

Joan Fitzpatrick, *Food in Shakespeare: early modern dietaries and the plays*, Literary and Scientific Cultures of Early Modernity, Aldershot and Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2007, pp. ix, 166, £45.00, \$89.95 (hardback 978-0-7546-5547-3).

There are five ways to commit gluttony: eating too soon, eating too expensively, eating too much, eating too eagerly, and eating too daintily. Food is socially and morally controlled; in the early modern period it was explicitly tied to medical advice. Good governance of the body was necessary for the health of the body and the soul.

Joan Fitzpatrick's book does exactly what it says in the title: it explores the uses of food and feeding in Shakespeare's plays alongside materials found in contemporary dietaries. Dietaries, or regimen, were amongst the vernacular medical works printed in early modern England. They set out how to maintain health and heal disease through the maintenance or restitution of the correct balance of the four humours. In Shakespeare's plays food and feeding signal the character of the glutton or the ascetic and the rank of the poor and the noble. Fitzpatrick argues that Shakespeare uses food to engage with debates about cosmopolitanism, expanding international trade, religion and philosophy.

She begins with a reading of Sir John Oldcastle and normative notions about gluttony and abstinence. Chapter 2, focusing on Celtic, alien feeding, cleverly explains apparently strange passages in *Macbeth*. For instance, "double, double, toil and trouble" echoes a process of making "double" beer. The Bard's vegetarian sympathies are neatly, if somewhat implausibly, set out in chapter 3. Chapter 4 associates famine, abstinence and contemporary concerns about dearth and foreigners. Chapter 5 posits the notion of "profane consumption" to describe cannibalism, the ultimate "exotic" consumption in terms of the religious and philosophical concerns that Shakespeare expresses through food in his later plays. Throughout, Fitzpatrick gestures towards contemporary sensibilities

about whether certain foods seem ordinary or alien to the modern reader; diet now, as then, is medically and morally freighted.

Within its own terms, Fitzpatrick's careful scholarship generates novel readings, solidly grounded in contemporary evidence. Historians of medicine would like to see dietaries situated within broader generic conventions of vernacular medical works and longer-term considerations of the shifting emphasis from medical advice to medical cures. Historians of the body will wonder why Mikhail Bakhtin is absent, and whether the analysis would have been richer if, with a few exceptions, food had not been so clearly partitioned from sex and excrement. Is something missing when a discussion of cannibalism omits to mention Mary Douglas? Economic and social historians will appreciate the note about the association between the theatre and food trades, and would like more analysis about food as a commodity and the place of domestic medicine in the emergent age of consumption. Dietaries provide a key to the terms in the play, and through them Fitzpatrick contributes some fresh and clever readings. A more adventurous and less controlled study could have asked why displeased theatre-goers throw food and why Chronos was not a vegetarian.

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Louise Hill Curth, *English almanacs, astrology and popular medicine: 1550–1700*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2007, pp. xi, 283, £55.00 (hardback 978-0-7190-6928-4).

Until very recently, scholarly examinations of almanacs within the contexts of early modern print culture and medicine had been largely absent from the existing historiography. Fortunately, this has now begun to change. Louise Hill Curth's 2007 work is one such contribution. It examines English almanacs as a distinct genre of print literature, situating it within the wider