

To close this review, I return to the intoxicating substances themselves and an episode from my own life history. One set of my grandparents subscribed to what they would have described as religious fundamentals, one aspect of which was a zero-tolerance policy where alcohol was concerned. They would not permit its consumption in their presence, let alone imbibe themselves. Yet, their kitchen cupboard always stocked what they called a medicinal bottle of brandy, and they did this openly, without so much as a flicker of embarrassment. As a young person, this seemingly obvious inconsistency left me bewildered. Breen has explained it perfectly. They had made a category adjustment, one very much in the tradition of the early modern Portuguese and British actors who people Breen's pages.

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*Tasting Difference: Food, Race, and Cultural Encounters in Early Modern Literature.* Gitanjali G. Shahani.

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"I am the sugar at the bottom of the English cup of tea," declared Stuart Hall in 1991. English history, he reminded readers, cannot be separated from the "outside history" of colonialism that brought both sugar and West Indians such as Hall to the British Isles (1, 28). Foods, bodies, and identities are bound together in ways that make it impossible to tell the history of one without taking into account the others. Hall's insights animate Gitanjali G. Shahani's *Tasting Difference*, which explores the presence of spices, sugar, and coffee in early modern English writings. More specifically, it examines the ways in which these and other foodstuffs became entangled with English representations of self and other, so that discussions of eating provided a way to articulate ideas about race, and discussions of cultural difference might be expressed through a language of consumption. It draws on the works of Shakespeare and his literary contemporaries, alongside recipe books, travelogues, and the like, to tell a story of how Hall's ancestors became food, and how food allowed early modern English people to make sense of distant places such as India.

At the heart of *Tasting Difference* is bell hooks's powerful and overarching metaphor of eating the other. Exotic foods were cast as racialized others, while racialized others might be depicted as desirable or disgusting foodstuffs. In the case of spices, for instance, men such as the writer (and vegetarian) Thomas Tryon imagined ginger and cinnamon as dangerous, dark-skinned invaders set on corrupting the English housewife, who would do better to stick to parsley and nettle-tops. The West Africans taken to labor and die in American sugar plantations Tryon in turn described as "stewed and par-boiled" in the holds of slaving vessels, where they became, in effect, food for greedy

English gullets (73). Shahani's chapter on coffee reveals that brown, Turkish coffee was sometimes represented as a dangerous Othello-like seducer, with evil designs on wholesome English water.

Shahani buttresses her insightful and largely convincing readings of early modern literature with a satisfying array of theoretical supports, from Kyla Wazana Tompkins's notion of racial indigestion to Arjun Appadurai's work on globalization. As a result, she is able to tease out new significance from Oberon's tussles with Titania over the Indian Boy, Prospero's vanishing banquet, and Oroonoko's dreadful death. A growing body of research demonstrates that metaphors based on eating were pervasive in this period; in its focus on the culinary language associated with racial or cultural Others, *Tasting Difference* makes a valuable contribution to this scholarship.

Nonetheless, at times its reach exceeds its grasp. Shahani for instance makes the bold assertion that it is in cookbooks, dietary manuals, and literary works that "a conception of racial, cultural and religious difference" is articulated. Surely this is just one place where such conceptions were articulated. The period's religious writings, to pick just one contrasting example, are (unsurprisingly) also rich in articulations of racial, cultural, and religious difference. It's a pity that Shahani occasionally felt it necessary to push her argument and material beyond what they are able to sustain, since *Tasting Difference* succeeds very well in illuminating food's powerful ability to articulate racial difference in the imaginative works of this period. Her readings of Shakespeare, and works by other familiar and less familiar early modern writers, convincingly reveal how certain foods and the peoples with whom these became associated were "imagined in the literature of the early modern period" (6). *Tasting Difference* will be read with profit by the now-substantial community of food scholars, and by all those interested in the ways in which "outside histories" in fact form an essential part of any history of the British Isles.

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*Contesting Europe: Comparative Perspectives on Early Modern Discourses on Europe, 1400–1800.* Nicholas Detering, Clementina Marisco, and Isabella Wasler-Bürgler, eds.

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This volume contends that a holistic idea of Europe emerges from the incunabular era up to the advent of the nation-state at the threshold of the nineteenth century. Europe, an allegory in the Middle Ages, becomes a discursive fact in the 1600s. The editors argue that as of 1500 a sense of geographic identity is shaped in iconography, Neo-Latin treatises, and "polemic statements within a field of political competition and