

THE FEAST: FOOD IN FILM, PHILOSOPHY, AND FICTION

Inger S. B. Brodey
CMPL 255 H
11-12:15, MWF



Alonso López de Herrera, *Saint Nicholas of Tolentino* (San Antonio Museum of Art)

While its individual form and content may differ greatly, the feast or banquet functions as a strong symbol in most global communities. Food and feasting often defines community by establishing a connection between those who eat, what they eat and how they eat: as such it shapes national and cultural identities. As it is portrayed in Western philosophy from the seminal banquet in the pages of Plato's *Symposium*, the feast is simultaneously erotic and philosophical. It has the potential to descend into gluttony or to rise to the level of the sublime. Feasting can represent communion or

transgression, just as eating "the flesh" may symbolize one of Christianity's most central rites or one of

Western society's central taboos. In Asia, the influence of Buddhist reincarnation has instilled additional meanings and taboos upon the consumption of food. The multiple purposes and nuances of food make it a rich theme in literature, film, and the visual arts.

The food and banquet film has recently become a genre unto itself, and the outpouring of films are helpful in

understanding cross-cultural differences in the social and philosophical understandings of what

it is to be human. In addition to readings in philosophy, theology, and literature, we will study food films, examine food art, and invite guest speakers.



Gabriel Axel's *Babette's Feast*