and relational emphasis, captured in his choice of the term and concept of *commensality*. Goldstein begins by articulating the distinction between eating and food, privileging the former in his study as the key term, with its emphasis on a relation-oriented study of food, in contrast to an object-oriented approach that much work on early modern food studies has privileged.

To structure his argument on commensality and relational eating, Goldstein divides the volume into two parts that address the destructive and constructive applications of communal eating, beginning with the former in "Cannibal Ethics." In his smart and carefully wrought first chapter, "The Cook and the Cannibal: *Titus Andronicus* and New World Eating," Goldstein examines how New World and Old World models for cannibalism/anthropophagy (and the distinction is intentional) form a palimpsest of signifiers through which to read Shakespeare's *Titus*. Importantly, it is through New World eating that new possibilities for reading *Titus* open up to us, as Goldstein guides us through how the influence of, in particular, Francisco López de Gómara's and Bartolomé de Las Casas's competing accounts of New World ingestion-inflected savagery, registering in contrasting depictions of the conquistadores' relationships with the Indians, informs how we might understand the destructive cannibal ethics we see played out between the Goths and the Romans of the play. Goldstein's effective argumentation continues in his second chapter. His strength here is his careful close reading of the various contradictions in Shylock's assertions of gastronomic similarity and difference. "I Will Not Eat with You: Failures of Commensality in *The Merchant of Venice*" provides the framework for examining how eating and community fail to intersect in productive ways in Shakespeare's play. Throughout, Goldstein is attuned to the nuances of the terms he uses, which also allows for delightful witticisms that derive from turns of phrases: "The food at this feast is not humanism but humans" (78).

In part 2 of the volume, “Communion and Community,” Goldstein begins in his third chapter, “Anne Askew, John Bale, and the Stakes of Eating,” by tracing the problematic of the Eucharist. The ritual of ingesting wafer and wine lies at the heart of religious contention about eating, and Goldstein explains how religious ideas of community drew from the differences in belief about the literality of what happened in the body with the ingestion of the Eucharist. To what extent did believers believe they were truly eating the body and blood of Christ? The chapter is an unexpected but effective transition from Goldstein’s analysis of cannibalism, turning from the conflation of food and body to the correspondences between food and the Word. Goldstein follows with a transition to recipes and to his fourth chapter. His argument about Ann Fanshawe’s recipe book, in “How to Eat a Book: Ann Fanshawe and Manuscript Recipe Culture,” is predicated on attributions of authorship and the network of relations they underscore. But the title is in some ways misleading — rather than an exploration of the manuscript recipes, the chapter’s strength comes from Goldstein’s reading of Fanshawe’s memoir, in productive dialogue with her family’s recipe book. Goldstein here demonstrates how early modern work in recipes can produce especially generative readings of other textual genres. Finally, Goldstein moves to John Milton, in “Eaters of Eden: Milton and the Invention of Hospitality,” to demonstrate how eating and commensality underlie the entire ethos of *Paradise Lost*, using references to other works to sketch out Milton’s “gastro-theology.” Goldstein reads Eve’s Fall as a moment of misunderstanding the ethics of community and communal eating. The result is effective and thought provoking, although Goldstein’s illustration of the extreme community-as-unity at the end does not quite do justice to the strength of his argument in the rest of the chapter.

Goldstein concludes with a gesture toward a relational ethics. The visual framing works — a 1976 photograph of a woman “engrossed” (206) in her own moment of eating in contrast to Annibale Carracci’s sixteenth-century painting *Mangiafagioli*, with which Goldstein’s study began. And Goldstein’s echo of Wendell Berry’s list of ethical-eating axioms is promising in theory — both a recapitulation of the ethical lessons Goldstein has sought in his early modern examinations as well as a push forward to where those lessons of early modern commensality might lead us. The result, however, is that the conclusion feels somewhat reductive in comparison to the richness of Goldstein’s earlier insights and the careful nuance with which he treats texts, argument, and language.

Throughout, however, *Eating and Ethics* is a pleasure to read. Goldstein’s prose is clear and articulate. His argument, well supported, leads to a number of wonderful insights. *Eating and Ethics* leaves the reader refreshed, as it offers an engaging volume that contributes to a community of food and literary scholars in the spirit of the very commensality, constructive and generative, to which it gestures.

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