

a clear picture of a unified human subject that can be distinguished easily from “the animal,” as such. There may not exist a single “biblical view” of humans and animals at all. What we have in the Bible are, rather, to recall the words of Derrida, “many fractures, heterogeneities, differential structures.” And close attention to the dogs of Exodus, and the passages in which they appear, offers us one way to begin exploring some of those differential structures.

But let us return, finally, to the fact that these dogs appear in a biblical book that, as Levinas notes, is often associated with human freedom. Today any association between Exodus and freedom is perhaps more difficult to make uncritically than it was at the time Levinas wrote his article. After all, limitations to the use of Exodus as a model for human liberation have been much discussed in recent years.⁵⁴ However, the difficulties Levinas seems to have had making room for animals in his ethics may be indicative of difficulties that others experience as well. Advocates for human freedom and social justice are, unfortunately, sometimes skeptical of attempts to take seriously the question of the animal. Some of these skeptics recognize that animal rights and environmental activists are occasionally too cautious in their advocacy for human rights and welfare. But others simply adopt uncritically the anthropocentric assumption that matters of animal suffering and flourishing are too trivial to be taken seriously by advocates for justice.

However, attention to the dogs of Exodus and the passages associated with them brings to light the fact that, whatever its limitations as a resource for modern liberation, the book of Exodus at least does not simplistically cordon off concerns for human welfare from concerns about animal welfare. Such concerns are inextricably intertwined with one another. Animals and humans do die together as objects of sacrifice and slaughter. But animals and the poor are also juxtaposed as beneficiaries of prescribed agricultural practices, as we have seen. And in the Exodus narrative, the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt itself involves animals. Those Israelite animals, against whom no dog moves its tongue, leave Egypt with the Israelite humans. Animals are already there in this paradigmatic story of liberation, already participating in the exodus of the Israelite slaves. Thus, attempts to work for their survival and welfare now may simply honor their presence among the Israelites then, as they walked together out of the house of bondage under the watchful eyes of the silent dogs of Exodus.

☛ Devouring the Human: Digestion of a Corporeal Soteriology

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Traditional wisdom holds that the category *human* comes with the privilege of an untouchable corporeality: We are, it is often quipped, at the top of the food chain. And yet the term *food chain* itself represents a kind of scientific misnomer: All organisms, including humans, return to the earth through the mouths and stomachs of insects, bacteria, and sometimes larger predators who find us a rather easy meal. Acknowledging that humans are a consumable product, I contend, is not just a point of ecological correctness: Recognizing our fleshy vulnerability may be vital to creating an opening for the divine. The philosopher H  len   Cixous draws our attention to human corporeal vulnerability when she recounts being bitten as a child by the family dog, Fips. After Fips releases his grip from her ankle, she tells us, “I saw the meat we are. We came out of the mortal spasms broken lame and delirious. Unrecognizable.”⁵¹ Cixous’s glimpse of the meaty human interior becomes a transformative moment that changes her both somatically and psychically. Strikingly, the bite draws this atheistic postmodern thinker into the world of the biblical: The experience with Fips echoes, for Cixous, the narratives of both Job and Jesus. What Cixous hints at but does not name is that this biblical material is not simply related to this somatic interiority but is actually about “the meat we are.” As Stephen Moore reminds us, Jesus as he appears flogged before Pilate is “a slaughtered lamb . . . soon to be hung from a crude cross hewn from a butcher’s block.”⁵² I suggest that seeing Christ as animal can offer us what Fips offered Cixous: the experience of a vulnerable corporeality that both reveals our limits and expands our capacity for connection to the transcen-

dent. By recognizing that the "human" is also at every moment a consumable animal, we make room for the radical relationality that is necessary for transformation. It is in this way that a somatic reeducation—an opening of the body—can point us toward a soteriology of the flesh.

Cixous does not spare us any details in the painful description of her childhood relationship with the family dog: After her father suddenly dies, extreme neglect and suffering set in. Fips, along with the rest of the family, becomes a target for stone-throwing Arab neighbors who are unhappy with the "Jew-French" family in their midst. Fips remains chained outside, vulnerable to attack, his body increasingly swollen with ticks. When Cixous answers the door one morning, the catastrophic fold occurs: Without warning, Fips charges and latches on to her ankle. The washerwoman strikes Fips with a wet sheet until his jaw finally releases. Cixous recounts, "At the thirteenth stroke the muzzle cracked"; but she reflects, "When we were at last separated the one from the other, it was too late. The root had been reached. On the inside of my brain the very slight bleeding of a small lack of forgetting, a minuscule wound would not close its eyes."³ The bite on the ankle resonates through her entire body, creating a wound with eyes of its own. As a new vision(ary), Cixous correlates this somatic trauma to a psychic transformation: As Fips reaches the root of the body, he also touches an ontological root. The exposure of "the meat that we are" indelibly entwines Cixous and the animal that bit her. As Hugh Pyper puts it, the story of Fips is "about the bite . . . the act of violence, severing and eating."⁴ The bite, perhaps, could have begun and ended at the ankle. But Cixous allows the trauma to become completely consuming, and the human/animal boundary is blurred. As a result, Fips's violent demonstration of the human body as meat paves the way for a transformed capacity for compassion and connection to the other.

Indeed, the depth of Fips's instruction is so profound that the reverberations take on biblical proportions. "Job was that dog I am sure," Cixous tells us. "The scourges were sent to him; god was well hidden, the father dead, the house ruined and now the plagues and the ulcers."⁵ Cixous also experiences Fips's sorrow-filled life and death as a Christ-like sacrifice: It is only through experiencing her lack of compassion toward Fips that Cixous eventually learns to love openly and infinitely. She loves Fips "not then," she tells us, "not there in the garden of war, not yet, but later."⁶ The bite seems to sink in fully only as an adult when she is haunted by recurring

dreams. After two years of strange nightmare narratives, Cixous is struck: "Suddenly, the resurrection. Of which I had never thought," she declares. "It happened one morning, and it had the features of a cat. . . . My cat came from my dog, which explains the singular power of my cat over my heart, an absolute power that makes of this young and childish beast my daily prophet."⁷ Returning as resurrected animal, Fips and his sacrifice succeed in transforming Cixous's human limitations: She now claims an increased capacity for connection and more capacity to love. "As for me," Cixous declares, "I am ready to give my life for my cat, but it was necessary that Fips should first have given his life for me."⁸ Although acknowledging Fips's martyrdom, Cixous does not explicitly address the sacrifice made by both sides; before Fips can sacrifice himself for her, Cixous herself must permit herself to be consumed. She allows the violence of the bite to penetrate in a way that dissolves her sense of human invulnerability and somatic wholeness. It is only after many years that the festering, eye-opening wound winds its way through her body and produces oneiric visions. After her sacrifice of self, the resurrection occurs.

If Fips indeed embodies Christ's sacrifice, this event may not simply reveal a connection between Cixous's experience and the biblical, but it may also reveal a crucial corporeal aspect of biblical revelation itself. Christ on the cross, while most often celebrated for his simultaneous humanity and divinity, is also a sacrificial animal, as Moore points out. The Lamb of God becomes the sacrificial lamb on the cross, his meaty interior exposed on the cross "hewn from a butcher's block." But although we receive clear testimony from Cixous that her somatic encounter with the animal leads to revelation, the biblical witness to Jesus' role as animal—and as fleshy meal—is much less clear. Although corporeality is obviously quite germane to incarnation, orthodox attitudes toward flesh have been fraught with ambiguity.⁹ The Johannine text in particular offers an intriguing example of scripture's struggle between flesh, spirit, and soteriology. It is in John that Jesus warns, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53). And yet this admonition is soon followed by the declaration that "it is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless" (John 6:63). Is the flesh indeed useless, or does salvation depend on our ability to claim Christ as a meal? Biblical scholars such as Craig Keener find scripture's message quite clear. He tells us: "It is not the *literal* flesh (cf. 6:5) that brings life, but the Spirit." Therefore, Keener

instructs, "Disciples must imbibe his Spirit, not his literal flesh (cf. 20:22); his life is present also in his words (6:68; cf. 15:7)."¹⁰ And yet it seems we do a disservice to Jesus' message if we claim that "flesh" in this case simply falls into the category of figurative language while the "real" message—that we need to consume Jesus' words—is a subtext. In *Poststructuralism and the New Testament*, Stephen Moore addresses the figurative versus literal in a deconstructive reading of John: At the well with the Samaritan woman, Jesus holds up "living water" as superior to the literal water being drawn from the well. And yet when Jesus is crucified and the spear strikes his side, it is indeed literal, earthly water that flows from Jesus' body; water that can also be seen as, in Moore's words, "a further token of the promised living water or Spirit."¹¹ At this moment, water is both of the spirit and of the earth. As Moore explains, "It is a spiritual material and a literal figure. Literality and figurality intermingle in the flow from Jesus' side, each contaminating the other, which is to say that we cannot keep the literal clearly separate from the figurative in the end."¹² The truth that inhabits Jesus' body is one in which categories are disarmed and seemingly obvious oppositions overwhelm each other. Also striking is that Jesus' body seems to out-articulate Jesus himself. Moore observes that Jesus "speaks to the Samaritan woman and all his other dialogue partners as though he were a mixture composed of separable elements, as though the living water could be clearly distinguished from spring water . . . the spiritual from the material, and the heavenly from the earthly. What Jesus says is contradicted by what he is."¹³ We can say this contradiction also plays out in Jesus' Johannine dialogue regarding flesh and spirit: Whatever Jesus may say about flesh versus spirit, his performance as slaughtered lamb speaks to an extreme engagement with both flesh and spirit that does not allow us to disentangle one from the other. On the cross as the lamb, the flesh of the animal overflows like either an eternal or earthly spring, surpassing our ability to articulate the deep paradox at its root. Flesh offers the gift of performance, which adds its own layers of wisdom to the body of the text.

And yet, in John, it is not enough to simply recognize Jesus' flesh as indelibly commingled with spirit. The Johannine text seems to demand that we consume this flesh-spirit cocktail by not simply drawing our attention to the idea of flesh, but by interweaving flesh, spirit, and food. As Virginia Burrus observes, John seems "strangely preoccupied with the matter of eating and drinking even in passages where 'flesh' is only implicitly

invoked."¹⁴ Jesus continually negotiates issues of drink and food, including his conversion of water into wine, his exchange with the Samaritan woman at the well that involves both a request for a drink and the offer of water that banishes thirst, and his offering of a breakfast of fish and bread to his disciples postresurrection.¹⁵ Taking in the spirit is both literally and figuratively a material consumption, involving an absorption by and processing of the body. And although Jesus may indeed say that "the flesh is useless," we can refer to Moore's testimony that "what Jesus says is contradicted by what he is." Although in this case, we might suggest that Jesus' words are contradicted by what the text is: The body of John's text continually encourages us to devour the spirit in whatever form it takes. We find ourselves making a meal of the lamb, despite any intellectual debate over the meaning of the biblical text. And yet, I propose, as we sit down to eat, we must also allow ourselves to be consumed by the lamb. The slaughtered carcass must sink its teeth into our own flesh with the same shock that arrived with the bite on Cixous's ankle. Jesus as slaughtered lamb—and as potential meal—must provide an opening through which we experience our own somatic vulnerability. To look into the depths of corporeal interiority and see ourselves as animal is to make room for the other, to be actively open to the mutual indwelling for which Christ calls when he commands, "Abide in me as I abide in you" (John 15:4). And if we indeed abide by the thread of John's consumptive trope, we need to consume and be consumed absolutely in order to be transformed by the spirit.

John's text, we can say, seduces us into consumption, tempting our taste buds with food that promises to enlighten. As Moore points out, the text itself becomes a body urgently demanding that the Word be digested. The "book sent from God, whose name was John," Moore reminds us, speaks: "'Read me,' urges the book, 'that you may have life.' 'Eat me,' urges the Word, in the book; 'whoever eats me [*ho trōgōn me*] will live because of me (6:57). Eat me, drink me (cf. 6:53–56), ingest me, digest me!"¹⁶ Acquiescing to these demands to devour, however, are not without their risks. John's text may in fact have a similar taste to Revelation's little scroll: sweet to the mouth but bitter to the stomach. The text, too, has teeth, the ability to strip us down to the root. In "Extreme Fidelity," Cixous explores the moment of Eve's encounter with the apple, explaining that "what we are told is that knowledge might begin with the mouth, with the discovery of the taste of something: knowledge and taste go together."¹⁷ And in-

... still remember 'animal' and the so

deed, Cixous's biblical reading also gives us a new taste and a deeper epistemological experience of the text, one that becomes more complex and fraught with risk. Hugh Pyper notes that Cixous "reminds me as a gentle reader that the text, too, can bite—the text that renders me unclean, then clean, thereby renders me edible, open to being devoured by the text."¹⁸ We taste the apple along with Eve, along with the text; and the text, at the same time, tastes us. As the flesh of the apple is pierced, the epistemological root is exposed, and disobedience brings death to Eden. However, the death of eternal life brings with it an appetite for depth, expansiveness, and potentiality. Is it possible that the sting of mortality is necessary for ontological transformation? Cixous indeed sees Eve's bite not as an unfortunate defiance but rather as a movement toward penetrating relationality: "The apple is visible and it can be held up to the mouth, it is full, it has an *inside*. And what Eve will discover in her relationship to simple reality, is the *inside* of the apple, and that this *inside* is good."¹⁹ Eve becomes familiar with the interior of the other, losing her fear of exploring and exposing. And although "consuming" this biblical text may indeed evoke a bittersweet taste, it also allows us to recognize existential complexity. To know death is to also know our connection to the fleshy interior of the other: It is only through this vulnerability that we can enter the dangerously raw interiority of scripture and experience the potentiality of flesh unfolding.

The fact that death is tied to Eve and Adam's epistemological discovery points to a curious relationship between loss and insight. The moment when the skin is pierced—whether that of the apple or of Cixous's ankle—can be seen as a moment of simultaneous trauma and revelation. God sentences Eve to birth pains, condemns Adam to toil the earth, and assures them that they will return to the dust from which they were made. And yet Eve and Adam's new suffering is accompanied by an enlightened epistemological state in the ways of good and evil. Humanity has entered a space where life and death are intertwined and interdependently influence human epistemology and ontology. The theologian Shelly Rambo's work on trauma speaks to this often overlooked contingency between death and life as she explores the theological implications for moving too quickly past the effects of loss. Although Rambo's focus on traumatic events such as war and natural disaster does not allow a direct correlation with Eve's taste of fruit in the garden, Rambo's conclusions do inform the lingering aftereffects of loss. Trauma, Rambo avers, is often such a shock to the

human psyche that it cannot be properly processed; the result is a sense of death that continually resides with us. Living in the midst of this loss places us in a liminal state where life and death are inseparable. Rambo characterizes this middle space as "the figurative site in which life and death are no longer bounded. Instead, the middle speaks to the perplexing space of survival." This middle space "is subject to elisions of time, body, and language and is therefore difficult to witness."²⁰ This concept of an existential middle can be applied to the event in Eden, which is fraught with a similar complexity and ambiguity: The death that enters the world because of Eve's curious taste buds places humanity into such a "perplexing space of survival" where life—the world of relationship, evolution, and transformation—is always entangled with loss. Often within the wake of trauma, we are left to experience what Rambo calls "death in life," a sense of death that is always present and folded into living.²¹ Embracing the entwined reality of the death-in-life experience requires allowing the bite to take place—either our own or that of the other. Cixous's encounter with Fips and Eve's encounter with the apple are brave ventures into the fleshy interior that allow us to see the meat that we are instead of the invulnerable body that we wish to be. To encounter flesh is to risk being made unclean by making contact with unknown ontological depths.

Allowing ourselves to inhabit a liminal experience of death in life may also offer a unique experience of the spirit. As we fold ourselves into the intensity of flesh's vulnerability, the expansiveness of the spirit reveals itself in new ways. Cixous's revelation arrives only after she has experienced the extreme fragility of her body and its relationship to the other. We might say, then, that exploring the flesh in its full intensity—its potential for devouring as well as being devoured—allows a unique space for transcendence within the creaturely body. Perhaps the limits of the body are not necessarily in opposition to the infinity of the divine, but rather are part of a path to the spirit. The flesh/spirit relationship then becomes part of a constant experiential exchange that fosters the ontological change necessary for revelation. Although the presentation of spirit and flesh as an oppositional dichotomy is prevalent in traditional Christian scriptures such as John, we find alternative notions of the body from other Christian sources. In the *Gospel of Thomas* Jesus proclaims, "Whoever has come to know the world has discovered the body, and whoever has discovered the body, of that one the world is not worthy" (*Gospel of Thomas* 87). This mysterious

proclamation suggests, among other things, that we do not quite know what the body is. What does it mean to discover the body instead of simply having one? The discovery, though, as we see from Cixous's encounter with Fips, does not arise from a place of corporeal intactness; realizing "the meat that we are" arrives through somatic exposure. The theologian Sharon Becher suggests that preoccupation with bodily wholeness as presented in the traditional Christian context creates a harmful "eschatological idealism," a delusion that salvation and the wholesome body are linked. Persons with disabilities, she insists, "refuse to be resolved, saved, made whole," choosing instead "our histories of flesh."²² The history of flesh may indeed prove key to our soteriological approach: If the body is always being discovered and revised, then refusing somatic resolution may offer a path toward revelation. The human body that recognizes itself as animal, that refuses to resolve, also retains its sense of creational process, history, and relationality. The body then becomes a paradoxical integration of both predictable material limits and perpetual novelty. This is, Derrida explains, Christ's own corporeal process. Derrida notes that "one also speaks of the invention of the body of Christ to designate an experience that consists in discovering, in an inaugural fashion, to be sure, but all the same a body that was already there, in some place or other, and that had to be found, discovered, *invented*. Even though it unveils the body of what was already there, this invention is an event."²³ Although Christ had a body like any other, the body of Christ as "invented" in a soteriological context produces an event of somatic novelty. Recognizing the Lamb of God as invention has interesting implications for our own somatic futures; the body of Christ, while in many ways unique unto itself, has the potential to guide a unique discovery of our own bodies. We too have "histories of flesh" that, when open, can guide us toward the transcendent. To imitate Christ is perhaps not just to follow Jesus' actions based on scriptural study, but also to aspire to the eventiveness of Christ's body as both human and animal. Seen from this perspective, we might find that the vulnerability of the flesh—the potential for openings, scars, and depressions—is not a flaw to be overcome, but rather that which makes possible our experience of the infinite.

And yet engaging the flesh in this way demands that our sense of the body become strangely both more precise in its sensitivity and less robust in its demand for corporeal organization. If we are to allow ourselves to

be consumed, we must see and experience ourselves as structurally open, as human and as animal, as consumers and as food. Burrus points out that flesh in the Johannine text "is the only food that matters. . . . Flesh precedes, saturates, and exceeds the cosmos. . . . It is crucial to both the making and the unmaking of the body, constituting the womb as well as the ongoing source of nurturance for 'eternal life.'"²⁴ It is no secret that food affects our bodies; but this call for radical consumption seems to point to the fact that we need to experience the effect of this food, to be likewise totally consumed by what we eat. This is, as Burrus notes, partly an "unmaking" of the body. We must open ourselves not only to eat and experience, but to reconsider what food actually is. Divine nourishment may arrive as a seemingly indigestible and improper event. But if our bodies are unmade as well as made, we may sustain enough permeability to allow a radical exchange between self and other, humanity and divinity. John's consumptive trope suggests that the truth may lie in the tender area of somatic mystery that both holds and refuses structure, where our cosmic womb is woven from flesh that is cut through, but not apart, where eternal/maternal nurturance arrives along with the marks of impermanence and death.

Following the biblical theme of consumption may lead us to a perhaps counterintuitive connection between our unmaking and connectivity. The call to consume Christ is not simply a demand to dissolve oneself and become one with God, but to partake in a somatic experience that allows the deepest kind of relationality. The call to unmake ourselves in the process of consuming and being consumed is not a mandate for individual salvation, but a call to experience a kind of death that is necessary for authentic love. Jesus' famous commandment to "love one another as I have loved you," although widely embraced, still exists in the realm of the abstract (John 15:12). How do we practice this (r)evolutionary love that remains so elusive? If we explore the consumptive trope in John as the psychic and physical manifestation of this commandment, we may find that the act of love becomes more textured and multilayered. Jesus as the lamb who both consumes his flock and is in turn consumed offers a somatic vision of the radical openness required for authentic relationship. Cixous herself delves into this space of animalistic mystery where love and the open body meet. For Cixous, seeing ourselves as animal is not simply a matter of seeing another side of the human, but rather uncovering the root of human relationality. "The wolf," she tells us, "is the truth of love, its cruelty, its

fangs, its claws, our aptitude for ferocity. Love is when you suddenly wake up as a cannibal, and not just any old cannibal, or else wake up destined for devourment."²⁵

Love, for Cixous, requires the depth that comes with devouring, where an open self is a self actively engaged with both life and death. Recognizing ourselves as animal flesh is indeed key, it seems, as we see in Cixous's meditation on Rembrandt's *The Slaughtered Ox*, a portrait of a flayed ox hung upside down tied to a wooden pole. "Why do we adore *The Slaughtered Ox*?" Cixous asks. "Because," she replies for us, "without our knowing it or wanting it, it is our anonymous humanity."²⁶ The lifeless flesh of the flayed ox resonates with our sense of helplessness, the raw vulnerability of "our captivity."²⁷ As Pyper describes Cixous's reading, "The ox, luminous, cruciform, is the interior exposed. It is meat, but not yet meat; it is butchery, but also beauty, it is shocking and it is iconic." And yet Pyper also notes that Cixous both implies and denies the ox's wider biblical implications. She protests, "We are not Christ, never, Christ. . . . No, I will not speak of this."²⁸ Pyper remarks on this omission, interjecting, "Where Cixous won't go, Stephen Moore will," drawing out Moore's connection of the slaughtered body to the body of Christ.²⁹

Indeed, Moore begins *God's Gym* with a confession that his father was a butcher, who was indeed even "a lover of lamb with mint sauce."³⁰ His childhood visual memories include "the filling of basins with blood" and "the crimson floor littered with hooves."³¹ Unlike Cixous, Moore does not shy away from connecting the butchered animals' sacrifice to Christ's crucifixion. Sights of the butcher's knives and narratives of "the atrocious agony felt by our sensitive Saviour as the spikes were driven through his wrists and feet" easily blend in Moore's childhood imagination.³² This connection allows us to see the *Slaughtered Ox* as a portrait of Christ's own somatic performance. The "anonymous humanity" that Cixous identifies with the ox is both ours and Christ's, the animal flesh becoming an anonymous but universal indicator of vulnerability. Cixous even reminds us that "as children we would pass trembling before the butcher's window. Later on we want to forget death. We cut the dead one up into pieces and we call it meat."³³ Moore, with childhood memories of butchery and church in the fore, is able to remember both death and Christ, bringing us to the space where Cixous will not quite go. But Cixous's cataphoric refusal to speak of the flayed ox as both humanity and Christ, in essence, creates

the connection for her. The very nature of flesh's overflow that Cixous so adeptly establishes cannot simply touch the biblical without also being an innate part of its performance. And it seems that the drawing together of the animal, the human, and the divine at the moment of sacrifice on the cross leads us to the somatic space that Cixous wants us to inhabit: where vulnerability allows love in its fullest expression.

Although Cixous never directly ties love to the divine, we do not have to travel far to find hints of transcendence in Cixous's work. Fips as Christ figure is both the attacker and the persecuted teacher, the wolf and the lamb. The lesson is no ordinary one by Cixous's own admission: Her Fips-inspired transformation is indeed a revelation, teaching a love so profound that she is ready to give her life for it. But this love is ultimately accessible only through a sense of something in Fips that extends beyond ordinary ontology: "At the bottom of the bottom of all my ignorances, I must have had a prescience inaccessible to myself, that this my dog was something else, that he was, much more than I, and that I do not know what a dog is nor what being a dog is."³⁴ Although Cixous never claims Fips is Christ, his strong somatic presence and his grief-stricken bite do lead Cixous to approach the transcendent through the animal, to experience a kind of relationship that could come about only through the clash of animal bodies. As "the meat" revealed by Fips's bite and in the portrait of *The Slaughtered Ox*, we are not only subject to the same vulnerabilities that the flesh reveals but also capable of the same revelations. The vulnerability of animal flesh, as the sacrificial lamb demonstrates, can potentially lead us to the transcendent love of the divine. To realize that our extreme vulnerability is linked to our potential for the transcendent is to come closer to the devouring "truth of love," that fully inhabits our ability, need, and desire to taste and be tasted, to embody both the "anonymous humanity" of the ox and the devouring nature of the wolf.

This corporeal openness of consumption, I suggest, is the openness of the divine: It is the act that Jesus performs on the cross as an animal carcass, not simply exposing corporeal vulnerability as an act of love but asking that this vulnerability become our food and nourishment. And although Keener may not be wrong in his assertion that the biblical text is not instructing us to consume flesh literally, he is not quite right, either: The way we have consumed scripture historically goes beyond the literal or figurative. The Eucharist is a strangely routine Christian meal, a

performance of consumptive salvation. Fear of the animal, of the “meat we are,” then, becomes fear of not only our vulnerability but also our capacity for the infinite. Cixous locates this fear in our fear of the animal other, warning us: “A dog is a threat. What is threatening about a dog is their terrible love. . . . Meeting a dog you suddenly see the abyss of love. Such limitless love doesn’t fit our economy. We cannot cope with such an open, superhuman relation.”³⁵ The dog, perhaps, reveals our limitations whether it actually bites us nor not. And yet we can also remind ourselves that, as Jacques Derrida avers, “What threatens is also what makes possible the expectation or the promise.”³⁶ To lose ourselves in the animal—as the animal—threatens us with the possibility of corporeal and perhaps psychic rupture. But what we potentially gain is the promise of the divine: the radical fold of relationality that forms the crux of Christ’s simultaneously mundane and revelatory body. The scriptural word of the lamb is always a bit bitter, hinting at the threat of somatic dissolution. But if we meet that threat instead of resisting it, we may find ourselves at the edge of transcendence, where we have the capacity to transform that which we call “human” into something more human/e. We may even become a creature that abides, shockingly, in the wisdom of the flesh, with the ability to have the integrity of a body willing to be unmade at any moment.

☪ The Microbes and Pneuma That Therefore I Am

DENISE KIMBER BUELL

How connected we are with everyone.

The space of everyone that has just been inside of everyone mixing inside of everyone with nitrogen and oxygen and water vapor and argon and carbon dioxide and suspended dust spores and bacteria mixing inside of everyone with sulfur and sulfuric acid and titanium and nickel and minute silicon particles from pulverized glass and concrete.

—JULIANA SPAHR, “Poem Written after September 11, 2001”

Juliana Spahr’s poem mimics the pulsation of breathing. She begins small: “Everyone with lungs breathes the space in and out as everyone with lungs breathes the space between the hands in and out,”¹ progressively extending this pneumatic interaction to a room, building, neighborhood, city, region, nation, continents, islands, oceans, troposphere, stratosphere, and finally mesosphere. From the all-encompassing mesospheric interconnection, Spahr reverses direction back to the hands to conclude the poem with the excerpt of the epigraph above. Here, she introduces a tragic dimension of breathing—the blasted bits from the twin towers inhaled by survivors, rescuers, and city residents²—closing the poem with this line: “How lovely and how doomed this connection of everyone with lungs.”

By invoking various agents in the air (elements, dust spores, bacteria, the toxic dust arising from the wreckage of the twin towers), Spahr thus complicates what might have appeared to be simply a positive image of the

shocks to the

41. *Ibid.*, 110.
 42. *Ibid.*, 101.
 43. Derrida, "Eating Well," 279.
 44. Derrida, *Animal That Therefore I Am*, 278.
 45. *Ibid.*, 280.
 46. *Ibid.*, 281.
 47. See, for example, David Wood, "Comment ne pas manger—Deconstruction and Humanism," in *Animal Others: On Ethics, Ontology, and Animal Life*, ed. H. Peter Steeves (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 15–35; and the response to Wood by Matthew Calarco, "Deconstruction Is Not Vegetarianism: Humanism, Subjectivity, and Animal Ethics," *Continental Philosophy Review* 37, no. 2 (2004): 175–201. Cf. Calarco, *Zoographies*, 126–36.
 48. For a recent attempt to sort through some of the possible reasons for the donkey's unusual status, see Way, *Donkeys in the Biblical World*, 178–83.
 49. I explore this story further in my essay "Wittgenstein's Lion and Balaam's Ass: Talking with Others in Numbers 22–25," in *The Bible and Posthumanism*, ed. Jennifer Koosed, *Semeia Studies* 74 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013).
 50. See, e.g., Charles F. Fensham, "The Dog in Ex. XI 7," *Vetus Testamentum* 16, no. 4 (1966): 504–7.
 51. Schwartz, "Dogs in Jewish Society in the Second Temple Period," 261–62.
 52. McHugh, *Dog*, 42.
 53. For a useful discussion of the implications of Darwin's theories for our understanding of the relationships between humans and other animals, see James Rachels, *Created from Animals: The Moral Implications of Darwinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).
 54. For one influential critique, see Robert Allen Warrior, "Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians: Deliverance, Conquest, and Liberation Theology Today," in *The Postmodern Bible Reader*, ed. David Jobling, Tina Pippin, and Ronald Schleifer (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 188–94.
- DEVOURING THE HUMAN: DIGESTION OF A CORPoreal SOTERIOLOGY | ERIKA MURPHY**
1. Hélène Cixous, *Stigmata: Escaping Texts* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 258.
 2. Stephen D. Moore, *God's Gym: Divine Male Bodies of the Bible* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 113.
 3. Cixous, *Stigmata*, 258.
 4. Hugh S. Pyper, "Job the Dog: Helene Cixous on Wounds, Scars, and the Biblical Text," *Biblical Interpretation* 11, no. 3–4 (2003): 440.
 5. Cixous, *Stigmata*, 259.

6. *Ibid.*, 261.
7. *Ibid.*, 252.
8. *Ibid.*, 250.
9. For more on the historical context of the dichotomies between materiality/transcendence, see Virginia Burrus, "Begotten, Not Made": *Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000). Burrus points out, for example, how Athanasius's attempt to separate Christ's transcendence from his materiality in "On the Incarnation of the Word," is "unveiled as a lie" but also "heavily reinscribes the irreducible difference of divinity" (44).
10. Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003), 1694–95.
11. Stephen D. Moore, *Poststructuralism and the New Testament: Derrida and Foucault at the Foot of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 58.
12. *Ibid.*, 58–59.
13. *Ibid.*, 59.
14. Virginia Burrus, *Saving Shame: Martyrs, Saints, and Other Abject Subjects* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 50.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Moore, *God's Gym*, 39.
17. Hélène Cixous, "Extreme Fidelity," in *Writing Differences: Readings from the Seminar of Hélène Cixous*, ed. Susan Sellers (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 16.
18. Pyper, "Job the Dog," 447.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 8–9.
21. *Ibid.*, 6.
22. Sharon V. Betcher, *Spirit and the Politics of Disablement* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 66.
23. Jacques Derrida, "Typewriter Ribbon: Limited Inc (2)," in *Without Alibi*, trans. and ed. Peggy Kamuf (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002), 104.
24. Burrus, *Saving Shame*, 49–50.
25. Cixous, *Stigmata*, 123.
26. *Ibid.*, 19.
27. *Ibid.*, 21.
28. *Ibid.*, 19.
29. Pyper, "Job the Dog," 445.
30. Moore, *God's Gym*, 4.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*

33. Cixous, *Stigmata*, 21.34. *Ibid.*, 250.35. Hélène Cixous, *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, trans. Susan Sellers and Sarah Cornell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 48.

36. Derrida, "Typewriter Ribbon," 135.

THE MICROBES AND PNEUMA THAT THEREFORE I AM | DENISE KIMBER BUELL

This chapter is revised from a paper presented at "Divinanimality: Creaturely Theology, The Eleventh Transdisciplinary Theological Colloquium," Drew Theological School, September 29–October 2, 2011. My sincere thanks to Stephen Moore and Catherine Keller for the invitation to participate in this galvanizing colloquium, to Mayra Rivera for her insightful response to the paper, to the other participants for their stimulating contributions, and to James Grzelak, Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, Jason Josephson, and Stephen Moore for their valuable comments on drafts of this chapter.

1. Juliana Spahr, "Poem Written after September 11, 2001," in *this connection of everyone with lungs: poems* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 4.
2. And it is not only humans who breathed in the wreckage of the twin towers but also pigeons, seagulls, dogs, cats, and other nonhuman animals.
3. Nancy Thana, "Viscous Porosity: Witnessing Katrina," in *Material Feminisms*, ed. Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 198.
4. The colloquium for which this essay was originally crafted took as its organizing principle an exploration of "divinanimality" and "creaturely theology." As the conference materials state: "Human-animal relations are emerging as an ever more important focus for academic engagement with the more-than-human world. The heterogeneous academic field that has resulted has attracted various (non-synonymous) names, including 'animal studies,' 'animality studies,' 'posthuman animality studies,' and 'zootricism.' The Eleventh Drew Transdisciplinary Theological Colloquium will attempt to triangulate these vital reflections on humanity and animality with reflections on divinity. The resources for a 'creaturely theology' are considerable. All Christian scripture and most Christian theology predates the epochal Cartesian realignment of human-animal relations in terms absolutely oppositional and hierarchical, as do Jewish and Muslim traditions. Prior to the Cartesian revolution in philosophy, posthumanist zootrics are claiming, there were no 'animals' in the modern sense, and hence no 'humans' either. 'We have never been human,' Donna Haraway hyperbolically but incisively insists (*When Species Meet*). A contemporary crea-

turally theology might begin with the recognition that the concepts of the human and the animal inherited from the Enlightenment are best construed as the epiphenomenal products of a particular historical moment—albeit the formative moment for almost every aspect of western culture, including the academic discipline of theology itself—bracketed by a pre- and posthumanism that think the human/animal distinction differently, and hence, potentially, the divine/human/animal distinction in addition" (<http://depts.drew.edu/tsfac/colloquium/2011/>).

5. I understand part of the impulse in animal studies and within post- and transhumanism to be a critique of understandings and practices of subjectivity, agency, and being that are seen to have had devastating results such as oppression among humans (racism, sexism, heterosexism, genocide, imperialism), destruction of many nonhuman species and their habitats, and poisoning of the environment. The privileging of the human as a species viewed as both distinctive and superior, the notion that agency is ideally characterized by autonomy and voluntary capacity to effect change in the world, that only certain varieties of humans are capable of such agency—all these have been challenged in important ways. One strand of critique has redefined "otherness" to ward off the dangerous effects of claiming to know, speak for, and thus assimilate or kill the "other," whether that be human or nonhuman animal others. Protecting alterity is especially central to the philosophical project of Emmanuel Levinas, for example. And as many readers will know, the title of this essay is adapted from Jacques Derrida's late meditation, "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)," trans. David Wills, *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 2 (2002): 369–418; republished in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 1–53. Derrida is also concerned to protect alterity. From a different perspective, protecting the alterity of divinity has been a feature of much Christian theology—a goal that has been challenged by some feminist theologians whose work resonates with some of the ideas in this essay. I am thinking here specifically of the work of Laurel Schneider and Mayra Rivera Rivera, in addition to the pathbreaking work of Catherine Keller. See, e.g., Laurel Schneider, *Re-Imagining the Divine: Confronting the Backlash Against Feminist Theology* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1998); and Mayra Rivera, *The Touch of Transcendence: A Postcolonial Theology of God* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 2007); Catherine Keller, *On the Mystery: Discerning Divinity in Process* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008).

6. The neologism "intra-action" underscores the position that processes produce actors and not simply that, as interaction implies, already distinct actors come