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THE ENDS OF (HU)MAN:
Following Jacques Derrida's Animal Question into the
Biblical Archive

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Abstract

This thesis engages with the biblical archive and its animals, asking what it means to read the Bible after Jacques Derrida's "question of the animal", that is, critical questions directed at the characterisations, representations and utilisations of animals past and present which deem animals distinctly different to humans in order to demarcate their inferiority. At the same time, it is a critical response to Derrida's Bible. Derrida – arguably one of the most important and influential thinkers of the twentieth century – provides a significant philosophical contribution to the question of the animal. In animal studies, the Bible is treated as a foundational legacy for concepts of the "human" and is frequently held up to blame for a misplaced human hubris. Derrida too draws on the Bible in implicit and explicit ways to underpin his critique of human/animal distinctions. Building on Derrida's work on animality, I provide close and critical interpretations of four crucial texts of the biblical archive. I argue that these biblical texts are caught up in irreducible tensions: on the one hand, these texts depict and describe how humans and animals alike abide as finite, fellow creatures under God as a justice to come which calls for a radical similitude and solidarity; on the other hand, animals are portrayed as objects that are mastered by humans to demonstrate God's power over the living. God's power thus resides in a double bind – it both displaces power from humans to show them *as* animals, and it simultaneously provides a model for human power *over* animal others.

In the first chapter I explore the significance of Derrida's motifs of nakedness and shame over nakedness for his critique of human/animal distinctions, arising from his reading of Genesis. Critically continuing Derrida's play on myths of origin, I tackle the question of the first carnivorous man, Noah, in Genesis 9 in order to show how this text can both be read as a license to enact the sovereignty of man over animals, and, how this text radically resists such a reading in God's covenant with all life, human and non-human.

Following my exploration of myths of origin, the second chapter grapples with Derrida's notion of a deconstructed subject through his emphasis on response and responsibility. Derrida puts forward the biblical response "here I am", as the mark of vulnerability in every relation with the other. I explore what this responsible response might mean in the context of the Book of Daniel that portrays encounters between human, nonhuman animals and God. Developing Derrida's injunction to follow the nonhuman

other, I argue that the double context of Daniel conveys two distinct visions of the concept of the political as animal: one, in which a fantasy for a harmonious domestication and cohabitation amongst rulers and their human and animal subjects is fostered under the only true ruler, a benign God; and, a collapse of such a fantasy, where rulers – human and divine – are portrayed as carnivorous, ferocious creatures who turn their subjects from pets to prey.

The third chapter follows this collapse to Derrida's critique of the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" as a commandment relating only to humans and thus a detrimental Judeo-Christian legacy. Derrida draws on the story of Cain and Abel to discuss the way the killing of an animal leads to the killing of a brother. To explore questions of killability I, however, turn to the negotiations of such issues in Acts 10. In the animal vision of Acts 10, questions of clean/unclean animals are suspended and hospitality is apparently opened up between Jewish and non-Jewish Christians. I demonstrate that the universalism associated with this text refers to an exclusive human fellowship which evades the actual implications of the animal vision. Yet, I posit that there are again two ways of reading the animal vision. In the first reading the analogical resemblance set up between animals and Gentiles implies that Gentiles too become killable as "clean" and thus the animal vision allows for indiscriminate killability amongst the living in general. In the second reading the cleanness of all animals is in fact a radical redemption of animal life for fellowship, in the same way that Peter accepts the fellowship and hospitality of Gentiles. Ultimately, the category of the living and the dead draws humans and non-humans together into what I call "mortability"; that is, the capacity for death *shared* amongst the living in the suspension of judgement until Jesus returns.

In the fourth chapter, I follow up on the suspension of judgement by analysing Derrida's thinking of sovereignty and animality in relation to Revelation 17. Crucially, Derrida's logic of sovereignty includes Christ as lamb, in his *logos* or reason of the strongest, despite its ostensible weakness as a diminutive animal. I explore this further by turning to the scene of Revelation 17 in which the Lamb is at war with the Beast and the woman riding it. Developing Derrida's allusions to sexual difference as it relates to the question of the animal, I explore how Revelation 17 denigrates both animals and women by characterising them as the figure of evil: Rome. The logic of the animal representations sets up the divine as the good on the side of the *weak* in the figure of the suffering Lamb. But as the Lamb becomes a beast-like indivisible sovereignty that asserts its reason of the strongest, the figures of "evil" become the vulnerable weak victims – the animal others.

Another image of Rome emerges, then, as a deconstructed sovereignty in the subjects that stand as powerless figures in the political order, namely the animals of the Roman arenas and the prostitutes of the Roman Empire.

The four texts I examine abide in the ambiguous tensions of an archive that can in the end neither be presented as animal-friendly nor as straightforwardly anthropocentric. The biblical archive is a complex compendium fraught with tensions that can, with its animals, only be held in abeyance. There can be no final “ownership” proclaimed of this archive and its animals, nor can any interpretive act dis-suspend them from such an ambivalent state. These very different texts do, however, provide the material and momentum to show central and crucial instances of *how* the biblical archive characterises its humans, animals and gods. My analysis reveals that the very same spaces in which these characterisations might be fixed as detrimental to animal life, are where the possibilities of seeing animals radically otherwise lie.

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Notes on References

Abbreviations for Jacques Derrida's works:

AF - *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*.

BS I - *The Beast and the Sovereign, vol. I*.

BS II - *The Beast and the Sovereign, vol. II*.

EM - "The Ends of Man".

EW "Eating Well' or the Calculation of the Subject".

FK - "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone".

GD - *The Gift of Death*.

GHH - "Geschlecht II: Heidegger's Hand".

MO - *Monolingualism of the Other, Or, the Prosthesis of Origin*.

OG - *Of Grammatology*.

OS - *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*.

PF - *Politics of Friendship*.

R - *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*.

SEC - "Signature, Event, Context".

SM - *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*.

TATTIA - *The Animal That Therefore I am*.

VAA - "Violence Against Animals".

WD - *Writing and Difference*.

The Biblical references are from the following sources:

The Bible with Apocrypha, New Revised Standard Version, anglicized edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. Edited by K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, 4th edition. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1990.

Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece. Edited by Kurt Aland et al, 27th edition. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001.

Introduction

Animal Questions, Biblical Blame, and Jacques Derrida

While scholarship has been undertaken on the Bible and its relationship to animals, it has tended to fall between negative *or* positive accounts. I argue that there is a need for nuanced interpretations of biblical texts which abide in the ambiguous tensions of these texts that can in the end neither be presented as animal-friendly nor as straightforwardly anthropocentric. Building on Jacques Derrida's work on animality, I present interpretations of four crucial texts in the biblical archive: the aftermath of the flood where humans are given animals to eat in Genesis 9, the story of Daniel following his God amongst the lions in the Book of Daniel, the question of Jewish-non-Jewish fellowship over clean/unclean animals in Acts of the Apostles 10, and the battle between the Lamb and the Whore who rides a Beast in Revelation 17. These very different texts provide the material and momentum to show some instances of *how* "the Bible" characterises its humans, animals and gods. I propose that, in fact, often in the very same spaces in which these characterisations might be fixed as detrimental to animal life, the possibilities of seeing animals radically otherwise also lie.

I argue that both Derrida's use of the Bible for thinking about animals, and the biblical texts I examine on the subject of animality, abide in an irreducible tension: on the one hand, humans and animals alike abide as finite, fellow creatures under God as a justice to come that calls for a radical similitude and solidarity; on the other, animals are portrayed as the subjects that are mastered by humans to demonstrate divine-like power over the living. God's power is thus a double bind – it both displaces power from humans to show them *as* animals, and simultaneously provides a model for power *over* others as God has power over the living, mimicked by humans over those they call animals. Derrida's critique of the "human" draws upon the biblical archive to develop what I call his "awakening" to the animal other as the condition for ethics as response and responsibility. For him, the Bible is ostensibly part of an intellectual inheritance that needs critical rethinking in regard to animals, but at the same time, he draws on biblical resources to

counter the philosophical heritage he critiques. Yet it is important to not rest there, as if Derrida has the last word. Picking up where he left off, intending to say, “if we have time, a word about the Bible”,¹ there are yet many more words required in following Derrida’s thinking today in our own time, and many more words and creatures of the Bible still to be thought, followed and responded to.

Three questions will have to be addressed in this introduction. First, a double one: why the question of the animal? What is this “question of the animal”? Secondly, why the Bible? And finally, why Jacques Derrida as an interlocutor? I will attempt to respond to these questions, contextualizing my contribution to what is termed animal studies, followed by an outline of my thesis argument. Three points form the premise of this thesis: (1) in animal studies the Bible is seen as an important, “originary” legacy in, and of, Western culture over notions of the “human”, and is frequently held up to blame for anthropocentric attitudes; (2) Jacques Derrida provides a significant philosophical contribution to the “question of the animal”; (3) Derrida too draws on the Bible in implicit and explicit ways to underpin his critique of human/animal distinctions. I argue that Derrida’s use of the Bible in relation to animality requires attention and analysis, and, that the biblical archive needs to be revisited in light of the blame accorded to it as well as in light of Derrida’s thought on animality.

Humanity’s Identity Crisis: Sovereign Subject No More?

Concern and compassion for animals is nothing new. From Pythagoras to Theophrastus, Seneca to Porphyry, Percy and Mary Shelly to Arthur Schopenhauer, Jeremy Bentham, John Locke and John Stuart Mill to Jacques Derrida, the debate around attitudes to, and appropriation of, animals has existed. But from an increased interest in animals burgeoning in the 1970s, the last three decades have seen this interest gain momentum towards rethinking more radically and systematically animal life as a subject in the Humanities. The “question of violence and compassion toward animals has, in a certain sense, become one of the leading questions of our age.”² The question of the animal is born out from what might be classed as two *crises*, overlapping to some extent in both being related to the concept of the “human”, its powers, properties and place in the world. The first is the crisis

¹ BS I, 343.

² Matthew Calarco, *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal From Heidegger To Derrida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 113.

of the subject and the desired “exiting” of something like an “epoch of the metaphysics of subjectivity”,³ promulgated perhaps most prominently by thinkers such as Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, Jacques Lacan and again Derrida. This crisis has taken shape under the shadow of the Enlightenment era as a critique of conceptualizations of the human subject, particularly around concepts of autonomy, consciousness, freedom and reason. Derrida characterises the way in which this Enlightenment subject has come under critique as “absolute origin, pure will, identity to self, or presence to self of consciousness”.⁴

Notions of the subject in relation to definitions of humans could be thought as far back as Aristotle’s writings, but the idea of the subject as it is understood today comes most clearly to the fore with René Descartes’s famous *je pense donc je suis*, or the, *Cogito ergo sum*, and what is characterised as the beginning of modernity.⁵ It has become commonplace, as Nick Mansfield points out, to characterise the modern era as an era of the subject.⁶ The intellectual trends sparked by critiques of the subject proffer interrogations of the debt of Enlightenment thinkers such as Descartes, Immanuel Kant and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and the ways in which their thinking undergirds modern conceptions of selfhood as well as socio-political structures and institutions.⁷ An important work in this regard is Theodor W. Adorno’s and Max Horkheimer’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, published in 1944, that put forward a powerful critique of an Enlightenment tradition and rationalist thinking that appeared to go hand in hand with the bloodshed of the twentieth century.⁸ They asked why humanity has not entered into a new kind of living but rather sunk “into a

³ Jean Luc Nancy, “‘Eating Well’ or the Calculation of the Subject”, in *Points... Interviews, 1974 – 1994*, trans. Peter Connor and Avital Ronell, ed. Elisabeth Weber (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 257.

⁴ Derrida is in fact being somewhat facetious here in that he is questioning Heidegger’s characterisation of an “epoch of subjectivity”, by giving the example of Spinoza as someone who does not present a metaphysics of absolute subjectivity. EW, 265.

⁵ René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, trans. J. Veitch (Amherst NY: Prometheus Books, 1989 [1637]) and *Principles of Philosophy*, trans. Valentine R. Miller and Reese P. Miller (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991 [1644]). As Nick Mansfield points out, in Descartes “we find together two principles that Enlightenment thought has both emphasized and adored: firstly, the image of the self as the ground of all knowledge and experience of the world (*before I am anything, I am I*) and secondly, the self as defined by the rational faculties it can use to order the world (*I make sense*).” Nick Mansfield, *Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 15.

⁶ Mansfield, *Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway*, 13.

⁷ Mansfield discusses the importance of Heidegger’s critiques of the subject as something determined by certain attributes such as consciousness or reason; what Heidegger proposes we ought to consider, rather, is a more fundamental ground for the subject, namely existence itself, *Dasein*. Foucault’s name has stood for a thinking of subjectivity that is not a naturally occurring “thing” that anyone *has*, but rather a construct of dominant socio-economic, political and cultural structures and institutions. For further discussion see Mansfield, *Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway*.

⁸ Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (London: Verso, 1997 [1944])

new kind of barbarism.”⁹ In 1947, Heidegger asks in his “Letter on Humanism”, how meaning can be restored to the term “humanism” and critiques ways in which humanism has been understood in relation to man, his essence and existence.¹⁰ The story for Adorno and Horkheimer was one in which humanity had not met its own expectations and had trusted too much in the triumphs of modern consciousness.¹¹ The Enlightenment “*must examine itself*, if men are not to be wholly betrayed.”¹² Liberating people from superstition and myths seems, for them, to have resulted in a sovereignty of man (or the autonomy, power, will and force of the *subject*) that manifested itself in domination and mastery of nature, power, technology as well as other people on the grounds of calculation and utility.¹³ As a result of such examinations and critiques, Calarco suggests that the subject has become disassociated from “the autonomous, domineering, atomistic subject of modernity”, but rather recognises his or her coming into being by and from events, powers, structures, cultures and institutions.¹⁴ “The subject, when understood as one who bears and is responsible to an event and alterity that exceeds it”, is, then, not a “fully self-present and self-identical subject”.¹⁵ This latter idea would be the subject “whose existence and death have been proclaimed in the discussions over humanism and the metaphysics of subjectivity.”¹⁶

Discussions of the subject and critiques of the Enlightenment are of course diverse, complex and multifaceted, and by no means form a straightforward consensus. Similarly, the “Enlightenment tradition” is itself an amorphous and composite web of thinkers far more diverse and multifarious than implied here. But, broadly speaking, particular conceptions associated with Enlightenment thought concerning the subject and its relation to autonomy, reason, freedom, the individual and consciousness, have come under close

⁹ Ibid., xi.

¹⁰ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism”, trans. Frank A. Capuzzi, *Basic Writings*, ed. David F. Krell (New York/London: Routledge, 2011), 149. Heidegger proposes that the first humanism, “Roman humanism, and every kind that has emerged from that time to the present, has presupposed the most universal ‘essence’ of man to be obvious. Man is considered to be an *animal rationale*.” Ibid., 154. This is not only a literal translation of the Greek, but a metaphysical one as well, he argues. Metaphysics, Heidegger says, thinks of the human being on “the basis of animalitas and not in the direction of his humanitas.” Ibid. The human body and existence is something *essentially* different to animals, according to him, and so humanism and the human must be rethought on this basis. Derrida critiques Heidegger for this supposition on several occasions. See GHH, 169-173, TATTIA, especially 142-160, and most fervently and closely perhaps throughout BS II.

¹¹ Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, xi.

¹² Ibid., xv.

¹³ Ibid., 4.

¹⁴ Calarco, *Zoographies*, 12.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

and critical scrutiny in the last century, a scrutiny that appears to have generally taken the form of a “crisis” as to what the human subject is or might be.

The second crisis is the ecological concern for the natural world, the seemingly detrimental impact of human life and civilization in the world, and the critical attempts to alter attitudes to the world’s natural resources, the environment, and the habitat in which humans and animals live.¹⁷ Ecological thought could be characterised as a “humiliating descent” for humans.¹⁸ Tracing such a “descent” much further back than the twentieth century critique of the Enlightenment subject, Timothy Morton argues that from “Copernicus through Marx, Darwin and Freud, we learn we are decentered beings, inhabiting a Universe of processes that happen whether we are aware of them or not, whether we name those processes ‘astrophysics’, ‘economic relations’, ‘the unconscious’ or ‘evolution’”.¹⁹ A major element of the current ecological crisis is species extinction; animals and their disappearance thus serve as a wake-up call and horror mirror-image to humans. Mary Midgley calls the relations between humans and the world a “war” against nature, and proposes that it is only recently that,

modern people might actually in some monstrous sense win their bizarre war, that they might ‘defeat nature’, thus cutting off the branch that they have been sitting on, and thus upsetting, not only the poets, but the profit-margin as well. To grasp this change calls for an unparalleled upheaval in our moral consciousness.²⁰

A double anxiety is embedded in animal species extinction: first, a sense of responsibility and guilt at animals disappearing at what appears an alarming and unprecedented rate; secondly, a recognition of humans as vulnerable (human) animals who may suffer the same fate if a balance is not regained of sustainability in the ecosphere. The ecological crisis and concern for the environment has functioned as a profound challenge to what is now condemned as human sovereignty. Critical questions as to human superiority and a self-serving human culture are rife in debates over the state of the world today, and much of this debate figures as a powerful indictment of humanity, calling for radical change. Such change is not merely about practical alterations to some human lifestyles, industry and

¹⁷ For further discussions of ecology see for instance Timothy Morton’s work, *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2010) and *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2007). For an interesting and critical discussion of ecology, animality and humanism, see Luc Ferry, *The New Ecological Order*, trans. Carol Volk (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1995 [1992]).

¹⁸ Timothy Morton, “Thinking Ecology: The Mesh, the Strange Stranger and the Beautiful Soul”, *Collapse VI* (2008): 265.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 265.

²⁰ Mary Midgley, *The Myths We Live By* (Oxford/New York: Routledge, 2004), 171.

culture – existing at the cost of the natural world and its resources – but about *attitudes* to the very concept of humanity and its place in the world.

As a general backdrop to these two crises, another important factor for the rise of animal studies comes from the natural sciences. Zoological, ethological and ecological research has provided the empirical grounds and impetus for reassessing dominant assumptions about the differences between human and animal life. Merely one example is tool use, commonly thought to be a uniquely human characteristic. Research done in behavioural ecology shows for example the new Caledonian Crows who can be observed to not only frequently use tools but also to manufacture tools, create new designs to suit their needs and select tools according to task.²¹ The destabilization of concepts and characteristics thought to be exclusive to, and definitional of, humans, has set in motion something of an “identity crisis”. As Cary Wolfe points out, such knowledge has “called into question our ability to use the old saws of anthropocentrism (language, tool use, the inheritance of cultural behaviors, and so on) to separate ourselves once and for all from animals”.²² He argues that the humanities are “now struggling to catch up with a radical reevaluation of the status of nonhuman animals”.²³ Wolfe also draws attention to new theoretical paradigms over the past few decades – cybernetics and systems theory, chaos theory – paradigms that “have had little use and little need for the figure of the human as either foundation or explanatory principle.”²⁴ Troubling absolute distinctions between humans and animals has opened up most pertinently, perhaps, questions of ethics in reflecting on the status of animals in relation to humans, and a concomitant attempt to rethink the exclusivity of *human* rights and strictly *human* ethical considerations.²⁵

Pragmatic questions are raised over the appropriation and exploitation of nature and its resources for human gain, animal life as a commodity and commercial industry, along with an existential probing of human progress and its questionable status today, for the

²¹ There are numerous books now that testify to characteristics thought to *belong* to humans observed in various animal species, such as the research done by Jane Goodall, Arthur Schaller and Dian Fossey, developed from the founders of modern ethology, Niko Tinbergen and Konrad Lorenz. More about the Caledonian Crows can be found on the website of the Oxford University research group on Behavioural Ecology: <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~kgroup/tools/introduction.shtml>.

²² Cary Wolfe, ed. *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), xi.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ See for instance Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (California: University of California Press, 2004 [1983]), Robert Garner, *Animal Rights: The Changing Debate* (New York: New York University Press, 1997) and Paul Waldau, *Animal Rights: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

future, and our place (or survival) in it as a species. The question of the animal, Calarco exhorts, “should be seen as one of the central issues in contemporary critical discourse”, rather than tucked away somewhere distant and unimportant as a niche in applied ethics.²⁶

Moral philosopher Christine M. Korsgaard writes of animals:

many of these individuals are complex centres of subjectivity, conscious beings, who experience pleasure and pain, fear and hunger, joy and grief, attachments to particular others, curiosity, fun and play, satisfaction and frustration, and the enjoyment of life. And these are all things that, when we experience them, we take to ground moral claims on the consideration of others.²⁷

Why, then, are animals ipso facto excluded from such consideration? Marc R. Fellenz calls this exclusion an “inattention” on the part of moral philosophers,²⁸ and suggests it is “the challenge philosophy must face in the coming century”.²⁹ The question of the animal, then, is (1) an appeal to face and challenge the industrialization, commercialization, exploitation and objectification of animals and the suffering this entails in the contemporary world; (2) a concern and care for the impact of anthropocentrism for wider ecological, environmental, political and ethical issues; and (3) a critical engagement with conceptions of the subject in light of current philosophical and scientific discourse, along with a commitment to reevaluate concepts of the “human” and “animal” in scientific, political, literary, religious and philosophical traditions, past and present.

The surge of interest in the topic of animals in the Humanities has accelerated in the last few decades, with research that has steadily received more and more critical attention, reaching a pitch in the last ten years. Earlier scholars such as Peter Singer, Richard Ryder, Andrew Linzey, Tom Regan and Mary Midgley fought for academic attention in the 1970s and 80s, focusing on animal rights and animal liberation, building on the pioneers of utilitarianism Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, for an appeal to decrease the suffering and pain of animals. In the 1990s the debate continued to explore the differences between humans and animals and what this might mean both philosophically and politically.³⁰ This is coupled with feminist issues of exclusion and marginalization,

²⁶ Calarco, *Zoographies*, 1.

²⁷ Christine M. Korsgaard, “Facing the Animal You See in the Mirror”, *The Harvard Review of Philosophy* XVI (2009), 3.

²⁸ Marc R. Fellenz, *The Moral Menagerie: Philosophy and Animal Rights* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 5.

²⁹ Fellenz, *The Moral Menagerie*, 6.

³⁰ See for instance James J. Sheehan and Morton Sosna, eds., *The Boundaries of Humanity: Humans, Animals, Machines* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), Robert Garner, ed. *Animal Rights, The Changing Debate* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), David Degrazia, *Taking Animals Seriously, Mental Life and Moral Status* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

with for instance Carol J. Adams' work.³¹ The turn of the century and onwards has only seen an increase of this interest with a range of thought-provoking scholarship on animals, from Stephen R. L. Clark's *The Political Animal: Biology, Ethics and Politics*,³² Peter Atterton and Matthew Calarco's *Animal Philosophy, Ethics and Identity*,³³ Wolfe's (ed) *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal*,³⁴ to Fellenz's *The Moral Menagerie: Philosophy and Animal Rights*, Paola Cavalieri's (ed) *The Death of the Animal: A Dialogue*,³⁵ and Calarco's *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal From Heidegger To Derrida*,³⁶ to mention only a few of the most significant examples.³⁷ This scholarship engages historically, ethically and philosophically with animal issues,³⁸ from questions of the human/animal distinction and whether it can be retained,³⁹ to extensive discussions of

³¹ See for instance *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010 [1990]); *Neither Man Nor Beast: Feminism and the Defense of Animals* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 1995); *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations*, edited with Josephine Donovan (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1995) as well as their *Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics: A Reader* (New York: University of Columbia Press, 2007). Much work has been done in this field, see also Josephine Donovan, "Animal Rights and Feminist Theory", *Signs* 15.2 (1990): 350-75, and more recently Lori Gruen and Kari Weil, eds. Special Issue "Animal Others", *Hypatia* 27. 3 (2012).

³² Stephen R. L. Clark, *The Political Animal: Biology, Ethics and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1999).

³³ Peter Atterton and Matthew Calarco, eds., *Animal Philosophy: Ethics and Identity* (London: Continuum, 2004).

³⁴ Cary Wolfe, ed. *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

³⁵ Paula Cavalieri, ed. *The Death of the Animal, a Dialogue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

³⁶ Matthew Calarco, *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal From Heidegger To Derrida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

³⁷ This is only continuing with the second decade of the twenty-first century, beginning with a number of prominent animal-focused publications; to name a few, Stanley Cavell et al, eds., *Philosophy and Animal Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), Tom Beauchamp and RG Frey, *Oxford handbook of Animal Ethics* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Kathy Rudy, *Loving Animals: Toward a New Animal Advocacy* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011) and F. Bailey Norwood and Jason Lusk, *Compassion, By the pound: The Economics of Farm Animal Welfare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). These were quickly followed by Margo Demello, *Animals and Society: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, ed. *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral: Ethics and Objects* (Washington DC: Oliphant Books, 2012) and Tom Tyler, *Ciferae: A Bestiary in Five Fingers* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

³⁸ See particularly Calarco's *Zoographies* for the Continental Philosophy tradition, and Clark's *The Political Animal: Biology, Ethics and Politics*, for a thorough discussion of philosophical traditions on animals, particularly Aristotle and Plato, but that also touches excellently on slavery, children, women, kings and apes in relation to rethinking the concept of the animal.

³⁹ Calarco's thesis, for instance, is that human/animal distinctions should no longer be maintained, and that we must move away altogether from anthropological modes of thought. Calarco concludes with a critique of Derrida for maintaining the two terms "human" and "animal" despite his criticism of the absurd distinction they are founded on, calling this a rarely dogmatic moment in Derrida's writing. Calarco, *Zoographies*, 3, 10, 143-148. In my opinion it is rather that Derrida insists on a number of limits and distinctions, as he argues in VAA. But further, that it is not as simple a matter of just erasing the word "animal" (or "human") and thus acting as if the problematic issues surrounding this word are also gone. Derrida's focus on specific animals, with specific names and in specific contexts is his call for a thinking that would be different to the words "the animal", that resist such reduction.

consciousness, rights, tradition, rationalism and Darwinism,⁴⁰ psychoanalysis, microorganisms and DNA,⁴¹ as well as concepts of technology and pets, such as Donna Haraway's well-known discussion of "cyborgs and companion species".⁴² Clearly, the debate over animal welfare, rights and status, is one that is attracting much attention in current scholarship, engaging with contemporary popular attitudes to animals, such as the fashion and food industry, as much as with philosophical theories and cultural legacies.

The Biblical Archive: Sacrificial Scapegoat in our Cultural Memory⁴³

What does the Bible have to do with any of this? The Bible is a crucial archive to explore in the context of animal studies because much contemporary philosophy on the animal refers to the Bible (either explicitly or implicitly) as an anthropocentric cultural weight to blame for humanity's superiority complex. In much the same way as feminist scholars have turned to the Bible to critique patriarchal structures, arguing for its persistent influence in cultural and social structures, this scriptural archive has also seemingly trod animals underfoot. This view is largely based on assumptions about "the Bible", and so this archive needs to be revisited and reviewed more closely and critically, which is the main aim of this thesis. To apportion blame to a complex canon of texts from vastly varying time, place, style, content and context is at any rate a dubious practice. I engage with the Bible precisely because of its importance in cultural memory as a powerfully persistent archive with a complex and rich diversity of characters – animal, human, divine. The Bible demands more sustained attention in order to grapple with its texts today, in light of the concerns and criticisms of animal studies.

Scanning the field of contemporary philosophy on the question of the animal, it is interesting to note that in measuring blame for the concept of the human as a superior

⁴⁰ See in particular Fellenz's *The Moral Menagerie*.

⁴¹ Judith Roof, "From Protista to DNA (and Back Again): Freud's Psychoanalysis of the Single-Celled Organism", in *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal*, ed. Cary Wolfe (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

⁴² Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, And Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003), 4. See also Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York: Routledge, 1990) and *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007). Haraway focuses on dogs and what she calls the "implosion of nature and culture in the relentlessly historically specific, joint lives of dogs and people, who are bonded in significant otherness." Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, And Significant Otherness*, 16.

⁴³ Much of the following section on biblical blame is reproduced in my article "Beastly Questions and Biblical Blame", in *The Bible and Posthumanism*, ed. Jennifer L. Koosed (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014).

being, the Bible is frequently brought up in the beginning, in introductions to rigorous discussions over the status of animal life. Seemingly, this is done to name and shame “the Bible” as blame-able without being put under much, if any, critical investigation. Engaging with the status of animals in the world, the Bible is held accountable for our rigid, exclusive and inflated notion of the human. Anchoring popular and philosophical conceptions of the “animal” in the deeply entrenched anthropocentric structures of Western intellectual thought, the tendency is to mount the Bible as an originary stable point of blame, to be put on trial, hurriedly condemned without prosecution, and thereby rushed to the marginal spaces of muted censure. Of course, no philosopher says exactly this: I will take the Bible to court and put it on trial for the killing and eating of millions of animals, for intensive farming, hunting, fur-production, pet-keeping, and other similar practices so commonplace in the Western world. Nonetheless, there is an implicit assumption that the Bible is guilty of animal abuse, or at the very least partly responsible for the current ideological underpinnings that justify animal abuse. While it is not afforded the privilege of closer examination – perhaps deemed somehow unquestionable or not of sufficient philosophical interest – the Bible nonetheless persistently stands accused of sacrificing the animal in favour of the human, thereby acting as scaffolding for the metaphysical assumptions that have traditionally held the human in place: central and aloft. The human is privileged by the divine, prime receiver of the logos; a powerful gift that has long equated humans to sovereign masters over the non-human in creation. Turning to some of the most significant recent publications in animal studies, mentioned earlier, demonstrates this marked tendency, that is, Wolfe’s *Zoontologies*, Atterton and Calarco’s *Animal Philosophy, Ethics and Identity*, Calarco’s *Zoographies*, Clark’s *The Political Animal: Biology, Ethics and Politics*, Cavalieri’s *Death of the Animal* and Fellenz’s, *The Moral Menagerie*.

For instance, Wolfe writes in *Zoontologies*, that “the animal as the repressed Other of the subject, identity, logos” reaches “back in Western culture at least to the Old Testament”,⁴⁴ and yet none of the diverse contributors to this exciting collection of articles follow up on this particular Old Testament heritage. It is briefly brought to the fore only to be dropped again as a muted point. In Peter Singer’s preface to *Animal Philosophy: Ethics and Identity*, his second reference to the long history of animals having “no ethical

⁴⁴ Wolfe, *Zoontologies*, x.

significance,” or at least, “very minor significance”⁴⁵ is the apostle Paul (after Aristotle), further mentioning Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. It is from this vantage point that Singer opens up into “most Western philosophers”.⁴⁶ In the introduction to the same book, Atterton and Calarco contend that the transition from Aristotle’s man as “rational animal” to simply “rational being” (in which “man” is exclusively and exhaustedly subsumed) was made “all the easier by the biblical story of man being made in the image of god and having dominion over the animals.”⁴⁷ A biblical story, then, is thought to have smoothed the passage from thinking of man as a certain *kind* of animal in creation, to man as something else altogether in light of his ability to reason.

In *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida*, Calarco discusses Levinas and the ethical relation to the “Other”, who for Levinas is necessarily a *human* other. Calarco turns Levinas’ position on its head, drawing his own “neoreligious”⁴⁸ conclusion where the encounter with the animal is “transcendent”, a “miracle”, but, is quick to avoid this turn to religious language by affirming his resolve for a “complete shift in the terms of the debate”,⁴⁹ as if he were echoing Levinas’s own words: “enough of this theology!”⁵⁰ He goes on to warn that we must adopt a hypercritical stance towards the “ontotheological tradition” we have inherited, “for it is this tradition that blocks the possibility of thinking about animals in a non- or other-than-anthropocentric manner.”⁵¹ A theologically oriented tradition is not merely to blame then, but is also a stumbling block for contemporary attempts to think about the animal. In the introduction to *The Political Animal: Biology, Ethics and Politics*, Clark references a number of specific biblical passages (Leviticus: 19, 22, 23, 25, 26; Deuteronomy: 22, 25; Ezekiel 34; Proverbs) to demonstrate “these commands, these tacit bargains” implicit in *owning* animals and yet not treating them as mere things.⁵² His is a more “positive” account of the biblical legacy, but

⁴⁵ Peter Singer, “Preface”, in *Animal Philosophy: Ethics and Identity*, eds. Peter Atterton and Matthew Calarco (London: Continuum, 2004), x.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Peter Atterton and Matthew Calarco, “Introduction”, in *Animal Philosophy: Ethics and Identity*, eds. Peter Atterton and Matthew Calarco (London: Continuum, 2004), xvii.

⁴⁸ Calarco, *Zoographies*, 59.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, “The Name of the Dog, or Natural Rights”, in *Animal Philosophy: Ethics and Identity*, eds. Peter Atterton and Matthew Calarco (London: Continuum, 2004), 47.

⁵¹ Calarco, *Zoographies*, 112.

⁵² Clark, *The Political Animal*, 5.

remains in this case nonetheless elusive, never expanded upon in the main body of the argument.⁵³

In Cavalieri's *Death of the Animal: A Dialogue*, one of her "speakers" (in the first essay of the book, a dialogue-shaped discussion) suggests we need to instate "distance from the revered legacy of our history, what I am referring to in particular is the idea that some points, or perspectives, of the past should be rejected as archaic".⁵⁴ The same speaker warns that although narrative form is something humans have always "craved" and "cherished" as modes of understanding self and world, we must ensure that "such narratives are not translated into normatively hierarchical frameworks", as "they determine roles and questions of status."⁵⁵ This becomes more explicitly directed to the biblical tradition when she writes that according to "the most widespread" of these culturally and conceptually determining narratives, "human beings were made by God in his own image, while nonhuman beings are mere creations. The latter are only a preparatory work, while the former are the apex of creation, directly molded by God."⁵⁶ This reference is put forward with confidence, without recourse to specific biblical text, context or sustained analysis. The assumption is that we already know what she is talking about, the point speaks for itself. Cavalieri uses this point as a synecdoche for the history that has justified the systematic subjugation and suffering of animals: "such a story supports the normative implication that humans are superior beings, entitled to use nonhumans as they see fit."⁵⁷ What Cavalieri seemingly calls for is violence towards the "sacred"; a fundamental purge or erasure of the biblical trace. Without further ado, she suggests, this particular conceptual corpse needs burying. A relic of the past, it still clutters our thinking of the animal, and thus demands immediate iconoclastic action. Invoking the ethical dimension inscribed in the question of the animal, issues of "right and wrong" as she puts it, this is a point of some urgency, lest we allow the biblical to run wild and cause all sorts of further havoc.⁵⁸

Fellenz picks up on the same point, and sums up the blame in the following statement: "The traditional ethical models found in Western philosophy and theology have been premised on human uniqueness: the belief that as rational (perhaps ensouled) beings,

⁵³ Clark has dealt more explicitly with religion and animals elsewhere, such as "Ask Now the Beasts and They Shall Teach Thee", in *Animals as Religious Subjects: Transdisciplinary Perspectives*, eds. Celia Deane-Drummond, David Clough and Rebecca Artinian-Kaiser (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

⁵⁴ Cavalieri, *The Death of the Animal*, 2.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

humans have a putative value and destiny that surpass that of any other animal.”⁵⁹ He writes about “the religious concept of animals as part of the *human dominion*”⁶⁰ and points out the necessary “proximity” between human and animal within religious sacrifice which is also the prerequisite for scientific experiments on animals for human gain; it is a case of life and living in a way that *corresponds*.⁶¹ Whether this is a point that accords greater significance to animals in biblical accounts of sacrifice or not, the relation Fellenz sets up implicitly foregrounds biblical sacrifice of animal bodies as the origin to scientific experimentation on animals. This is an interesting point, but one that surely needs validating through specific reference to biblical sacrifice narratives, rather than ploughing forth under the assumption that we all know what exactly takes place in such sacrificial structures, as if these scenes were straightforwardly transparent. Fellenz also refers to biblical and classical Greek stories to convey the way in which the transformation of humans into animals is a frequent trope used to signify punishment.⁶² One of the foundations for assuming the ontological inferiority of animals is according to Fellenz “theological in nature”, embodied in the religious myth that “we humans are ensouled beings, created in the image of a God who made the world, including the animals, for our use.”⁶³ He does present some of the ways in which Christian theologians have worked against this trend, but stays clear of specific textual references to the Bible, and ultimately the theological arguments are swept under the carpet: “we need not rely on them, nor become entangled in other theological complexities”,⁶⁴ a sweeping motion reminiscent of Cavalieri’s proposed disentanglement from the biblical.⁶⁵

Of course, these are all *philosophical* texts on the moral and ontological status of animals. Why should they engage with biblical texts? Further, this is not to say they are necessarily wrong. The point is rather, that to respond to the question of the animal as it relates to our cultural inheritance, it is problematic to plot an uncritical notion of the Bible as origin point, or as stable homogenous meaning, especially without revisiting these textual sites. Further, to hold up the cultural inheritance of the Bible and its theologies without thinking more precisely about what is meant by the “theological”, “God”, “human”

⁵⁹ Fellenz, *The Moral Menagerie*, 31.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 16.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁶⁵ Cavalieri, *The Death of the Animal*, 4.

and “animal” in these contexts is to propagate a myopic acceptance of this legacy as well as its whole-sale rejection on terms that are all too opaque.

Even if these contemporary philosophical references are merely the result of religion’s “prolonged stammerings”⁶⁶ in the world today, the Bible nonetheless plays the significant part of both fundamental beginning and ensnaring tangle. It represents a dangerous labyrinthine structure that serious philosophers would be better off avoiding. As if that messy business is a job for biblical scholars alone. If it were not for the fact that the above-mentioned philosophers are producing valuable and timely publications on the animal, and all point to the Bible as culpable, this troublesome biblical body of literature *could* perhaps feasibly be left for biblical scholars to dissect in the dark, or for theologians to peruse in peace. As this is clearly not the case, however, and, additionally, as the biblical corpus and its creatures arguably have much to offer in the animal studies debate, it is of paramount importance that we turn to the Bible as textual supplement to our thinking around and about the question of the animal. Instead of attempting to violently erase the biblical trace we would be better off turning towards that textual body, responding to it, go through its pockets anew, and review the strange and fantastical, domestic and divine characters that inhabit its spaces. As Laura Hobgood-Oster points out, to view such a tradition – she is specifically addressing the Christian tradition – as wholly negative is “mistaken or at least incomplete.”⁶⁷ It is perhaps a matter of adopting what Yvonne Sherwood in *Derrida’s Bible* called “slow motion biblical interpretation”.⁶⁸ An interpretive practice with the biblical archive that is “caught up in a complex relationship of exultation-mourning, gratitude-disappointment, fidelity-betrayal”, “a mode of interpretation that, instead of dividing the world into those who accept or reject a given religious inheritance (in a large act of choice that seemingly exonerates us from the intricacies of inheritance thereafter), implicates us all in little acts of micro-choosing and micro-decision.”⁶⁹

There are of course exceptions to the trend described above, perhaps best diagnosed as a backlash, which has formed more “positive” readings of the Bible. The earliest and

⁶⁶ Georges Bataille, *Theory of Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1989), 96. I do not think this is the case and return to reflect on this point in the conclusion.

⁶⁷ Laura Hobgood-Oster, “And Say the Animal really Responded: Speaking Animals in the History of Christianity”, in *Divinanimality: Creaturely Theology*, ed. Stephen D. Moore (New York: Fordham University Press, forthcoming), 216. In this article, Hobgood-Oster provides accounts of speaking animals in the Christian tradition as a response to the question of the supposedly *Word*-obsessed Christianity and its exclusive connection to humans and human language.

⁶⁸ Yvonne Sherwood, “Introduction: Derrida’s Bible”, in *Derrida’s Bible (Reading a Page of Scripture with a Little Help from Derrida)*, ed. Yvonne Sherwood (New York/Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 14.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

continuing example of a Christian theological response within animal studies has been Andrew Linzey's work – such as *Animals on the Agenda: Questions about Animals for Theology and Ethics*, which investigates both Christian scripture and tradition to question whether this tradition is “irredeemably speciesist”.⁷⁰ In another publication, now with the collaboration of Rabbi Dan Cohn-Sherbok, Linzey and Cohn-Sherbok aim to give an account of “the positive resources available within the Jewish and Christian traditions for a celebration of our relations with animals.”⁷¹ While not uncritical, Linzey's project has been oriented around a positive revaluation and redemption of the Bible and the Judeo-Christian. Another example is Lisa Kemmerer's *Animals and World Religions* from 2011 which has two chapters on Judaism and Christianity that also provide a predominantly positive gloss. While valuable in their own rights, what overtly positive responses risk is to replace the Judeo-Christian and its biblical literature as sacrificial scapegoat with a resurrected lamb: meek, domesticated and benign. I argue that it is equally impossible to see the vast and complex biblical archive in such a guise as it is to hold it up as a scapegoat.

Two notable examples of recent scholarship that engage with animal studies, religion and the Bible that do not fall into the trap of either denigration or approbation are Stephen D. Moore's forthcoming volume *Divinanimality: Animal Theory, Creaturely Theology*⁷² and Jennifer L. Koosed's edited volume *The Bible and Posthumanism* from 2014.⁷³ Both volumes provide rich engagements with both the theoretical stakes of animal studies and the ambiguities of religion and its scriptures. Such work, however, is still on the marginal, even eccentric, side of Biblical studies. Other studies such as Kenneth Way's *Donkeys in the Biblical World: Ceremony and Symbol*⁷⁴, Tova L. Forti's *Animal Imagery in the Book of Proverbs*⁷⁵, Deborah O'Daniel Cantrell's *The Horseman of Israel: Horses and Chariotry in Monarchic Israel (Ninth–Eighth Centuries B.C.E.)*⁷⁶ are also appearing within the field of animals in the Bible, but as Ken Stone points out, these are strictly

⁷⁰ Andrew Linzey's introduction is named: “Is Christianity Irredeemably Speciesist?”, in *Animals on the Agenda: Questions about Animals for Theology and Ethics*, eds. Andrew Linzey and Dorothy Yamamoto (London: SCM Press, 1998). “Speciesist” refers to when one species is deemed superior to another.

⁷¹ Andrew Linzey and Dan Cohn-Sherbok, eds. *After Noah, Animals and the Liberation of Theology* (London: Mowbray, 1997), 1.

⁷² Stephen D. Moore, ed. *Divinanimality: Animal Theory, Creaturely Theology* (New York: Fordham University Press, forthcoming).

⁷³ Jennifer L. Koosed, ed. *The Bible and Posthumanism* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014).

⁷⁴ Kenneth Way, *Donkeys in the Biblical World: Ceremony and Symbol* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011).

⁷⁵ Tova L. Forti, *Animal Imagery in the Book of Proverbs* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

⁷⁶ Deborah O'Daniel Cantrell, *The Horseman of Israel: Horses and Chariotry in Monarchic Israel (Ninth–Eighth Centuries B.C.E.)*⁷⁶ (Winona Lake, IN.: Eisenbrauns, 2011).

historical-critical resources, that, although useful, do not provide a critical engagement with, or connection to, the questions raised by animal studies today.⁷⁷

More work has been emerging within theology and religious studies than biblical studies so far. In his introduction to animal studies, Paul Waldau calls for “inquiries about religion and animals” that do not resort to generalization, noting Lynn White’s infamous 1967 thesis that “especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has ever seen.”⁷⁸ Elijah Judah Schochet’s *Animal Life in Jewish Tradition*⁷⁹ and Robert M. Grant’s *Early Christians and Animals*⁸⁰ have been two resources for Judaism and Christianity and their relationships to animals, and Ingvild Sælid Gilhus’ valuable *Animals, Gods and Humans: Changing Attitudes to Animals in Greek, Roman and Early Christian Thought* is a welcome contribution to contextualising the Judeo-Christian in a Greco-Roman world.⁸¹ Waldau and Kimberly Patton’s *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science and Ethics*, David Clough’s systematic theology on animals,⁸² *Creaturely Theology*,⁸³ along with the recently published *Animals as Religious Subjects: Transdisciplinary Perspectives*, are further signs of a response from scholarship on religion.⁸⁴ Laura Hobgood-Oster provides a wide-ranging reading of animals in the Christian tradition that have largely gone unnoticed and forgotten, in her *Holy Dogs and Asses: Animals in the Christian Tradition*.⁸⁵ Sarra Tlili has recently published a book entitled *Animals in the Qur’an*, providing a response from the Islamic perspective. Expanding and building on such work, it is important, I argue, to resist stark or simplistic oppositions between redeeming the Bible or dismissing it wholesale.

It is imperative to build on this burgeoning scholarship, multiplying perspectives and critical attention to foster broader as well as more detailed discussions. Perhaps, in the desire to promote animal welfare, a tendency to dismiss contradiction and complexity for

⁷⁷ Ken Stone, “The Dogs of Exodus and the Question of the Animal”, in *Divinanimality: Creaturely Theology*, ed. Stephen D. Moore (New York: Fordham University Press, forthcoming), 290.

⁷⁸ Lynn White Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis”, *Science* 155 (1967): 1205.

⁷⁹ Elijah Judah Schochet, *Animal Life in Jewish Tradition* (New York: Ktav, 1984).

⁸⁰ Robert M. Grant, *Early Christians and Animals* (London/New York: Routledge, 1999).

⁸¹ Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans: Changing Attitudes to Animals in Greek, Roman and Early Christian Thought* (London/New York: Routledge, 2006).

⁸² David Clough, *On Animals, Volume One: Systematic Theology* (London/New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012).

⁸³ Celia E. Deane-Drummond and David Clough, eds. *Creaturely Theology: God, Humans and Other Animals* (London: SCM Press, 2009).

⁸⁴ David Clough, Celia Deane-Drummond, Rebecca Artinian-Kaiser, eds. *Animals as Religious Subjects: Transdisciplinary Perspectives* (London/New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013).

⁸⁵ Laura Hobgood-Oster, *Holy Dogs and Asses: Animals in the Christian Tradition* (Champaign IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

wholesale blame or praise concerning the biblical archive has marred the field of animal studies so far. The task now is to make space for the nuances, contradictions, complexities, tensions and idiosyncrasies that abide in the biblical archive as to its characters, animal, human, divine.

It is in the name of a particular textual cultural-religious inheritance and canon as memory and authority that the Bible is referred to as we have seen above, and to which we must turn anew with the question of the animal in mind. Or perhaps, it would be better to talk (as I already have) of the “biblical archive” in referring to the Bible, thus drawing in notions of multiplicity, preservation, power and legacy more explicitly. Thinking critically about such a “biblical” inheritance in relation to its textuality is important to unmask the seemingly organic origin point the “Bible” or the “Judeo-Christian” stands for in references to its blame, as if it were homogenous, congruent, and a monolithic corpus. I argue that it is neither a pure origin for anthropocentrism nor a straightforward source for anthropocentric thinking. It is indeed the case that individual texts in the biblical archive can be interpreted as fostering current understandings of human dominance, centrality and superiority. At the same time, however, the same texts frequently also radically problematize such an anthropocentric understanding in the relationality that conditions life with and as animals.

It goes without saying that the Western world is influenced by the Bible in countless and incalculable ways. Whether it is actually read or known as such by the contemporary majority is another question. In his influential *Religion and Cultural Memory*, Jan Assmann theorises the ways in which individual memory is never wholly distinct from social memory, and further, the ways in which societal norms and practices emerge from such collective memory. In “the act of remembering we do not just descend into the depths of our own most intimate inner life, but we introduce an order and a structure into that internal life that are socially conditioned and that link us to the social world.”⁸⁶ Individual memory, its formation, structure and order, is mediated through and in a particular context, culture and society, and is thus caught up in what he calls collective memory. “The task of this memory, above all, is to transmit a collective identity. Society inscribes itself in this memory with all its norms and values and creates in the individual the authority that Freud called the superego and that has traditionally been called

⁸⁶ Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 1-2.

‘conscience.’”⁸⁷ This kind of memory is, he writes, “particularly susceptible to politicized forms of remembering.”⁸⁸ We might for instance see the above references to the Bible as a symptom of a particular kind of collective memory of the Bible *as* anthropocentric. Particular pages of its archive are remembered and reinforced socially and communally through repetition of its supposed meaning. One such example would be the much referred to *Imago Dei* in Genesis – that is, humans being made in God’s image – and the concurrent “memory” that this implies human superiority. Such reinforced memory and its consequences explain perhaps the anxiety felt in regard to the Bible as a cultural canon whose memory is still deeply present in today’s world, in more or less oblique ways. The fuzziness that accompanies any attempt to calculate just *how* such memory functions or exactly *what* it denotes merely exacerbates the anxiety, making such “memories” all the more elusive and uncontrollable, thus harder to erase or even to admit their presence as a dominant norm.

It is important to note that what Assmann is suggesting is that norms and values are to some extent *naturalized* by appearing to represent the individual beliefs of a person, as separate from particular cultural archives, thus thought to be natural as either singular or universal (“common sense”) rather than culturally constructed and part of a larger more particular fabric of influences and influxes. Cultural archives, such as literary canons and religious myths, are of great importance, whether consciously acknowledged or not. “Both the collective and the individual turn to the archive of cultural traditions, the arsenal of symbolic forms, the ‘imaginary’ of myths and images, of the ‘great stories,’ sagas and legends, scenes and constellations that live or can be reactivated in the treasure stores of a people.”⁸⁹ Archives, then, are crucial for understanding both individual and collective forms of memory and how they continue to influence norms, values and practices in the present and for the future. Assmann holds that there “is no understanding without memory, no existence without tradition.”⁹⁰ Noting Heidegger’s thought and Derrida’s writing on archives, Assmann argues that this discussion emerges “as a form of memory that constitutes the present and makes the future possible through the medium of symbols... permeated by the political structures of power and domination.”⁹¹ For the question of the animal this is of great importance. It is precisely a question of power and domination in

⁸⁷ Ibid., 6-7.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 7.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 7-8.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 27.

⁹¹ Ibid.

terms of political structures and authoritative archives that condition thinking and acting in the world today *with regard to* power (or the lack of it), but also, crucially, as Assmann implies, for the future. In other words, if perceptions of animals today as edible, killable *things*, are shown to be linked to particular myths or cultural legacies, these perceptions might appear rather less “natural” or “common sense”. If, on the other hand, such understandings are reinforced by recourse to discursive strategies of myths and narratives as to the “natural” or “original” order of particular hierarchies, then the right to lord it over animals might appear fully justified, and the idea that animals could be treated or thought of otherwise would remain unthinkable.

Derrida finds his discussion of the archive in its etymology; *arkhe*, he says, “names at once the *commencement* and the *commandment*.”⁹² This word coordinates two principles in one, namely, “the principle according to nature or history, *there* where things *commence* – physical, historical, or ontological principle – but also the principle according to the law, *there* where men and gods *command*, *there* where authority, social order are exercised, *in this place* from which *order* is given – nomological principle.”⁹³ Reflecting on the biblical archive, it is pertinent that its status in contemporary philosophy on the animal is as precisely these two features, as an origin point – commencement – and as a persevering, prescriptive law – commandment. For Derrida the archive always holds what is uniquely imprinted but at the same time re-iterable, reproducible. Like a signature, it signifies the utterly singular *and* is a repeatable, general structure of signs. The archive can never wholly secure or enclose its content as singular and unique. It is always haunted by its possible destruction, haunted from the origin in “its immanent divisibility, the possibility of its fission”.⁹⁴ In other words, it can never be only a “thing” of the past that safely and purely records and holds particular inscriptions, but abides in an on-going signification process that is divisible, multiple, vulnerable, but also always to some extent uncontrollable and excessive. The Biblical archive can quite clearly never form *one* inheritance or inhabit one legacy; it can never wholly “be” itself, as if this “itself” could remain self-identical, stable and singular. In other words, it “is” by definition not anthropocentric in any pure or stable manner. It is not that the philosophical thinkers of the animal I have discussed propose this, but rather, that the biblical heritage and its identities are vaguely and obscurely “remembered” as such. As Derrida points out, every archive is

⁹² AF, 1.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 100.

both “*institutive* and *conservative*. Revolutionary and traditional.”⁹⁵ The biblical archive is a particularly conserved and conservative canon, with a particular history of formation and interpretation. But it is also always already constituted by a destabilizing movement, and can always be thought otherwise or elsewhere,⁹⁶ thus “opening wide spaces for reimagining”⁹⁷ what has been marked as anthropocentrically colonized territories, or indeed, to challenge the positive gloss imprinted on its pages, stamped as “animal-friendly area”.

In light of the blame apportioned to the Bible, and to its status as an important cultural archive, it is imperative that this hybrid body of texts is examined with a critical attention to the complexities and tensions that mark its varied topography. Exactly *how* this canon has influenced past and present views of animals is perhaps impossible to map out. But to trawl over some of its terrain today – in light of the questions posed in animal studies – and attempt to identify in *what ways* the biblical archive could be seen to reinforce ideas of human superiority, and, in *what ways* it might resist such ideas, is a task that this thesis will attempt.

Following Derrida

Why Jacques Derrida as an interlocutor? Derrida (1930-2004) was arguably one of the greatest thinkers of the twentieth and start of the twenty-first century, and certainly one of the most influential if not infamous. The names “Derrida” and “deconstruction” have, as Sherwood’s assessment demonstrates, been frequently divided between religious mystification and secular demystification, both “encroaching totalitarianism and encroaching relativism”.⁹⁸ Alternately critiqued for “impotent bookishness” and “totalizing power”,⁹⁹ he “serves as a cipher for perilous regression (into childhood ‘play,’ or the occult world of Jewish mysticism), and also for dangerous acceleration beyond the borders of the

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁹⁶ These comments recall Nicholas Royle’s description of deconstruction as “a logic of destabilization always already on the move in ‘things themselves’: what makes every identity at once itself and different from itself: a logic of spectrality: a theoretical and practical parasitism or virology: what is happening today in what is called society, politics, diplomacy, economics, historical reality, and so on: the opening of the future itself.” Nicholas Royle, “What is Deconstruction”, in *Deconstructions: A User’s Guide*, ed. Nicholas Royle (Hampshire/New York: Palgrave, 2000), 11.

⁹⁷ Laurel Kearns, “Foreword”, in *Divinanimality: Animal Theory, Creaturely Theology*, ed. Stephen D. Moore (New York: Fordham University Press, forthcoming), xii.

⁹⁸ Yvonne Sherwood and Kevin Hart, eds. *Derrida and Religion: Other Testaments* (London: Routledge, 2004), 5.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

humanities and the human and humane.”¹⁰⁰ From his early work in the 1960s and 1970s with the seminal *Writing and Difference*¹⁰¹ and *Of Grammatology*,¹⁰² through *Dissemination*,¹⁰³ *Glas*,¹⁰⁴ *The Truth in Painting*,¹⁰⁵ *Of Spirit*,¹⁰⁶ *Spectres of Marx*,¹⁰⁷ *Rogues*,¹⁰⁸ to mention only a few, to the last two posthumously published volumes *The Beast and the Sovereign*,¹⁰⁹ he has done nothing if not sparked debate and intellectual stimulus amongst critics and followers. Prolific and diverse in his interests, Derrida wrote on phenomenology, Marx, Plato, Freud, drugs, 9/11, the poetry of Paul Celan, the death penalty, Franz Kafka, democracy, the South African truth and reconciliation commission, Abraham and animals, as well as the terms and neologisms he is so well known for, such as *écriture*, *différance*, the *khora* and deconstruction.¹¹⁰ Perhaps what characterises Derrida’s style of thinking and body of work the most is a sustained attention to languages and texts, their details, marginalia and tensions, marked by a deep respect for the legacies and traditions he engaged with, as well as a ceaseless capacity for imaginative, radical and surprising interpretations.

Peter Sedgwick calls Derrida “amongst the most controversial of post-war European thinkers”,¹¹¹ because “he is a thinker who has sought to challenge a number of what he argues to be deeply rooted presuppositions that dominate the practice of philosophical enquiry.”¹¹² As Derrida-scholar Nicholas Royle puts it: “He questions everything. He refuses to simplify what is not simple. He works at unsettling all dogma.”¹¹³ It is perhaps no wonder then, that he has “consistently provoked anxiety, anger

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 6.

¹⁰¹ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (New York/Oxford: Routledge, 2001 [1967]).

¹⁰² Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1998 [1967]).

¹⁰³ Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

¹⁰⁴ Derrida, *Glas*, trans. R. Rand and J.P. Leavey (Lincoln NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1986 [1974]).

¹⁰⁵ Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

¹⁰⁶ Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

¹⁰⁷ Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York/Oxford: Routledge, 2006).

¹⁰⁸ Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).

¹⁰⁹ The first volume of his seminars on the death penalty (Dec 1999- Mar 2000) was published December 2013, with the second in progress, but they were given prior to the last seminars he gave on the beast and sovereign.

¹¹⁰ This by no means forms an exhaustive list, to provide one would be too long-winded.

¹¹¹ Peter Sedgwick, *Descartes to Derrida: An Introduction to European Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 192.

¹¹² Ibid., 193.

¹¹³ Nicholas Royle, *In Memory of Jacques Derrida* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), ix.

and frustration, as well as pleasure, exhilaration and awe.”¹¹⁴ In his book *In Memory of Jacques Derrida*, Royle argues that Derrida “was the most original and inspiring writer and philosopher of our time. He made – and his writing still makes and will continue to make – earthquakes in thinking.”¹¹⁵ But earthquakes in thinking *what?* Or *who?*

I propose two primary reasons for choosing Derrida as an interlocutor. The first is that Derrida extensively and rigorously analyses issues at the heart of the two crises I referred to earlier, namely the question of the subject and the question of the human as a sovereign figure in the world. His later work forms a significant contribution to the question of the animal. The second reason is the way in which the Bible functions in his work. As I will show, the Bible is seemingly complicit with the traditions he critiques, but simultaneously, more implicitly, forms a crucial resource for his thinking of response and responsibility towards the nonhuman other.

In the philosophical tradition associated with the crisis of the subject, Derrida is a significant figure, both indebted to, and critical of, thinkers such as Adorno, Levinas, Heidegger and Foucault. Derrida argues that despite all the challenges to the understanding of the “subject”, the discourse on the subject “continues to link subjectivity with man”.¹¹⁶ Already in 1968, Derrida addresses the question of “man” and suggests that the history of the concept of man has not been sufficiently interrogated, as if “man” were a sign without historical, cultural, linguistic limits.¹¹⁷ A large part of Derrida’s later work engages with concepts of the “human” and “man” in the Western philosophical tradition, the question of the animal, and what a different subjectivity might look like – one that takes account of animal life too, and not merely as inferior to humans. I would go so far as to say that to a great extent Derrida inscribes his philosophical signature on this question of the animal, as his contribution and legacy to philosophy and critical thought. This can be most powerfully and succinctly found in the 1997 C erisy lectures that have become posthumously published as *The Animal that Therefore I am*. Related to this work on the human subject and animals, he also dedicated much work and many seminars towards the end of his life to concepts of sovereignty – the sovereignty of man – and figures of beasts in philosophical, political, cultural, and religious canonical works. These are gathered in the posthumously published two volumes *The Beast and the Sovereign*, transcribed from his final 2001-2003 seminars.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ EW, 268.

¹¹⁷ EM, 35.

Here he explores the often paradoxical representations of political man as superior to animality and political man as animality.¹¹⁸ He wishes to pose “the great questions of animal life (that of man, said by Aristotle to be a ‘political animal,’ and that of the ‘beasts’) and of the treatment, the subjection, of the ‘beast’ by ‘man.’”¹¹⁹ Michael Naas points to this central concern of sovereignty in the last two decades of Derrida’s work, as “the root of many of the philosophical concepts Derrida wishes to reread and many of the contemporary ethical and political issues he wished to rethink.”¹²⁰ To mention the most prominent issues, these would be religion, hospitality, democracy and justice.¹²¹ These themes are all both obliquely and more unequivocally present in Derrida’s thinking of animality.

In “Violence Against Animals”, Derrida proclaims that the “‘question of animality’ is not one question among others, of course.”¹²² He explains how he has long considered it “decisive”:

while it is difficult and enigmatic in itself, it also represents the limit upon which all the great questions are formed and determined, as well as the concepts that attempt to delimit what is ‘proper to man,’ the essence and future of humanity, ethics, politics, law, ‘human rights,’ ‘crimes against humanity,’ ‘genocide,’ etc.¹²³

Derrida explicitly draws attention to the persistent interest he has taken in the question of the animal and the many references to it in his work.¹²⁴ Situating himself like a Robinson Crusoe on an island unto himself, Derrida claims he has always been exempt from what philosophy has called with such imprecision “the animal”:

I am saying ‘they,’ ‘what they call an animal,’ in order to mark clearly the fact that I have always secretly exempted myself from that word, and to indicate that my whole history, the whole genealogy of my questions, in truth everything I am, follow, think, write, trace, erase even, seems to me to be born from that exceptionalism.¹²⁵

What Derrida contributes to animal studies is a thought-provoking and wide-ranging critique of the traditions in Western philosophy that have dominated the debate on the “human” and “animal”, providing suggestions for how we might begin to follow such

¹¹⁸ BS I, 26.

¹¹⁹ Editorial Note quoting Derrida on the seminars in BS I.

¹²⁰ Michael Naas, *Derrida From Now On* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 63.

¹²¹ See for instance *Rogues, The Gift of Death*, “Faith and Knowledge”, *Of Hospitality, On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*.

¹²² VAA, 62.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 62-63.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 63. In footnote 3 he lists some of these references.

¹²⁵ TATTIA, 62.

traditions – and various forms of anthropocentrism – differently. Derrida’s repeated references to a “Western philosophical tradition” from Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, to Heidegger, Lacan and Levinas, intentionally situates him as following this tradition, participating in its legacies, but determinedly inscribing his own philosophical signature on this tradition in a powerful indictment of its philosophical treatment of animals. This set of names is frequently referred to simply as a metonym for the Western philosophical tradition, named by Derrida, “from Aristotle to Lacan, and including Descartes, Kant, Heidegger, and Levinas”¹²⁶ as “paradigmatic, dominant, and normative” in regard to the philosophical understanding of the “human”. He further justifies their prominence in his work by arguing that they

constitute a general topology and even, in a somewhat new sense for this term, a worldwide anthropology, a way for today’s man to position himself in the face of what he calls ‘the animal’ within what he calls ‘the world’ – so many motifs (man, animal, and especially world) that I would like, as it were, to reproblematicize.¹²⁷

It is not, of course, that this tradition is homogenous, but rather that it has been “hegemonic” when it comes to human/animal distinctions, and further that it is in fact a discourse “of hegemony, of mastery itself.”¹²⁸ In *The Animal That Therefore I am* he undertakes this reproblematicization, focusing on the above-mentioned canonical figures. For the *Beast and the Sovereign* seminars he expands his canon, with a wide range of writers in volume one: La Fontaine, Thomas Hobbes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Niccolò Machiavelli, Giorgio Agamben, Gustave Flaubert, Gilles Deleuze, Edmund Husserl, Paul Celan, D.H Lawrence, as well as going over Aristotle, Paul Valéry, Levinas, Lacan and Heidegger again. Volume two focuses on interpreting Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and Heidegger’s *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*. The figures and texts Derrida examines are not put forward as an exhaustive archive of Western culture and philosophy for rethinking the conceptualisation of the human/Man, but do form an impressively expansive exploration and multifaceted critique of some of the key texts and thinkers for the Western world.

Derrida’s thesis is bold and with enormous implications for grappling with some of the most dominant thinkers in the history of Western philosophy:

I’ll venture to say that never, on the part of any great philosopher from Plato to Heidegger, or anyone at all who takes on, as a philosophical question in and of

¹²⁶ TATTIA, 12, 27, 32, 54, 59, 89.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 54.

¹²⁸ VAA, 63.

itself, the question called that of the animal and of the limit between the animal and the human, have I noticed a protestation based on principle, and especially not a protestation that amounts to anything, against the general singular that is the animal.¹²⁹

He traces an agreement between philosophical sense and common sense “that allows one to speak blithely of the Animal in the general singular” and suggests that this “is perhaps one of the greatest and most symptomatic *asinanities* of those who call themselves humans.”¹³⁰ Derrida stands seemingly solitary in the continental philosophical tradition in paying attention to animal issues, despite, as Calarco reminds us, this tradition priding itself on its engagement with concrete ethico-political subjects of thought.¹³¹ Singer echoes this in his affirmation that a philosophical impetus is necessary to bring about practical change in relation to animals but that continental philosophy has failed to provide one. What philosophical incentive to challenge the way nonhuman animals are treated, he asks, has come from philosophers in the continental tradition, thinkers such as “Heidegger, Foucault, Levinas, and Deleuze, or those who take the work of these thinkers as setting a framework for their own thought?”¹³² His answer is “as far as I can judge, none”, revealing perplexity as to “why such an extensive body of thought should have failed to grapple with the issue of how we treat animals.”¹³³ He asks what this failure signifies in the alleged attempts to question and critique prevailing assumptions and dominant institutions.¹³⁴ At the same time, as I implied earlier, of course these thinkers *have* formed an important part of rethinking animality in terms of bringing questions of the subject, freedom, ethics and the other to the fore. It would arguably be impossible to imagine animal studies today without these thinkers and this continental tradition. Derrida, however, is one such thinker who explicitly drew attention to such practical and philosophical issues, and whom Singer fails to mention.

Despite his own insistence on the topic of animality, to which he dedicated his whole life, little sign of this can be found in the scholarship that poured out in the aftermath of his death, on his work and legacy. In their book *Encountering Derrida: Legacies and Futures of Deconstruction*, editors Allison Weiner and Simon Morgan Wortham, write that Derrida’s death in October 2004 leave us behind with “a wealth of

¹²⁹ TATTIA, 40.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹³¹ Calarco, “Thinking Through Animals: Reflections on the Ethical and Political Stakes of the Question of the Animal in Derrida”, 6.

¹³² Singer, “Preface” in *Animal Philosophy: Ethics and Identity*, xii.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

writings that touched upon nearly every aspect of the philosophical enterprise, publishing an enormous body of texts that crossed – and reinvented – a host of disciplinary fields” but none of the contributions to this volume mention the question of the animal.¹³⁵ *In Memory of Jacques Derrida* touches briefly on Derrida’s *The Animal that Therefore I am* and the question of animality and suffering, but would not leave the impression that this was a particularly important topic for Derrida.¹³⁶ Ian Balfour’s edited collection *Late Derrida* does not bring this issue to the fore,¹³⁷ nor does Madeleine Fagan, Ludovic Glorieux, Indira Hašimbegović, and Marie Suetsugu’s rather more gauche *Derrida: Negotiating the Legacy*.¹³⁸ Calarco bemoans this “utter dearth of writing on this theme by his followers and critics”¹³⁹, and asserts that from “the very earliest to the latest texts, Derrida is keenly aware of and intent on problematizing the anthropocentric underpinnings and orientation of philosophy and associated discourses.”¹⁴⁰

Naas’ *Taking on the Tradition: Jacques Derrida and the Legacies of Deconstruction* from 2003, looks at how Derrida’s work has helped us rethink themes of tradition, legacy, inheritance in Western philosophical tradition, writing of “the incredible power of the tradition, its way of recuperating the most heterogeneous and marginal elements, and its great fragility, its vulnerability to the very gestures of reception that make it – along with our history and our origins – possible in the first place.”¹⁴¹ While Naas

¹³⁵ Allison Weiner and Simon Morgan Wortham, eds. *Encountering Derrida: Legacies and Futures of Deconstruction* (London: Continuum, 2007).

¹³⁶ Royle, *In Memory of Jacques Derrida*, 157-158.

¹³⁷ Ian Balfour, ed. *Late Derrida* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

¹³⁸ Madeleine Fagan, Ludovic Glorieux, Indira Hašimbegović, and Marie Suetsugu’s, eds. *Derrida, Negotiating the Legacy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

¹³⁹ Matthew Calarco, “Thinking Through Animals: Reflections on the Ethical and Political Stakes of the Question of the Animal in Derrida”, *Oxford Literary Review*, “Derridanimals” July (2007), 1.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2. Attention to this aspect of Derrida’s work is growing, albeit in rather niche corners. A notable example is Leonard Lawlor’s *This is Not Sufficient: An Essay on Animality and Human Nature in Derrida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007). In 2007, the *Oxford Literary Review* published a special issue on Derrida and animals, entitled *Derridanimals*. Even more recently there is Anne Emmanuelle Berger and Marta Segarra’s edited *Demenergies: Thinking (of) Animals After Derrida* (Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2011), David F. Krell’s *Derrida and Our Animal Others: Derrida’s Final Seminar, ‘The Beast and the Sovereign’* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), and Lynn Turner’s edited collection *The Animal Question in Deconstruction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013). With the exception of Lawlor, these are situated at the fringes of animal studies with a somewhat idiosyncratic approach, with a focus on more particular and sometimes eccentric human-animal encounters or very specific concerns in Derrida’s work. Krell, for instance, offers a summary and close reading of *The Animal that Therefore I am* and *The Beast and the Sovereign* seminars, involving also a critical response with particular focus on Derrida’s reading of Heidegger’s 1929-1930 lecture on world, finitude and solitude. Lynn Turner’s *The Animal Question in Deconstruction* draws on Hélène Cixous extensively, and takes a somewhat idiosyncratic approach, with essays on insects, moles, worms and sponges, as well as lions, elephants and wolves. It is less strictly tied to Derrida’s corpus per se, rather taking its point of departure from Derrida into other avenues.

¹⁴¹ Michael Naas, *Taking on the Tradition: Jacques Derrida and the Legacies of Deconstruction* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), xix.

touches on concerns that are close to the animal as the forgotten, foreclosed topic Derrida emphasises in the Western philosophical tradition he examines, he does not mention animality specifically. Naas continues to argue that one “begins by listening to the canon because the canon always gives us more than we imagine, more than we could have expected, because the canon always gives us, in its folds, something noncanonical, something that can never be simply included in the curriculum.”¹⁴² This *more* arguably could easily refer to the foreclosed animal subjects that Derrida follows and responds to, and what he forcefully argues has been what philosophy forgets, namely, “the animal can look at me.”¹⁴³ In other words, it is not merely an object of study, of comparative interest or symbolic significance. The animal “has its point of view regarding me. The point of view of the absolute other”.¹⁴⁴ As Derrida says, “nothing will have given me more food for thinking” than the alterity of the animal.¹⁴⁵ Much still remains to be thought as to the philosophical and practical stakes of Derrida’s question of the animal. In this contribution to the study of Derrida and animality, I attempt to take account of the ways Derrida’s response to the question of the animal overlaps with his thinking of hospitality, justice, and religion because these concepts are crucial when it comes to the relation between human and non-human animals and the divine. But I am also interested in teasing out the less overt aspects of Derrida’s thought in regard to the oblique ways in which biblical examples and interpretations function in his work on the animal as a whole.

What Derrida ultimately calls for in his work on animality is three-fold: (1) greater vigilance in philosophical thought, over the supposedly distinct differences between humans and animals; (2) compassion and what I term the “awakening” to the animal other as a condition for ethics – an awakening that is linked to his dream for an unconditional hospitality; and (3) responsibility in the face of a horizon of justice that will always be to some extent excessive, incalculable and impossible, but that nonetheless demands our interminable response with respect to the other as *any* other.

While the term “deconstruction” is indiscreetly bandied about in all manner of contexts, usually in alliance with a vague sense of the postmodern project divorced from Derrida’s work or person, or, on the other hand used synonymously with his signature as a thinker, I am somewhat uneasy about its usage, especially in light of the frequent misuse

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, xxix.

¹⁴³ TATTIA, 11.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

and misunderstandings that weigh it down.¹⁴⁶ As a ghost that cannot be wholly purged, however, I would like to suggest that in this context, the term specifically understood might be helpful for shedding light on Derrida's point of departure in thinking through the so-called distinction(s) between what we call humans and what we call animals. This can be described by the figure of the threshold.¹⁴⁷

The threshold not only supposes this indivisible limit that every deconstruction begins by deconstructing (to deconstruct is to hold that no indivisibility, no atomicity, is secure), the classical figure of the threshold (to be deconstructed) not only supposes this indivisibility that is not to be found anywhere; it also supposes the solidity of a ground or a foundation, they too being deconstructible.¹⁴⁸

The word threshold (*seuil*), Derrida explains, comes from the Latin *solum*, which means soil "or more precisely the foundation on which an architectural sill or the sole of one's feet rest".¹⁴⁹ What this means, "and this is the gesture of deconstructive thinking" is "that we don't even consider the existence (whether natural or artificial) of any threshold to be secure, if by 'threshold' is meant *either* an indivisible frontier line *or* the solidity of a foundational ground."¹⁵⁰

But to stop here would be to succumb to the abstraction that so many explications of deconstruction fall into. It is not merely about acknowledging the instability of any threshold, or limit between one concept/thing and another, or merely about breaking down such boundaries by pointing to their fragility, thus equating "deconstruction" (as it so often is) with its near-homonym "destruction", declaring with glee a signification-vacuum. This would be to open up what Derrida calls the "abyss", and remain content to cease thinking in the face of such a void. Rather, for Derrida, what is called for is both "a greater vigilance as to our irrepressible desire for the threshold, a threshold that *is* a threshold, a single and solid threshold",¹⁵¹ an openness to the fact that there may in fact be no threshold,¹⁵² and a recognition that "the abyss is not the bottom nor the bottomless depth (*Ungrund*) of some hidden base."¹⁵³ "The abyss, if there is an abyss, is that there is *more*

¹⁴⁶ Perhaps what haunts "deconstruction" most visibly today is the banality associated with its vague alliance with a pop-culture postmodernism, such as celebrity chefs serving "Deconstructed Banana Tarte Tatin", or a more down to earth "Deconstructed Cheesecake", for which Google provides many and varying examples.

¹⁴⁷ This is perhaps a play on Levinas's: "the possibility for the home to open to the Other is as essential to the essence of the home as closed doors and windows." Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis. (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 173.

¹⁴⁸ BS I, 309-310.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 310.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 333-334

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 334.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

than one ground [sol], more than one solid, and more than one single threshold [plus d'un seul seuil].”¹⁵⁴ What the “deconstructive” task would consist of, then, is to examine critically *what* threshold is upheld as natural, single and seemingly indivisible, and what other thresholds might be unmasked or unmaskable in the critique of such a supposed central threshold. Where does a threshold lie? But further, what does it hold *inside* and what (or who) *outside*? How is it constructed as a threshold? Who are the masters and inhabitants of the house, and who are strangers, foreigners, even enemies lurking outside? Concepts of house, home, threshold, and its insiders/outside become hugely important to Derrida’s discourse on animality. It is, for him, part and parcel of a thinking of a hospitality that is unconditional, and an ethics that is spatial and temporal: *in* a place, a specific context, at a threshold that is both shared and divisive, and *with* a singular other who is both potentially threatening and loving, never determined (or determinable) in advance as one or the other.

Humans, Derrida suggests, have given themselves this word *animal*, “as if they had received it as an inheritance” to construct a threshold: they have “given themselves the word in order to corral a large number of living beings within a single concept” the animal.¹⁵⁵ Animals thus remain outside, on the other side of this threshold, as killable, edible, huntable, trappable, containable; as non-others and non-neighbours, accepted in proximity as exceptions in the case of pets or as machines for human use. Of course, this is putting the point starkly, and Derrida does participate in a certain polemical trend that marks animal studies.¹⁵⁶ Such polemics, however, are perhaps justified in light of the urgency of challenging the threshold that “allows” intensified animal farming industries, genetic cross-breeding and manipulation, hormone-treatment, experimentation, cloning and artificial insemination, at unprecedented levels involving unimaginable suffering, all for the “putative well-being of man”.¹⁵⁷ Derrida calls the question of the animal an *event*, and condemns the dissimulation that allows for a diversion from, or deferral of, confrontation with this event. “However one interprets it, whatever practical, technical, scientific, juridical, ethical, or political consequences one draws from it, no one can today deny this event – that is, the *unprecedented* proportions of this subjection of the animal.”¹⁵⁸ This is a repression of sorts, a symptom that demands immediate attention and long-term treatment,

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ TATTIA, 32.

¹⁵⁶ For a critique of some of the polemical, even extreme strands of animal studies, as it relates more specifically to environmentalism, see Ferry’s *The New Ecological Order*.

¹⁵⁷ TATTIA, 25.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

that no one can seriously deny any longer: “men do all they can in order to dissimulate this cruelty or to hide it from themselves; in order to organize on a global scale the forgetting or misunderstanding of this violence, which some would compare to the worst cases of genocide”.¹⁵⁹

I have called Derrida’s response to the question of the animal an “awakening” to the animal other as a condition for ethics. Why? Peggy Kamuf argues that “wakefulness, or alertness” are traits Derrida “consistently assigns a positive value”.¹⁶⁰ She points out that this key part of his vocabulary is a testament to the legacy of modern philosophy at least since the Enlightenment and perhaps especially with Kant and his call for vigilance.¹⁶¹ What she calls Kant’s “wake-up call to critical, non-dogmatic philosophy” has continued to resonate ever since, and she argues, “nowhere in a more thought-provoking fashion than in Derrida’s writings of the last half century.”¹⁶² Wakefulness is “the very condition or possibility of critical reception and inheritance.”¹⁶³ But wakefulness to what or who? To the other, in an ethical relation that is a response and responsibility to the other, which Derrida proposes must also be the animal other. Before pursuing this further it is necessary to add a preliminary note on the reference to “ethics” here. When Derrida refers to ethics in relation to animality he is seemingly referring to two things. The first is the specific moral practices and laws that govern the interactions between humans and animals; the second is to the self-other relationship as an always already ethical relation. Simply put, “ethical” in this second sense is bound up, not with specific moral prescriptions, but with a state of responsibility to and for the other, to whom something of me is due. When I mention the awakening to the *condition* for ethics, then, I mean to the conditions under which this encounter takes place in determining this *something* in regard to *who* the other is or can be.

It is important to note that Derrida’s notion of an awakening to ethics is partly based on a critique of Heidegger and the authority of wakefulness that Derrida criticizes Heidegger for deeming a human power or property.¹⁶⁴ It is, he writes, on the basis of questions of sleep and waking that Heidegger announces his typology of beings – stone,

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 26.

¹⁶⁰ Peggy Kamuf, *To Follow: The Wake of Jacques Derrida* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 10.

¹⁶¹ Kamuf recalls Kant’s comment that it was reading David Hume that woke him from his “dogmatic slumber.” Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Derrida is mainly engaging with Heidegger’s 1929-30 lectures, published as *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001 [1938]).

plant, animal, man.¹⁶⁵ Derrida emphatically does *not* follow Heidegger in this regard on positing a *human* straightforward, exclusive and authoritative consciousness as “wakefulness”. The other important reference for Derrida’s awakening is its connection to his critique of Levinas and his ethics of the face of the other who is a determinedly *human* other.¹⁶⁶ Derrida questions this ethics and suggests it remains a *dormant* ethics. “It is a matter of putting the animal outside of the ethical circuit.”¹⁶⁷ And this, he writes, “from a thinker that is so ‘obsessed’ (I am purposely using Levinas’s word), so preoccupied by an obsession with the other and with his infinite alterity.”¹⁶⁸ Derrida retorts:

If I am responsible for the other, and before the other, and in the place of the other, on behalf of the other, isn’t the animal more other still, more radically other, if I might put it that way, than the other in whom I recognize my brother, than the other in whom I identify my fellow or my neighbour? If I have a duty – something owed before any debt, before any right – toward the other, wouldn’t it then also be toward the animal which is still more other than the other human, my brother or my neighbour? In fact, no. It seems precisely that for Levinas the animot is not an other.¹⁶⁹

Derrida is attempting, in Calarco’s words, to think “a thought of the same/other relation where the same is not simply a human self and where the other is not simply a human other.”¹⁷⁰ In the notion of “awakening” Derrida is thus indicting the philosophical tradition he criticizes with a myopic, docile, negligent attitude when it comes to the question of ethics in the face of animals. “So long as there is recognisability and fellow, ethics is dormant. It is sleeping a dogmatic slumber. So long as it remains human, among men,

¹⁶⁵ TATTIA, 149. Heidegger in turn draws on Aristotle for his discussion of wakefulness and sleeping.

¹⁶⁶ Derrida retells Levinas’ story of the dog named Bobby in a concentration camp, whom he calls “the last Kantian dog in Nazi Germany” from “The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights”, published in *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, trans. Sean Hand (John Hopkins University Press, 2013 [1976]). Derrida deals with this passage in TATTIA extensively, and cites John Llewelyn’s question to Levinas at the 1986 Cerisy conference as to whether animals have a face, along with Levinas’s rather thwarted, hesitant response. TATTIA, 113-117.

¹⁶⁷ TATTIA, 106.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁶⁹ TATTIA, 107. “Animot” is a term Derrida coins to signify (in sound) “animaux”, animals in plural, rather than the animal in general singular, to mark the absurdity of what such a general singular animal could possibly mean. But it also refers to “mot” (word) and his emphasis on this *word* animal, the attention paid to what a word means, and what powers words can have for cramming such a vast multiplicity of living beings into this verbal enclosure as an opposition to humans. In *Rogues*, Derrida writes similarly: “pure ethics, if there is any, begins with the respectable dignity of the other as the absolute *unlike*, recognized as nonrecognizable, indeed as unrecognizable, beyond all knowledge, all cognition and all recognition: far from being the beginning of pure ethics, the neighbour as like or as resembling, as looking like, spells the end or the ruin of such an ethics, if there is any.” R, 60.

¹⁷⁰ Calarco, “Thinking Through Animals: Reflections on the Ethical and Political Stakes of the Question of the Animal in Derrida”, 4.

ethics remains dogmatic, narcissistic, not yet thinking. Not even thinking the human that it talks so much about.”¹⁷¹ The unrecognizable is the awakening.¹⁷² Sedgwick explains how,

Philosophy, for Derrida, takes place in the world first and foremost as an ethical mode of thought: it concerns the relationship between thinkers (philosophers) and the limits of what they can think. Their duty is to pay attention to these limits. Paying attention to these limits, refusing to think in terms of an already secure future for philosophical thought, is the duty of philosophy itself and of those who practice it.¹⁷³

Having critiqued ideas of response and responsibility as properties thought to be exclusively human, Derrida is both calling for a more radical response and responsibility on the part of human animals in his call for an awakening to the animal other as a condition for ethics, but he is also at the same time questioning the autonomy and authority assumed to be inherent to such powers of “wakeful” response and responsibility. As he puts it, we must cast “doubt on all responsibility, all ethics, every decision”.¹⁷⁴ Such doubt, he says, “on responsibility, on decision, on one’s own being-ethical, seems to me to be – and is perhaps what should forever remain – the unrescindable essence of ethics, decision, and responsibility.”¹⁷⁵ His awakening to ethics, then, is a relation that is always in question and always undecidable. Wakefulness can never be assured as a fully present consciousness, an authoritative open-eyed seeing, or a wholly controlled knowing, immune from dreams, blindness, the unconscious, finitude and limitations, as well as forgetfulness of what or who also *sees me*. In fact, to be responsible or responsibly “wakeful” might be to recognise oneself still to be dreaming, to be still asleep. The self-consciousness of the wakeful human, Derrida emphasises, is a relationship to the other whom I follow, who sees me, who can see me naked, and to whom I respond. This provisional wakefulness is what, I argue, characterises Derrida’s idea of the other as an animal other who goes before me, to whom I say “after you”, and the other as a witness who sees me and who signifies a justice in abeyance, who founds my accountability as the very possibility for ethics. As I will go on to discuss, this otherness for Derrida is imagined in the *nonhuman* other of animal and divine.

In order to be ethics at all, for Derrida, the relationship to the other must be grounded in two principles. One is what he calls the

¹⁷¹ BS I, 108.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Sedgwick, *Descartes to Derrida: An Introduction to European Philosophy*, 217.

¹⁷⁴ TATTIA, 126.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

immense question of pathos and the pathological, precisely, that is, of suffering, pity, and compassion; and the place that has to be accorded to the interpretation of this compassion, to the sharing of this suffering among the living, to the law, ethics, and politics that must be brought to bear upon this experience of compassion.¹⁷⁶

This compassion ought, as he says, to “*awaken* us to our responsibilities and our obligations vis-à-vis the living in general”.¹⁷⁷ In other words, this is not an awakening to Heidegger’s “authority of wakefulness”,¹⁷⁸ but rather to the responsibility demanded towards the vulnerability of life, the always deconstructible limits of humans and animals alike, and a shared finitude in the face of mortality.¹⁷⁹ Wakefulness is attention as *care* and *curiosity* towards animal others, rather than a consciousness deemed exclusively human. The second principle is developed in Derrida’s important interpretation of D.H Lawrence’s poem “Snake” with the “scene of hospitality”¹⁸⁰ and sovereignty it presents. Here sovereignty is on the side of the snake, however, and not the human who is petty with a learned propensity to violence, and who thus attempts to kill the snake who shows up at the watering hole. Analysing this poetic narrative, Derrida writes that “Lawrence *awakens to ethics*, to the thought ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ in a scene of hospitality”¹⁸¹ in a scene with a potentially murderous, threatening animal. Here lies Derrida’s critique of Levinas and Heidegger, in the recognition of the other who goes before me – the snake who is already there at the watering hole and whom I follow – who demands an “after you” from me, the proper ethical response to the other as any other. This is an animal who shares my world, who evokes humility at the heteronomy of this other, and the possibility of hospitality.

The question is, Derrida suggests: “Does an ethics or a moral prescription obligate us only to those who are like us”... “or else does it obligate us with respect to anyone at all, any living being at all, and therefore with respect to the animal?”¹⁸² Derrida’s awakening to ethics is precisely the recognition of the animal as a neighbour, or fellow, not by claiming its “sameness” to humans, but in its otherness and thus as a prime example of the challenge of the other of ethics, who demands my compassion, even in the face of danger or incalculability as to *who* the other is and what it might do. It is a matter of recognising the other as first, coming before me, and thus admitting a certain

¹⁷⁶ TATTIA, 26.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 27. Added emphasis.

¹⁷⁸ BS II, 185.

¹⁷⁹ TATTIA, 26.

¹⁸⁰ BS I, 241.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 243. Added emphasis.

¹⁸² Ibid., 244.

powerlessness and divisibility in the “I” who always stands in relation, *seen* by the other, *seeing* the other.¹⁸³

Wakefulness and awakening to ethics is also related to Derrida’s dreams:

I was dreaming of inventing an unheard-of grammar and music in order to create a scene that was neither human, nor divine, nor animal, with a view to denouncing all discourses on the so-called animal, all the anthro-po-theomorphic or anthro-po-theocentric logics and axiomatics, philosophy, religion, politics, law, ethics, with a view to recognizing in them animal strategies, precisely, in the human sense of the term, stratagems, ruses, and war machines, defensive or offensive manoeuvres, search operations, predatory, seductive, indeed exterminatory operations as part of a pitiless struggle between what are presumed to be species. As though I were dreaming, I myself, in all innocence, of an animal that didn’t intend harm to the animal.¹⁸⁴

The first part of this dream is a reference to his deconstruction of the absolute distinction between humans and animals, showing the so-called “animal” strategies that suffuse human conceptions of politics and philosophy, and the violence inherent to such a “war” against “the animal”. His dream is both to expose this lack of a rigorous distinction and to indict this violence by hoping to move outside such anthropocentric and -morphic circles. The second aspect of the dream, that refers to an animal that does not intend to harm another animal, is a testament to the “dream of an absolute hospitality and an infinite appropriation”¹⁸⁵ that characterises Lawrence’s scene between the “I” and the snake. It is the dream of a possibility of non-war between what is generally called human and generally called animal, grounding this possibility in the ethical stance that demands a certain naivety or innocence in facing the other who *might* harm me, and the hope inherent to this innocence that one will in fact remain unharmed. This ties in with Derrida’s idea of an impossible hospitality. Such an awakening to ethics, then, is paradoxically to some extent a *dream* and must remain a dream, in the sense that it is in the end the unknowable, incalculable and even the impossible.¹⁸⁶ Derrida nonetheless suggests that this is the only

¹⁸³ BS I, 239.

¹⁸⁴ TATTIA, 64.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 37.

¹⁸⁶ In “Fichus”, Derrida asks what the difference between dreaming and thinking one is dreaming is. And whether a dreamer could talk about a dream without waking up. He imagines two responses, a philosophical one that would be a “firm ‘no’”: “you can’t have a serious and responsible line on dreams, no one could even recount a dream without waking up.” Derrida suggests that such a response in a sense characterises the very essence of philosophy. “This ‘no’ links the responsibility of the philosopher to the rational imperative of wakefulness, the sovereign ego, and the vigilant consciousness.” What is philosophy for philosophers, he asks: “Being awake and awakening.” Another response, “but no less responsible”, perhaps from poets or musicians, would not be ‘no’ “but ‘yes, perhaps sometimes.’ They would acquiesce in the event, in its exceptional singularity: yes, perhaps you can believe and admit that you are dreaming without waking yourself up; yes, it is not impossible, sometimes, while you are asleep, your eyes tight shut or wide open, to

ground for ethics that would be worthy of the name “ethics”, one we must be alert to, just as the only kind of hospitality *is* the infinite, impossible hospitality that welcomes the other at my door, on the threshold, as *any other*, and as the call from this other, the first-comer to whom we must respond with an “after you”. We are thus talking not about ethical principles themselves in regard to Derrida’s awakening to the animal other as a condition for ethics, but to what Calarco describes as Derrida’s proto-ethics.¹⁸⁷ It is not that this is without practice, but rather that such a practice emerges out of the principles described *in* or by particular, concrete contexts. This is essentially “a matter of acting and making decisions in concrete circumstances, using as much knowledge as possible, and in view of a ‘maximum respect’ for animals.”¹⁸⁸

The Biblical Derrida and the Animal Bible

While, as already mentioned, Derrida suggests that all his work has been concerned with animality and the question of life, this thesis will engage most closely with his explicit later texts on animals, namely the essay “‘Eating Well,’ or the Calculation of the Subject”, *The Animal that Therefore I am* and the two volumes under the title *The Beast and the Sovereign*. This is not to deny that his other work contains interesting and fruitful material for thinking about animality, or because it has been already done, merely because – in addition to limitations in time and scope – these explicit texts on the animal still require far more scholarly attention than they have been given so far. Before attempting to engage with Derrida’s entire corpus of more oblique and implicit references to animality, it is necessary to begin with a focus on his explicit work on the question of the animal. This is especially the case as I propose that one important aspect of Derrida’s work on animality in particular has been neglected, namely his biblical references and their significance for his thinking of animality. This comes to the fore especially in “‘Eating Well,’ or the Calculation of the Subject”, *The Animal that Therefore I am* and in *The Beast and the Sovereign* seminars. So far little has been said of the relationship between Derrida’s

utter something like a truth of the dream, a meaning and a reason of the dream that deserves not to sink down into the night of nothingness.” Derrida, “Fichus”, in *Paper Machine*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 165-166.

¹⁸⁷ Calarco, *Zoographies*, 108.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 115, 118, 125-126.

biblical references and his thinking of animality.¹⁸⁹ What this thesis will contribute to the field of animal studies, biblical studies, animality and religion, and scholarship on Derrida and his legacy, is an analysis of the significance of Derrida's biblical references, building on this by adding interpretations of biblical texts that supplement, challenge and develop Derrida's biblical reference points further in relation to the question of the animal.

Following Derrida's injunction to "begin wherever we are", "in a text where we already believe ourselves to be"¹⁹⁰ it appears that from reading both Derrida and the philosophical accounts of the question of the animal I have cited, one of the "texts" we are *already inhabiting* is the book we call the Bible. Alongside his philosophical-cultural-political canon, Derrida pays heed to the biblical archive. This too is an archive we come *after*, a legacy we *follow*, and one that is perhaps equally normative and dominant to the philosophical texts Derrida examines. Derrida's attention to the Bible in this context is far from negligible, but neither is it seemingly fully developed, at least not with the same vigilance as his engagement with the philosophical tradition in question. His rather cursory remark about the "Judeo-Christian" current in the Cartesian cogito¹⁹¹ and the parenthetical homogenization of Cartesianism "beneath its mechanistic indifference, to the Judeo-Christiano-Islamic tradition of a war against the animal, of a sacrificial war that is as old as Genesis" is never explicated or properly confronted.¹⁹² Nor are his rather vague allusions to the "Christian or classical", "Greek or Christian" tradition(s) done justice in the purported interchangeability and nebulous quality of these terms.¹⁹³ Like the philosophical assumptions about theology and the Bible I discussed above, the "Judeo-Christian" tradition and biblical legacy thus sits rather shamefacedly in the corner within Derrida's work regarding its unquestioned blame. The words that trail off the last pages of *The Beast and Sovereign vol. I* – signalling a promise to turn to Genesis¹⁹⁴ – become a haunting remainder, and are never resuscitated in *vol. II*.¹⁹⁵ Of course, Derrida *does* offer a reading of Genesis, in the earlier *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, and this book is full of biblical references with thought-provoking interpretations. But they are never explicitly theorized

¹⁸⁹ Exceptions are the aforementioned volume *Divinanimality* and *The Bible and Posthumanism*, as well as Matthew Chrulew, "Feline Divinanimality: Derrida and the Discourse of Species in Genesis", *Bible and Critical Theory* 2.2, 2006. <http://novaojs.newcastle.edu.au/ojsbct/index.php/bct/article/view/87>.

¹⁹⁰ OG, 162.

¹⁹¹ TATTIA, 91.

¹⁹² Ibid., 101.

¹⁹³ BS II, 90-91.

¹⁹⁴ BS I, 335.

¹⁹⁵ Krell explains that Derrida intended to continue the *Beast and Sovereign* seminars into 2003-2004. Krell, *Derrida and Our Animal Others: Derrida's Final Seminar, 'The Beast and the Sovereign'*, 1.

or commented on as part of a “biblical” or “Judeo-Christian” legacy, nor are they explicitly extended to form part of a larger argument either for Derrida’s work on the animal, or for reflecting on the Bible and the Judeo-Christian as cultural canon(s) and tradition(s). They are examples of what he fleetingly (in this context) refers to as the “Judeo-Christian” tradition; but as examples, they are never free from what Naas describes as Derrida’s logic of the example, never arbitrary, neutral, merely given or innocent.¹⁹⁶ The ambiguity of the example, as Naas notes, is its status as a *singular* sample and its tendency toward a teleological model.¹⁹⁷ This logic is not critically reflected on or faced up to in Derrida’s work on the animal, nor has it received sufficient attention in the scholarship on Derrida. This is what I will attempt to rectify and suggest how we might develop this further with more extensive exploration of, and critical regard for, the biblical archive.

Calarco suggests that the question of the animal “is situated at the limits of philosophy and the metaphysical tradition, and that the resources to think through this question are not likely to be found wholly within that tradition.”¹⁹⁸ Although it is doubtful he had the biblical archive in mind, and as shown previously, this archive is thought of as endemic to, and a source of, the metaphysical and philosophical tradition Derrida critiques, it is, I argue, with the biblical archive that some of these resources seem to be found for Derrida. Resorting to these resources, Derrida develops, in Calarco’s words, “a notion of finite life as responsivity, where life is understood not exclusively but broadly and inclusively, ranging from human to animal and beyond.”¹⁹⁹ Calarco’s “beyond” could well be said to signal the God figure Derrida discusses in *The Animal that Therefore I am*. Other central themes to Derrida’s discourse are also related to biblical examples, as I will show in the four chapters of this thesis, namely, nakedness and shame, accountability or responsibility before God, killability, and the logos.

Derrida’s reliance on the biblical archive to develop his argument does not occur by celebrating the Bible as a canonical source of animal-rights. As I have shown, on the surface of it, the Bible is held up as quite the opposite, both in the contemporary philosophical literature on animality and in Derrida’s own work. Nonetheless, the motifs that undergird Derrida’s call for rethinking attitudes and assumptions towards animal life

¹⁹⁶ Michael Naas, “Introduction”, in Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today’s Europe* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), xv.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, xvii.

¹⁹⁸ Calarco, “Thinking Through Animals: Reflections on the Ethical and Political Stakes of the Question of the Animal in Derrida”, 11.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

are arguably grounded in the biblical archive that Derrida sporadically draws from. These themes are: (1) Genesis and nakedness; (2) Ethics, hospitality and “Thou Shalt Not Kill”; (3) Following the nonhuman other as “cat or God”; and (4) The Logos, sovereignty and the Lamb. All four themes figure under the over-arching conception of an inextricable relationality between human, animal, divine, that is in opposition to the solitary sovereign indivisible human “I” Derrida critiques so forcefully. Such a relationality and responsivity is crucial for Derrida’s call for a thinking of the other, and for thinking conceptions of the subject and sovereignty that go beyond the human.

What I argue is that these themes constitute a tension in Derrida’s work that in fact mirror the tensions that can be found in the biblical archive more broadly. For Derrida, his biblical themes partly form a positive resource for thinking the responsivity and relationality of humans and animals, and in part, they provide a bulwark for human sovereignty. Ultimately, what I argue in regard to the biblical texts I examine, is that they are caught up in an irresolvable tension: on the one hand, humans and animals alike abide as finite, fellow creatures under God as a justice to come that calls for a radical similitude and solidarity; on the other, animals are also portrayed as the subjects that humans master and appropriate to play God, or demonstrate God’s power over the living. God’s power is thus a double bind – it both displaces power from humans to show them *as* animals, and simultaneously provides a model for power *over* others.

The four chapters of this thesis build on the four themes delineated above, by exploring Derrida’s treatment of them along with four biblical texts in response. The four biblical texts that will supplement Derrida’s philosophy and expand his biblical archive are: the aftermath of the flood in Genesis 9; Daniel who follows his God and encounters lions in the Book of Daniel, the animal vision that leads to a suspension of clean/unclean distinctions in Acts of the Apostles 10, and the Lamb who confronts and triumphs over the Beast and Whore in Revelation 17. My engagement with, and interpretation of, all four biblical texts form a critical response to Derrida’s question of the animal, building on his own references to the biblical archive, but also importantly responding back to Derrida, challenging and supplementing his own biblical repertoire. The four biblical texts are chosen not only with regard to their interest for exploring further Derrida’s themes, but also for their place, function and significance in the biblical archive itself, in order to think further about what it means to draw on this canon of texts that form such a crucial tradition and inheritance for Western culture. Additionally, each biblical text is read through the

lens of Derrida's question of the animal, thus recognising and opening up their textual spaces to include the consideration of animality that Derrida so insistently and persuasively calls for. In this way the biblical texts help us to understand Derrida's interest in the question of the animal better, while at the same time they supplement this focus with their own themes, trajectories and tensions.

It is necessary to say a few words on why these four biblical texts in particular have been chosen. I am not presenting these texts as overarchingly representative for "the Bible" or as exhaustive for the dual theme "Bible and animality". They are not the only or necessarily the most "natural" texts to choose with this question in mind.²⁰⁰ Three reasons can be given for why I have chosen these texts in particular. The first is that they present particularly pertinent themes that exemplify and supplement Derrida's points: Genesis 9 on nakedness, the Book of Daniel with its "cats" and God figure, Acts 10 with its questions of the "other" for hospitality and killability, and Revelation 17 with its sovereign Beast and Lamb. Secondly, they can be read as symptomatic points in the biblical archive that mark a certain "biblical" or "Judeo-Christian" terrain, moving between origin, myth and aetiology (Genesis) to the revelatory, apocalyptic and messianic (Revelation); from purportedly "Jewish" legends and divinity (Daniel) to an emergent "Christianity" (Acts) as well as the interaction between the "Jewish" and the "Christian" over relationships to animals and humans (Acts). Lastly, these texts both in some sense confirm ideas of an anthropocentric Bible *and* simultaneously disturb and destabilize such accusations of anthropocentrism; they thus prompt critical attention to such an influential canon for the question of the animal today and provide resources for thinking outside and beyond anthropocentric attitudes.

Each chapter will engage closely with one of these biblical texts, and each of these will explicate and exemplify further aspects of Derrida's question of the animal. Each

²⁰⁰ There are two topics that are perhaps conspicuously absent, namely the Genesis creation stories and the issue of sacrifice. I have evaded these topics precisely for their obviousness in that where attention is given to the Bible in relation to animality, it has mostly been given to these issues, whereas so many other aspects of the Bible have gone passed by. For the Genesis creation stories (Gen. 1-2), see particularly *After Noah, Animals and the Liberation of Theology*, eds. Andrew Linzey and Dan Cohn-Sherbok (London: Mowbray, 1997), David S. Cunningham, "The Way of All Flesh: Rethinking the *Imago Dei*", in *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans and Other Animals*, eds. Celia Deane-Drummond and David Clough (London: SCM Press, 2009), *The Earth Story in Genesis*, eds. Norman C. Habel and Shirley Wurst (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000). For the topic of sacrifice, see for instance Jonathan Klawans, "Sacrifice in Ancient Israel", in *A Communion of Subjects (Animals in Religion, Science and Ethics)*, eds. Paul Waldau and Kimberly Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009) and Yvonne Sherwood, "Cutting Up Life: Sacrifice as a Device for Clarifying – and Tormenting – Fundamental Distinctions Between Human, Animal, and Divine", in *The Bible and Posthumanism*, ed. Jennifer L. Koosed (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014).

biblical text will supplement Derrida's own interpretive responses, spawning further questions and tensions of their own, sometimes widening the scope of the question and sometimes narrowing its focus; they add other understandings of human/animal distinctions, human/animal/divine relationships and representations, as well as challenges for thinking these categories and relations differently, otherwise, elsewhere.

In the first chapter I develop Derrida's theme of nakedness and shame. Nakedness is a key concern for Derrida's question of the animal. It is what spurs on what Stephen Moore calls a "catalytic" moment for animal studies²⁰¹ in Derrida's encounter with his cat, the cat's difference to himself in not being considered naked as such, and the thought process this sets in motion over questions of shame, self-consciousness, guilt and the relationship between humans and animals. Nakedness is a trope that signals shame and guilt at positing a fundamental difference between humans and animals and the far-ranging consequences of this, but also of a shared vulnerability in the mortality humans and animals suffer alike. On the surface of it, Genesis 9 is "culpable" of the origins of carnivorousness in animals being given to humans to eat. Continuing Derrida's discussion of nakedness, shame and accountability, I show that on one hand, Genesis 9 is a prime site for locating the sovereignty of "Man" given by God to humans, in order to see the power of humans over the animal world. On the other hand, however, Genesis 9 stages the tensions in such a power dynamic, in light of the emphatic covenant with *all* life and the "reckoning" or "accounting" for *all* life prescribed as a justice to come by God. Because animals are now in principle killable, this justice is a space of decidability: animals become a site in which humans must decide how to respond, with "good or evil". This is akin to Derrida's call for a responsibility to the other (and the animal other) beyond prescribed rights; responsibility and justice are caught up in a logic of excess and undecidability, in which *more* is always demanded within singular, irreducible contexts of encounters between self and other.

The second chapter explores Derrida's remark on being under the gaze of "cat or God"; in other words, his thinking of the other as the *nonhuman*. Derrida puts forward the idea of a deconstructed subject as the vulnerable exposed response that follows the nonhuman other, be it animal or divine. I explore the way in which Derrida appears to proffer a particular response in the biblical "here I am", that he propounds more fully in *The Gift of Death*. While Derrida outlines what following his cat entails in a response of

²⁰¹ Moore, "Introduction", 3.

“here I am”, he does not fully extrapolate on the “God” figure in this context, leaving it open as to whether the cat *is* God, is *like* God, or whether animal and divine are distinctly different entities but both figures for nonhuman otherness. To explore this further, then, I turn to the Book of Daniel with its “cats” and God. I suggest that Daniel presents two radically different visions of animality, one in which all creatures – kings and animals alike – are akin to domesticated animals under the one divine ruler, God, in a harmonious cohabitation that calls for a non-carnivorous relation to the other. The other vision is a collapse of the first, where the state of domesticated animality has revealed a profound vulnerability to the animality of human and divine rulers, now conceived as brutal and carnivorous. The “here I am” of the deconstructed subject, then, is a double-edged response: it opens up for the encounter with others in solidarity and similarity, but it simultaneously reveals the vulnerability inherent in regard to the untameable otherness of one’s other.

In the third chapter I outline Derrida’s critique of “Thou shalt not kill” as an acceptance of the killability of animals and the limitation of the other in ethics to be a specifically human other. This is infinitely troubling for conceptions of ethics, justice and hospitality, in Derrida’s view. Here the biblical commandment is an obstacle for critical thinking that Derrida sees as endemic to philosophy in the West. Why has this commandment been understood always as only relevant to humans? What is it about killing humans that makes it murder and not legitimate slaughter or sacrifice? And how might these categories be reversed, manipulated or confused? Derrida turns to the story of Cain and Abel to suggest that the sacrifice/killing of an animal is what leads to the sacrifice/killing of a brother, suggesting that God repents of his preference for animal flesh when he recognises the consequences of such legitimate killing. Interpreting Acts 10, its animal vision, and the questions it raises over the killability of animals and hospitality between Jews and Gentiles, I provide two possible interpretations in seemingly stark contrast to one another. The first interpretation emphasises the command in Peter’s vision to “kill and eat” in the new cleanness of all animals and by extension Gentiles. The shift from laws of clean/unclean, then, and the opening up to Gentiles, is a move that carries with it a violence and acceptance of the killability of *all* animals. In the analogical resemblance set up between animals and Gentiles, Gentiles too are similarly killable as “clean”. The second interpretation I show to be possible posits the cleanness of all animals as a radical redemption of animal life for fellowship and consideration, in the same way that Peter accepts the fellowship and hospitality of Gentiles. The animal/Gentile other thus

becomes a neighbour, building analogically from animals having gained a new status as no longer profane; animals too, then, are the fellows upon which other any or all fellowship is founded. Crucially, Acts 10 provides a model for Derrida's dream of an unconditional hospitality. At the same time, however, it shows how easily a circumscribed "other" in ethics becomes linked to a more indiscriminate killability – Derrida's nightmare.

Finally, in the last chapter, I analyse the figure of the lamb as the animal other and the figure of the beast as the human sovereign in relation to Derrida's discussion of animality and sovereignty in *The Beast and Sovereign vol. I*. Derrida proposes a representation of the political in the sovereignty of man as carnivorous wolfishness that subjects the lamb to being killed and eaten in this show of mastery and the logic or *logos* of the strongest. Alluding to another lamb, the Christ-lamb, Derrida briefly engages with what might be sketched as the Christian legacy on conceptualisations of the "human" as that which has *logos* and *life* as they are tied to reason, autonomy and sovereignty. This would be another instance where the Christian legacy is put forward as negative. The logic of the animal representations in Revelation 17 rely on two points. The first is that Jesus and God as the "good" are construed as *weak* and *powerless*, in the figure of an animal, the Lamb. Evil, on the other hand, is construed as a beast and as a woman, a prostitute. It would seem that Revelation 17 thus presents both a sympathetic solidarity with weak animal others and propagates a negative image of animality and women as evil. Ultimately I argue that in the triumph for sovereign power that Revelation 17 stages, the Lamb becomes a sovereign reason of the strongest. While the Beast and Whore are presented as evil forces of the political, they become the vulnerable weak victims – the animal others – in the face of the violence of the sovereign Lamb. Another image of Rome emerges, then, as a deconstructed sovereignty in the subjects that stand as weak and powerless figures in the political order – now presented as the "good" – namely the animals of the Roman arenas and the prostitutes of the Roman Empire.

Summarising my interpretations, I point out that these are texts in the Bible that may well be deemed anthropocentric in some ways, but, as Koosed points out, this archive "also contains multiple moments of disruption, boundary crossing, and category confusion".²⁰² Many of its stories "explore the boundaries of the human in ways that

²⁰² Jennifer L. Koosed, "Humanity at Its Limits", in *The Bible and Posthumanism*, ed. Jennifer L. Koosed (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature), 3.

destabilize the very category of the human.”²⁰³ As Stone emphasises, reading the Bible in response to the question of the animal, originating as it does before modern conceptions of the human and animal, can complicate and multiply distinctions and differences between human, animal, divine.²⁰⁴ But engaging with texts in the Bible is not merely, or even foremost, about blurring boundaries. Rather, such an engagement is about exploring particular manifestations of “animal”, “human”, “divine”, in their relationships, imagined boundaries and identities, in their inter-dependence, affection and animosity, empathy and alienation, destruction and dreams. Calarco states that Derrida’s work has “only scratched the surface of this project of deconstructing the history of the limitrophe²⁰⁵ discourse of the human-animal distinction.”²⁰⁶ His hope, then, is that scholarship will continue building on Derrida’s thought across different institutions, contexts, texts and discourses.²⁰⁷ One such geography that needs to be explored further is precisely Derrida’s Bible and the Bible we might read after Derrida, following Derrida and his questions. These are texts we might hope to “think with, to think about how we think and categorize, divide and decide.”²⁰⁸ I return then to the “slow motion” reading I noted earlier, hoping to offer close and attentive readings of the biblical texts that would take account of their tensions and disruptions, strangeness and symbolism, as well as their more “literal” and seemingly straightforward meanings.

Perhaps in tension with the pace of such a reading, such a project cannot but hope to respond to the urgency and contemporaneity of Derrida’s question of the animal in regard to this ancient archive called “Bible”. Picking up on what Sherwood says of Derrida’s Bible, this straddling of the ancient and the urgent – the past and the present – involves perhaps responding to a further invitation set in motion by Derrida. Namely, turning to an edition of the Bible that is not locked into the past as a wholly contextual study seeking out origins, intentions and “ancient meanings”. Rather, as I will attempt to do, such an interpretive practice would entail picking up Derrida’s Bible as “an edition of

²⁰³ Ibid., 3.

²⁰⁴ Stone, “The Dogs of Exodus and the Question of the Animal”, 38.

²⁰⁵ The limitrophe refers to the particular limits drawn between humans and animals that are necessarily endless, in order to keep multiplying the powers of the human – *throphe* or *throphy* alluding both to growth, topic and nourishment. As Moore explains, *limitrophy*, is a strategy Derrida himself uses, not to efface the limit between humans and animals but to complicate and fold it, to thicken and divide it, multiplying it further in ways that demonstrate the strategies used against animals and those that reveal the impossibility of many such starkly drawn limits. Moore, “Introduction”, 5.

²⁰⁶ Calarco, *Zoographies*, 140.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Yvonne Sherwood, “Cutting Up Life: Sacrifice as a Device for Clarifying – and Tormenting – Fundamental Distinctions Between Human, Animal, and Divine”, in *The Bible and Posthumanism*, ed. Jennifer L. Koosed (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature), 251.

uncertain date: in one sense ultra-contemporary, constantly thinking the biblical *cum tempus*, with time – that is with change, flux, interpretation, revision – and with the time(s).”²⁰⁹ After all, “every reading is not only anachronistic, but consists in bringing out anachrony, non-self-contemporaneity, dislocation in the taking-place of the text”.²¹⁰ Turning to the four biblical texts that inhabit very different spaces of the biblical archive, I will address their characters with curiosity as to how they might “speak” today, how they might *look* now, perhaps always already haunted by how they may or may not look back, answer back, respond in one way or another. Padding through these various textual landscapes it is hoped the reader will consent to follow in these tracks and allow a response to Derrida’s Bible and the Bible after Derrida.

²⁰⁹ Sherwood, “Introduction: Derrida’s Bible”, 4.

²¹⁰ BS II, 87.

Chapter 1

Derrida's Nakedness and Genesis 9: Reckoning with the First Carnivorous Man

Derrida's Nakedness

Nakedness is a key concern for Derrida in his discussion of animality. From the very beginning of *The Animal that Therefore I am*, this concern is situated in a reading of Genesis: "Starting from Genesis",¹ confessing to "words that are, to begin with, naked".² Derrida's very first words echo the first words of Genesis: "In the beginning".³ Derrida chooses nakedness as a point of departure for discussing distinctions between humans and animals because it allows him to outline the crux of his argument as a condemnation of a "crime" "against animals"⁴ and a call for a response and responsibility towards what we "call" the animal.⁵ Nakedness is one point that is thought to divide humans and animals. "Man would be the only one to have invented a garment to cover his sex."⁶ Humans are thought to be different to animals because humans can *know themselves* to be naked. Animals, however, are unaware of their nakedness and so are not naked as such.⁷ The issue of nakedness is tied to the assumption that humans are self-conscious creatures whereas animals do not possess such self-consciousness. In other words, this differentiation on the point of nakedness is less about nakedness *per se*, and more about the capacity to self-reflect, to be self-aware, self-conscious. Derrida shows how this human self-consciousness becomes connected to the idea of the human as an autobiographical "I", capable precisely of saying "I", of reflecting on him or herself and the philosophical dictum "I think

¹ TATTIA, 1.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid., 48.

⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁷ Ibid., 4-5.

therefore I am” that arises from this understanding.⁸ Without language, animals are thought to *lack* this “I”, the “think” that accompanies the “I” as a defining characteristic, and thus the ability to say “I am”.⁹ As a result, animals are thought to be incapable of the response and responsibility tied to ideas of language, reason, self-consciousness and accountability. Derrida inflects the “I am” into an “I can”, because the human, in philosophical discourse, is described according to the *powers, properties, and capacities* he or she is thought to possess and that animals purportedly *lack*.¹⁰ Derrida’s “I can” is an allusion to the French *pouvoir*, meaning both “to can”, “to be able” and “power”; Derrida thus proposes that the human “I am” is really an “I can” that is thought sovereign, powerful, capable, possessive of properties that set it apart from animals as a superior sovereign figure.¹¹

In this chapter I will outline the significance of Derrida’s discussion of nakedness in relation to his references to Genesis, and develop this further with my reading of Genesis 9 that both draws on Derrida and builds on his points for the relationality of response and responsibility between animal, human and divine.

Response and Responsibility as Relationality

Derrida’s critique of a discourse that divides between the properties humans possess and that animals purportedly lack is inextricably – but only implicitly – caught up in his references to, and readings of, Gen. 1-4. While I remarked that nakedness is a trope used to signify self-consciousness or the lack of it, it is also no arbitrary trope. It draws from the nakedness of Adam and Eve hiding from God in Genesis 3 and extrapolates from there to point to shame, name and naming, accountability, animality, and God. Derrida understands the self-consciousness of the human who knows him or her-self to be naked as *shame*: Man “would be a man only to the extent that he was able to be naked, that is to say, to be ashamed, to know himself to be ashamed because he is no longer naked. And knowing *himself* would mean knowing himself to be ashamed”.¹² Realising one-self to be naked and the accompanying sensation of shame implicitly alludes to Adam and Eve coming to know

⁸ Ibid., 34. Derrida discusses Descartes and his “I think therefore I am” at some length, see 69-87 in TATTIA.

⁹ Ibid., 76.

¹⁰ Ibid., 93.

¹¹ Ibid., 27. “Pouvoir” also of course contains the verb “voir”, which Derrida discusses in regard to an autopsy scene between a sovereign king and an elephant in BS I, 250-251. It is about the *power* (pouvoir) to see (voir) the dead animal as a passive object of knowledge that mirrors and magnifies the autonomous, living sovereign figure who does the active seeing.

¹² TATTIA, 5.

themselves as naked, being exposed and hiding in Gen. 3:10-11. Further, Derrida writes, “the property unique to animals, what in the last instance distinguishes them from man, is their being naked without knowing it”.¹³ “Not being naked therefore, not having knowledge of their nudity, in short, without consciousness of good and evil.”¹⁴ The consciousness of “good and evil” is of course a reference to Adam and Eve’s fruit-eating, consequent knowledge of good and evil and banishment from the garden in Gen. 3:5. Derrida uses these Genesis references to critique what he sees as the solipsistic sovereignty of the human “I” in philosophical discourse. He sees its exclusion of animals as a symptom of the solipsism that makes humans respond and responsible to only a human other, an other who represents the similar or self-same. Derrida implies that the autobiographical capacity of “I” and “I am” is self-regarding, even when it purports to relate to its other, because it is still a human other, reflecting one-self in similitude. What is deemed proper to humans – such as reason, language, response, responsibility – has thus become the justification for a sovereign rule of humanity at the expense of animals. What the justification has refused, however, is a sense of relationality *with* animals; it has resisted a response *to* animals, and a *responsibility* in the face of the animal.

By orienting the human “I” around notions of shame in his allusions to Genesis, Derrida inflects autobiographical solitude into a confessional and relational stance. Is there, he asks, “an account of the self free from any sense of confession?”¹⁵ Alluding to Augustine’s *Confessions* and the invention of autobiography, the concept of confession links the human “I” to notions of fault and guilt, thus pointing us back to Adam and Eve after eating the forbidden fruit.¹⁶ Derrida implies that the confession that accompanies any autobiographical “I” is the “crime” of depriving animals of everything humans are thought to possess.¹⁷ Derrida shows the artifice of such a construction of difference. This is particularly the case because the nakedness of the body also connotes the vulnerability of exposure to the other which stresses the impossibility of separating the “I think” from a body. Humans and animals share such an embodied state as mortal creatures, however different their bodies may be. Nakedness is the sign of exposed vulnerability. Derrida’s theme of nakedness is thus intended to draw attention to the vulnerability of the body as a mortal thing *capable* of suffering. This “capacity” for suffering counters the “I can” that,

¹³ Ibid., 4-5.

¹⁴ Ibid., 5.

¹⁵ Ibid., 21.

¹⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, trans Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹⁷ TATTIA, 48.

Derrida argues, dominates the discourse around the “human” with its properties and powers, in being a negative capacity, a weakness rather than capacity-as-power or *pouvoir*. This is where Derrida’s call for compassion in the face of animal life leads, to a compassion that ought to “awaken us to our responsibilities and our obligations vis-à-vis the living in general”.¹⁸

While autobiography marks the solipsism of the sovereign “I” in a self-rotating self-reflection, Derrida uses confession to argue that every “I” is always a response *to*. He calls for relationality rather than solipsism, a *response* and *responsibility* that is not calculated in advance to exclude any other as too other. Describing himself naked in his bathroom in the sight of his cat, Derrida is showing the way in which it is not merely a matter of his perspective as a philosophical thinker, a solipsistic, disembodied “I think therefore I am”, but rather an acknowledgement of his *being seen*.¹⁹ Derrida stages his philosophical discussion of the animal in a *relational* scene where he is *being seen* by an animal, and not by the idea of an animal, but by a particular cat, an “unsubstitutional singularity”, “*this* irreplaceable living being”.²⁰ By *calling* all animals by this common denominator, philosophical discourse on “the animal” has refused the multiplicity, irreducibility and complexity of the living creatures that are subsumed by this designation, that Derrida condemns as a dynamic of power, akin to Adam’s naming of the animals in Gen. 2:20, but as if he had given them only this one name: *the animal*. Derrida’s animal other is an irreducible singular other who “can see *me* naked”.²¹ What philosophy has forgotten, he suggests, this being perhaps “calculated forgetting itself – it can look at me”.²² The animal “has its point of view regarding me. The point of view of the absolute other”.²³ This is important because it turns the tables to the animal as a sovereign gaze and the human “I” as a vulnerable body. When Derrida writes that as with “every bottomless gaze, as with the eyes of the other, the gaze called ‘animal’ offers to my sight the abyssal limit of the human: the inhuman or the ahuman, the ends of man”²⁴ he is revealing the

¹⁸ Ibid., 27.

¹⁹ There is an implicit reference here to Michel de Montaigne’s “In Defense of Raymond Sebond”, where Montaigne is commenting on the arrogance of humans, presuming themselves to be god-like, calling humans both the most fragile and the proudest of creatures. He mentions his cat and famously asks: when I play with my cat, who can say for certain whether she is playing with me or I playing with her? Michel de Montaigne, “An Apology for Raymond Sebond”, *An Apology for Raymond Sebond*, trans. M. Screech (London: Penguin, 1987), Chapter II, Section 3.

²⁰ TATTIA, 9.

²¹ Ibid., 59.

²² Ibid., 11.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 12.

unknowability of the other, whose identity will always to some extent remain hidden – unknown and unknowable – just as this gaze reveals what we ourselves do not know. He configures this as a secret: “seeing oneself seen naked under a gaze behind which there remains a bottomlessness, at the same time innocent and cruel perhaps, perhaps sensitive and impassive, good and bad, uninterpretable, unreadable, undecidable, abyssal and secret.”²⁵ Thinking of the animal as “bare” or naturally naked is to strip animals of the potential for secrecy and thus of otherness. They become reducible objects to the human gaze, transparently inhabiting the properties humans *see* in them, namely, all that is deemed not-human.

Derrida orients the autobiographical capacity of the “I”, then, rather to testimony and witness (confessing and being-seen), in relation to the other who sees me and the other who demands my response. But response and testimony to who or what? If response and responsibility are properties of humans, Derrida implies, then the creature capable of saying “I” and confessing ought also to take responsibility for the “crime” of demoting animal life to the homogeneity, subjection and violence of this category “the animal”.²⁶ “The sovereign is alone insofar as he is unique, indivisible and exceptional”,²⁷ but the human, Derrida argues, is not such a sovereign “I” alone, but always lives in *response* to the other, in the gaze of the other, which Derrida posits as his cat, the animal other. This is where Derrida’s reading of Genesis comes in again, with the Adam of Genesis 1 who is created *after* the animals (the animals are created in 1:24-25 and humankind in 1:26). Along with nakedness, an important trope in this discussion is that of *following*. With the reference to following, Derrida redirects the human “I am” (in French: *Je suis* from *être*), “this powerful little word *suis*”²⁸ to another meaning of *Je suis*, namely “I follow” in the French verb *suivre*, to follow.²⁹ Like the Adam of Genesis 1, Derrida implies that humans *follow* animals, coming after. Whereas this “coming after” can mean to hunt or pursue, it can also imply the call for an “after you” to the animal as the other, the firstcomer. As with the first creation story of Genesis in which Adam comes *after* (Genesis 1) and the second where Adam comes first (Genesis 2), Derrida implies there is a decidability in the I of the

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 48.

²⁷ BS II, 7.

²⁸ TATTIA, 64.

²⁹ “Following” as a trope recurs repeatedly throughout TATTIA. Reflecting on “I am” as also “I follow” Derrida is bringing attention to what philosophical subjects are *pursued*, what legacies one comes *after*, and other “modalities of following” such as seduction, hunting, persecution, the predatory and the investigatory, as well as Derrida’s suggested “after you” to the animal as the other who should go first. See TATTIA: 3-4, 6, 10-11, 12, 32, 42, 52, 54-55, 60-65, 69.

"I am" which is also at the same time always already an "I follow" as to what forms *being* and *following* will take, as if left with the knowledge of Adam and Eve of "good and evil" and the decidability this sets in motion.³⁰ In the context of his reading of Genesis, then, relationality is construed, like Adam, "*between* the beast and God".³¹ Whereas the animal is the figure of otherness for Derrida that breaks the seal of solipsism that has kept humans in relation predominantly to self-same humans, Derrida's figure of God is harder to place. If Derrida takes on an "Adamic" persona as naked, standing *before* but also coming *after* his cat whom he – like Adam – has named, what becomes of God in this equation?

Michael Naas points out that Derrida resists the theologico-political, rejecting any pure sovereignty – that is, an indivisible solitary and exceptional power – such as God.³² But God is arguably both sovereign and non-sovereign in Derrida's interpretations of Genesis. Drawing upon the second creation myth in Genesis 2 where Adam names the animals, Derrida argues that "the public crying of names remains *at one and the same time* free *and* overseen, under surveillance, under the gaze of Jehovah, who does not, for all that, intervene".³³ "He lets him indulge in the naming all by himself. But he is waiting around the corner, watching over this man alone with a mixture of curiosity and authority."³⁴ Derrida connects the power of man in naming the animals to the conceptualisation of the human as a sovereign "I" set apart from divine or animal creatures, lonely in his sovereignty. But everything happens "as though God still wanted to oversee, keep vigil",³⁵ marking his own sovereign and – as Derrida puts it – "infinite right of inspection of an all-powerful God *and* the finitude of a God who doesn't know what is going to happen to him with language. And with names".³⁶

³⁰ In Derrida's reading of D. H. Lawrence's poem "Snake", an important point is that the snake is the firstcomer, a sovereign figure whom the human "I" comes *after*. Discussing Levinas and the question of whether an animal has a face, where Levinas proposes the example of a snake, Derrida writes "the choice of this mythical beast, makes attributing a face to this figure of temptation or evil highly improbable. That is no doubt what Levinas' rhetoric wants to convince us of, although one could be tempted, on the contrary, to see in figure of bestial evil a still more inevitable idea of the face. Where there is evil there is face". TATTIA, 110. Here too we have the snake of Genesis 3 who becomes the emblem of evil and temptation, an animal other whose ambiguous character in Genesis is perhaps precisely an animal other in the sense of unknowable, secret, potentially poisonous, but also a neighbour in the garden.

³¹ BS I, 54.

³² Michael Naas, *Derrida From Now On* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 9.

³³ TATTIA, 16.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁶ *Ibid.* In his reading of Genesis 4, of Cain and Abel, Derrida questions whether this too is a case of God waiting "in order to see" as to the offering of "sacrificial flesh" for God, and conveys Cain's *shame* and hiding himself, covering himself up, as if naked in the sight of God and in light of the murder of his brother. Derrida suggests that God shows signs of repentance for preferring Abel's animal sacrifice, seeing the consequences in the move from killing an animal to the killing of a brother. *Ibid.*, 42-44.

Derrida's God here is not an indivisible sovereign God, but a God who has given over power to humans, and will wait to see what happens. While Derrida stages the human entrance to knowledge in the implicit reference to Genesis with knowledge as "consciousness of good and evil",³⁷ and referring, as I have shown, to Gen. 1-4 more broadly, he does not comment further on how the biblical legacy might either be complicit with the philosophical tradition he critiques (as he appears to imply elsewhere) or how these references in fact ground his own relational "I" responding to the other as "cat or God".³⁸ Building on his Genesis reading, Derrida inflects Adam's naming to his own named cat as a particular cat,³⁹ for thinking of the animal other not "as the exemplar of a species called 'cat'" but in "its unsubstitutional singularity".⁴⁰ Like the secret, unknown and unknowable gaze of the animal other, God similarly provokes a "vertigo before the abyss"⁴¹ in the prospect of an address from the other. But while Derrida reflects on being seen naked by his particular and named animal other, the figure of God is left as something of a haunting remainder.

I suggest that by supplementing Derrida's reading of the Genesis creation myths at the beginning of Genesis, with another origin myth that follows, in Genesis 9, this "in order to see"⁴² of Derrida's God is crucially embedded in a covenant between God and *all living beings*, that shows the "power of man at work"⁴³ given from God in the subjection of animals. But it also portrays Derrida's demand for accountability to, and responsibility for, the lives of others, the shame evoked by the crime in excluding the animal from the ethical circuit, and the unveiling of the naked human as animal. Genesis 9 both stages the power of sovereign "Man" in the figure of Noah whose nakedness must be covered and whose position and propriety must be erected and upheld, but simultaneously complicates this sovereignty in the haunting promise of God to account for *all* life. Permission to kill animals in Genesis 9 sits uneasily beside the injunction not to kill a fellow brother and the demand for response and responsibility. It is in this uneasy proximity to animal life and the deconstructable distinctions that separate a human neighbour/brother from an animal

³⁷ Ibid., 5.

³⁸ Ibid., 18.

³⁹ On the proper name, Franz Rosenzweig writes that as soon as a being has its own name it can no longer be dissolved in its genus as a generality, it is its own genus. Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. Barbara E. Galli (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005) 201. Derrida alludes to this idea here when he emphasises the significance of his named cat, perhaps as another oblique comment on Levinas's dog, who also had a name, Bobby, but who does not feature in Levinas' thinking as an ethical subject.

⁴⁰ TATTIA, 9.

⁴¹ Ibid., 18.

⁴² Ibid., 42.

⁴³ Ibid., 16.

neighbour/brother that Genesis 9 sets in motion a call for a responsibility that is always already broken, at fault, but at the same time excessive, haunting and powerful. Building on Derrida's discussion of nakedness, animality and relationality, Genesis 9 provides the ground for an understanding of the figure of God as a horizon of justice to come.

Genesis 9 on the First Carnivorous Man

Ostensibly, Genesis 9 is one of the texts in the biblical archive that could be held up as "blameable" for its attitudes to animals. It is the chapter that follows the story of the flood in which God exterminates all creatures, except those he has warned: Noah, his household, seven pairs of clean animals, a pair of unclean animals, and seven pairs of birds, 'to keep their kind alive on the face of all the earth' (7: 1-3). R.W.L Moberly deems the Noah stories to be the most famous biblical texts,⁴⁴ and Bill T. Arnold calls Gen. 6:9-9:29 "one of the best-known stories in world literature".⁴⁵ After the two creation myths of Genesis 1 and 2, Genesis 9 presents a third "creation". After Adam as the first man, Noah becomes a "new Adam, the first of a new human race".⁴⁶ Genesis 9 thus sets up the relationship between animal, human and divine after the flood, and presents the conditions of this new world. With its (in)famous line about humans being made in the image of God, it seemingly destines humans to be God-like and leaves animals out of this equation. Further, Genesis 9 stages the origin story of the first carnivorous man, with Noah, the new "head" or "Man" of humanity after the flood, who is given permission to eat animals.⁴⁷ Although the earlier creation myths in Genesis are better known, also in their treatment of human-

⁴⁴ R. W. L Moberly, *The Theology of the Book of Genesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 102.

⁴⁵ Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 96. Norman Cohn further lists a number of roles it has played, from "royal and priestly propaganda" to "a message of consolation and hope" for Jews, and for Christians "a prefiguring of salvation". From "an excuse for extravagant flights of fancy and strenuous exercises in pedantry", it has been "deeply involved in the development of scientific geology" from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, and from the late eighteenth century to contemporary times it has played a major part in discussions between traditional religious beliefs and scientific perspectives. Norman Cohn, *Noah's Flood: The Genesis Story in Western Thought* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), xi-xii.

⁴⁶ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Continental Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion S.J. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 479.

⁴⁷ While Noah, as I will go on to argue, takes on the role of "Man" as a new first sovereign authority, a patriarch, it is perhaps interesting to note, as Lloyd R. Bailey points out, that there is in fact another less well-known Noah in the Bible. The "other" Noah is in fact a woman, one of the five daughters of Zelophehad (Num. 26:33; 27:1; 36:11; Josh. 17:3). As Bailey argues, the narrative in which she appears is significant for women's right to inherit real estate. Her name, in Hebrew, is Nō'āh. Lloyd R. Bailey, *Noah: The Person and the Story in History and Tradition* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 145.

animal relationships, Genesis 9 also plays out a decisive moment in the biblical archive over the relations between animal, human and divine.⁴⁸ Genesis thus appears to be one of the most popular parts of the Bible to turn to, either implicitly or explicitly, for discussions of the Bible in regard to animals.⁴⁹ As I have already discussed, it is certainly Derrida's most cited biblical text in this context.

One of the infamous lines to be brought up as blameable can be found in Gen. 9:6, namely that humans are made in God's image (9:6).⁵⁰ In the same passage, the killing of a human is designated as wrongful, and the killing and eating of animals is made permissible by God. As Andrew Linzey pointedly puts it: "While Genesis 1.29 commands vegetarianism,⁵¹ Genesis 9 allows carnivorousness".⁵² Seen in this light, Genesis 9 is indeed a blame-worthy text for a perspective that seeks to think otherwise about human/animal distinctions than merely consumer and consumed. Accordingly, Linzey divides the Bible into "two worlds", one in which "violence and disorder are inevitable, even divinely sanctioned", and the other with the hope and dream of "Isaiah in which the lion does not eat the lamb but lies down next to it".⁵³

How can these two worlds be understood, if there are indeed two?⁵⁴ Considering the vast and various texts that make up different biblical canons it seems unlikely that there

⁴⁸ See for instance Norman C. Habel and Shirley Wurst (eds) *The Earth Story in Genesis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), for a reevaluation of earth, nature and animal themes in Genesis. John Olley's chapter, "Mixed Blessings for Animals: The Contrasts of Genesis 9", is dedicated to Genesis 9. John Olley, "Mixed Blessings for Animals: The Contrasts of Genesis 9", in *The Earth Story in Genesis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

⁴⁹ See for instance Habel and Wurst (eds) *The Earth Story in Genesis*, or S. Barton and D. Wilkinson (eds), *Reading Genesis after Darwin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁵⁰ This line is also found in the first creation myth of Gen. 1:26: "Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness". David Clough suggests we are still reading Genesis with an Aristotelian worldview rather than Darwinian theories of the natural world. He notes Philo of Alexandria's reading of Genesis, affirming human superiority and a qualitative difference between humans and animals. Clough suggests that Aristotelian natural philosophy and Philo's reading have been significant for Christian understandings of Genesis, "and the qualitative division between human beings and other creatures on the basis of reason has set the parameters for Christian thought ever since". Clough traces other influential thinkers such as Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther and John Calvin who seem to have agreed to a great extent with Philo. As for humans being made in the image of God, Clough writes that discussions in modern interpretation have developed, but its function in providing a divisive demarcation between humans and other creatures remains largely the same. David Clough, "All God's Creatures: Reading Genesis on Human and Non-human Animals", in *Reading Genesis after Darwin*, eds. Barton and D. Wilkinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 145-148.

⁵¹ This is a reference to Gen. 1:29: "God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food."

⁵² Andrew Linzey, "Is Christianity 'Irredeemably Speciesist'?", in *Animals on the Agenda: Questions about Animals for Theology and Ethics*, eds. Andrew Linzey and Dorothy Yamamoto (London: SCM Press, 1998), 3.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵⁴ For a similar division into two worlds, cf. Robert Murray, *The Cosmic Covenant: Biblical Themes of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1992), 34.

should be (only) two such stark worlds. There is more complexity and nuance to Genesis 9 than has often been acknowledged.

I will argue that the scenes of Genesis 9 are more complex than a mere permissibility of carnivorous power. I propose that the proximity between God's permission for humans to eat animals and his covenant with *all* life evokes a tension in the text over edibility, killability and accountability. God's promise to account for *all* life marks the power given into human hands to consume animals, but simultaneously the response and responsibility that will be demanded of them. The reading I propose, then, is that the God of the flood eschews sovereign power, becoming the figure of justice to come, in which humans and animals are accounted for alike, but in a world where humans abide in a decidability regarding their response as to *who* is or can be(come) *seen* as a "brother", and who or what in turn *sees* them (naked).

Genesis 9 tends to be divided into two separate parts, 1-17 and 18-29. I will treat these two parts in turn, but read their themes and characters in conjunction as a narrative, in view of the relationship between animals, humans and God in the first part and the emphasis on Noah's nakedness and his relationship to his sons and grandson in the second part. In this second part, Noah is caught naked by his son Ham; Noah angrily curses Ham's son Canaan, condemning him to servitude to his brothers. This part of the chapter plays out the changeability of status regarding "brotherhood" and the "human", where a brother and a son, or grandson, can become relegated and subjected to a lower status as a non-brother, a non-human. I argue that this happens in the anxiety caused by Noah the patriarch being exposed for what he is: naked, drunk and unconscious, as if there were no difference between himself and a beast. To compensate for such an exposure of the truth of his naked "animal" state, Noah exercises his power in a performative command that makes Canaan animal-like, of lesser status than his human brothers. He is perhaps not edible but he is no longer a "brother", but the lowest of the low. As in the case of Cain and Abel, the killing of animals seemingly leads to the killability or demotion of a "brother" to what is not properly human.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Of course, it could be objected that the story of Noah and his sons is not one of *human* equality either. I will go on to discuss this in regard to Noah's position as the head of the family as the father. The hierarchies that are drawn up in Genesis 9 are between Noah and his sons to whom *everything* is given as food, and the living creatures who are *given* into human hands. In this sense, the humans share an equality as those who can kill and eat rather than those who are eaten. This implies a certain equality of *human* life.

While I take account of some of the wider connections in Genesis outside chapter 9, such as those Derrida refers to in chapters 1-4, it is of course important to note that Genesis is a complex “text” or rather a complex set of texts. The “canonizing process”⁵⁶ thought to be involved with regard to Genesis has a complicated and long history and as such it is impossible to speak of *a* coherent composition. Yet, while Genesis may well be “an accretion of sundry traditions, shot through with disjunctions and contradictions, and accumulated in an uneven editorial process over several centuries”⁵⁷ it is pieced together in this particular way and it persists as a text. This is how I will treat it. It is crucial to grapple with this text-tradition as well as the tensions at work in this text as a multifaceted inheritance. By cross-referencing other parts of Genesis, or in treating chapter 9 as a narrative unit, I am not attempting to locate sense or coherence as a result of original composition or authorial intention. Rather, I am reading Genesis 9 and its place in Genesis as a part and product of a biblical canon the legacy of which remains powerful and persistent in cultural memory but frequently obscured as to its nuances.

God's Gift of Covenant

In this part I examine the power-dynamic from divine to human, tracing the way in which God becomes a less sovereign figure of power and presence after the flood and humans become more sovereign in their relationship towards the living, as if God renounces his power as a fearful Lord and gives it over to humans. But I propose that the proximity between God's permission for humans to eat animals and his covenant with all life, evoke a tension in the text over edibility, killability and accountability. God's promise to account for *all* life, emphatically the lives of animals too, marks the power given into human hands to consume and kill animals, but simultaneously the response and responsibility that will be demanded of them.

Genesis 9 begins with a blessing on Noah and his sons, telling them to be fruitful, thus replenishing the earth with their offspring (9:1). God tells them that the dread of them will be on ‘every animal [or living thing: חַיָּה] of the earth, and on every bird of the air, on everything that creeps on the ground, and on all the fish of the sea’: all are delivered into

⁵⁶ Walter Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (London/Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 31.

⁵⁷ Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York/London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996), xl.

their hands (9:2). The following verse gives permission for 'everything' to be edible (9:3), implying that humans have been vegetarian before but now can eat freely a carnivorous diet. There is a clause, however, according to which flesh with its life-blood cannot be consumed (9:4).⁵⁸ Further, killing a human (or rather man: אָדָם) is forbidden (9:6). So far, it appears that God favours the human subjects of this re-creation such that there is a clear hierarchy between the life of humans that must be protected and the life of animals that is now edible, which is to say killable. Like Derrida's God who "created man in his likeness so that man will subject, tame, dominate, train, or domesticate the animals born before him and assert his authority over them",⁵⁹ the God of Genesis 9 too seemingly "destines the animals to an experience of the power of man, in order to see the power of man in action, in order to see the power of man at work, in order to see man take power over all the other living beings".⁶⁰ Claus Westermann understands the emphasis on being fruitful as a form of divinely given human power: a "god-given dynamism", "God's power at work" in humans.⁶¹ The gift of animals – 9:3 'as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything' – is like an offering to humans, giving over the 'fear and dread' they might feel towards a God who has once blotted out his creation, to the animals in their relationship with humans. Fear (פֹּחַד) could also imply elements of reverence, as if it is indeed a matter of proper reverence towards one's master or Lord, humans to the divine, and now animals to humans. In this sense, humans do indeed become God-like, in God's image (9:6), with 'every animal of the earth', 'every bird of the air', 'everything that creeps on the ground' and 'all the fish of the sea' into human hands (9:2). The difference between killing a human and killing a non-human animal for food is thus inserted as part of the conditions for this re-created world. Westermann concludes, "human existence is now confronted with the necessity of killing".⁶²

One way to read the beginning of Genesis 9 would be as a repentance on God's part for the flood; or, if not outright repentance, then the acknowledgement that it should not be done again (9:11).⁶³ As a sign of his promise he has set his 'bow in the clouds' (9:13).

⁵⁸ Arnold explains how the prohibition against consuming blood arises from the priestly conviction, stated frequently in the Bible: blood is life, and life is sacred (Lev. 3:17; 7:26-27; 17:11, 14; 19:26, and Deut. 12: 15-16, 23). Arnold, *Genesis*, 109.

⁵⁹ TATTIA, 16.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 17.

⁶² Ibid., 462.

⁶³ This is an implicit promise in chapter 8 (reaching full expression in chapter 9), where Noah builds an altar to the Lord, and offers animal burnt offerings. 'And when the Lord smelt the pleasing odour, the Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is

Indeed, such an acknowledgement would perhaps hint at an admission of repentance. W. Lee Humphreys calls this God's recognition of his "overreaction".⁶⁴ Arnold deems the rainbow an "unexpected turn" as it is *God* who admits to need reminding rather than humans.⁶⁵ Walter Brueggemann argues that Gen. 1-11 shows how "the will and purpose of the Creator God is sovereign, but that sovereignty is deeply and categorically under assault from the outset".⁶⁶ These intimations of a non-sovereignty in God are played out particularly with regard to the transfer of the power over animals into the human hand (9:2 נָתַן). In God's promise not to *exercise* such sovereignty again a repentance is hinted at, and thus God's sovereignty appears diminished. Moberly suggests that this is God's acknowledgement of the inevitability of human violence and his correlative decision to himself change, if humans will not.⁶⁷ As such, God's sovereignty is displaced from himself to humans. Westermann criticizes the explanation for God's bow as connected "with the image of God as a warrior carrying a bow".⁶⁸ Rather, he argues, the Hebrew word for "bow" comes from an Arabic verb meaning "to bow" or "to bend".⁶⁹ The word for to bless that Genesis 9 opens with (בָּרַךְ) can in Qal also mean to kneel. In light of God's later promise never again to blot out his creation, it is as if God repents of his violence, blessing his remaining living creatures, as if kneeling before them in repentance and bowing or bending to the remaining life on earth. The offering of animals to humans, then, could be seen as a withdrawal from the sovereign God to the sovereignty of humans.⁷⁰ God is casting off the violence marking his destruction in the flood. Humans take God's place in regard to the living. This would tally with Robert Murray's suggestion that in 9:2, "God reaffirms the grant of sovereignty over animals" set out in the earlier creation narrative.⁷¹ He sees this as the relationship between humans and animals laid bare "*as they are*, not as they were idealized in Genesis 1 and 2, or in any other vision of universal peace".⁷²

evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done." (Gen. 8:20-22). God's meaning-to-say, as Derrida might put it, becomes an overt promise in Genesis 9.

⁶⁴ W. Lee Humphreys, *The Character of God In the Book of Genesis: A Narrative Appraisal* (Louisville/London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 70.

⁶⁵ Arnold, *Genesis*, 111.

⁶⁶ Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 33.

⁶⁷ Moberly, *The Theology of the Book of Genesis*, 116.

⁶⁸ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 473.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Mark G. Brett argues that the "the final editors of Genesis were covertly anti-monarchic", discussing particularly the two creation narratives of Genesis 1 and 2. But his claim could also be made in regard to the "less" sovereign God in Genesis 9 as a postlapsarian condition leaning towards a negative view of man's sovereignty: in the life after the Fall, "male rule is a sign of distance from God, not likeness to God". Mark G. Brett, *Genesis: Procreation and the Politics of Identity* (London/New York: Routledge, 2000), 34.

⁷¹ Murray, *The Cosmic Covenant*, 34.

⁷² *Ibid.*

However, there is a two-fold tension in this text between such a reading of human sovereign power and what follows in regard to God's relationship to his creation and his covenant. First, the covenant (9:9) he establishes consists of the promise 'that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth' (9:11).⁷³ This covenant is established with Noah, his sons and the sons of his sons (9:9): 'and with every living creature [כָּל־חַיָּוְיָהּ] that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark' (9:10). Arnold remarks on the centrality of this covenant "to the post-diluvian order".⁷⁴ But what is involved in this covenant and order? Is it the hierarchical form Murray intimates as a veritable demythologization,⁷⁵ a more "natural" non-idealized order in which the "partners" may well be "God, humankind and all animals" but where the latter are straightforwardly subordinated to humankind in fear and trembling?⁷⁶ The covenant arguably adds ambiguity rather than a clear-cut order. The stipulation as to *who* this covenant includes ('between me and you and every living creature of all flesh') is repeated in 9:12, 9:15 and 9:16. Again in 9:17 the inclusivity of this promise is emphasised: 'This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth'. The references to 'all life' or 'all the living' are in Hebrew suffixed as one term joined together (כָּל־חַיָּוְיָהּ), emphasising the unity of this 'all' and the shared condition of life.⁷⁷ David Cunningham emphasises how the emphasis on *flesh* helps "blur the boundaries between human beings and other animals".⁷⁸ He proposes this focus on flesh as

⁷³ As Jack P. Lewis points out, a reference to the "waters of Noah" is used in the book of Isaiah to introduce the idea of an unchangeable covenant (Is. 54:9-10). Jack P. Lewis, *A Study of the Interpretation of Noah and the Flood in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 8.

⁷⁴ Arnold, *Genesis*, 110.

⁷⁵ Murray, *The Cosmic Covenant*, 35.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁷⁷ While Noah is associated with being the first carnivorous man, he does have another legacy related to animals. Andrew Linzey and Cohn-Sherbok recount a rabbinic story from Genesis Rabbah (Noah 31.14) where Noah is praised for his care and consideration for animals. In the ark, each day he is said to feed every species its appropriate food at the correct time: "he chopped straw for the camel, barley for the ass, vine tendrils for the elephant, and prepared grass for the ostrich and citrus for gazelles. Because of his untiring work, he was unable to sleep at night or during the day but the Lord richly blessed him". They link this to the rabbinic concept *tsar baalei hayyim* (pain of living creatures). Although this concept does not come specifically from the Bible, it is based on teaching from and interpretation of biblical literature concerning need for care of God's creatures. Andrew Linzey and Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *After Noah, Animals and the Liberation of Theology* (London: Mowbray, 1997), 27-30. Peter France tells of another Hebrew legend with a slightly different twist in which a lion suffered a fever while being in the Ark and did not like the dry food that was provided for him. When Noah, one day, forgot to feed this lion, the beast struck him so violently that Noah was lame, and, because of this deformity, was not allowed to exercise the office of priest. Peter France, *An Encyclopedia of Bible Animals* (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1986), 102-103.

⁷⁸ David S. Cunningham, "The Way of All Flesh: Rethinking the *Imago Dei*", in *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans and Other Animals*, eds. Celia Deane-Drummond and David Clough (London: SCM Press, 2009), 101.

a resistance to the superiority of humans made in God's image and viewing life forms within this "larger context of all flesh".⁷⁹

What happens then with the fear of animals towards humans and the permission to eat animals? In scholarship, this is predominantly perceived as a further "fall" in Genesis. Robert Alter comments that this speech "affirms man's solidarity with the rest of the animal kingdom", which is then qualified with "[v]egetarian man" given permission to eat animals.⁸⁰ Linzey and Cohn-Sherbok write that in this new creation "God has now set up the world as a 'kitchen' for human beings".⁸¹ J.W. Rogerson too suggests that whereas the relationship between humans and animals in Genesis 1 could be interpreted to imply a "caring role in regard to animals", Genesis 9 undoes such care by introducing "an element of hostility".⁸² Rogerson understands this as showing the way in which the world before the flood was how God originally desired creation to be, and the re-creation afterwards is the compromised version.⁸³ While the command to procreate in Gen. 1:22 is also directed towards animals, and thus "humankind has to share the divine vocation of co-creation with the earth and with other creatures"⁸⁴ Brett too argues that this "radically inclusive"⁸⁵ order is compromised in Genesis 9 where the "human dominance over animals" is heightened.⁸⁶ Laurence A. Turner states: "The relations between humans and animals are brutalized."⁸⁷ Interestingly, Julia Kristeva too comments on this turn as if there were a "*bent toward murder* essential to human beings and the authorization for a meat diet was the recognition of that ineradicable 'death drive,' seen here under its most primordial or archaic aspect –

⁷⁹ Ibid., 114. Cunningham shows how there is an abundance of references to flesh, suggesting that a more "complex and nuanced relationship between human beings and animals" can be found in the Bible if we look further at biblical concept of flesh. "Many of the references are to the physical stuff that makes up the body of an animal; notably, whether the flesh is that of a human being or another animal, the same word is used". Further, the phrase "all flesh" is fairly common, and its meaning appears stable: all living creatures. As well as God's relationship to all flesh in Genesis (Gen. 6:13, 17, 19; 7:15, 16, 21; 8:17; 9), he also draws attention to Job. 34:14-15; Ps. 136:25; Ps. 145:21. As for the New Testament, he mentions the incarnation and Christ as flesh (John 1:14; also, Eph. 2:14; I Tim. 3:16; I John 4:2). Cunningham, "The Way of All Flesh: Rethinking the *Imago Dei*", 114-117. This is a valuable discussion but there are tensions. In 1 Cor. 15:39, Paul provides an example where flesh is distinctly distinguished into different *kinds*: 'All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes'. See John A. T. Robinson's *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (SCM Press, London, 1957) for a detailed discussion of Paul's use of *σάρξ* and *σῶμα* in relation to the Hebrew understanding of flesh and the body.

⁸⁰ Alter, *Genesis*, 38.

⁸¹ Linzey and Cohn-Sherbok, *After Noah*, 8.

⁸² J. W. Rogerson, "What was the Meaning of Animal Sacrifice?", in *Animals on the Agenda, Questions about Animals for Theology and Ethics*, eds. Andrew Linzey and Dorothy Yamamoto (London: SCM Press, 1998), 12.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Brett, *Genesis*, 27.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁷ Laurence A. Turner, *Genesis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 45.

devouring”.⁸⁸ But this narrative presents a more nuanced effect than merely the loss of another “Eden”. This is not merely a collapse into a grim realism on the part of a God whose high hopes have been shattered in the face of human propensities to violence, or what Moberly calls “the evil-thought clause”⁸⁹ from Gen. 8:21: ‘for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth’, as if God had drawn up something like a pre-nuptial insurance against the future violence humans will commit. Rather, I propose that the proximity between God’s permission for humans to eat animals and his covenant with all life, evoke a tension in the text over edibility, killability and accountability.

Tension appears in relation to God’s words on the edibility of animals, the non-killability of humans, and God’s stipulation that he will require a reckoning of, or for, every life (9:5). This all-inclusive covenant, Linzey and Cohn-Sherbok point out is clear but “is rarely given its due and proper weight”.⁹⁰ As already mentioned, the power given into human hands to consume animals arises alongside a promise to account for all life, simultaneously thus demanding response and responsibility. This is connected to God’s less sovereign status, allowing humans to live sovereignly. Westermann comes close to this reading when he concedes that the restrictions concerning life-blood appear to imply caution with regard to the consequences of carnivorousness. If to kill animals is permissible, such killability “carries with it the danger of blood-lust”, he writes, or “of killing for the sake of killing, of blood-thirstiness”.⁹¹ “One’s conduct towards other people is not to be separated from one’s conduct towards animals.”⁹² While the worry about blood-lust is a rather typical reason given for not harming animals – more for its *human* impact than concern for the animals – Westermann has hit on the issue with his comment on the differentiation in conduct in inter-human relationships and human-animal relationships that asserts itself in this narrative but remains questionable. Flesh (בָּשָׂר) with its life (נַפְשׁוֹ) or blood (דָּמָו) (9:4) is something humans and animals share. Literally what God says is that he will require (שָׁרַף) the blood of their lives, at the hand (יָד) of every beast or living creature (חַיָּה) and the hand (יָד) of every man (אָדָם) (9:5), emphasising the commonality between beast and man. Human life is designated as ‘man’, ‘mankind’: אָדָם,

⁸⁸ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 96.

⁸⁹ Moberly, *The Theology of the Book of Genesis*, 113.

⁹⁰ Linzey and Cohn-Sherbok, *After Noah*, 22.

⁹¹ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 465.

⁹² *Ibid.*

but also as אִישׁ as well as with reference to a man's brother: אָח. A reckoning will be required 'at the hand of' every beast and man as if both are equally accountable, as well as 'at the hand of every man's brother' (9:5). The word for brother, as I already noted, does appear to refer straightforwardly to a human brother. The second reference to requiring a reckoning for human life in 9:5 could be read to qualify the words referring to 'each one for the blood of another', implying this refers only to human blood. This would fit with the prohibition against shedding the blood of a human that follows in 9:6. But following directly after the reference to the flesh, life, hands and blood shared by humans and animals alike, and in the reckoning of animal *and* human life, the line that adds 'I will require a reckoning for human life' (9:5) and the life of every man's brother, could be interpreted to mean that killing will be questioned and confronted also in regard to animal life. John Olley too points out that it "cannot be fortuitous that there is a close linking of permission to eat flesh and strong statements about human killing".⁹³ Like Cunningham, he notes the striking reference to flesh - בָּשָׂר - signifying humans and animals alike. Flesh can be eaten in Gen. 9:4, but flesh is to be kept alive in Gen. 9: 8-15.⁹⁴ Furthermore, as Humphreys points out, "the logic of God in this double couplet (9:6) is problematic when pressed: One who sheds the blood of one who sheds the blood becomes a blood shedder... The chain could go on forever on an endless feud".⁹⁵ The "brother" figure in 9:5 whom one is held accountable for is potentially more open as regards fellowship than is commonly understood. At the very least there is the assertion that animals too will require a reckoning and so appear to be *similarly* accountable to, and accounted for, as humans.⁹⁶ Westermann's point about the "necessity of killing",⁹⁷ then, is perhaps rather the *possibility* and thus the freedom to kill in relation to animals, a freedom that is haunted by the accountability to God as a justice to come.

In Alter's translation of Genesis where he aims to uphold the "profound and haunting enigmas"⁹⁸ he believes Genesis itself cultivates, he also laments the loss of the bodily emphasis in Ancient Hebrew in translation. He draws particular attention to the

⁹³ John Olley, "Mixed Blessings for Animals: The Contrasts of Genesis 9", 134.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Humphreys, *The Character of God In the Book of Genesis*, 71.

⁹⁶ Turner states that the fact that animals are also made accountable ought not to be surprising given the curses placed on the serpent in Gen. 3:14-15. (cf. Exod. 21:28). Turner, *Genesis*, 46. This also speaks against the interpretation of a compromised re-creation which accepts human violence.

⁹⁷ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 462.

⁹⁸ Alter, *Genesis*, xiv.

repeated reference to the 'hand',⁹⁹ which is so important for Genesis 9 in regard to animals: 'into your hand they are delivered' (9:2). As James Murphy translates: animals "are placed entirely at the disposal of man".¹⁰⁰ The hand here can be read as a symbol of capacity for care as well as power, for the potential of compassion and/or violence. To be given something in this sense can mean placed into one's hands as possession or property, but it can also mean to have something *entrusted* to one's care; or, it could imply "at hand", that is, available or nearby, as a neighbour. In "Geschlecht II: Heidegger's Hand", Derrida examines the way in which Heidegger conceives of the hand as a defining essence of the human but not of animals.¹⁰¹ This is partly rooted in a distinction Derrida critiques as "seriously dogmatic" in its lack of empirical evidence, that distinguishes between the human hand's capacity for giving and the animal claw as *taking*.¹⁰² Here, in Genesis 9, it is God who *gives* (נתן) into the human hand; the human is the creature who receives or takes. Further, as already mentioned, when God requires a reckoning, it is 'at/from the *hand* of every living being' (9:5 מַיִד כָּל־חַיָּה), as if the properties symbolized by the hand are associated with accountability and God as a justice to come for *all* the living. Accordingly, the hand is a site for "good and evil" (Gen. 3:5), for responsibility and the space of decision in regard to the life or lives of others. What could be said to take place, then, is that the God of the flood eschews sovereignty, to become a justice to come, in which humans and animals are accounted for alike, but in a world where humans abide in a decidability regarding their response as to who is a neighbour and who is not, and how to *handle* their fellow creatures as brothers or as bodies to be killed and eaten.

A Justice to Come

Alter characterises the system implemented in 9:5 ('each one for the blood of another') that of a "retributive justice",¹⁰³ since the taking of human life will result in the killer's life to be taken (9:6). Murphy calls it the "law of retaliation" or the "axiom of moral equity".¹⁰⁴ While Olley suggests the covenant spells out an "unequivocal equality" rarely taken account of, he ultimately concedes that Genesis 9 falls back upon the "reality of self-

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ James G. Murphy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1863), 227.

¹⁰¹ GHH, 169-173.

¹⁰² Ibid., 173.

¹⁰³ Alter, *Genesis*, 39.

¹⁰⁴ Murphy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 228.

centred human violence” which requires divine sanctions.¹⁰⁵ But there is more to this justice than a system of inter-human symmetrical retribution or divinely given sanctions. With the “reckoning” God will demand ‘from every animal’ ‘and from human beings’ (9:5), it is as if *every* living being will be held accountable to God in, or as, a justice to come, that is, one who will hold to account and demand an account as a higher power or judge. The emphasis on God’s promise to *all* life is a testament to the relationship between God and *all-the-living*. But the proviso appears to be that this God who has blotted out his creation must decrease sovereign power and allow the freedom, decidability and responsibility rest between humans and animals. He will, rather, as Derrida put it, wait “in order to see”.¹⁰⁶ J.G. McConville places this in a binary: “Human interrelationship has the capacity to be benign or internecine.”¹⁰⁷ He suggests that this duality and decidability is particularly shown up in another pair of brothers over questions of fraternity, competition and killability, namely with Jacob and Esau (Gen. 27:41), echoing Cain and Abel.¹⁰⁸ McConville calls this the “embedding of justice-righteousness in the created order”.¹⁰⁹ But arguably it is more complex than a duality in which one could simply opt for “justice-righteousness” as if it appeared on a drop-down menu for ethical decisions. It is this complexity and ambiguity that Genesis 9 arguably plays out.

Returning to Derrida’s “cat or God”¹¹⁰, then, the animal other would be the figure who I am called to live *with* and respond *to*. God would be the figure, in whose sight I am, of a justice to come – a justice that consists of response and responsibility. The human, “between the beast and God”¹¹¹ is both sovereignly free and *seen* by these figures of otherness, who demand response and responsibility. Just as justice “can never be reduced to law, to calculative reason, to lawful distribution, to the norms and rules that condition law”¹¹² the relationship to the animal other cannot be wholly inscribed in laws to kill or not to kill in this narrative. In other words, there is no straightforward command either way, to kill or not kill. This comes close to Derrida’s critique of rights also as something

¹⁰⁵ Olley, “Mixed Blessings for Animals: The Contrasts of Genesis 9”, 139. Olley does suggest that the covenant depends on the equality of all parties, divine, human and animal, and that humans are called to look beyond self-interest as a result of reading this covenant. But he nonetheless does not go further than appearing to accede to the compromised state of human-divine-animal relations.

¹⁰⁶ TATTIA, 17.

¹⁰⁷ J.G. McConville, *God and Earthly Power, An Old Testament Political Theology: Genesis-Kings* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 38.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 169.

¹¹⁰ TATTIA, 18.

¹¹¹ BS I, 54.

¹¹² R, 149.

prescribed by a law, rather than being interested in concepts like compassion, that are more ambiguous than can be inscribed in, or demanded, by laws. Further, rights-based ethics is “locked into a model of justice in which a being does or does not have rights on the basis of its possession (or lack) of morally significant characteristics that can be empirically derived”.¹¹³ Ethics and the “question of justice”, for Derrida, is not reducible to the question of rights – or to the immanence of any juridico-political doctrine.¹¹⁴ It is always *more*. As Wolfe puts it in regard to Derrida, ethics only as a given law or right reduces “ethics to the *antithesis* of ethics by relying upon a one-size-fits-all formula for conduct that this actually *relieves* us of ethical responsibility – an application that, in principle, could be carried out by a machine”.¹¹⁵ In Genesis 9 the response to the animal other is left ambiguous, a space of decidability, and thus of responsibility: it is a place where compassion can happen but not according to a prescribed law or a programmed demand. It is in the relationship between humans and animals, then, that justice can be demanded, precisely because the choice to kill or not is a choice, and not determined in advance as a moral law. *More* responsibility resides in such a freedom and power.

But God is not, for Derrida or for Genesis 9, necessarily to be interpreted as a teleological judgement in such a structure of justice. Just as the God of Genesis 9 is less sovereign, eschewing a powerful presence, God as a justice to come might play a similar part to Derrida’s “democracy to come” as the possibility of a dream or prayer for justice as equality without calculation or exclusivity.¹¹⁶ As Simon Morgan Wortham explains it, this democracy can never *be* present – just as the God of Genesis will not *be present* to judge. It is rather, a call,

for unending vigilance, uncomplacent politics, highly singular engagement, and newly creative, newly resourceful decision. Indeed, amid this enduring, vital struggle – one which cannot be resolved by recourse to constructed laws, customs or norms – we find the promise of the future itself, the ‘democracy to come’ in the here-now.¹¹⁷

In the aftermath of Adam and Eve’s fruit-eating and self-conscious knowledge of “good and evil” in Genesis 3, the re-creation that Genesis 9 portrays is one in which *more* responsibility is demanded of life and in regard to life, rather than merely a concession to

¹¹³ Cary Wolfe, “Humanist and Posthumanist Antispeciesism”, in *The Death of the Animal: A Dialogue*, ed. Paola Cavalieri (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 52.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ See Derrida’s discussion of a “democracy to come” in R.

¹¹⁷ Simon Morgan Wortham, “‘By force of love...something should happen to God, and *someone* happen to him’: the other other(s) in Derrida”, *Textual Practice* 25, 6 (2011): 1060.

human violence. In fact, such an accountability announced by God from *all* the living, in the context of his covenant with *all* life, is arguably a demand for *excessive* responsibility in the face of one's other as every living other. Justice is thus a horizon of expectation that sets in motion the demand for response and responsibility in excessive measure: an impossible responsibility, and the dream, perhaps, of an impossible justice to be done to all-the-living. Or as Derrida puts it in *Spectres of Marx*, "justice as incalculability of the gift and singularity of the an-economic ex-position to others".¹¹⁸ He goes on to ask whether "justice as relation to the other supposes" "the irreducible excess of a disjointure or an anachrony" that always risks evil and injustice, "against which there is no calculable insurance" but which "alone would be able to *do* justice or to *render justice* to the other as other?"¹¹⁹ The "an" here is tied to *anachrony*, and the "ex" to being *out-of* –joint as well as the "excessive" responsibility to the other that is always also an *exposure*. This marks the way in which the other comes *before* – being oneself after – and thus always already in a state of anachrony and asymmetry. Such a relation to the other cannot be economic, contained in an already designated law, nor can it be entirely equal. Reading this in regard to the animal as an other in Genesis 9, animals present a justice that denotes exposure, outside the given law. Despite the permission to eat animals, their killability is thus not assured, but is suspended in the unknowability of the justice to come in which *all* will stand to account for their lives and the lives of others. This becomes particularly the case in light of the second half of Genesis 9, where the lines drawn as to who is "man" or "brother" and who is "animal" are troubled, and thus who is killable is also problematized.

Exhibiting Noah's Nakedness

As mentioned above, Genesis 9 is often divided into two parts, with 9:1-17 and 9:18-29 as separate textual strands. For all that the first half is discussed in relation to animal studies the second half is not taken into account, nor is the whole chapter read together in this regard. In the second part of Genesis 9, Noah is caught uncovered (9:21 נָגְלָה) drunk (שָׁכַר) and naked 9:22 (עָרְוָה) by his son Ham. Ham tells his two brothers of their father's naked state, and they take a garment, walk backwards into their father's tent, and cover him up

¹¹⁸ SM, 26.

¹¹⁹ SM, 32. Otherwise, as he also argues in R, "justice risks being reduced once again to juridical-moral rules, norms, or representations, within an inevitable totalizing horizon". SM, 34.

without looking at him. As soon as he realises what has happened, Noah curses Ham's son Canaan, condemning him to servitude to his brothers.

Turner helpfully points out that as a "sequel to the Flood story" Gen. 9:18-29 is strikingly similar to the sequel to the creation account in Genesis 3. Offences are connected to fruit: the fruit of knowledge of good and evil (3: 3-6) and grapes from Noah's vineyard (9:20-21).¹²⁰ In both narratives nakedness is a central motif, though the terms differ.¹²¹ Both are followed by curses, and both involve covering up one's nakedness: "by God with animal skins in 3:21; by Shem and Japheth with a garment in 9:23".¹²² Intimations of sexual crimes pre-flood are also potentially at play in regard to Noah's nakedness post-flood.¹²³ But, as Laurence points out, in Genesis 3 man and woman come to *know* they are naked; Noah eats of his fruits and does not know his "true state" (9:21, 24).¹²⁴ It is, however, as Laurence does not mention, in coming to *know* his own nakedness and having-been-seen, that the narrative pivots. Hence, the story of Noah's nakedness plays out the changeability of status regarding "brotherhood" where a brother and a son, or grandson, can become relegated to a lower status as a non-brother. I argue that this happens in the anxiety caused when Noah the patriarch is exposed for what he is: naked as a beast, unconscious of his nakedness as if there were no difference between himself and an animal. To compensate for such an exposure of the truth of his naked "animal" state, Noah exercises his power in a performative command that makes Canaan animal-like, of lesser status than himself and his brothers.

Much biblical scholarship is baffled by the Noah figure of Gen. 9:18-29, unable to reconcile him with the righteous Noah under God's protection, and viewing the drunkenness, cursing, and apparent injustice of the narrative as inexplicable. This tendency is perhaps the result of the dominant historical-critical method in Biblical Studies, especially oriented around what Alter calls the "philologist impulse" "to disambiguate"¹²⁵ and the difficulties of disambiguating the Noah of vv.18-29. For example, both Norman Cohn¹²⁶ and John Skinner solve the issue by arguing that there must be two Noahs, as the

¹²⁰ Turner, *Genesis*, 48.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹²⁴ Laurence, *Genesis*, 50.

¹²⁵ Alter, *Genesis*, xi. Alter goes on to say that biblical scholars have frequently been "trigger-happy in using the arsenal of text-critical categories, proclaiming contradiction wherever there is the slightest internal tension in the text, seeing every repetition as evidence of a duplication of sources, everywhere tuning in to the static of transmission, not to the complex music of the redacted story". *Ibid.*, xlii-xliii.

¹²⁶ Cohn, *Noah's Flood*, 14.

drunken Noah simply does not fit the character of the “righteous and blameless patriarch who is the hero of the flood”.¹²⁷ Westermann argues for separate authorship or redactions between the Priestly source “P” and Yahwistic source “J”.¹²⁸ David M. Carr’s study of Genesis evades the drunken Noah altogether by ending his interpretation at Gen. 9:17.¹²⁹ “Bypassing the intriguing story of Noah’s sons”, Tremper Longman III moves straight from the rainbow to the Tower of Babel.¹³⁰ In Brett’s *Genesis: Procreation and the Politics of Identity*, he writes that whatever “confusion hovers over the culprit of the crime against Noah, the reader is expected to see the curse of slavery as justifiable” and leaves it at that.¹³¹ Humphreys writes about Noah as “God’s select other”¹³² but refrains from remarking on the “other” Noah in the post-diluvian world of God’s creation. Murphy notes that we are in no position to know the extent of Noah’s guilt in regard to wine drinking, conflating Noah’s curse with the mythic explanation of future races.¹³³ This forms part of a plausible reading also offered, for instance, by Lloyd R. Bailey, which explains the two narrative sections serving different functions. The purpose of the second half of Genesis 9, he argues, is to explain the political and social relations between the groups that Noah’s sons represent, shifting from a flood story to an aetiology.¹³⁴ “This type of literature, attested in ancient societies around the world, intends to explain some presently existing object or custom by means of an ‘event’ in the past.”¹³⁵

John Bergsma and Scott Hahn call this passage a “compressed, elusive narrative” with “awkward features,” that has been an exegetical puzzle since antiquity.¹³⁶ William Evans writes that “Noah’s curse dwarfs Ham’s offense” and thus offends our moral sensibilities.¹³⁷ Arnold argues quite simply that Ham’s offense is due to failing to honour his father – a serious offense in ancient north-western Semitic culture, as is clear from Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16.¹³⁸ Another strategy in scholarship seems to have been to *add to*

¹²⁷ John Skinner, *Genesis* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1910), 181.

¹²⁸ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 482.

¹²⁹ David M. Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996).

¹³⁰ Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Genesis* (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2005), 17-18, 119.

¹³¹ Brett, *Genesis*, 46.

¹³² Humphreys, *The Character of God in the Book of Genesis*, 66.

¹³³ Murphy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 239.

¹³⁴ Bailey, *Noah: The Person and the Story in History and Tradition*, 159.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ John Sietze Bergsma and Scott Walker Hahn, “Noah’s Nakedness and the Curse on Canaan (Genesis 9:22-27)”, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124 (2005): 25, 27

¹³⁷ William McKee Evans, “From the Land of Canaan to the Land of Guinea: The Strange Odyssey of the ‘Sons of Ham’”, *American Historical Review* (1980): 15.

¹³⁸ Arnold, *Genesis*, 112.

the story, to give it sense, to insist on “more to the story”¹³⁹ than is told and to speculate as to what this might be.¹⁴⁰ This “more” has mostly taken the shape of a “dirty” secret, sexual deviancy, something unspeakable. Bergsma and Hahn contend that refusing this “more” to the story is succumbing to a conservatism in regards to anything not made entirely explicit in the text, and go on to explain away the “awkwardness” of the narrative by inserting sexual transgression into the empty space left in the silence of the text itself.¹⁴¹ Alter relates how the mystery of Ham’s transgression towards Noah has remained a conundrum, explaining how some, even as early as the classical Midrash, have read into this story a castration-narrative between father and son, like the Zeus-Chronos story in which the son castrates the father or, alternately, enters him sexually.¹⁴² A sexual reading is not entirely implausible as “to see the nakedness of” sometimes does refer to sexual activity.¹⁴³ But, as Alter points out, it is also entirely possible that seeing one’s father naked was itself a taboo and that this alone would warrant a curse.¹⁴⁴ Bergsma and Hahn list paternal incest, voyeurism and castration as possibilities that have been put forward for what takes place between Noah and Ham.¹⁴⁵ Surveying the sexualized accounts of this scene in scholarship, Brad Embry explains how paternal incest has been the category most widely accepted in modern interpretations of Genesis 9.¹⁴⁶ He argues, however, that voyeurism is the problem, because “nakedness is a literary cue that indicates the reality of the Fall”.¹⁴⁷ Embry calls the scene of Noah’s nakedness a “recognition of the residue of the initial Fall; the naivety lost in the Fall remains in the post-diluvian context as well”.¹⁴⁸ I propose that this connection might be read not merely as a matter of voyeurism, but rather as oriented towards the relationships between animal, human, divine that cause tension and trouble.

Despite seeing no reason to read maternal incest into the Genesis 9 account of Noah and his son Ham, as Bergsma and Hahn argue, I do agree with their point

¹³⁹ Bergsma and Hahn, “Noah’s Nakedness and the Curse on Canaan (Genesis 9:22-27)”, 25.

¹⁴⁰ Lewis argues this passage “perplexed the ancients as much as they do us”. In tracing various readings by early Christian writers and in Jewish rabbinic texts, he suggests that the explanations given to the curse of Canaan arise from the particular *Sitz im Leben* of the individual writer. Lewis, *A Study of the Interpretation of Noah and the Flood in Jewish and Christian Literature*, 181.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁴² Alter, *Genesis*, 40.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* Alter adds that it is noteworthy that the Hebrews did associate the Canaanites with licentiousness. (based on e.g. the rape of Dinah in Genesis 34, and the story of Lot’s daughters in Genesis 19).

¹⁴⁴ Alter, *Genesis*, 40.

¹⁴⁵ Bergsma and Hahn offer the thesis that maternal incest is what takes place to explain Noah’s curse of Canaan – the illicit offspring of incestuous sexual practice – in order to usurp the place and authority of the father. Bergsma and Hahn, “Noah’s Nakedness and the Curse on Canaan (Genesis 9:22-27)”.

¹⁴⁶ Brad Embry, “The ‘Naked Narrative’ from Noah to Leviticus: Reassessing Voyeurism in the Account of Noah’s Nakedness in Genesis 9.22-24”, *The Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 35 (2011): 418.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 419.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 426.

concerning the theme of humiliation that is seemingly played out in Noah's anger, the possible interpretation of a shift in power dynamics when the father and head of the household is seen naked, and the concurrent anxieties about authority being destabilized.¹⁴⁹ But this can be read in relation to animality and divinity rather than purely inter-human hierarchies. In light of God's seeming to repent of the flood, or at least his promise not to exercise such violent authority again, Noah appears to take on a role as sovereign "Man" in his anger at being seen naked. Such a scene could be read as a loss of mastery – similar to God's loss of mastery over Adam and Eve – and thus *being seen as animal*. Noah is, to borrow a phrase from Derrida, "naked as a beast"¹⁵⁰ and is ashamed at *being seen* in this state. It is a matter of being seen before knowing one is seen.¹⁵¹ "Nudity is nothing other than that passivity, the involuntary exhibition of the self."¹⁵² With the new order of animals in human hands, Noah desires to uphold such an order of differentiation, with a clear hierarchy of Man as Master. Here, 'everything' else is subjected, given into human hands (9:2). Brett holds that in Genesis "overt ideologies of human dominance, male dominance or primogeniture are allowed to stand, but alternative perspectives are juxtaposed in such a way as to undermine the dominant ideology".¹⁵³ Noah's dominance as "man" is precisely undercut and undermined in this scene of naked exposure. If power has been displaced somewhat from God to humans, in whose hands all animals are given, then Noah is arguably asserting a stance of power in regard to his sons in the curse he exclaims. Seeing his father naked is akin to depriving Noah of his power as a man, above his sons and animals. As Derrida notes, man alone clothes himself. Animals are living creatures that cannot be naked, precisely because they are naturally "naked". Keen to be *more* than a mere beast, Noah's nakedness is something like an upstaging of his authority. He loses face.¹⁵⁴ To repeat Derrida's connection between the idea of manhood and shame:

Man would be the only one to have invented a garment to cover his sex. He would be a man only to the extent that he was able to be naked, that is to say, to be ashamed, to know himself to be ashamed because he is no longer naked. And knowing himself would mean knowing himself to be ashamed.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹ Bergsmah and Hahn, "Noah's Nakedness and the Curse on Canaan (Genesis 9:22-27)", 32.

¹⁵⁰ TATTIA, 4.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Brett, *Genesis*, 44.

¹⁵⁴ As Derrida discusses in relation to Levinas' ethics, to not have a face, to "lose face" would precisely be to be animal. See TATTIA, 107-110.

¹⁵⁵ TATTIA, 5.

But Derrida's mentioning of shame is not merely to point to the feeling of embarrassment that might accompany being seen naked by another. It is also, as mentioned earlier, to point to accountability. If only humans are capable of shameful nakedness, and thus also to a certain self-consciousness and self-reflection then Derrida's turn from the autobiographical to the confessional "I" is due to a certain idea of guilt. Derrida emphasises this to distance himself from the autobiography tied to the *human* as an autonomous singular "I" who freely self-reflects, and rather situates the "I" as a testimonial figure always already testifying *to* and guilty *of*. For Genesis 9, it seems that Noah's anger at *being seen* naked could be read as a symptom of uneasiness at the permission to eat animals, as to *who* or what is animal, and the status of all the living in regard to God, in the sight of God, accountable *to* God after the flood in which so much life – animal and human – was obliterated, guiltily, *alike*. Noah is described as 'a righteous man, blameless in his generation' (6:9).¹⁵⁶ He has lived responsibly, properly, guiltlessly. Feeling himself watched over by God, as the only man not blotted out, Noah lives uneasily in the new world, haunted, as if his position as the new first man – survivor, carnivore and a Father of fathers – is vulnerable, and if not guilty he is nonetheless blame-able. Eager to uphold his blamelessness and haunted by this desire to remain proper and shameless, Noah thrusts blame outwards at the other who has exposed him, lying flat out, unconscious, naked, and drunk in his tent. Noah's shame at being caught in this state must be transferred to another's account. Ham, stepping inside the tent in which Noah lies, trespasses the threshold outside which his father's "manhood" is erected, properly and clothed before God. Once conscious and covered again, Noah responds with a violent curse, as if he were covering the disgrace of improper nudity with divine-like retribution: 'When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said: "Cursed be Canaan; lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers"' (9:24-25). As McConville points out, the covenant with all life earlier in the chapter, with its "universalizing picture is disturbed by Noah's curse on Canaan for the enigmatic sin of his father Ham (9:25-27)".¹⁵⁷ How should such a disturbance be understood?

¹⁵⁶ Lewis discusses how in post-biblical literature, both Jewish and Christian, Noah is frequently held up as "an outstanding example of righteousness". He notes how the early Christian debates on moral issues by the church fathers, were often focused around Genesis 9, where Noah's drunkenness "becomes a classic example of the evils of drinking". At the same time, there appears to be a tendency to exonerate Noah. Ambrose, for example, proposes Noah was not ashamed of his nakedness; Origen and Jerome suggest Noah may not have known of the effects of wine. Lewis, *A Study of the Interpretation of Noah and the Flood in Jewish and Christian Literature*, 7, 177-178.

¹⁵⁷ McConville, *God and Earthly Power*, 36.

Why Canaan and not Ham? Lewis notes tendencies in later post-biblical literature to make Ham an “archsinner”.¹⁵⁸ “The moral interest in Ham’s action expressed itself by drawing a warning against the exposure of the body.”¹⁵⁹ Ham was conceived as one who laughed at the vulnerability of his father.¹⁶⁰ Westermann notes the tendency in some scholarship to solve this problem by treating it as an error, thus it is Canaan who sees Noah naked, not Ham.¹⁶¹ But Westermann fiercely counters this point and says we “must leave the contradiction as it is”.¹⁶² Others have read this slur on Canaan as a justification for the animosity between the Israelites and Canaanites.¹⁶³ Read as it is, the curse on Canaan could be interpreted as a hyperbolic exercise of authority that is intended more for the *show* of paternal potency than for justice. Crucially, the unfairness of the curse could be explained as the sheer “I can” – the *pouvoir* – of Noah’s power. Turner implicitly sees Noah as the God figure in this scene when he notes the correspondence between Genesis 3 and 9, with God doing the cursing in the former passage and Noah doing the cursing in the latter.¹⁶⁴ When he questions “the efficacy of Noah’s words” and asks whether “they have the same force as the words of God?” he conveys the way in which Noah takes on a divine-like stance.¹⁶⁵ Just as God was described as “overreacting” in the flood-destruction, Evans suggests here it is Noah who overreacts.¹⁶⁶ Of the word *bête*, meaning both beast and stupidity in French, Derrida argues that to designate a living being either as stupid, lesser, and/or a “beast”, is a dogmatic, performative gesture, similar, I propose, to Noah’s curse. The “attribution of the attribute *bête*, the attribution of *bêtise*” is “a stratagem, i.e. an act of war, an aggression, a violence that intends to be wounding. It is always an injurious, offensive, abusive insult, always *injurious*, i.e. in the order of right, one that runs the risk of being unjust”.¹⁶⁷ Noah’s curse is an excessive gesture precisely because Noah is asserting the right of sovereign man as differentiated from the naked, edible beast, and thus as such a sovereign figure his action is staged as one who does not have to answer for his actions. Canaan will become a servant (עֶבֶד) to his brothers, the lowest of slaves, or a servant’s servant (9:25). The freedom of humans, given from God, then, becomes

¹⁵⁸ Lewis, *A Study of the Interpretation of Noah and the Flood in Jewish and Christian Literature*, 178.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* Ambrose and Gregory the Great are two such examples.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 484.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ This is read according to Hebrews being regarded as “Semites”, descendants of Shem and the Canaanites being descendants of Canaan.

¹⁶⁴ Turner, *Genesis*, 50.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Evans, “From the Land of Canaan to the Land of Guinea: The Strange Odyssey of the ‘Sons of Ham’”, 15.

¹⁶⁷ BS I, 166.

construed as sovereign power of autonomy and authority up and against the non-sovereignty of animals as subjected creatures. But Canaan's demotion to servitude as the 'lowest of slaves' to his brothers (9:25) reveals the slipperiness of "brotherhood" and "beasts" for the sacredness of only or purely human life. With Ham seeing Noah naked and the differentiation made consequently between his son and Noah's other sons, the narrative seems to show that a brother or son can be like Derrida's animal gaze that sees me naked. If human life is not immune from demotion or devaluation then the line that separates man from beast or brother from non-brother is fragile. Who, then, is safely killable and who immune from such killability?

It is pertinent that what is known as the "curse of Ham" is linked to race issues. In David Goldenberg's *The Curse of Ham*, he calls Gen. 9:18-25 "the single greatest justification for Black slavery for more than a thousand years".¹⁶⁸ Goldenberg traces how the biblical story is understood to justify slavery. "Over and over again one finds Black enslavement justified with a reference to the biblical story of the curse of eternal servitude pronounced against Ham, considered to be the father of black Africa."¹⁶⁹ Wondering whether the origin of anti-black sentiment in the Western world can be traced back to the Bible, he concludes that an increased association of black with slave in the Near East can be located in exegetical responses to Genesis 9. While incorrect, a perceived etymology of the name Ham from a root meaning dark, brown or black, had an impact that clung to this text. Such understandings influenced readings of Noah's curse of slavery on Canaan, associated with Ham, since the first century.¹⁷⁰ Blackness was sometimes inserted into the story, such as can be found in one fourth-century source, where Canaan is explicitly seen as the ancestor of dark-skinned people.¹⁷¹ The dual curse of blackness and slavery can be found in seventh-century Islamic texts that coincide with Muslim conquests in Africa. This period brought an increasing influx of black African slaves to the Near East. Goldenberg explains how from this time on, "the Curse of Ham, that is, the exegetical tie between blackness and servitude, is commonly found in works composed in the Near East, whether in Arabic by Muslims or in Syriac by Christians".¹⁷² He thus suggests that the increasing emphasis on the curse coincides with the increasing numbers of black people taken as

¹⁶⁸ David Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 2005, 1.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

slaves.¹⁷³ Skin colour becomes the mark of ethnic groups. A similar phenomenon can be observed in sixteenth-century England: “After England’s encounter with Black Africans, white and black became the terminology for ‘self’ and ‘other’.”¹⁷⁴ Categorizing humans according to skin colour was also mapped onto the biblical text. From the seventh century, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim biblical interpretations can be found that pinpoint Noah’s sons as different human skin colours.¹⁷⁵ The fragility of the “brother” or the “human”, then, is not only a matter of edible animals and carnivorous humans, but also of the responses to any other as potentially “animal”, or a non-brother. The liberation theologian James Cone condemns the logic that determines segregation and slavery in race relations between “white” and “black” as the same one that leads to the subjugation and abuse of animals and the natural world.¹⁷⁶ The use of the curse of Canaan to justify the inferiority of black people demonstrates this in a particularly powerful way.

What Noah’s nakedness and its exposure reveals is that the conceptualisations that divide humans from animals, such as the capacity for nakedness, are constructed. With the particular matter of nakedness the “nakedness” of the animal as a natural state becomes a way to institute the accepted vulnerability of the animal body as killable and edible. To uphold the “clothedness” of humans is not, then, merely a matter of custom but also of protection *as* a strong, shielded, sacred species, saved from killability. Such a non-nakedness becomes an aggression against the naked animal which is perceived as essentially different. As Noah’s curse demonstrates, such constructions of difference must be upheld with a spectacle of sovereignty that is a *performance* of the power of the human “I am” as a sovereign “I can”. But if one whose life was protected as a human, a brother, a son, becomes a slave and thus of a closer status to a domesticated or tamed animal, or even a wild animal held in captivity, then the line that divides other humans from animals is less robust and clear-cut too. To do as Noah does, asserting the sovereignty of his status as a father, a man, a master, is to refuse the other who sees him, just as to refuse to concede animals a perspective and power is to veil oneself to the singular gaze of the other. Further, it is to refuse to concede one’s own vulnerability as an animal *to* the sovereign other. Derrida calls this the violence and asinarity [*bêtise*] of “suspending one’s compassion and

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. Goldenberg also argues that biblical and postbiblical literature in Jewish antiquity and late antiquity, do not show anti-Black attitudes. This is only later imposed. “In those earlier times colour did not define a person and was not a criterion for categorizing humanity. It was irrelevant in taking the measure of man.” Ibid., 200.

¹⁷⁶ James Cone, “Whose Earth is it Anyway?”, in *Earth Habitat: Eco-Injustice and the Church’s Response*, eds. Dieter Hessel and Larry Rasmussen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 23.

in depriving the animal of every power of manifestation, of the desire to manifest *to me* anything at all, and even to manifest to me in some way *its* experience of *my* language, of *my* words and of *my* nudity".¹⁷⁷

Conclusion: Accounting for All Life?

In this chapter I have shown how the theme of nakedness in Derrida's discussion of animality plays a crucial part for his thinking. Inextricably caught up in references to Genesis, Derrida's nakedness becomes a *topos* for him to explore notions of human/animal distinctions. Knowing oneself to be naked is to be an autobiographical "I", construed as a human "I can", with powers to know "good and evil", to be self-conscious, in self-reflective autonomy and autarchy. Animals – thought to *not* know themselves to be naked – are not seen to possess this autobiographical "I". Yet Derrida orients this "I" and its autobiography around confession. Confession becomes the way for Derrida to posit an "I" who is counter to the autonomous, authoritative, autobiographical "human" "I". In a confessional mode, this autobiographical "I" is no longer sovereign, but is accountable to others, testifying *to* another sovereign figure and guilty *of* a crime: namely the crime of excluding animality and the consequences this exclusion entails for disregarding, demoting and devaluing animal life. For Derrida, it is imperative to recognise oneself *as* naked *in* the gaze of the animal other because to do so is to concede one's own nakedness *as* an animal. To feel shame in such a gaze is to recognise the error in deeming the animal a non-neighbour. Testimony and guilt are conditions that arise in the face of God as a justice to come, as that sovereign being who sees me, but whose sovereignty does not diminish my own. The "I" is thus free *to be* always already accountable.

Building on Derrida's reflections on nakedness, animality and accountability before God, my reading has shown that on the one hand, Genesis 9 is a prime site for locating the sovereignty of "Man" given by God to humans, *in order to see* the power of humans over the animal world. On the other hand, however, Genesis 9 stages the tension in such a power dynamic in light of the covenant with *all* life before a justice to come by God. Because animals are now in principle killable, justice is a space of decidability: animals become a site in which humans must decide how to respond. Such a justice cannot be wholly programmed in advance or it would not *be* a justice to come that demands

¹⁷⁷ TATTIA, 18.

responsibility in the face of such a horizon. With the scene between Noah, exposed naked as a beast in the gaze of his son, and the following curse and demotion of Canaan to slavehood, tensions in the differentiation between humans and animals are played out further over the exposure of nakedness and the performance of sovereign power. Noah's exposure as naked, resulting in Canaan's demotion to a non-brother, conveys the fragile, slippery divisions between human life and animal life, showcasing thus the difficulties in delineating who or what is in fact killable and edible and who or what is a brother and neighbour. In the face of God as a horizon of justice whose covenant is with *all* life, the differentiations and distinctions between humans and animals are thus more problematic and questionable than a simple acceptance of carnivorous, sovereign human power would appear at first glance. Rather, in the face of such a horizon of justice, a demand for response and responsibility might be what is required and what will be reckoned with.

Chapter 2

Derrida's Cat or Daniel's God? Following God to the Deconstructed Subjects in the Book of Daniel

Derrida's Cat or God

Derrida calls for a subject that would be deconstructed, which is to say, a subject that is not “identical to itself”.¹ It would be “a subject that would no longer include the figure of mastery of self, of adequation to self, center and origin of the world”.² Derrida “would define the subject rather as the finite experience of non-identity to self, as the underivable interpellation inasmuch as it comes from the other, from the trace of the other, with all the paradoxes or the aporia of being-before-the-law”.³ The subject would thus be “a singularity that dislocated or divides itself in gathering itself together to answer to the other, whose call somehow precedes its own identification with itself, for to this call I can *only* answer, have already answered, even if I think I am answering ‘no’”.⁴ This call does not have to be a linguistic one. It is marked also by silence and secrecy. As Derrida challenges the *human* subject as being marked by the very concepts his “deconstructed subject” resists, he looks to the call from the other as nonhuman, that which has been excluded from the human order, and so remains *other* to the human subject. He writes: “I hear the cat or God ask itself, ask me: Is he going to call me, is he going to address me?”⁵

The “subject”, Derrida writes, is above all linked to “the law, as subject subjected to the law, subject to the law in its very autonomy, to ethical or juridical law, to political

¹ EW, 261.

² Ibid., 266.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 261.

⁵ TATTIA, 18.

law or power, to order (symbolic or not)".⁶ Instead of continuing to see the figure of the human as a sovereign entity either enforcing the law as the sole sovereign subject of, or as the sole subjects to, the law, Derrida reorients the question to what he calls *divinanimality*.⁷ It is a matter of thinking beyond the law as a convention or contract of mutual benefit amongst human subjects. As I discussed in the first chapter, for Derrida, justice and responsibility necessarily exceed the order of calculable law or a given prescription and program towards, and in relation to, the other.⁸ To respond responsibly for Derrida is more than this, it is to answer the call of the *other*. He recognises this call in the gaze of his cat. "This real, singular cat occupies a crucial threshold in Derrida's philosophical knowledge. She (for this cat is in fact *une chatte*) allows him to see something of the otherness of *all* non-human animals".⁹ But it is not only a case of non-human *animals* but of the *nonhuman* or *ahuman*. Derrida asks: "Must not this place of the Other be *ahuman*?"¹⁰ Because they are thought not to respond in *language*, animals – and one could add, gods – are excluded from the human order, founded on the possibility of responding responsibly in language, that is, to *be able to* account for oneself autonomously before the law and sovereignly enforce the law. But Derrida posits a two-fold argument in response to this. First, that there can be no response that is entirely devoid of what is thought foreign to it, namely reflex or so-called instinctive automaticity.¹¹ In other words, the division separating a *human* response from an *animal* mere reaction is not assured. Secondly, that responsibility may present itself in other modes than as a response of linguistic transparency and accountability. One way to understand Derrida's point is through the response "here I am".

In *The Animal that Therefore I am*, Derrida writes that he is interested in "here I am" as a response because:

'Here I am' as responsibility implies this self-presentation, this autotelic, autodeictic, autobiographical movement, exposing oneself before the law... because 'Here I am' as responsibility implies the possibility of 'responding,' of answering for oneself in the response to the appeal or command of the other.¹²

For Derrida the other who "calls" is an animal other. But seemingly, it is also the call of God. Drawing upon Levinas' concept of ethics as a respect for the other formulated through the "after you", Derrida argues that this does not just mean " 'go ahead at the

⁶ EW, 259.

⁷ TATTIA, 132.

⁸ EW, 272-273, 286.

⁹ Steve Baker, *The Postmodern Animal* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), 186.

¹⁰ TATTIA, 132.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 112. This is also what Derrida argues in "Signature, Event, Context", about citation or citability.

¹² TATTIA, 111.

elevator, etc., it means 'I come after you,' and I come to myself, to my responsibility as an ego, in some sense, only from the other".¹³

The other is there before me, and I receive the order from the other who precedes me. That is the situation when faced with the other, and he not only goes ahead of me, must go ahead of me, but is there before me. So I say 'After you,' and it's my first address to the other as other.¹⁴

As he puts it in *Rogues*, "as with the coming of any event worthy of this name, of an unforeseeable coming of the other, of a heteronomy, of a law come from the other, of a responsibility and decision of the other – of the other in me, an other greater and older than I am".¹⁵ Since Derrida calls for a response to the "other" as what is nonhuman, his call is situated between "cat or God", or as "divinanimality" as that which has been excluded from the human order. Reorienting humanity to *following* in the double meaning of "je suis" as "I am" and "I follow", Derrida reflects on what it means to follow animals, to come after animals. He writes that the ethical imperative towards the other to say "after you", to allow the other to be a sovereign firstcomer must be thought in terms of the other as *any other*, without calculation. This other is thus also – and perhaps especially – a nonhuman other. In the delineation of the nonhuman other as "cat or God"¹⁶ in *The Animal that Therefore I am*, Derrida does not pose the question explicitly as to what it might mean to follow God as the nonhuman other in the context of the question of the animal. But as Chrulew states, in the bathroom scene, it is in God's gaze that a turn is set in motion towards response and responsibility for the other.¹⁷

As for the question of whether (and if so, how), Derrida will address the nonhuman other, it would appear that his prime response is: "here I am". Despite it appearing to be Derrida who is the one to address these figures of otherness, his emphasis on *response* would signal the utterance of "here I am" not as a sovereign self-introduction but precisely as a response before the law of the other: *yes, here I am, you have already seen me, I am responding to you*. His cat or his God would not address him with words, in language, and so his response is an attention to their *being-there*, his following them, his already *having-being-seen* by them. Hence, Derrida's figure of the animal other here is that of his cat as an

¹³ BS I, 238-239.

¹⁴ Ibid., 239.

¹⁵ R, 84.

¹⁶ TATTIA, 18.

¹⁷ Chrulew, "Feline Divinanimality: Derrida and the Discourse of Species in Genesis".

irreplaceable, irreducible living being.¹⁸ His God figure, on the other hand, remains something of a haunting remainder, closely associated with the God of Genesis. Are “cat or God” exchangeable figures for the nonhuman, for the “other” as *ahuman*? And what would such exchangeability signify?

The generality *and* singularity of the “here I am” is encapsulated in Derrida’s discussion of Abraham who answers God: “Here I am” in Genesis 22, in the infamous story of God asking Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac. Abraham is silent about the call he has received from God, and “in not saying the essential thing, namely the secret between God and him, Abraham doesn’t speak, he assumes the responsibility that consists in always being alone, entrenched in one’s own singularity at the moment of decision”.¹⁹ Derrida argues that the self-presentation of the “here I am” that would be followed by the lawful and ostensibly responsible spoken confession and account of this call is in fact what would lead to a loss of singularity and a risk of generality, automaticity, and thus irresponsibility. As soon as one speaks, “as soon as one enters the medium of language, one loses that very singularity, precisely because language is always to some extent general, it can never be entirely singular. One therefore loses the possibility of deciding or the right to decide. Thus every decision would, fundamentally, remain at the same time solitary, secret, and silent”.²⁰ What Derrida’s “here I am” signifies, then, is the singularity of the one who is called by name and who must decide on a response, but the generality that encloses this singular subject in language. Crucially, for this context, the “I” responds *to* the God who is other. Referring to the “here I am” in the context of the animal adds another dimension to this ethical demand.

What Derrida shows with the “here I am” is that any response bears in it the traces of automaticity, that is frequently reserved for the animal instinctive reaction, and that responsibility can be deconstructed. In terms of automaticity, Derrida argues that iterability is essential to every response, “to the ideality of every response,”²¹ and that this iterability

¹⁸ Waldau complains about how a single nonhuman pet, namely Derrida’s cat, can stand for the entire array of nonhuman animals. “It is not at all clear how a relationship with a cat living in our carpentered world throws light on relationship possibilities with wild animals living in their own communities.” Waldau, *Animal Studies, An Introduction*, 182. What Waldau misses, however (a point I will go on to discuss in regard to Daniel’s God) is that this cat is precisely not *every other* but is *his* other, the cat is *his particular unsubstitutional* cat. The cat only becomes the figure for otherness more generally after that fact in light of the logic that *no other* exists as a general, abstract figure of otherness: every other figures also in a particular relationship, and so is a “*my other*”.

¹⁹ GD, 59-60.

²⁰ Ibid., 60.

²¹ TATTIA, 112.

“can and cannot fail to introduce nonresponse, automatic reaction, mechanical reaction into the most alive, most ‘authentic,’ and most responsible response”.²² It is the case of the iterable trace as a type of “machine” that cannot be reduced to my intention, reason, or presence, and so cannot be wholly accounted for.²³ This is not only the case for the written word, but is a function of language or any communication. My language is never only my own, my utterance “exists asymmetrically, always for the other, from the other, kept by the other. Coming from the other, remaining with the other, and returning to the other”.²⁴ In other words, the “here I am” as a response is a repeatable, iterable structured response that in itself *as* a general phrase or repeatable set of signs denotes the automatic and non-autonomous “I” who answers to the other who is already there, before him or her. Wolfe writes

‘we’ are always radically other, already in- or ahuman in our very being – not just in the evolutionary, biological, and zoological fact of our physical embodiment, vulnerability, and mortality, of course, but also in our subjection to and constitution in the materiality and technicity of language that is always on the scene before we are, as a precondition of our subjectivity.²⁵

At the same time, however, “here I am” is the response that signals an excessive responsibility of an undecidable law to and from the other. It is a matter of testimony and trust in the face of the other who calls me into being, whom I cannot wholly *know* and whose call asks something of me. Derrida terms this the “aporia of responsibility”,²⁶ in the tension between *knowing* what one is doing in acting responsibly but at the same time one is not actually *being* responsible if one is merely acting according to the knowledge presented to us, this would be “the technical deployment of a cognitive apparatus”.²⁷ Hence the very condition for responsibility is also simultaneously the impossibility of responsibility. Even if I say “no”, or think I have said “no” a response has been given. But there is simultaneously always the possibility of saying “yes” to the other. As Calarco states: “The Other leaves a trace of the shock of encounter within me, and how I respond to that trace – whether I affirm or negate, avow or disavow – constitutes ethics, properly speaking.”²⁸ Derrida continues to argue that there is no “discourse or address of the other

²² Ibid.

²³ SEC, 8.

²⁴ MO, 40.

²⁵ Cary Wolfe, “Humanist and Posthumanist Antispeciesism”, in *The Death of the Animal: A Dialogue*, ed. Paola Cavalieri (New York, Columbia University Press, 2009), 57.

²⁶ Ibid., 24.

²⁷ Ibid., 24.

²⁸ Calarco, *Zoographies*, 126.

without the possibility of an elementary promise".²⁹ This is perhaps nothing more than an elementary promise of a relational response that in itself always already promises the possibility of an affirmation or acknowledgement. The yes "will have implied and will always imply the trustworthiness and fidelity of a faith",³⁰ that is, a trust in the other that resides in *not knowing* the other or the other's response.

"Responsibility and faith go together," Derrida writes in *The Gift of Death*, "however paradoxical that might seem to some, and both should, in the same movement exceed mastery and knowledge".³¹ This ties in with his notion of a deconstructed subject because it is a matter of recognising a lack of mastery, a non-mastery, but simultaneously in acknowledging the relationality, response and responsibility with and to the other who goes before me, who I come after and answer to. As already mentioned, in *The Gift of Death*, Derrida stages the aporia of responsibility through the figure of Abraham in Genesis 22. Derrida attempts to show that secrecy and responsibility must be thought together "in *responding*, hence in answering to the other, before the other and before the law, and if possible publicly, answering for itself, its intentions, its aims, and for the name of the agent deemed responsible".³² But this is crucially an unknowable other. God "is himself absent, hidden and silent, separate, secret, at the moment he has to be obeyed".³³ To be God he must remain other: "If the other were to share his reasons with us by explaining them to us, if he were to speak to us all the time without any secrets, he wouldn't be the other, we would share a type of homogeneity."³⁴ The relation set up between the deconstructed subject as a "here I am" and the call of the other, then, is inextricably relational but never wholly transparent or symmetrical. What does it mean to follow Derrida's God in the face of an animal other? Or is it, in *cat or God*, that the cat is a kind of divinity in Derrida's eyes?

²⁹ FK, 83.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ GD, 6.

³² Ibid., 26-27.

³³ Ibid., 57. Derrida is here talking about Paul's God and his God being the same as Abraham's God. Ibid., 58.

³⁴ Ibid., 57.

Following God to the Deconstructed Subjects in the Book of Daniel

Daniel is a multifaceted book in the biblical archive, normally divided into two parts, chapters 1-6 and 7-12. Jan-Wim Wesselius calls it “a kaleidoscopic work” because of its variations in genre, style and language.³⁵ The book is pseudepigraphic, antedated, bilingual (Hebrew and Aramaic). It is a text that is rife with diverse influences³⁶ and has a long and influential trajectory, on the genre of apocalypse and particularly on the Book of Revelation, to which I will turn later.³⁷ Lawrence M. Wills draws attention to the didactic elements of Daniel and their probable relation to oral folk tales.³⁸ As Jennifer L. Koosed and Robert P. Seesengood point out, it is a collection of stories that have been popular especially among children, particularly known for its lions.³⁹ The first six chapters are commonly described as court legends while the last six are usually classified as apocalyptic literature.⁴⁰ But this benign association with children's stories and neat taxonomy masks the way in which the Book of Daniel presents two radically different visions of the political as animal, visions of the complex and shifting relationships between power and powerlessness. By “political” here I mean the social relations, powers and hierarchies that determine who rules over other creatures and who is in turn ruled or subjected. In Daniel, the political is animal: animality is a spectrum that runs from the domesticated to the wild, from pet to prey, where the boundaries between who and what are never entirely delineated. The two visions in Daniel are cobbled together in a manner

³⁵ Jan-Wim Wesselius, “The Literary Nature of the Book of Daniel and the Linguistic Character of its Aramaic”, *Aramaic Studies* 3. 2 (2005), 242.

³⁶ John J. Collins argues that the ancient mythological motifs used in Daniel must be understood in light of the interest in such traditions and myths in the Hellenistic age. He suggests that in the Hellenistic Near East such ancient material was drawn from an interest that was complementary to an increased use of pseudepigraphy. “Antiquity was thought to be superior to the present. Therefore writings and traditions which either were or claimed to be ancient enjoyed special prestige.” John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press for Harvard Semitic Museum, 1977) 102-103.

³⁷ For more on the Daniel imagery and its influences in apocalyptic texts see for instance G. K Beale's *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984).

³⁸ See Lawrence M. Wills, *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King, Ancient Jewish Court Legends* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

³⁹ Jennifer L. Koosed and Robert Paul Seesengood, “Daniel's Animal Apocalypse”, in *Divinanimality: Animal Theory, Creaturely Theology*, ed. Stephen D. Moore (New York: Fordham University Press, forthcoming), 2.

⁴⁰ These two parts are often read separately, or at least classified differently, but Wesselius puts forward an interesting argument for its unity, calling the book a “linear literary dossier”. Wesselius's argument is based on the correlation he traces between the language (particularly the Aramaic) and structure of Daniel with two other biblical books, Genesis 37-50 and Ezra, which Daniel mirrors. Wesselius, “The Literary Nature of the Book of Daniel and the Linguistic Character of its Aramaic”, 241-283. Koosed and Seesengood suggest that the theme of the animal actually shows more continuity between the two parts of the text than conventional scholarship normally allows. “The distinction between the beast and the sovereign is unstable in both parts of Daniel, and in both parts of Daniel, the distinction is maintained by God.” Koosed and Seesengood, “Daniel's Animal Apocalypse”, 7.

akin to the hybrid animals of Daniel's dreams, making it a strangely composite work; the two parts even speak different languages.⁴¹

The first half of Daniel presents a fantasy for successful assimilation, incorporation and political absorption for exiles in a foreign empire; here, to be animal is to be conquered and domesticated, brought into another territory. But this is an absorption that is triumphant in being allied to God, up and against the misplaced hubris of human domination. Being conquered and "consumed" by a foreign empire is not the end: rather, these exilic animals survive, living on as domesticated subjects within a foreign political system but ultimately following their God as the higher master. Under the divine ruler, conquered and conquerors alike are shown to be akin to Derrida's deconstructed subjects. This is shown to be an empowering state of being. The second half of Daniel, however, is a radical over-turning of the optimism of the first half. If the first part of Daniel highlighted the success of being a domesticated animal incorporated into foreign political structures, the second part has opened the cage doors wide and unleashed wildness and carnivorous animality. In Daniel's dreams of the second half of the book, animality now appears to signify the limits of the domesticated civilization of court life, as overpowering, causing anxiety, spelling out crisis and catastrophe. It is as if the displacement of power from humans to God in the first half, that showed humans and animals alike under God as deconstructed subjects, has unleashed an array of creatures – including God himself – displaying ferocity, carnivorousness and violence, denoting utter powerlessness for the subjects surrounded by such creatures.

The Book of Daniel is a particularly pertinent part of the biblical archive to turn to due to its association with questions of Jewish identity. The stories of 1-6 place the eponymous hero of Daniel in the Babylonian and Persian courts in the sixth century BCE, but the Book of Daniel is written around the time of the Maccabean Revolt (167-163

⁴¹ André Lacocque pinpoints this difficulty and peculiarity in studying and understanding Daniel, with the shift from Hebrew to Aramaic at 2:4 and then back again to Hebrew at 8:1. He suggests that the Aramaic passages are not translated from Hebrew, but rather that the Hebrew depends on an original Aramaic version. André Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*, trans. David Pellauer (London: SPCK, 1979), 13. David M. Valeta sums up the four positions generally proposed in scholarship regarding the mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic. "(1) a single author composed the book in two languages; (2) the entire book was composed originally in Hebrew, with subsequent partial translation into Aramaic; (3) the entire book was composed in Aramaic, with subsequent partial translation into Hebrew; and (4) older Aramaic material was redacted into a work being composed in Hebrew." Theories two and three have few adherents, and it is generally agreed that one or four are more plausible. Hebrew tends to be seen as the more elite language with Aramaic being more commonly spoken, an element some scholars identify with the content of Daniel. David M. Valeta, "The Book of Daniel in Recent Research (Part 1)", *Currents in Biblical Research* 2008 6:330, 340.

BCE).⁴² Jan Assmann calls the Maccabean revolt “a unique historical phenomenon, the influence of which has reverberated down through the centuries to the present day”.⁴³ Both the Babylonian exile and the Maccabean revolt signify pivotal points in constructions and conceptualizations of Jewish history, cultural memory and identity. Daniel is presented as one of the Judean exiles in Babylon along with other noble Jews. Daniel's setting, in the Babylonian exile, signals a context of exile after the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem in 587 BCE, and then in 539 Cyrus conquered Babylon with the Persian Empire. The Babylonian exile that followed 587 BCE can thus be seen as a time of crisis, of submission to foreign powers.

In his history of ancient Israel, Nils Peter Lemche argues that it was during the Babylonian exile that the Israelites emerged as a distinct people, that is, as the Jews.⁴⁴ This period in which Judah and the Judeans, or the “Jews” were subjected first to the Babylonian and secondly to the Persian rule is important for theorizing what “Jewishness” means – or has come to mean – and how such a category relates to concepts of assimilation or separation, identity or hybridity. Lemche suggests that the term “Jews” instead of “Judeans” could be employed hereafter, because the people in question were members of a society which had begun to develop characteristics ordinarily associated with the designation “Jew”, in relation to the character of religion in society.⁴⁵ This is primarily tied to identifying “who” were exiled, what identified them as a people, and who were the opposition; in other words, questions of group identity, cultural, ethnic and religious boundaries, forces of oppression and opposition. Arguably, these are all themes that are central to Daniel and are inextricably related to animality.

The period in which this text is thought to be composed was a time when the Greek King Antiochus IV of the Seleucid empire issued a decree that prohibited the practice of Judaism, in what Martha Himmelfarb calls “a rare instance of religious persecution in Greco-Roman antiquity”, suspicious of the worship of foreign deities “masking political conspiracy”.⁴⁶ John J. Collins conveys how the Maccabean revolt has “stood through the centuries as a striking paradigm for recourse to armed, violent revolution in the name of religion”, calling the purification of the Temple after the Maccabean victory “one of the

⁴² Martha Himmelfarb, *The Apocalypse: A Brief History* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 33.

⁴³ Jan Assmann, “Martyrdom, Violence, and Immortality: The Origins of a Religious Complex”, in *Dying for the Faith, Killing for the Faith: Old Testament Faith Warriors (1 and 2 Maccabees) In Historical Perspective*, ed. Gabriela Signori (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2012), 39.

⁴⁴ Nils Peter Lemche, *Ancient Israel: A New History of Israelite Society* (Sheffield: JSOT press, 1988), 257.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Himmelfarb, *The Apocalypse: A Brief History*, 33.

great events of Jewish history and is still commemorated in the celebration of Hanukkah".⁴⁷ During the second century BCE it appears that Jerusalem had a social elite that favoured reform, opening the Jewish religion to Hellenistic culture.⁴⁸ Assmann states: "Hellenistic culture as a widely held way of life, *ho koinos bios* as Josephus put it, was perceived not as Greek in particular but as Pagan in general."⁴⁹ This cultural influx received a varying degree of acceptance throughout the ancient Mediterranean – some aspiring to it, building gymnasia, baths, civic structures, while others resisted and resented such changes.⁵⁰ The initiative for Jerusalem's Hellenization came from the Jewish reform faction, not from Seleucid authorities, according to 1 Maccabees 1:11-15. Assmann emphasises that this was largely a question of fidelity to particular customs.⁵¹ To be a foe or friend is a matter of being recognised as belonging to a particular group. In other words, these are questions relating to the determination of what or who a particular religion and culture *are* and see themselves *as*, over the question of assimilation or separation, of domestication or wild revolt. Such domestication or revolt could be seen as a matter on the one hand of the political as founded in the purely human order, excluding or subjugating animals and gods, and on the other the political as animal, carnivorous beasts as rulers, lions or people(s) as trapped, subjugated subjects, such as the lions kept by the king in Daniel. Van der Toorn emphasises that references to lions in the Babylonian tradition are not real animals: "they stand for human adversaries. The single time that "pit of lions" is mentioned in a cuneiform scholarly text, it serves as a metaphor for the hostility and competition among the court sages".⁵² In light of this, he suggests Daniel's *literal* understanding of the lions is a "misrecognition" and "misunderstanding".⁵³ The lions in Daniel are clearly associated with such human political court-conflict. But I propose that thinking of real, living, wild animals trapped in a pit is crucial for understanding that subjection to foreign powers – whether Babylonian, Persian or Seleucid rulers – is configured as an animal-like state, being domesticated, caged, captured, and removed from

⁴⁷ John J. Collins, *Daniel, First Maccabees, Second Maccabees, with an Excursus on the Apocalyptic Genre* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1981), 3.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Collins too mentions this in connection to the inter-relations between religious and political power in the example of Jason, brother of high priest Onias, who shortly after Antiochus became king in 175 BCE, obtained high priesthood through corrupt means. Jason authorized to erect a gymnasium in Jerusalem. He was later ousted from his high priesthood, and when Jason subsequently recaptured Jerusalem by force, this sparked intervention by Antiochus. Collins, *Daniel, First Maccabees, Second Maccabees, with an Excursus on the Apocalyptic Genre*, 1-2.

⁵¹ Assmann, "Martyrdom, Violence, and Immortality: The Origins of a Religious Complex", 42.

⁵² Van der Toorn, "Scholars at the Oriental Court: The Figure of Daniel Against Its Mesopotamian Background", 43.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

one's territory. But the solidarity with such animals becomes also a nonhuman alliance with the God who is also an "other" to human powers of subjection.

Gabriela Signori explains that the idea of defending faith through violence took shape under Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 BCE) as a result of his prohibiting Jews from living according to their customs, his violation of their Temple and violence against those who resisted his rule.⁵⁴ Assmann argues that from a religio-historical perspective, "the Maccabean Revolt of 165 BCE, as depicted in the first two Books of the Maccabees and in the writings of the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, should be counted among the truly epochal events in world history".⁵⁵ Two of the elements he highlights are martyrdom and zealotry, dying for one's faith and killing for one's faith. Assmann highlights that this war was seemingly about resistance to, and revolt against, Seleucid persecution but it was also a Jewish civil war, between what he calls a "modernizing reformist faction and an orthodox faction of those faithful to religious law".⁵⁶ These are tensions that are palpable in Daniel. Arguably, what Daniel plays out is precisely the stark tension between assimilating to a foreign empire or resisting its powers; to following God as a domesticated subject or fighting for God like a wild animal. The significance of animality for a text such as Daniel can be gleaned in relation to power relations and socio-political structures as they relate to the sixth century Babylonian empire as well as the second century Maccabean revolt.

Daniel Smith-Christopher relates "P", the supposed priestly redactor of the Pentateuch to the period of the exile and highlights the relation between self-identity, boundaries and animals. He argues that the "purity/identity concern of the exilic community" is marked in the priestly writer/redactor as a preserver of a minority people, maintaining social boundaries of separation.⁵⁷ He writes of "the cultic use of separation to ensure and preserve purity and, most significantly, *the separation of Israelites from foreigners because they are selected by God*".⁵⁸ This is a matter of separation from foreigners through categorisations of social relations. The key concepts he notes as to fear of *transfer* of pollution and maintenance of the group are also linked importantly to

⁵⁴ Gabriela Signori, "Introduction", in *Dying for the Faith, Killing for the Faith: Old Testament Faith Warriors (1 and 2 Maccabees) In Historical Perspective*, ed. Gabriela Signori (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2012), 1.

⁵⁵ Assmann, "Martyrdom, Violence, and Immortality: The Origins of a Religious Complex", 39.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁵⁷ Daniel L. Smith, *The Religion of the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile* (Bloomington IN: Meyer-Stone Books, 1989), 149.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 148.

Leviticus and distinctions between clean and unclean animals.⁵⁹ While Daniel only briefly mentions defilement in relation to food (1:8), questions of separation or cohabitation are prominent, and inextricably bound up with the animality of people as either domestic or violent and wild, carnivorous or non-carnivorous, edible or non-edible, faithful or faithless in following God as the ultimate master.

What Daniel ultimately displays is that all the living, king and animal alike, are akin to Derrida's deconstructed subjects, and that higher power resides with the nonhuman divine. Human power is thus merely a play or puppeting of divine power, and at worst, a descent into ferocious, carnivorous violence. The Book of Daniel is a hybrid of the hope for triumphant domestic animality, and sheer anxiety at the dark wildness of unbounded political animality.

Fantasies of Absorption: Being At the Table

Briefly put, the first six chapters of the Book of Daniel depict the relationships between Daniel, his companions and various kings. Daniel shows himself to be clever and rises in the ranks: he interprets dreams and provides advice for kings. A little like Derrida's scene between cat or God, the Book of Daniel presents a scene with Daniel in the sight of lions and his God. This takes place in chapter 6, where Daniel enjoys a high position under King Darius (6:3). Jealous of Daniel, the 'other presidents and satraps tried to find grounds for complaint against Daniel in connection with the kingdom' (6:4). When they cannot find any grounds for complaint they realise that their best option is in regard to 'the law of his God' (6:5). Appealing to the king's vanity, 'O King Darius, live for ever!' (6:6), the presidents, satraps, prefects, counsellors and governors 'all agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an interdict, that whoever prays to anyone, divine or human, for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions' (6:7). The document is duly signed, and when Daniel is later found praying as usual to his God (6:10-11), the conspirators tell the king and remind him of the impossibility of revoking the law (6:12, 15). The king does not want to charge Daniel but is foiled by his own law, and has Daniel thrown into the pit of lions to be eaten and killed (6:14-17).

⁵⁹ Ibid.

P.R Davies relates how the characters of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar and the exiled Jews in Daniel “are both the *predecessors* and the *prototypes* of the persecuting monarch Antiochus IV and the persecuted Jews of Palestine centuries later”.⁶⁰ The story of Daniel, then, is thought to reflect both a past crisis and a “present” crisis.⁶¹ Smith-Christopher argues persuasively for the organic nature of this folding of past and present: “Memories and traditions regarding the hubris of Babylonian rulers that formed the ‘raw materials’ for the Daniel tales would not need extensive ‘revision’ to be flexible enough to apply with equal cynicism to the pretensions of rulers throughout the Persian and Hellenistic eras.”⁶² He argues that despite the differences between the political and ideological regimes from 587 to 164 BCE, the Daniel tales reflect an understanding of empire building in the Ancient Near East as a recurrent display of, and battle for, power.⁶³ André Lacocque conveys how representations of Babylonian kings are often shown as ruling over wild beasts and birds.⁶⁴ Keeping captured animals for hunting in menageries, as “symbols of their universal domination”,⁶⁵ is a prime way of ensuring the show of mastery. What underlies such a practice, he argues, is an enactment of the myth of “man as dominant over the animals”.⁶⁶ The lions in Daniel are thus a symbol of subjection to human power, akin to Daniel’s subjection to foreign powers. Like the lions, Daniel and his companions are caught, captured, subjected to foreign rule as domesticated subjects exiled from their land.

In regard to the lions of Daniel, Karel Van der Toorn points out that practices of keeping wild animals are well attested,⁶⁷ but for this purpose zoological gardens were created. Pits were not used to house lions.⁶⁸ “The image of a group of lions in a pit, therefore, evokes the idea of famished animals fighting one another for the slightest morsel of food.”⁶⁹ The power to capture living wild creatures, withhold food and determine the

⁶⁰ P.R. Davies, *Daniel* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 13.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, “Prayers and Dreams: Power and Diaspora Identities in the Social Setting of the Daniel Tales”, in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, vol 1., eds. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint (Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 2001), 280.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 280.

⁶⁴ Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*, 50.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ See for instance Thomas Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), and also Brent A. Strawn, *What is Stronger than a Lion? Leonine Image and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005).

⁶⁸ Karel Van der Toorn, “Scholars at the Oriental Court: The Figure of Daniel Against Its Mesopotamian Background”, in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, vol. 1, eds. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint, (Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 2001), 51.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

life or death of such creatures is a testament to the power of the “owner” of such animals. Emphases on fasting and the acceptance or rejection of food in Daniel in conjunction with these hungry lions evokes the power related to food and eating, and the vulnerability of such a captured position, subjected to the whims of another, one's master. This theme of eating and captivity or hospitality is brought up in the beginning of Daniel in the discussions over Daniel and his companions refusing the king's food (1:8), and is also alluded to in Daniel's later fasting (9:3) and King Darius fasting when Daniel is sentenced to the lions' pit (6:18). These are of course examples of *chosen* acts of not eating, but they too emphasise that acts of eating or not eating are tied up in dynamics of power, of resistance, or a *show* of powerlessness, as when Daniel is sentenced by the king's law and Darius lacks the power to undo his own laws. The lions thus become a symbol of the shift from strength to weakness in the hands of human political and legal mastery over life.

When Paul Porter calls Daniel “a magic zoo of fearsome and fabulous beasts”,⁷⁰ the emphasis is on the variety and strangeness of the beasts, but his allusion to a “zoo” is perhaps where the emphasis ought to lie. One of the ways in which Derrida conceptualises the relationship between human mastery and animality is with the term *oikonomia*. This refers to the economy or law of a household, a space

between domestication (and thus appropriation to the laws of the family home, the *domus*, the house of the master [*dominus*], or the mistress – *domus*, *Heim*, *home*, domesticity), taming, training, stock-raising, so many modalities of master and sovereign power, power and knowledge.⁷¹

What this comes down to is characterising power through “having possession, appropriation, and the property of beasts (through capture, hunting, raising, commerce, enclosure), *oikonomia* also being the general condition of the *ipseity* as sovereign mastery over the beast”.⁷² The lions in Daniel are such a symbol of human mastery over animals to mark the human *as sovereign political power*, and Daniel too thus becomes an example of an “animal” body in the political *oikonomia* and its rights and powers to take life, or indeed, to mark it as “animal”, capturable, killable and edible.⁷³

⁷⁰ Paul A. Porter, *Metaphors and Monsters: A Literary-Critical Study of Daniel 7 and 8* (Coniectanea Biblica, Old Testament Series 20, CWK Gleerup, 1985), xi.

⁷¹ BS I, 283.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Andrew Benjamin discusses something similar in regard to Agamben's concept of “bare life”. Writing on notions of, and relations between, Jews and animals, he writes that Adolf Hitler's extermination of the Jews was not capital punishment or sacrifice per se, but the actualization of the capacity to be killed – exterminated as lice – bare life. Bare life is a state of exception, in which determination is suspended to become killable. Benjamin writes: “Those identities, the victims who become bare life, are positioned in

Lemche explains that it does not appear that Jews were taken as slaves under the Babylonians, but social positions were doubtlessly overturned.⁷⁴ He suggests it was mainly the leadership class that was deported, but that they were put to little use in the complex administrative systems in the new empire.⁷⁵ “For one thing, the Judaeans were not educated so as to be able to undertake important administrative jobs (for which knowledge of cuneiform and of Sumerian, the ‘Latin’ of the day, was essential); for another, there would always be doubts as to the loyalty of the group.”⁷⁶ Judaeans social elites, then, could be reduced to the state of peasants, farming land assigned to them by the Babylonian state.⁷⁷ In his *The Religion of the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile*, Smith argues that although it has become common to assume that the Jews were not slaves in the Babylonian empire it is still pertinent to reflect on modes of slavery that might be appropriate for the subjects under Babylonian power in this context.⁷⁸ He mentions social “death”, demotion and removal of identity markers and name changes.⁷⁹ Daniel and his companions are given new Babylonian names in 1:7 and a new education (1:5) as if to tame and own them, as domestic subjects.

But the first half of Daniel presents a fantasy of successful assimilation and domestication. Daniel could be seen as a fantasy figure, exiled, but upholding his traditions and assimilating without betraying his God; rather than die for his faith, he lives on. While Daniel and his companions do indeed have their names changed into Babylonian ones, they learn the languages of their conquerors, are given education, and have superior knowledge (1:17), perform superior services to the king, e.g. 1:20: the king ‘found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom’. Daniel saves the day in chapter 2, by telling and interpreting the king’s dream and he is promoted to a high position (2:48). This is thus a “taming” that is favourable. Hence, power is retained for Daniel and his companions because ultimately their “animal” status alienates them from the human hubris of their rulers who play god, and allies them rather with another

advance. Bareness, therefore, is always a determination as an aftereffect. It operates by producing those who have already been identified as being subject to that process (i.e., to the process of subjectification). This determination means that sovereignty necessitates the capacity to discriminate”. Andrew Benjamin, “Particularity and Exceptions: On Jews and Animals”, in *The Agamben Effect*, ed. Allison Ross (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 82.

⁷⁴ Lemche, *Ancient Israel*, 180.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Smith, *The Religion of the Landless*, 40-41.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 40.

nonhuman other, their God, who is shown as the true ruler of the political and over all animals, human and non-human.

The first half of Daniel, then, is a fantasy for political absorption and incorporation into the economy of the empire, as one chosen and educated to participate in advisory capacities to the king – not only this, but one who excels in this task. Like an animal, a foreign “species” to the Babylonians, Daniel becomes the domesticated servant or house-animal who lives within the confines of his master’s house and becomes the master’s favoured pet, enjoying a great deal of room to move. Falling out of favour with human law, Daniel is ultimately the pet of his God, a higher power, and thus lives on. Daniel and his companions successfully integrate as animals in a new *oikos*. Conquered animals, they become heroic figures in solidarity with, and fidelity to, their nonhuman others, animal and divine, thus undercutting the human hubris that desires to rule exclusively, subjugate and determine life and death. Like the lions, they retain their powers, in deciding what or who to eat, in surviving the death sentence of their human masters, and responding to the nonhuman other, their God. Assimilation is undertaken without losing one’s life or allegiances. Daniel is thus a fantasy for being *at the table* of human rulers but of refusing its food, thus rising above the modes of consumption determining social relations acted out by such powers.

In the scene between lions and his God Daniel ultimately stands before the nonhuman that exceeds and interrupts human mastery. In following his God even to the brink of death, he stands before the law of this God and before the lions with whom he is now so dangerously near. The lions and God are the nonhuman, Derrida’s *divinanimality*, in whose gaze he stands.⁸⁰ This is indeed a case of Hugh Pyper’s “human in the biblical

⁸⁰ In *After Noah*, Linzey and Cohn-Sherbok relate other apocryphal stories that tell of lions and their relation to religious fidelity such as in *Pseudo-Matthew*, where Jesus is in Jericho and meets a family of lions who come towards him and worship him. Jesus sits in their cave and the lion cubs scamper about his feet, playing with him. People watching, including Jesus’ parents are scared and surprised at the sight. Jesus says to them: ‘How much better are the beasts than you, seeing that they recognize their Lord and glorify him: while you men, who have been made in the image and likeness of God, do not know him! Beasts know me and are tame; men see me and do not acknowledge me.’ The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation based on M. R James*, ed. J.K Elliott (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1993), 97-98. Also, in *The Acts of Paul*, Paul’s missionary companion, Thecla, is surrounded by wild animals which do not hurt her. Asked why they did not devour or harm her she answers that she is a servant of the living God. Further, Paul is made to fight with a lion. The lion and Paul face each other. In this mutual gaze, Paul realises he recognises the lion as a lion who had come to him to be baptized. Paul confronts the lion and asked him whether it is he whom is baptized. The lion answers in the affirmative. When Paul then asks the lion how he was captured, the Lion responds: ‘Just as you were, Paul’. The Acts of Paul, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation based on M. R James*, ed. J.K Elliott (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1993), 378-379.

imaginary” “caught in the gaze of God and the animal”.⁸¹ Such a sight is “at the same time innocent and cruel perhaps, perhaps sensitive and impassive, good and bad, uninterpretable, unreadable, undecidable, abyssal and secret”.⁸² Daniel might well share Derrida's dizziness⁸³ and “vertigo before the abyss”⁸⁴ at being seen in this vulnerable (to put it mildly) position. The judgement scene thus moves from human faux-divine mastery over life and death to a divine-animal power that interrupts and overrules, because, Daniel is *not* killed and eaten. Daniel survives *with, beside and in the face of* the lions.⁸⁵

The specific crime Daniel has committed when he is thrown to the lions is to not respond exclusively to his human master, the king as the single, sovereign and sole power, but to destabilize this dominion by disregarding the law and continue responding to a nonhuman power, his God. On the surface of it, Daniel's “crime” is merely to be successful, provoking jealousy amongst his fellow courtiers. But in light of the focus on human power in opposition to Daniel's God in the book in general, shows that the clear underlying element here is the issue of competition between human and divine powers, and the latter trumping human domination. In other words, Daniel refuses to act as if the human king is the highest power, as if a god. Jan Willem Van Henten calls this a “fundamental relativization of state authority”⁸⁶ and thus could be read as a questioning not only of Babylonian or Seleucid rule but of the *human* rights to master and rule over nonhuman others.⁸⁷ Daniel eschews such mastery from the beginning of the book, by calling himself a ‘servant’ (1:12, 13 עֶבֶד), resisting the food of the king, refusing thus to

⁸¹ Hugh S. Pyper, “The Lion King: Yahweh as Sovereign Beast in Israel's Imaginary”, in *The Bible and Posthumanism*, ed. Jennifer L. Koosed (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014), 73.

⁸² TATTIA, 12.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁸⁵ Grant tells of other narratives with friendly lions (in addition to Daniel's), the most famous one is about Androclus and the lion who is saved by a lion who refuses to eat him. Another features an old man who lived in a Palestinian cave who gladly received lions there, and another helpful lion helped a monk dig the grave of Mary of Egypt. In the third century Hippolytus of Rome insisted that the lions in the story of Daniel “rejoiced by shaking their tails as if submissive to a new Adam; they licked the holy feet of Daniel and rolled on his footprints in their desire to be trodden by him.” Grant, *Early Christians and Animals*, 17.

⁸⁶ Jan Willem Van Henten, “Daniel 3 and 6 in early Christian Literature”, in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, vol. I, ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint (Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 2001), 151.

⁸⁷ Van der Toorn suggests that the author of Daniel has drawn on other biblical images for the punishment of being thrown in a pit of lions (Ezek 19:4, 8; Jer 48:43-44), or a cistern (2 Sam 23:20, 1 Chr 11:22). There are also other parallels to such cavities being used for humans, for instance, Jeremiah (38:6), and King David claimed Yahweh delivered him from lion (and a bear – 1 Sam 17:37). “The author of the Daniel story, then, bred on the Bible, knew that victims of jealousy and royal disfavour might expect to be cast into a pit; that many a lion had ended up in a pit as well; and that God had delivered his servants from the attacks of lions before.” Van der Toorn, “Scholars at the Oriental Court: The Figure of Daniel Against Its Mesopotamian Background”, 52.

eat well.⁸⁸ Eating only vegetables and drinking water (1:12) rather than the delicacies [בָּנֵי מַלְכוּת] of the king, he is both emphasizing his non-belonging to the king's court and a resistance to participate in the privilege and power of human mastery.⁸⁹ Dana Nolan Fewell proposes that "eating from the king's table is symbolic of political covenant and compromise",⁹⁰ an alliance Daniel is clearly unwilling to enter into. It is a matter of not defiling oneself (1:8 יִתְנַחֵם). As Smith mused over Levitical concerns about modes of separation in the exilic period, the attempt to remain a "clean animal" in regard to eating habits implicitly marks the foreign rulers as precisely defiled.

This "defilement", however, is not inherent in their foreignness but primarily linked to their misplaced hubris and self-aggrandisement as god-like, rather than as domesticated animals under God. Any other God, thing or being, such as animals, must be subdued and subjected to not appear stronger than, or threatening to, human rulers as the strongest animal. Davies draws attention to the fact that the tension is not between Daniel's God and other gods, "but to political powers, be they kings or courtiers. Indeed, the problem of all the stories is not whether Judaism is *theologically* acceptable to Gentile rulers, but whether it is *politically* acceptable".⁹¹ Fewell too points out that in Daniel 1-6 "the most basic opposition" and the source of tension is between divine sovereignty and human sovereignty.⁹² It is note-worthy that the ruler at the time Daniel is written called himself Antiochus Epiphanes: "God made manifest", and as Himmelfarb points out, "his peculiar behaviour led some of his contemporaries to refer to him instead as Antiochus Epimanes, "mad man".⁹³ Daniel is keen to assert that it is God who is a higher ruler than any human king when in 2:37 he slips in that it is 'the God of heaven' who has given 'the kingdom, the power, the might and the glory' to Nebuchadnezzar. All 'who live must know that the

⁸⁸ John Walton connects this refusal in eating to Daniel's powers of prophecy and knowledge. In refusing the king's diet and accepting only the "seeds" or "crumbs", "so the divinatory and mythological literature of Babylon provided but the raw materials for Daniel's career as a sage and prophet in the court of Babylon". John Walton, "The Anzu Myth as Relevant Background for Daniel 7?", in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, vol. I, eds. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint (Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 2001), 69.

⁸⁹ John Trever argues that the author(s) of Daniel represent a peaceful version of opposition to Hellenization during the time Antiochus IV. Trever links this amity specifically to the Qumran community and calls the authors behind Daniel "a pacifist faction of the Hasidim" who refused to follow militant Jews in the Maccabean revolt beginning in the 167 B.C". John C. Trever, "The Book of Daniel And the Origin of the Qumran Community", *The Biblical Archaeologist* 49.2 (1985), 90.

⁹⁰ Dana Nolan Fewell, *The Circle of Sovereignty: A Story of Stories in Daniel 1-6* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1988),

37. She draws attention to another biblical example, namely, when David stops eating from Saul's table and Saul thinks David has rebelled against him in 1 Sam. 20. 30-34. Fewell, *The Circle of Sovereignty*, 37.

⁹¹ Davies, *Daniel*, 84.

⁹² Fewell, *The Circle of Sovereignty*, 15.

⁹³ Himmelfarb, *The Apocalypse*, 34.

Most High is sovereign over the kingdom of mortals' (4:17). As such it would indeed be madness to treat a human king as divine-like master.

Lacocque interestingly compares Daniel's lions to another animal figure, namely Balaam's ass in Numbers: "Like the ass who was more clairvoyant than its master the 'prophet', the lions had more sense than the king."⁹⁴ In other words, this is something of a nonhuman alliance between animals and God. Daniel becomes a near-martyr, fully expected to be eaten alive by the lions, becoming himself "a morsel of food"⁹⁵ as a result of breaking the law and addressing a nonhuman other. But, rather like Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac, the blade – or in Daniel's case, the mouth – is restrained at the last minute, and Daniel, like Isaac, escapes the trial and trauma physically unscathed. A deconstructed subject, vulnerable before this nonhuman otherness, Daniel faces the abyss of probable death and the unknowability of what is to come. This is an instance of Derrida's "here I am" as Daniel's vulnerable self-presentation, relational, between the lions and God, risky, before the law of the other.⁹⁶ Andrew Benjamin calls this relationality "porousness" and "a continual site of negotiation".⁹⁷ The "I" of the "here I am", and that Benjamin describes with regard to porousness, will always have also been plural, more than one, as Benjamin puts it.⁹⁸ "This is a site of an original relatedness."⁹⁹

When Daniel tells and interprets dreams, where none others can, this impossible knowledge is ascribed by him not to his own powers of knowledge but to 'a God in heaven who reveals mysteries' (2:28).¹⁰⁰ This is emphasised by him asserting: 'But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me because of any wisdom that I have more than any other living being' (2:30). Nonetheless, he becomes known as one who is endowed with

⁹⁴ Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*, 119.

⁹⁵ Van der Toorn, "Scholars at the Oriental Court: The Figure of Daniel Against Its Mesopotamian Background", 51.

⁹⁶ It is of course worth pointing out that Daniel is in the third person up till chapters 7-12, so this is not meant as a literal first person self-presentation. Rather, the third person narrative enforces the sense in which Daniel is no master-figure, self-possessing, but belongs relationally to, with and from others.

⁹⁷ Benjamin, "Particularity and Exceptions: On Jews and Animals", 78.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Smith-Christopher argues that this knowledge from his dreams is an empowering factor for Daniel, which is true to some extent, but he is too quick to conflate Daniel with God and God with Daniel. He focuses the point of the narrative in Daniel's *superior knowledge* over the strength of human mastery. I suggest the emphasis is on the similarity rather between the *powerlessness* of the lions and Daniel and the power of God who responds by using this power favourably, such as in giving knowledge or saving life.

Smith-Christopher, "Prayers and Dreams: Power and Diaspora Identities in the Social Setting of the Daniel Tales", 282-289. In the second half of Daniel there is also a note-worthy stuttering to Daniel's knowledge, who struggles with interpreting scripture. On this, see for instance Hugh S. Pypers, "Reading in the Dark: Zechariah, Daniel and the Difficulty of Scripture", *The Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 29.4 (2005): 485-504.

'the spirit of the holy gods' (4:8, 18; 5:11, 14), whose knowledge is beyond human knowledge. His knowledge is thus nonhuman, impossible for humans, and according to Daniel, the result of a gift from a nonhuman other. Daniel is thus a deconstructed subject, without mastery, sovereign selfhood or knowledge. He refuses to respond only to the human subject as a god, follows his nonhuman ruler, living in faith and facing his own finitude. This is not in a negative sense, however, as a weakness or reduction from "man" to "animal" in the den of the lions. Viewed in the light of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's reflections on becoming-animal, such a state of being is also a liberation, movement and freedom from entrapment by any determinate form.¹⁰¹ Becoming-animal, or Derrida's deconstructed subject, is to cross thresholds distinguished by "the particular underground tunnel in the rhizome or the burrow", or in Daniel's case, the "den".¹⁰² Daniel has thus shifted the *oikonomia* by entering into the state of a deconstructed subject in facing the nonhuman other, his God and the lions in a radically hopeful and successful way. He lives on, with and in response to his God, despite being a conquered and captured subject. Because he identifies with his nonhuman other, the lions and God, Daniel delegitimizes the human hubris to rule exclusively as divine-like figures.

Having put himself outside this exclusive human domain with its desire for mastery Daniel is animal. As a deconstructed subject he is situated near, as, and with animals.¹⁰³ In the judgement scene, before the human law, and sentenced to being thrown into the lions' pit, Daniel is made edible and killable in the carnivorous force that characterises this human law as protective of its boundaries. This would be part of the powers of the human to condemn others to being tamed, sacrificed, starved or fed, eaten and killed. In this human order or *oikonomia*, God is also what must be tamed or excluded in order to anchor power in human rule, and animals are the figures of this power as that which can be subjected, domesticated, hunted, eaten and put to death. A further example of the relationship between power, eating well and determinations of life and death can be found in chapter 5 with King Belshazzar and his feast. Belshazzar's self-possession is disturbed, his face going pale, thoughts terrified, limbs giving way and knees knocking together (5:6) at the disembodied 'fingers of a human hand' writing on the wall (5:5). Daniel is called upon to interpret, and he criticises Belshazzar's spectacles of power and mastery in not seeing, hearing or knowing 'the God in whose power is your every breath, and to whom

¹⁰¹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis/Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 13.

¹⁰² Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, 13.

¹⁰³ Benjamin, "Particularity and Exceptions: On Jews and Animals", 79.

belong all your ways' (5:23). Part of the critique is levelled at Belshazzar's father, whom Belshazzar is following, in killing those he wants to kill and keeping alive those he wants kept alive, degrading and honouring according to his whim (5:19). The point is to question the power and mastery over the living enacted by the human ruler.

In light of the mark of privilege and power to eat, Derrida brings up the question of sacrifice. Who or what is sacrificed for such a hospitality, for eating? Thinking of sacrifice and what it means he notes: "need, desire, authorization, the justification of putting to death, putting to death as denegation of murder. The putting to death of the animal, says this denegation, is not a murder".¹⁰⁴ What is it to eat well? Is it to consume voraciously, carnivorously, unboundedly? Or is it to eat "cleanly", without being defiled by participating in social practices of consumption that are based on domination, subjugation and violence? And who has the power to put to death, to determine who or what can be sacrificed in order to eat well? To decide who or what is "animal" and who or what is "divine"? What Daniel promotes is an animal-divine alliance against the hubris of human rulers to determine the life or death of others and a mode of consumption in which the subject *lives on*, just as Daniel lives on.

The Book of Daniel remains silent on what exactly takes place between Daniel and the lions, except after the event, in Daniel's explanation to King Darius: 'My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you O king, I have done no wrong' (6:22). The God whom Daniel follows overrules human mastery and shows the living to be ultimately in his power. Following such a God destabilizes the notion of the human as a master-subject to reveal it as a *deconstructed subject*. I have shown how this is conveyed with regard to Daniel, but another crucial example is that of King Nebuchadnezzar, who also becomes a deconstructed subject in becoming animal. Or rather, he always already is animal. In Daniel 4, a dream of King Nebuchadnezzar's comes to fulfilment and he is turned into an animal. King Nebuchadnezzar symbolises the power and mastery of the human subject who plays god. Placing Daniel in the context of Jewish court narratives more broadly, Wills argues that the figure of the king in such legends varies but that it essentially performs the function of "absolute power".¹⁰⁵ Nebuchadnezzar's name, from Nebo, means to protect the boundary. The word for "besiege" (צוּר) used of Nebuchadnezzar's entrance

¹⁰⁴ EW, 283.

¹⁰⁵ Wills, *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King, Ancient Jewish Court Legends*, 11.

to Jerusalem at the very beginning of the book means literally to cramp, confine or bind (1:1),¹⁰⁶ as if his entire character is marked by protection and mastery over the other's freedom through restriction and subjection. But it is precisely the boundaries that guard the human as exclusive master from both animality and divinity that are challenged in the king being made an animal.¹⁰⁷ Deleuze and Guattari suggest that a metamorphosis proposes two sorts of deterritorializations: "that which the human imposes on the animal by forcing it to flee or to serve the human, but also that which the animal proposes to the human by indicating ways-out or means of escape that the human would never have thought of by himself (schizo-escape)".¹⁰⁸ In a sense, both are intimated here in the implication that Nebuchadnezzar has treated his subjects like animals that must flee from him or serve him, and in his becoming-animal that is an escape from his master-identity. The difference is that it is not the animal that suggests this to Nebuchadnezzar, but another nonhuman other, namely God. God is the nonhuman other who sets in motion this escape from himself as a figure of mastery, to what he becomes, a deconstructed subject, deterritorialized, grazing, and finally gazing up to the heavens. Here, divinity and animality are brought into the economy of the human to reveal the king's vulnerability as a deconstructed subject, an animal.

Nebuchadnezzar looks out over his 'magnificent Babylon' which he has built 'as a royal capital by my mighty power and for my glorious majesty' (4:30). With the words of self-admiration still in his mouth, he hears a 'voice from heaven' (4:31) telling him that his kingdom will be taken away from him. 'You shall be driven away from human society, and your dwelling shall be with the animals of the field' (4:32). This fate, 'made to eat grass like oxen' until 'seven times' have passed over him, is so that he will learn 'that the Most High has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals and gives it to whom he will' (4:32). Immediately this takes place: 'He was driven away from human society, ate grass like oxen, and his body was bathed with the dew of heaven, until his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers and his nails became like birds' claws' (4:33). When he comes back to himself in v. 34, he speaks in the first person, having recovered his reason or power of knowing: מְנַדֵּעַ (4:34 [4:31 in BHS]). He has awakened to 'the Most High', his 'sovereignty as an everlasting sovereignty', who does what he wills 'with the host of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth' (4:35). At the same time, his 'majesty and

¹⁰⁶ James Strong, *The New Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 765.

¹⁰⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, 35-36.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 35.

splendour' are restored to him, he is re-established over his kingdom and more greatness is added to his rule (4:36). His conclusion: 'Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, for all his works are truth, and his ways are justice; and he is able to bring low those who walk in pride' (4:37).

What appears to have happened, then, is that Nebuchadnezzar is judged by the law of this God to become-animal, in order to reveal the king as a deconstructed subject: ultimately without mastery, knowledge or self-possession. A human sovereign is no higher or grander than a grazing animal, they are essentially similar, near one another, while God as the highest is irreplaceable as *the* sovereign power.¹⁰⁹ As Seesengood and Koosed put it: "True worship is a response to true power, and all (human) authority has limits. Kings are, at best, a simulacrum and must remain mindful of the real power, God".¹¹⁰ Steven Shakespeare speaks of the absolute other as God who sets in motion something "akin to a religious experience" but that is not that of a *presence*, rather "a response to a call, it is a grace that precedes every action, dethroning our dreams of sovereignty".¹¹¹ This could well describe Nebuchadnezzar's transformative experience in being called, but God is not the absolute other, rather the *nonhuman* other, showing the "human" to be a category of faux-divine mastery and unveiling the animality of his subjects.

Humans are thus shown to be merely glorified animals, giving themselves power to rule as divine-like masters, attempting to subjugate animals and exclude God from the political in order to ground this position of power. Nebuchadnezzar's transformation could be read as a hierarchical order in which God is highest, humans are in the middle and animals are lowest. In Paul Ricoeur's foreword to Lacocque's *The Book of Daniel*, he comments that King Nebuchadnezzar, "condemned to graze like a beast, is Adam and every other Master whose inhumanity leads back to a bestial condition".¹¹² But arguably, it is the king's *human mastery* in playing god that is the problem and that has to be altered, to be shown as what he essentially is; the "bestial condition" is the condition of *all* in the face of God's power. What is emphasised is that *all* the living are equally puppets or

¹⁰⁹ Lacocque relates how Alexander the Great and his successors generally held tolerant attitudes to religious practice, the God of Israel was thus accepted amongst other gods. But, in a parallel development, attitudes to deities turned also in the direction of a divinization of Hellenistic rulers. The worship of emperors as divine figures is widely discussed as to its import and significance. Daniel, then, might be seen to grapple with the challenges to ideas of divinity when human sovereign figures – also considered enemies – claimed worship for themselves. Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*, 54.

¹¹⁰ Koosed and Seesengood, "Daniel's Animal Apocalypse", 7.

¹¹¹ Steven Shakespeare, *Derrida and Theology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 141.

¹¹² Paul Ricoeur, "Foreword", in *The Book of Daniel*, trans. David Pellauer (London: SPCK, 1979), xxii.

domesticated animals in the hands of God. This is intimated in the very beginning of Daniel, when it is written that the Lord gives King Jehoiakim of Judah 'into his hand' (1:2; again the NRSV translation is "power" but the word used is that for hand: יָד). It is also shown in the address of Daniel to the king: 'You, O king, the king of kings – to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the might and the glory, into whose hand he has given human beings, wherever they live, the wild animals of the field, and the birds of the air, and whom he has established as ruler over them all' (2:36-38). A king may be established *as if* a ruler, but essentially, he is no different from the animals of the field and the birds of the air in them *all* being in the hand of God. This is also what takes place with Daniel as a deconstructed subject. Whereas previously Nebuchadnezzar is addressed with the greeting to 'live forever' the scene in chapter 4 is a lesson as to his finitude as a deconstructed subject.

King Nebuchadnezzar must thus recognize that the Most High is master over the realm of mankind (4:25); the human king does not rule: heaven rules (4:26). When King Nebuchadnezzar does come to this realisation he calls God and his kingdom everlasting, his dominion lasting forever (4:34), an echo of the greeting previously addressed to *him*: 'O king, live forever!'¹¹³ This greeting to human sovereignty as 'living forever' (2:4; 3:9; 5:10; 6:6, 21) is a denial of mortal life as if human kings are nonhuman and could live ad infinitum. In 4:35 Nebuchadnezzar expounds how all who dwell on earth are in God's hands – no one can question this mastery. The point would be, then, that Daniel's God is more than a tribal deity,¹¹⁴ and thus cannot be replaced by other human or pagan gods, this nonhuman other is an "other" and singular power. In this sense, it is about God *as* the figure of specifically *nonhuman* power in opposition to human faux-divine dominion. If as Lacocque puts it, "Daniel finds himself in the very centre of idolatrous power, par excellence, Babylon",¹¹⁵ then what is idolatry or misplaced mastery is not merely a particular king and his gods but rather the centering of power in a *human* subject that builds on the exclusion of animal and divine.

The first half of the Book of Daniel, then, presents an optimistic fantasy for incorporation into empire, encoded in the Babylonian context. While Daniel and his companions are akin to the trapped lions in being conquered subjects of foreign kings, they

¹¹³ Lacocque points out that this greeting is frequently used in Akkadian, and is used at the Persian court up to the Islamic period. Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*, 38.

¹¹⁴ Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1949), 18.

¹¹⁵ Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*, 26.

ultimately triumph in being allied to nonhuman powers that are higher and other to human faux-divine rulers who are revealed ultimately as domesticated subjects too. The impression the first half of Daniel leaves is thus one in which living in another's domain and being subjected to a foreign master does not mean renouncing one's life. Here, Daniel and his companions remain domesticated lions; they may abide in the "pit" of Babylonia but they are still living creatures who can insist on eating *well*, on living on, following their God who trumps human power dynamics by revealing the animality of all.

Daniel in the Dark: From Domestication to Destruction

The Maccabean armed revolt against the rule of Seleucid King Antiochus IV is thought to have been precipitated by an edict in 168 BCE that prohibited Antiochus IV's Jewish subjects from practicing their religion.¹¹⁶ Two related aspects of this revolt are particularly pertinent for Daniel, namely, acts of eating or not eating, and the political as animal, particularly in a negative sense of political battles as wild ferocious animality. While it seems clear that the first half of Daniel constructs a positive spin on assimilation, the second half descends into a dark nightmare populated predominantly of wild, terrifying animal figures. How might the shift in this text be understood, from domesticated animality in alliance with God as a successful integration into political power-play, to a reign of terror made up of warmongering hybrid animals? Arguably, what takes place is that the animality in the first half of Daniel, where all are shown to be deconstructed subjects or domesticated subjects of divine rule, escalates in the second half to the other spectrum of animality, namely the wild, ferocious and carnivorous. Here, the political as animal is visualized as far from domesticated cohabitation and rather as carnivorous, savage brutality in a dark political realm of terror. The neat order erected in the first half with animality under divinity has in the second imploded, blurring all boundaries as to who is who.

One of the central themes emphasised in the Maccabean stories that depict the Maccabean revolt are food customs and the refusal to conform to non-Jewish food habits. As in Daniel, to refuse to eat appears to be a powerful symbol of resistance. But while the

¹¹⁶ Although, as Assmann points out, this edict and some of its consequences as to persecution on pain of death may come from the realm of legend, it could be an invention of the Maccabees, or Hasmoneans as they are also known, to justify their armed violence towards the assimilated Jewish population. Assmann, "Martyrdom, Violence, and Immortality: The Origins of a Religious Complex", 45.

first half of Daniel posited the possibility of being incorporated into a foreign empire, the Maccabees take a very different approach, refusing to assimilate and rather reverting to violent tactics.¹¹⁷ The second half of Daniel can be read within the context of anxiety at such a political battle between warring factions in the Maccabean revolt, haunted by the fear of the political as wild animality, in the shadows of the domesticity of court life. Whereas the first half of Daniel spells out a desire for being domesticated by and in foreign empire, in a fantasy of integration and assimilation, the second half conveys the anguished fear at being devoured by wild beasts and trampled underfoot. Whereas political animality denoted humility and domestication, the political as animal of Daniel's dreams and visions has turned this humble vulnerability under foreign masters into a terror in the face of carnivorous, violent force. I argue that this could be read not only in relation to foreign kings, however, as this is imagined as a possible cohabitation, but rather that the revolting Jewish factions fighting against foreign rule also emerge as another force of political animality that takes on the face of ferocious menace. Daniel's God too takes on a potentially carnivorous face, as if Daniel suddenly finds himself the pet of the wrong master and prey to his fellow Jews and God.

1 Maccabees chronicles the events following Antiochus IV's supposed edict prohibiting Jewish religious practice, with the resistance started by priest Mattathias which catalysed the Maccabean Revolt. The narrative describes Mattathias and his sons fleeing into the mountains. Mattathias's son and successor, Judas Maccabeus, gained a significant group of fighters and set in motion what might be characterized as guerrilla warfare, soon even confronting Seleucid armies in open battle. Three years after the beginning of the religious persecution the Maccabean forces succeeded in taking back, purifying and rededicating the Jewish Temple. War continued, despite Antiochus V officially cancelling his father's persecutory edict in 163 and restoring the Jewish Temple's political-religious autonomy.¹¹⁸ The first independent Judea in 450 years was proclaimed. In this warfare, one of the prominent emphases in the Maccabean accounts is food. It is a core symbol of retaining traditional customs rather than assimilating to foreign powers, perceived as impure outsiders. Assmann suggests that Jewish identity in this era was a fusion of the

¹¹⁷ Assmann sees this as a battle between notions of a universal God of all and a God of a particular people. He delineates Jewish monotheism thus into two sides and competing discourses, universalism against exclusivism. For his discussion, see "Martyrdom, Violence, and Immortality: The Origins of a Religious Complex", 46.

¹¹⁸ Kai Trampedach, "The War of the Hasmoneans", in *Dying for the Faith, Killing for the Faith: Old Testament Faith Warriors (1 and 2 Maccabees) In Historical Perspective*, ed. Gabriela Signori (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2012), 62.

political as a question of association and dissociation, and the religious as a matter of cult and customs.¹¹⁹ Food can thus be seen as pertaining to both association and tradition. Albert I. Baumgarten writes: "Food of the gentiles had been an especially sensitive matter in the era leading up to Maccabean victory", mentioned for instance by the author of Jubilees criticizing Jews who ate gentile food, and the accounts of Antiochus's decrees which tried to prevent Jews from living according to their food laws, forcing them to violate these laws by sacrificing and eating pork (1 Macc. 1:47; 2 Macc. 6:18-7:42).¹²⁰ Houston brings up the story of Eleazar, and that of the seven brothers in 2. Macc. 6.18-31 and 7.1-42. "Eleazar, we are told, had his mouth held open while the officers forced pork into it, but he spat it out, preferring to die under fearful torture, and for the same reason did the seven brothers and their mother in ch. 7."¹²¹ "The permissible sources of food, not defiled by the gentiles, were severely limited at the time of the persecutions according to 2 Macc. 5:27. It is therefore no surprise to note the importance placed on food by the different sects."¹²² Food is connected to law and to social relations, a mark of the bodily to survive, shared by all creatures, and a feature of tradition, hospitality and particular groups of people.¹²³ It is thus a question of incorporation or resistance, of accepting the "hospitality" of foreigners or of fighting against it, of giving up one's own customs or laws or retaining them at all costs.

The representation of a Jewish revolt against Seleucid rule could thus be seen as a refusal to comply as caught, caged, domesticated animals, and thus their position in the wild signals their own untameable nature. Baumgarten draws attention to the flight to the wilderness in 2 Maccabees (5:27), "where they kept themselves alive as wild animals do".¹²⁴ He emphasises that this was not merely tactical necessity, but that as 2 Macc. explains: 'they continued to live on what grew wild, so that they might not share in the defilement'.¹²⁵ Baumgarten writes about the importance of maintaining boundaries as to insiders and outsiders, as to who was Jewish and who was non-Jewish. For Daniel, to be a

¹¹⁹ Assmann, "Martyrdom, Violence, and Immortality: The Origins of a Religious Complex", 46.

¹²⁰ Albert I. Baumgarten argues that after the Maccabean triumph, sectarianism flourished as questions of identity became more and more acute. He gives further details of various Jewish groups and their eating habits, thus emphasizing that there was no one Jewish way concerning food. Albert I. Baumgarten, *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation* (Leiden/New York/Köln: Brill, 1997), 93-100.

¹²¹ Walter Houston, *Purity and Monotheism: Clean and Unclean Animals in Biblical Law*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 14.

¹²² Baumgarten, *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era*, 91-92.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

Jew in exile is to be a domesticated animal to human rulers and above all to God as a higher ruler; for the Maccabees to be a political animal signifies fighting against their human adversaries like a pack of wolves defending their God. If there were Jews who were no longer recognized as such but rather, as Assmann puts it, “counted among the heathens”¹²⁶ there would be a palpable and potentially anxious “dialectics of inclusion and exclusion”.¹²⁷

In the second half of Daniel it is as if the domesticated scenes of the first half have given way to anxiety at wildness, chaos, confusion and carnivorousness. Daniel is in the dark, unknowing as to who is foe or friend, envisioning only ferocious animals in a world ruled and fought over by competing beasts. In chapters 7-12, human power is made synonymous with the jaws of beasts and Daniel is robbed of his previous hope and equanimity. In 7:17 a confused Daniel is told that the beasts he sees in dreams are kings to come. If the logic of the first part of Daniel has shown all under God to be deconstructed subjects, king and animal alike, then the second part pushes this logic to a hyperbolic extreme and imagines kings not only as animals – such as the grazing animal-king Nebuchadnezzar – but as warmongering, terrifying hybrid beasts. In 7:3 Daniel dreams of four great beasts, the first is like a lion and becomes like a man (7:4) on two feet and with a human mind, emphasising the beast-like nature of such a human. 7:5 presents the second beast like a bear which is told to devour much flesh (בָּשָׂר). A leopard too appears, with dominion, and is a hybrid creature, partly bird and with four heads, as if to emphasise the disorder of human power in its beastly guise. The fourth and final beast is described in 7:7 and is ‘terrifying and dreadful and extremely strong. It had great iron teeth and was devouring, breaking in pieces, and stamping what was left with its feet.’ This is emphasized by the repetition in 7:19 of the beast, ‘exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped what was left with its feet’. Despite the beast being predicted to be put to death and burnt in 7:11 and the others being deprived of their dominion in 7:12, Daniel admits ‘my spirit is troubled within me, and the visions of my head terrified me’ (7:15). Daniel’s previous powers of understanding seem to have dissipated and he needs help in understanding what he sees (7:16; 8:16; 9:25). In 7:23 the fourth beast is said to devour the whole earth and crush it and break it to pieces. Again, the promise is made that the holy ones of God shall prevail eventually, but by 7:28 Daniel is alarmed at the political animals he has seen and continues

¹²⁶ Assmann, “Martyrdom, Violence, and Immortality: The Origins of a Religious Complex”, 49.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

to see. The focus on devouring, being eaten or crushed by wild beasts shows the way this text has shifted from a fantasy of harmonious domestication or absorption into a political system to anxiety about being devoured and destroyed by political rulers, as if the tables have turned and the desire to be *at* the table with kings has morphed into fear at finding oneself *on* the table.

Chapter 8 continues with a violent battle between a ram and a goat, representing kings fighting one another, and the destruction of the holy ones is predicted in 8:24. In 8:27 Daniel is overcome; chapter 9 is dominated by Daniel's pleas to his God to help. But the visions continue relentlessly, with a flood (9:26), another terrifying vision in 10:8, and anguish in 10:16. The Book of Daniel has thus descended into a desolate anxiety at being *eaten, gobbled up*, overcome in the realisation of the fragility of animal life and the ferocity of human-animal power to take life. This might be understood as an anxiety at being surrounded by political beasts, Maccabean revolutionaries desiring to kill foreign powers as well as "improper" Jews, on the one hand, and the conquering kings of foreign empires, on the other. The first half of Daniel showed the "human" master to be nothing but a poor attempt to mimic divine rule and that all creatures are essentially domesticated animals under God, the second half shows this animal world to be a ferocious and wild battle for power.

The lions of chapter 6 look perhaps more ambiguous after the dark dystopian dreams of Daniel's second half. Rather than seeing them as allies to Daniel and God, they might signify the human animal but also divine animal capacities for carnivorous power. Moreover, as a power consisting of the right to take life and give death.¹²⁸ Hugh Pyper discusses the lion as a metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and shows that despite the popular conception that associates lions with noble kingship, the images of lions are perhaps rather used to satirize Israelite monarchs mimicking power, or, as an image of God, a topic I will return to below.¹²⁹ In this middle chapter – chapter 6 – between the earlier optimism and the later pessimism, ambiguity emerges as to the lions as fellow creatures and friends allied to God and Daniel, or as foes with the traumatizing jaws of carnivorous violence that might turn at any moment and bite one's head off. When Derrida wonders whether "the very

¹²⁸ Willem Van Henten suggests that death sentences and punishments like the fiery furnace and lion pit in Daniel could refer to Greek traditions about *asebeia* trials. "According to these traditions, which date from the classical period onwards, the 'ungodliness' of which one could be accused could consist of profanation of holy places or objects, contempt for state deities, or the introduction of new gods who were not recognized by the state." Willem Van Henten, "Daniel 3 and 6 in early Christian Literature", 15.

¹²⁹ Pyper, "The Lion King: Yahweh as Sovereign Beast in Israel's Imaginary", 62-63.

concept of law, that juridical reason itself, includes a priori a possible course to constraint or coercion and, thus, to a certain violence”,¹³⁰ the lions in Daniel might indeed be seen to embody human law or higher power as a violent as well as a carnivorous force and logic.¹³¹

The entry on the lion in *An Encyclopaedia of Bible Animals* notes that lions were so much a part of mythology that almost all contexts in which they are used in the Hebrew Bible are metaphorical, referring to human qualities as lion-like.¹³² It explains that lions are a figure for “the power of evil”, but as *human*, and so for instance the “wicked ruler” is seen ‘as dangerous as a prowling lion’ in Proverbs 28:15. In one of the psalms, cries for help are expressed because ‘my soul is among lions’ (Psa. 57:4) as if trapped and subjected to vicious powers.¹³³ In Daniel, standing before the law of humans is to be put before lions to be killed and eaten as a punishment for transgression. The lions could thus be seen to signify human power as carnivorous animality. The jaws and carnivorous appetite of the lions are synonymous with human power: Daniel is condemned by a human ruler to be made an animal, killable and edible to other animals and animal powers. As in the first half, the lions are what can be caught and caged, domesticated, like the Jews in exile, but they are also a power that is wild and ferocious. In the second half of Daniel, as if to emphasise the potency of such powers, lions – and other animals – are hyperbolic representations of human political power that testify to the beast-like carnivorousness and ferocity of the political. The power of being animal in the first half has exceeded all bounds – from domesticity to the wild in the second half.

It is as if the lions of chapter 6 have become a haunting emblem of political life as both power and powerlessness, as what is trappable and thus vulnerable *and* as ferocious carnivorousness. Despite being assured his God will prevail, Daniel remains terrified, as if he has suddenly awakened to a scene in which he is surrounded by wild animals and he is unable to pinpoint who is who. Who are the Jewish factions that seek to determine between insider and outsider? Is Daniel an insider or an outsider, clean or unclean, pet or prey? Who are the rulers who may be benign but may also be carnivorous, conquering, capturing, cruel? God may act as a protective leonine force against Daniel's enemies but his animal

¹³⁰ R, xi.

¹³¹ In his *An Encyclopaedia of Bible Animals*, Peter France writes that there is little to show that any of the biblical authors had actually seen a lion. Israelite culture “was shot through with the myths of Egypt and Babylon, both of which celebrated the regal majesty of Lions”. Peter France, *An Encyclopaedia of Bible Animals* (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1986), 102-103.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 100-101.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

subjects may also turn against Daniel himself. If both anti-assimilating Jews and foreign rulers might be portrayed as wild animals, Daniel is indeed in the dark, solitary and vulnerable, a potential enemy to both factions. In the second half of Daniel, potential enemies lurk everywhere and they are mostly in the guise of hybrid, many-headed animals as if to spell out disorder and confusion as to identities, fidelities and boundaries.

The beasts of Daniel might thus signify Derrida's subject as carnivorous power and violent force. This is Derrida's subject as "phallogocentric", characterised by "carnivorous virility"¹³⁴, desiring to *eat well*.¹³⁵ Here, to eat well means to eat flesh, to have power over the other as a weaker subject, categorizing such subjects as animals. Carol J. Adams starkly proposes: "People with power have always eaten meat",¹³⁶ relating such power to patriarchal structures. Derrida too poses the question: who could be Head of State and declare himself, publicly, a vegetarian?¹³⁷ To what extent is the question of human power and its relation to the other caught up in a carnivorous logic?¹³⁸ "'One must eat well.' It is a rule offering infinite hospitality."¹³⁹ Eating well is what is at stake.¹⁴⁰ But what sort of hospitality? And what is it to eat *well*? Calarco explains that Derrida's term "carnophallogocentrism", or "carnophallogocentrism" suggests a subjectivity structured by *sacrificial* (carno), *masculine* (phallo), and *speaking* (logo).¹⁴¹ In this context, *speaking* is synonymous with the power to condemn or put to death, the power or voice of the law, which as I will show, is in Daniel linked to the "hand" and "voice" of either human king or God. Daniel is what is sacrificed to the human dominion that gives itself the right to eat well, to put to death. Daniel is *like* the lions, domesticated and abiding in a pit *with* them, but he is also faced with political powers *as* lion-like, in the sense of their ferocity, carnivorous power and power to kill. It is this perspective that seems to dominate the second half of Daniel as a text marked by terror. The second half of Daniel, then, portrays a pessimistic vision of human political life as turbulent, untamed beastliness. All the living under God are animals, only God has and gives power, as the first half appeared to convey. But if all are animals then some animals are figures of terror: carnivorous and ferocious.

¹³⁴ EW, 280.

¹³⁵ In VAA Derrida uses the term "Carno-phallogocentrism". VAA, 68.

¹³⁶ Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*, 48. Adams investigates the way in which meat-eating has been tied to images of class, power and masculinity. She argues that mythologies around eating meat are almost exclusively linked to male power and so meat-eating takes on a patriarchal logic that consumes, controls and condemns to death the animal and, in the same gulp, the female.

¹³⁷ EW, 282.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Calarco, *Zoographies*, 131.

This part of Daniel overturns the fantasy of the first half, of eating at the king's table and being incorporated into imperial life as triumphant domesticated subjects. Here, the fantasy has morphed into a fear at being devoured wholesale, as if the trauma of standing before the lions has produced nightmares of terrifying political beasts lurking around every corner.

Following Daniel's God: The Prey or Pet That I May Be

It is instructive to return to the figure of God in Daniel, to tease out the significance of this nonhuman other to whom Daniel calls in the midst of his nightmarish visions. While I showed that the lions became synonymous with human carnivorous force and power they also, crucially, conveyed the possibility of *not* eating one's other, of abstaining from eating flesh, killing life. But this takes place due to the God figure in this text. This God, then, interrupts with an "other" law that overrules that of Daniel's human master. Daniel *lives on*. But who is this God who Daniel follows? I have already shown that God represents *nonhuman power* that forms the alliance with animals (and Daniel) against human powers. But how is such a nonhuman other to be understood? I propose that there is a two-fold structure to this God as presented in Daniel. First, God is superlatively other, of the "heavens", as the "Highest". But secondly, this God is simultaneously presented as addressable, as *this* unsubstitutional living God. God is *living*, intervening and anthropomorphised; in other words, proximate and present. Daniel follows him by praying, a response to the other akin to Derrida's to *his* "unsubstitutional singularity", "*this* irreplaceable living being", a "mortal existence", his cat.¹⁴² Ultimately, it is in the figure of this God that a following of the other as an alternative to human mastery is made possible in displacing mastery from humans and placing humans and animals alike as deconstructed subjects. But also, what this *particular* living God signifies is the singular responsibility in the relationship to "my" other in the "here I am", as well as the risk of being possessed and mastered by such a relation with the other.

Along with simply 'God' (אֱלֹהִים), references to God as the "Highest" (עֶלְיוֹן) are frequent and can be found implicitly for instance in 2:47 where God is presented as a 'God of gods and a Lord of kings', and explicitly in 4:2, 17, 24, 25, 32, 34; 5:18, 21. The

¹⁴² TATTIA, 9.

reference to the 'God of heavens' (אֱלֹהֵי שָׁמַיִם) is recurring in chapter 2 (2:18, 19, 28, 37, 44), and as 'king of heaven' (לְמֶלֶךְ שָׁמַיִם) in 4:37 and 'Lord of heavens' (מְרַאֲשֵׁי שָׁמַיִם) in 5:23. In 4:26 and 4:31, 34, God is associated with heaven or the skies, as the power that rules, with a voice from heaven. When Nebuchadnezzar surfeits his self-aggrandizement and begins to follow Daniel's God he turns his eyes to heaven (4:34). As such this nonhuman other is precisely what is *other*: unappropriable and unknowable. Additionally, and as with God as a nonhuman power in opposition to the human ruler, a prime concern appears to be that Daniel's God is irreplaceable, akin to Derrida's nonhuman other as "*this irreplaceable living being*".¹⁴³ For example, when King Nebuchadnezzar presents his golden statue in chapter 3, and all 'peoples, nations and languages' (3:4) are commanded to bow down before it and worship it or be faced with death in 'a furnace of blazing fire' (3:6), 'certain Jews' are condemned for disobeying this law. Daniel's companions, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, refuse to substitute their God: 'our God whom we serve' for 'your gods' and 'the golden statue that you have set up' (3:17-18). It is later said of them: 'They disobeyed the king's command and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God' (3:28). It is admitted that 'no other god' 'is able to deliver in this way' (3:29). When a law is passed in chapter 6 against praying to anyone other than the human king, Daniel continues to pray to his God (6:10), again at the risk of death, perceived as the *only* God. Further, this God is presented as a *living* God. When Daniel is thrown into the den of the lions, the king who sympathizes with Daniel calls to him: has the *living God* (אֱלֹהֵי חַיִּים) whom you constantly serve, saved you? (6:20) Daniel is saved because he trusts in his God whose justice intervenes to save him (6:23) as are Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (3:27). Following this God involves a confrontation with mortality but simultaneously with life beyond the power of the human subject as a carnivorous mastery and hierarchy of animality. As a result, all are called to worship the God of Daniel, as animal subjects under the one who is the *living* God, whose dominion will last forever (6:26).

Referring to the hand of the human sovereign (2:38; 3:15, 17) and the hand of God is a way of placing them side by side but by emphasising that also the human sovereign is ultimately in God's hand. Anthropomorphic references to God's hand can be found in 4:35; the breath of life is in God's hand in 5:23 (translated as "power" in the NRSV, but

¹⁴³ Ibid.

the word used is that for hand: יָד). and it is God who sends a hand to write on Belshazzar's wall (5:24). In 4:31 God is a *voice* (קוֹל). The hand symbolises power, and the voice is the call of this nonhuman other. It is intimated this *this* is a God 'whose dwelling' (מְדוּרָה) is with 'mortal flesh' (בְּשָׂר), as the Chaldeans assert the impossibility of telling the king his own dream: only a God could do this but the gods are not with mortal flesh (2:11). Daniel, of course, is the one who *does* come to know the king's dream from the knowledge given to him from his God (2:19, 23, 27-28) and so Daniel's God is associated with precisely mortal flesh. Along with the references to God as *living*, this nonhuman other is oddly anthropomorphic but remains largely disembodied: split between the heavenly and the worldly. These characterisations jar with the "other" nonhuman God of the heavens as the highest. Such an anthropomorphism of the divine, however, might signify the way in which this nonhuman other is characterised as *part of* the world as a particular response but simultaneously *remains* irreducibly other.

The significance of God's otherness is that the "other" as God cannot be thematized or theorized as a wholly abstract signification of power *in general*, but must be accounted for in the specific, irreducible relationality of response and address as *this* living one, *my* other. Chrulew explains how the name of God for Derrida might express a "denuded alterity, stripped of predicates, the unsubstitutable singularity of any other".¹⁴⁴ To some extent this is the case, but in Daniel, and in Derrida's own emphasis on his cat as an "unsubstitutional singularity", a crucial aspect is the possessive "my" other or "the" other whom I encounter as a *particular* other. The relational response takes place in addressing the other with a spoken or tacit self-presentation as a deconstructed subject, *open* and thus vulnerable to this other who is there before me and who I follow. This God being unsubstitutional showcases the way in which no relation can exist as a theoretical generality, but always as a response – "here I am" – in a particular here and now *to* what is perceived as a particular other. God as *this* living nonhuman other, then, is present, but simultaneously "other" in being the highest, of the heavens, irreducible and inexhaustible in appearing as a disembodied hand or voice. This would signify what Aaron S. Gross calls religion as "a relation with the other that does not demand the other's assimilation; it is an

¹⁴⁴ Chrulew, "Feline Divinanimality: Derrida and the Discourse of Species in Genesis".

encounter with the overwhelming command of the other's face looking down upon us".¹⁴⁵ Further, as an "other" law that interrupts the human law characterised by force, mastery and carnivorousness, it would appear that the God who overrules and opposes human dominion would thus represent non-carnivorous power. God as "living", a "hand" and "voice" signifies the possibilities of a justice that *handles*, calls, lives and judges differently, not according to a mastery that kills, eats and condemns to death. But there is an abiding tension in the book between this optimistic view of a non-carnivorous power that enables a living on with one's others, and the threat of being devoured, crushed or mastered and thus being lived *off*. Hence, for Daniel as an exiled Jew subject to competing political factions, the tension lies between being or becoming pet or prey.

Stefan Beyerle suggests that the book of Daniel "envisages a radical replacement of social organization" and ought to be seen as utopian, in the sense of a dream for a non-carnivorous, harmonious order.¹⁴⁶ In turning Nebuchadnezzar into a specifically grazing, non-carnivorous animal, and in stopping the lions from exercising their carnivorous appetite by eating Daniel, God as a nonhuman power appears to invoke a response to the living that is perhaps best described as a utopian dream: non-carnivorous. Showing human subjects to be always already deconstructed, he presents the condition for non-mastery. This God, then, is a call for a recognition of the deconstructed subject every living being therefore is, and the possibility of non-carnivorousness: one does not eat one's pets, one lives *with* them. At the same time, however, the otherness of God could be seen as untameable wildness and the anthropomorphic elements of God's hand, voice and livingness could spell out the possibilities of such a God-figure to be like a human master, and thus also, within the logic of the text, like a terrifying beast. In the second half of Daniel, this anthropomorphism of God is increased, while the human rulers become more beast-like. For instance, a ram symbolises the kings of Media and Persia (8:20), a goat the king of Greece (8:21). God as the highest power becomes, in chapter 7, associated with the

¹⁴⁵ Aaron S. Gross, "The Question of the Creature: Animals, Theology and Levinas' Dog", in *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans and Other Animals*, eds. Celia Deane-Drummond and David Clough (London: SCM Press, 2009), 130.

¹⁴⁶ Stefan Beyerle, "Daniel and Its Social Setting", in *The Book of Daniel, Composition and Reception*, vol. I. eds. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint (Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 2001), 225. Beyerle proposes that this comes more to the fore in the second part of Daniel, in Dan 7:3-8, 11-12, with the war of the 'horn' against the 'holy ones', which he sees as representing two realities of a corrupt and lost world on the one hand, and an everlasting world of salvation on the other. This, he says, spurs on a "hope for salvation within a transcendent reality that only comes to light through the visionary context of Daniel". Beyerle, "Daniel and Its Social Setting", 224-226. As I argue, however, this is rather the case in the first half, whereas in the second half, violence appears to be endemic to both sides and the everlasting dominion comes through the human-like God who acts similarly to the previously criticized kings, and so is more difficult to identify *as* God and appears more in the image of carnivorous mastery.

'Ancient One' who sits on a throne with 'the hair of his head like pure wool' in 7:9. He is soon accompanied by 'one like a human being' (7:13) who is given an everlasting dominion and whose kingdom will never be destroyed. It is as if these characterisations in the second half of Daniel erupt in an escalation of God as present and proximate as a human-like ruler and the human tyrants as increasingly carnivorous, violent and virile figures with their devouring, trampling, battling bodies and horns. Seesengood and Koosed argue that in "the cosmic array of Daniel, tyrants become beasts. God becomes human. God, the human, destroys the tyrants, the beasts".¹⁴⁷ Evil, they write, becomes consigned to the image of the animal as beast, and therefore must be killed. The image of animality in Daniel, then, relies ultimately on the killability of animals.¹⁴⁸ Human tyrants are conceptualised as animals, they argue, in order to make them killable to the human-like God.¹⁴⁹ Yet I would argue the text is more confused than such a delineated taxonomy. These representations are rather a testament to the confusion displayed in Daniel as to who is who. As Koosed and Seesengood themselves write: "the borders of God, human and animal are repeatedly blurred."¹⁵⁰ Are the rulers of foreign empires benign domestic animals or beastly powers? Is God human-like, or indeed, beast-like as a *living* God and super-power? Is he a master of his pets or a predator to prey? Are the lions my fellows in captivity or my carnivorous foes? Who is in fact "clean" and who "unclean", who Jew or non-Jew?

Koosed and Seesengood argue that "Daniel is replete with the Animal as symbol", as "part of the strategy of the apocalypse to construct a great divide between humans and animals, one that allows humanity to be divided into the good and the evil where the evil is consigned to the category animal and slaughtered accordingly".¹⁵¹ But I suggest that humans in Daniel are all shown to be hybrid animals, domestic and wild, clean and unclean, distressingly indeterminately. The question is whether to be a grazing, domestic animal or a wild and carnivorous one: all alike are mortal, killable, and ultimately pets or prey in the hand of the divine. The dread of the second half of Daniel is thus both directed at the vulnerability of all creatures in such a world – of domestic pets in the domain of more powerful masters – and at the power of political – human and divine – predators. The second half of Daniel conveys the ferocity of political power to reinforce the pet-like status

¹⁴⁷ Koosed and Seesengood, "Daniel's Animal Apocalypse", 9.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 12.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 12-13.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 3.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 12.

of God's subjects as vulnerable creatures, and the potential ferocity of political rulers in ruling over land and the living. In the same way that the human kings in Daniel are essentially domesticated animals that mimic divine power, it could be remarked that God's anthropomorphic elements and superlative position as merely a *higher* rather than *other* power to the human, marks this figure out as a potentially violent force also competing for power. With such properties, this God may act as a living, ruling master and take life, deal blows with his hand, and condemn or sentence with his voice. If he has a voice, does God also have a mouth? Does he need to eat? Wisdom and power are said to belong to God (2:20), he raises and removes kings, gives knowledge and wisdom (2:21), he reveals secrets (2:28), he is a great God (2:45) and everlasting (4:3), he rules over the realm of mankind (4:17, 25); all those who dwell on earth are accounted as nothing in the face of the power of heaven, all are in God's hand (4:35), the breath of life is in God's hand (5:23), men are to fear and tremble before this God, he is the living God and he rules the kingdom (6:26). Is the conclusion thus that to follow God and be a deconstructed subject is in fact to play puppet to a Master-God, to be a domesticated animal or pet vulnerable to being eaten or killed? As Pyper points out, lions in the Hebrew Bible are also represented as God. "Yahweh can be represented as the roaring lion that opposes Israel's enemies. Yet he is also depicted as turning on Israel itself, regarding it as prey."¹⁵²

On the scale of mastery as the "Highest", this God too may be *like* a human-beastly master, merely higher, *more* master. In the alliance between lions and God, then, God and lions too become interchangeable, like Derrida's "cat or God". As Pyper puts it: "What is strong and fierce enough to protect me can also threaten me, and the image of the lion uncannily ties together this duplicity of protector and threat, ruler and unruly."¹⁵³ Pyper wonders whether a wider metaphor of lions may be at work in the Hebrew Bible, seeing the world and its politics as God's hunting park, "where the nations can be either his quarry or his hunting beasts" where Israel is either witness or victim?¹⁵⁴ If the living are puppets or pets in the hand of God, just as Daniel became an animal-victim to human law and the lions function as puppets and pets, the haunting notion lurks that to follow this God is also to be potentially followed, hunted, played with, puppeteered, even crushed and devoured. God is a life-saving benign master but he is also conveyed as "other" to this, a potential leonine force, or as the master over his animal subjects. Creaturely

¹⁵² Ibid., 63. Pyper here mentions the example of Amos 1:2.

¹⁵³ Pyper, "The Lion King: Yahweh as Sovereign Beast in Israel's Imaginary", 64. Pyper provides examples of Yahweh using lions to punish people, such as in 1 Kgs 20:35-36 and 2 Kgs 17:25. Ibid., 66-67.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 67.

characterisations flurry across this text, making it impossible to discern finally who is who, who friend and who foe, who pet and who prey. In the weakness emphasised by the idea of the deconstructed subject, notions of the autonomy, power and freedom of the living dissipate. What remains is the haunting idea that God too may display violent mastery: that *my other* may be what/who masters *me*.

Shakespeare writes of the way in which Derrida conveys that faith is risky because it is always potentially misplaced, the one followed might turn out to be a spectre, an emptiness.¹⁵⁵ But in this case it is rather the risk that the one followed is a master in whose hands I become a puppet, a mere play-thing, akin to the lions in the pit, awaiting their feeding or starvation. Perhaps this ambiguity is also what is intimated when the lions in chapter 6 cease to be non-carnivorous and overpower those who have conspired against Daniel. Devouring them, their wives and children, the lions break all their bones in pieces (6:24). The non-carnivorous can become the carnivorous, and vice versa: the other as other is ultimately irreducible and inexhaustible. The only possibility of encounter with, and response to, the other is marked by risk. To follow Daniel's God, then, is to exist in "the very ordeal of the undecidable", to partake of "*faith* through a form of involvement with the other that is a venture into absolute risk, beyond knowledge and certainty".¹⁵⁶ Nick Mansfield proposes that power always presents itself as that which "offers as well as hurts", adding that "critique of power must at some point become the willingness to assume power, in fact is already the assumption of power".¹⁵⁷ As a critique of, and intervention into, the human mastery that attempts to be "top dog", then, divine power is an assumption of power that could become dangerous. But the risk and double bind of (following) the power of the other is also an opening "to the *gift* and to the gift of death that puts me into relation with the transcendence of the other".¹⁵⁸ Transcendence would signify here the way in which the other always eludes my control, is always *more* than I can encompass and calculate. The "gift" would be the confrontation with mortality, with finitude, with "the borders or the ends of man"¹⁵⁹ which is the condition for responding to the other as a vulnerable being with the possibility of *not* eating (the other) or being eaten, in an infinite appropriation that can be survived, living on in the sense of survival and hospitality *on* one's others. As Hélène Cixous puts it of that love she calls a "god": "only

¹⁵⁵ Shakespeare, *Derrida and Theology*, 147.

¹⁵⁶ GD, 5-6.

¹⁵⁷ Nick Mansfield, *The God Who Deconstructs Himself: Sovereignty and Subjectivity Between Freud, Bataille, and Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 8.

¹⁵⁸ GD, 5-6.

¹⁵⁹ TATTIA, 10.

that which gives me life can take it away from me.”¹⁶⁰ Daniel's God gives him life in the first half of Daniel; in the second half, the dread at life being taken away turns this gift into threat and terror.

Derrida argues that non-carnivorosity is perhaps the impossible. Speaking of vegetarianism he says that “a certain cannibalism remains unsurpassable”.¹⁶¹ “It is not enough to stop eating meat in order to become a non-carnivore.”¹⁶² There are other carnivorous processes in living with, near, besides, on and off one's others.¹⁶³ It is always possible to “incorporate, symbolically, something living, something of flesh and blood – of man and of God”.¹⁶⁴ Eating the other always remains a temptation and a possibility. This, Derrida writes, is not merely an admission of potential violence in every other, but also the very temptation of love in proximity to, and possession of, “my” other, my pet.¹⁶⁵ As Derrida states, one must eat, and one lets oneself be eaten.¹⁶⁶ There is no possibility of avoiding violence towards the other wholesale. But as Ruth Lipschitz suggests, this is a call to a self-critical attention to boundaries and representations that come to constitute “hierarchies of conquest”, as well as opening up the ethical imperative of “eating well”.¹⁶⁷ To eat well would be to offer hospitality in a relation of responsibility that is not immune from appropriation. Following the other, be it Derrida's cat or Daniel's God, is thus perhaps a matter also of loving one's other as “*this* irreplaceable living being”¹⁶⁸ with all the irreducible risk and faith this entails, what Cixous calls “the love of the wolf, the complicity that attaches us to that which threatens us”.¹⁶⁹ This is what Shakespeare affirms

¹⁶⁰ Hélène Cixous, “Love of the Wolf”, trans. Keith Cohen, in *Stigmata: Escaping Texts* (London/New York: Routledge, 2005 [1994]), 72.

¹⁶¹ VAA, 67.

¹⁶² Ibid., 68.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. Derrida is drawing on Hélène Cixous here, cf. her “Love of the Wolf”, trans. Keith Cohen, in *Stigmata: Escaping Texts* (London/New York: Routledge, 2005 [1998]), referred to explicitly in BS I, 210.

¹⁶⁶ EW, 282.

¹⁶⁷ Ruth Lipschitz, “Skin/ned Politics: Species Discourse and the Limits of “The Human”, *Hyapatia* 27.3 (2012), 562.

¹⁶⁸ TATTIA, 9.

¹⁶⁹ Cixous, “Love of the Wolf”, 72. Cixous writes: “We love the wolf. We love the love of the wolf. We love the fear of the wolf. We're afraid of the wolf: there is love in our fear. Fear is in love with the wolf. Fear loves. Or rather: we are afraid of the person we love. Love terrorizes us. Or else the person we love we call our wolf or our tiger, or our lamb in the manger. We are full of trembling and ready to wolf down.” Ibid., 73. And further: “The wolf 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. But happiness is when a real wolf suddenly refrains from eating us. The lamb's burst of laughter comes when it's about to be devoured, and then, at the last second, is not eaten. Hallelujah comes to mind. To have almost been eaten yet not to have been eaten: that is the triumph of life. But you've got to have the two instants, just before the teeth and just after, you've got to hear the jaws coming down on nothing for there to be jubilation. Even the wolf is surprised.” Ibid., 77-78.

in the risk of following one's other: namely, a drive or desire for the other¹⁷⁰ that is always already insatiable because the other remains other and thus to some extent always *more*, but at the same time, this other is a particular singular other, *my* other, my pet. As Hugh Pyper glosses it: "To love and be loved is to be open to being prey, and also to acknowledge that one can be predator."¹⁷¹ The gift Derrida speaks of then, of death, is precisely the finitude that marks my relation to the other *as* other, life-affirming as well as always already potentially life-destroying. The implications of "eating well" are as Turner writes, "not simply to refuse to eat the other and as a consequence to properly respect the other".¹⁷² "One must eat not just because there are basic needs to be met such as the need for nutrition, but rather because one must identify with others in order to form any self of one's own."¹⁷³ The question, as Rachel Muers poses it, is "whether we can draw them [animals] in to our spheres of interest and concern without consuming them completely".¹⁷⁴ In other words, whether we can let the other *live on*. As Daniel shows, the question is one of being consumed, either in a desire for incorporation and assimilation or in anxiety at being devoured and destroyed in one large gulp. Derrida's cat as *his own* is the sign of possession and appropriation in a *particular relation*, which is also the condition for love and any encounter with any other, such as Daniel's God. Following *this* living other is to display the condition for loving the other as unsubstitutional, but simultaneously to reside in the risk of being mastered or puppeteered, as prey or pet, in the hands of this, my other.

Conclusion: The Finitude of (Ir)Responsible Faith

In this chapter I pursued Derrida's nonhuman other as "cat or God" in order to examine more closely what the relationship is between Derrida's following the animal and the notion of following God as a nonhuman other. With Derrida's response as a "here I am", a self-presentation that signifies both the automaticity in every utterance as well as the singular responsibility of the response to one's other, I outlined Derrida's concept of a

¹⁷⁰ Shakespeare, *Derrida and Theology*, 147.

¹⁷¹ Hugh S. Pyper, *An Unsuitable Book: The Bible As Scandalous Text* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005), 8. Pyper too is drawing here in Cixous' "Love of the Wolf".

¹⁷² Lynn Turner, "Insect Asides", in *The Animal Question in Deconstruction*, ed. Lynn Turner (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 61.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁷⁴ Rachel Muers, "The Animals We Write On: Encountering Animals in Texts", in *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans and Other Animals*, eds. Celia Deane-Drummond and David Clough (London: SCM Press, 2009), 150.

deconstructed subject. The deconstructed subject is what responds to the law of the other, before the other, following the other, in a “here I am” that marks vulnerability, faith (in not wholly *knowing*), automaticity and iterability, *and* the singular responsibility in responding to the particular, singular other. For Derrida, this “here I am” is situated as a response to God in *The Gift of Death*, posited in the question of who can demand a life to be taken, who can sentence to death, who can give death or life. By turning to the Book of Daniel, I have shown another scene that poses questions as to who has the power and mastery over life and who can give death, displacing it from human mastery to the nonhuman as a non-carnivorous response. Carnivorousness is not escapable, however. It haunts in that a relation to one's other is always marked by a degree of appropriation and desire for assimilation or absorption as well as risk at being devoured and crushed wholesale.

In the Book of Daniel, the political is animal. The political realm as animal is a testament both to a power of solidarity with the nonhuman as equal domesticated creatures under a higher divine power, and a dread at the vulnerability of being animal in the face of carnivorous battles for domination and consumption. I have proposed that the first part of Daniel is a fantasy of incorporation into foreign rule, where Daniel and his companions successfully integrate as animals conquered and brought into a new territory. Conquered animals, they become heroic subjects in solidarity with their nonhuman others, animal and divine, thus undercutting the human hubris that desires to rule exclusively and govern the life and death of other animals. Building on Derrida's scene between “cat or God”, I have suggested that the Book of Daniel presents another such scene, with Daniel in the sight of lions and his God. This is a double judgement scene, before the human law as carnivorous animal force but also before the law of the nonhuman as a greater and “other” power that resists carnivorousness. This nonhuman other is shown to be higher than human mastery over life and death and is thus a power that interrupts and overrules. This is the God whom Daniel follows, an unsubstitutional nonhuman other who undercuts human mastery and shows the living to be ultimately in his power. Following such a God is what reveals the human as a master-subject to be a *deconstructed subject*. While the mastery of such a God is retained as the highest power, a glimpse of the possibility of non-mastery can be traced in the call for the non-carnivorousness of the lions and the grazing animal that Nebuchadnezzar becomes. God as “living”, a “hand” and “voice” signifies the proximate presence and possibility of a justice that judges differently, not according to a desire for mastery in killing, eating and condemning to death. God is both the figure of the other and,

as Chrulew puts it a “less-other-otherness”, “a finite God subject to time” who is thus relational and responsive.¹⁷⁵

At the same time, however, these anthropomorphic elements spell out the possibilities of such a God figure to be more like a ferocious human-animal ruler, living and participating in the political world of warring carnivorous creatures. With such properties, this God may act as a living, ruling human master and take life, enact violence with his hand, condemn or sentence with his voice, and devour with his mouth. On the scale of mastery as the “Highest”, this God too may be *like* a carnivorous master, merely higher, *more* master. Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar, as deconstructed subjects who follow this God, come face to face with their animality and thus mortality as domestic subjects. This confrontation with the ends and limits of power is the haunting atmosphere of the second half of Daniel, where the sense of harmonious cohabitation has dissipated and what remains is a nightmarish vision of the political as untameable animal others: ferocious, carnivorous, violent.

The first part of Daniel can thus be seen as a retort to human hubris in political structures that capture human and non-human animals and exclude the idea of a more powerful God to anchor human power as the highest. In this part the nonhuman is held up as a triumphant *divineanimal* alliance that Daniel participates in as an animal who follows his God, as pets in a domesticated world in divine hands. The second part of Daniel descends into a dark dreamscape where the animality of all is visualized as terrifying. If all are seen as equally domesticated under God in the first part of Daniel, animal and king alike, then the second part envisions a world in which human and animal are fused as terrifying beasts, where boundaries are blurred, and the fear of being devoured or crushed underfoot is paramount. Ultimately, I have argued that following Daniel's God is a response as Derrida's “here I am”: both puppet- and pet-like in trusting God in the face of death and a life-affirming responsible response. Thus, to follow God in Daniel is to recognise oneself as a deconstructed subject, without mastery in the face of the other *as* other; but it is simultaneously to be responsive to the irreducible unsubstitutability of the other as *my* other. The other *as* other denotes the infinite distance of the untameable other, and the possessive pronoun “my” signifies both the risk of possessive mastery and the response to living with, alongside, near the other as a particular proximate other in finitude and faith. In the biblical archive, Daniel is a prime text for displacing mastery and power

¹⁷⁵ Chrulew, “Feline Divinanimality: Derrida and the Discourse of Species in Genesis”.

from humans as glorified animals. This displacement, however, comes with the risk of perceiving the living as puppets or domesticated pets to a higher divine master vulnerable to being devoured and destroyed, hence the dark anxiety-ridden visions of the second part of Daniel. Affirming the imperative for faith and the fidelity of the “yes” to the call from the other in order to live on, then, always runs the risk of being the least responsible response as well as the most.

Chapter 3

Derrida's Thou Shalt Not Kill: Acts 10 on Edibility, Animality, and Hospitality

The “Thou shalt not kill”, with all its “limitless” consequences, Derrida asserts, “has never been understood within the Judeo-Christian tradition, nor apparently by Emmanuel Levinas, as a ‘Thou shalt not put to death the living in general’”.¹ Rather, and crucially, its significance has resonated in cultures for which “carnivorous sacrifice is essential, as being-flesh”.² The other, is always “man as other, other as man”.³ This is Derrida’s entrance to the question of the “other” in regard to ethics and the most fundamental moral law in regard to life and the taking of life. He positions this question of life and its sacredness or killability up and against the “Judeo-Christian” tradition and Levinas’ important contribution to the discourse on otherness. Derrida’s primary concern with this commandment is the tension between protecting some life by deeming the taking of it as “murder”, and allowing other killing or taking of life to be legitimized. It is a matter of reflecting on the limits of ethics, its tacitly accepted parameters, but also on the relationship between killing, death and the “other” in capacities of power, violence, compassion or vulnerability. Derrida’s concern for the “who” or “what” of the other and the fellow in regard to such a commandment “not to kill” is thus raised as to concepts and classifications of life that enable distinctions between those who are killable and those who are not. Put plainly, within the logic of the commandment “Thou shalt not kill”, to kill a *human* is generally to commit a crime, namely murder, whereas to kill an *animal* is not considered murder, but rather, a lawful killing: hunting, putting down, slaughter or sacrifice.⁴ In this chapter, I will convey how “Thou shalt not kill” functions in Derrida’s

¹ EW, 279.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Of course, there are exceptions. There are cases where slaughter, sacrifice or the killing of animals is unlawful, but this is not usually on the grounds that killing an animal is in principle against the law. Killing animals might be breaking the law if someone kills an animal that belongs to someone, thus conflating the animal with private property. Also, the legislation of some states prohibits certain ways of slaughter which are deemed too cruel. There is of course also lawful killing of humans, such as in war-fare or the death

work on animality and provide a discussion of its significance for his discourse on animality. Building on Derrida, I will develop this discussion in regard to the Acts of the Apostles chapter 10, analysing how this narrative in the biblical archive can be interpreted in response to Derrida and his allusion to killing, conceptions of humans and animals. Finally, this chapter will draw together the discussion of Derrida and the interpretation of Acts 10 in regard to human/animal distinctions, killability and the “Judeo-Christian”.

Derrida's *Thou Shalt Not Kill*

With this commandment forbidding murder, seemingly in line with God's commandment in Genesis 9, Derrida is eager to probe the underpinnings of such a regard for *some* life and at the same time disregard for *other* life. The point of his emphasis on this commandment is to think about the ways in which distinctions between humans and animals become enshrined in laws that signify the sanctity of life, but with exceptions that de-sanctify or demote other life. Essentially, Derrida is suspicious of qualifications and legitimizations of “murder” based on classifications and categorizations of calculated otherness. Derrida critically questions how to determine such absolute distinctions regarding the purported killability of non-human life forms and the determination of who is a “who” and who is a “what” for the inclusion and exclusion of ethical consideration. The refusal to recognise the animal other as a fellow or brother, exemplified in the commandment not to kill (humans), is, for Derrida, tantamount to an automated dogmatism in the ethical order that eschews a properly awakened responsibility. In other words, to exclude animals from the sanctity of life by allowing for their killability is a custom that is now automatically adopted, without further thought, and dogmatically defended on the grounds of human/animal difference when it comes to the perceived intrinsic difference in the life and death of humans as opposed to animals. Ironically, the unique responsibility of *human* life is precisely what many philosophers have wanted to deny animals, but what Derrida accuses such an ethical order of failing to live up to.

penalty. While this would be considered an exception done in the name of protection of others and the law condemning murder, such exceptions could have similar effects to those of excluding animals from moral laws relating to murder. Derrida discusses this issue in his *Death Penalty* seminars (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013). This, however, is outside the scope of my discussion.

The Fraternity of Brothers

The biblical example Derrida uses to explore further the “Thou shalt not kill” in relation to the question of who is killable or not – the fellow, brother, and animal other – is the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4. Here he also reflects on God as a figure of justice who waits to see, who repents of his preference for the sacrificial animal, and sees the animosity this creates between the two brothers.⁵ What happens to the fraternity of brothers, Derrida asks, when an animal comes on the scene?⁶ In his allusion to Cain and Abel, Derrida suggests that the otherness of the animal, understood *as* an animal rather than a brother or fellow, ensures a fraternity based on exclusion. Paola Cavalieri discusses this attitude of “perfectionism”, where attributes thought to belong to some beings are higher or better and are used to exclude others thought to lack such attributes.⁷ This attitude “accepts degrees in moral status”, where some individuals matter more than others.⁸ Animals are at the bottom of such a system.⁹ The competition of mastery between Cain and Abel leads from the killing of an animal to the killing of a brother; Abel offers an animal sacrifice to the Lord and Cain, seemingly jealous of the favour shown Abel, kills his brother. Derrida’s aversion to an ethics founded in the exclusion of animals as too other, is based in his belief that there is a thin line between a fraternity based on the exclusion and othering of a group of living creatures (animals) to other forms of exclusion and legitimized violence. Such an exclusion of animals from the realm of criminal killing on the grounds that animals are non-fellows or non-brothers opens up for a philosophy that sees my neighbouring people as not “neighbourly” enough, my brother as not “brother” enough. This is what Elizabeth Weber calls “the spectre of eugenics, the determination of belonging via blood and the corresponding bloody exclusion of the other” that haunts human group dynamics.¹⁰ Weber explains that Derrida, in “learning, from the ghost”, challenges both victims of legacies and the *différance* *within* these legacies: “how to address ourselves to the other, not just to the ghost, but to the other *tout court*. It requires defending justice not only for the known ‘other,’ the familiar and related ‘other,’ but also for the *other other*”.¹¹

⁵ TATTIA, 112-113.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷ Cavalieri, “The Death of the Animal: A Dialogue on Perfectionism”, 3.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Elizabeth Weber, “Suspended from the Other’s Heartbeat”, *Late Derrida*, ed. Ian Balfour (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 336.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 340.

The question of what happens to the fraternity of brothers when an animal comes on the scene foregrounds Derrida's proposal that it is imperative to rethink an ethics that has been programmed towards *human* subjects. For Derrida, this is about the conditions of ethics itself as a radical opening to the other. But for ethics to be such a radical opening, this other cannot be calculated in advance as *this* or *that*, the other cannot be pre-programmed as "human", "similar" or "like me" because what this does is to specify in advance what the other can or cannot be, and thus the other is no longer conceived as other but merely a reflection or construction of myself, my desires and calculations. Such an ethics is precisely what Derrida indicts as a dormant ethics. The condition for ethics is one that situates me after the animal other, who goes before, whom I come after. He writes that a thinking of the other cannot first and foremost privilege the one conceived of as a brother but that "the infinitely other who looks at me" should:

privilege the question and request of the animal. Not in order to put it in front of man, but in order to think that of man, of the brother and the neighbour from the perspective of an animal request, of an audible or silent appeal that calls within us outside of us, from the most far away, before us after us, preceding and pursuing us in an unavoidable way.¹²

In the allusion to Cain and Abel, Derrida is implicitly making a point that will arise in Acts 10 also. Namely, that the reference to the animal entering the arena in regard to Cain and Abel is either an allusion to the potential violence of every other, even brother to brother, *after* the sacrificial killing of an animal, or, it is an invitation to regard the animal in a different more "brotherly" light. The murder of Abel (4:8) follows the sacrifice of the animal which Abel offered to God and which God prefers to Cain's 'fruit of the ground' (4:3-5). By killing his brother, Derrida suggests that Cain falls into a trap ('sin is lurking at the door' 4:7), having become prey to an evil lurking both in the competition between the brothers and awoken by Abel's animal killing.¹³ If the animal can be killed why not a brother too who has shown Cain – and his offering – to be lesser before the Lord? Derrida reflects on the God who then extends his protection on Cain after all, as if God had repented: as if "he were ashamed or had admitted having preferred the animal sacrifice. As if in this way he were confessing and admitting remorse concerning the animal".¹⁴ The significance of this interpretation in *The Animal that Therefore I am* appears to be that the killing of an animal is part of a competition of power that foregrounds the killability of

¹² TATTIA, 113.

¹³ Ibid., 44.

¹⁴ Ibid.

more than the animal: a brother too may become an other who is killed or sacrificed for the performance of power. As such, it is perhaps the animal who must become a brother before a relation to every other can be founded in a regard for life and “fraternity”. How does one recognize a fellow? Derrida asks.

Is the ‘fellow’ only what has human form, or is it anything that is alive? And if it is the human form of life, what will be the criteria for identifying it without implying a whole determinate culture, for example European, Greco-Abrahamic culture, and in particular Christian culture, which installs the value of ‘neighbour’ or ‘brother’ in the universality of the world, as totality of all creatures?¹⁵

Derrida proposes that the “confusion of all nonhuman living creatures within the general and common category of animal is not simply a sin against rigorous thinking, vigilance, lucidity, or empirical authority, it is also a crime”.¹⁶ He qualifies this by denying the generality of the term “animal” and emphasising the plural “animals” or the neologism *animot*¹⁷: “Not a crime against animality, precisely, but a crime of the first order against the animals, against animals.”¹⁸ Humanity and human rights, Derrida implies, are terms that have been admirable attempts at universal, inclusive concepts of equality, freedom and compassion based on principles of protection, but are founded in a fundamental distinction between the “human” and the “nonhuman”. This is crystallized most forcefully perhaps in the distinction between a *permissible* killing of animals and the criminal *murder* of humans.¹⁹ One source of such a distinction could be traced to the passages in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Ten Commandments, that refer to “Thou shalt not kill” in terms of a prohibition against killing *humans* (Exod. 20:13, Lev. 24:17 (21), Deut. 5:17). The Hebrew verb **רָצַח** in Exodus 20:13 is in the NRSV translated as murder rather than kill or slay, avoiding in advance any confusion in the word “kill” as to whether it also includes non-humans. In Leviticus 24:17 the verb used is **נָקָה**, meaning to strike, slay, hit, kill, in regard to the *life* or soul: **נַפְשׁוֹ** of man (**אָדָם**). Leviticus 24:17 reads in the NRSV: ‘Anyone who

¹⁵ BS I, 106.

¹⁶ TATTIA, 48.

¹⁷ To reiterate the meaning of “animot” from the Introduction: animot is a term Derrida coins to signify (in sound) *animaux*, animals in plural, rather than the animal in general singular, to mark the absurdity of what such a general singular means. But it also refers to “mot” (word) and Derrida’s emphasis on this *word* “animal”, the violence and generality it denotes, and the attention paid to what a word means, what powers words can have for cramming such a vast multiplicity of living beings into this verbal enclosure and allowing violence on a mass-scale to take place in the name of this word, as a negligible non-fellow or neighbour to humans.

¹⁸ TATTIA, 48.

¹⁹ Midgley too speaks of crimes in the utilisation of nature and its creatures. “The painful words WE WERE WRONG must not only be spoken but spelt out in action, and this needs to be action with a strong symbolism that bears on the offences that have been central to our crimes.” Midgley, *The Myths We Live By*, 175.

kills a human being shall be put to death', and is followed in v. 18 with: 'Anyone who kills an animal shall make restitution for it, life for life', repeated in v. 21: 'One who kills an animal shall make restitution for it; but one who kills a human being shall be put to death.' Deuteronomy 5 also lists the Ten Commandments and like Exodus חַצֵּה is translated: 'You shall not murder' (Deut. 5:17). But are there crimes only against humanity, Derrida asks? Is *Thou shalt not kill* for man alone?²⁰ It is in the catch-all concept of the animal, thus perceived as distinct from the human species, that a separate ethical order with its logic of difference between killing and murdering can continue to be upheld. Masking the inanity of such a forced concept of the animal in general singular, Derrida indicts this confusion of all nonhuman living creatures as a collapse of critical thought and crucially, a crime. It cannot continue to be conceived as an acceptable "crime" comfortably external, or alien, to the ethical realm. As well as being a polemical gesture to draw attention to the somewhat arbitrary and hypocritical distinction between humans and animals, Derrida's insistence that such a dogmatic line-drawing is a crime, is not a call for a homogenization of humans and animals as the same, but an attention to and respect for irreducible difference and complexity, and a call for *more* responsibility in ethics regarding *all* life.²¹

Referring to the crime of this word "animal" and the legitimized violence that goes with it, is also a way of opening up the philosophical subject of human/animal difference to what is taking place today. Namely, the industrialization of animal life, genetic manipulations, artificial insemination, production and over-production, hormone and drug treatments, on an enormous and systematized scale. No one today, Derrida argues, can deny this "event", "that is, the *unprecedented* proportions of this subjection of the animal".²² The reason Derrida draws attention to the commandment not to kill, then, is that it is the fundamental principle and law in ethics that could – if it were not directed only at human life – protect animals from such cruelty and violence, and what he regards as crimes against animality.

The Sanctity or Edibility of Life

Referring to the biblical commandment "Thou shalt not kill", Derrida takes Levinas to task for accepting this as: "You shall commit no murder". Not on the grounds of an error in

²⁰ TATTIA, 48.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

²² *Ibid.*, 25.

interpretation of the biblical text – Derrida does not comment specifically on the biblical passages in this instance – but as an indictment towards Levinas himself as a prominent and powerful thinker of the ethics of the other, unable to question this distinction between the *human* face of the other and any other face or other.²³ This commandment not to kill “forbids murder, namely, homicide, but doesn’t forbid putting to death in general, no more than it responds to a respect for life, a respect in principle for life in general”.²⁴ This commandment then, features as a powerful biblical legacy that has continued to haunt philosophy in its proclivity towards *human* life and disregard for animal life. For Levinas’ conception of the subject, Derrida contends that what is considered ethically wrong is not making an attempt on life in general but “only on human life, on the neighbour’s life, on the other’s life as *Dasein*”.²⁵ In light of the “lawful” killing of Jews, homosexuals and disabled people in Nazi Germany, rooted in particular ideas about what it is to be properly or purely human, such a qualified notion of humanity and modified regard for life is slippery. This is why Derrida polemically makes use of words such as genocide and holocaust in his discourse on animal abuse.²⁶ It can no longer be repressed “that men do all they can in order to dissimulate this cruelty or to hide it from themselves; in order to organize on a global scale the forgetting or misunderstanding of this violence, which some would compare to the worst cases of genocide”.²⁷ As Stephen Morton sees it, “Derrida’s point is that the violent logic of manufactured death that was first exemplified in the Nazi death camps has become normalised through practices such as the factory farming of animals”.²⁸ Derrida proposes that we should neither abuse this term genocide nor refuse wholesale to use it with its powerful and painful connotations, precisely to cause unease at the mass killing and suffering of animal life for the putative well-being of humans.²⁹ What

²³ Derrida discusses John Llewelyn’s question to Levinas at the 1986 Cerisy conference as to whether animals have a face. TATTIA, 113-117. For a further discussion of Derrida and Levinas on animality see Aaron S. Gross’ “The Question of the Creature: Animals, Theology and Levinas’ Dog”, in *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans and Other Animals*, eds., Celia Deane-Drummond and David Clough (London: SCM Press, 2009), and Ken Stone’s “The Dogs of Exodus and the Question of the Animal”, in *Divinanimality: Creaturely Theology*, ed. Stephen D. Moore (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014).

²⁴ TATTIA, 110.

²⁵ EW, 279.

²⁶ See TATTIA, particularly 26.

²⁷ TATTIA, 26.

²⁸ Stephen Morton, “Troubling Resemblances, Anthropological Machines and the Fear of Wild Animals: Following Derrida after Agamben”, in *The Animal Question in Deconstruction*, ed. Lynn Turner (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 120.

²⁹ TATTIA, 26. When Derrida uses the word “genocide” in connection with animals, the point he is trying to make is that ways of imagining and treating non-others has taken place also in regard to humans. Cavalieri discusses this explicitly in regard to the “Aktion T4” example, where a Nazi elimination program killed disabled children and adults (6000 children, 180 000 adults): individuals lacking certain cognitive skills. If to have full moral status requires one to be “human” and to be human is to have certain cognitive skills, this is clearly problematic in more instances than those concerning animals. Cavalieri, *The Death of the Animal*, 35.

is worse, this is a matter of common knowledge, a permitted violence and killing, in what Morton calls “the necropolitical forms of sovereignty that continue to kill particular forms of animal life – whether human, subhuman or non-human”.³⁰ This is why Derrida insists on an *awakening* to the horrors of animal suffering and the compassion this fact ought to awaken.

Everybody knows what terrifying and intolerable pictures a realist painting could give to the industrial, mechanical, chemical, hormonal, and genetic violence to which man has been submitting animal life for the past two centuries. Everybody knows what the production, breeding, transport, and slaughter of these animals has become.³¹

Derrida argues that if the animal can be killed without it being “murder” or even “killing” properly speaking – in other words, without the “Thou shalt not kill” coming into play – it is because the animal is considered alien to protection on the grounds of sanctity, the sanctity of life. Alluding to Levinas, he shows that the way in which ethics and metaphysics relate to the “Thou shalt not kill” become construed around the person as face and the *human* face, thus making responsibility towards humans proper and anomalous to animals.³² Derrida concedes the *demand* of this responsibility but calls for such a responsibility to specifically engage in a critical thinking that ceases to dogmatically assert the separation between humans and animals in general. Such a responsibility ought, he argues, to be directed towards animals, indeed as a response to animals. Derrida calls for a responsibility that is both more humble and more excessive; that demands *more* of our ethical relations, and at the same time recognises the always possible, and even inevitable, failure and collapse of responsibility. To turn to animal rights in order to evoke the possibility of rethinking this division between the sanctity of the human face and the ethically negligible life of an animal is not enough according to Derrida. As he points out, however far rights to protect animals have come and however commendable this is, they only forbid certain forms of cruelty or torture, without forbidding the killing of animals in general, be it for the production of meat for food, or for experimentation and dissection.³³ “Killing an animal, at any rate, is not held to be cruel in itself.”³⁴ What Derrida is calling

Roudinesco and Derrida also discuss similar issues in relation to Cavalieri and Peter Singer’s “Darwinian” project, which advocates not animal rights but human rights to nonhuman great apes. See Cavalieri and Singer, *The Great Ape Project: Equality Beyond Humanity* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995). VAA, 62.

³⁰ Morton, “Troubling Resemblances, Anthropological Machines and the Fear of Wild Animals: Following Derrida after Agamben”, 121.

³¹ TATTIA, 26.

³² *Ibid.*, 111.

³³ *Ibid.*, 110.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 110.

for, is what he called “a protestation based on principle” “against the general singular that is *the animal*”.³⁵ “Responsibility carries within it, and must do so, an essential excessiveness.”³⁶ For Derrida “there is no responsibility, no ethico-political decision, that must not pass through the proofs of the incalculable or the undecidable. Otherwise, everything would be reducible to calculation and causality, and, at best, ‘hypothetical imperative.’”³⁷ If responsibility is not excessive, it is not responsibility.³⁸ “What deconstruction would call for would be a different kind of rights, prescribing, in a different way, more responsibility.”³⁹ As discussed above in relation to Genesis 9, responsibility and ethics for Derrida would not be about calculating a mutuality or “sameness” between one subject and another, in terms of what can be expected in return or measuring what the other merits in an encounter. Nor can it be based wholly on agreement – I accept these laws if you accept the same laws, we both agree to abide by them. Rather, in his notion of the “after you”, responsibility is always about a response that comes after the other and without wholly knowing the other. This is not purely a prescriptive stance on Derrida’s part; there is also the suggestion that such an asymmetry is always at work in every relationship between self and other.

On Death and Dying (As Such)

Derrida traces Levinas’ belief that “Thou shalt not kill” refers to humans to the Heideggerian view that only humans die as such.⁴⁰ Derrida does not attempt to prove that animals *do* in fact die “as such”, but rather questions what such an “as such” means except being a dogmatic assertion. Korsgaard argues that it is clear that many non-human animals are “complex centres of subjectivity”, that is, beings who experience pain and pleasure, fear and hunger, attachment, curiosity, play.⁴¹ Why, then, are they banished to a place outside the realms of ethics? While Korsgaard goes on to argue that the lesson to be learnt is that the capacity for the above-mentioned experiences is grounded in “our animal

³⁵ Ibid., 40.

³⁶ Ibid., 272.

³⁷ Ibid., 273.

³⁸ Ibid., 286.

³⁹ EW, 273.

⁴⁰ Derrida refers to Heidegger’s *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), from his 1929/30 lecture series. For the fuller discussion of Heidegger on death and dying, see BS II, especially 114-117.

⁴¹ Korsgaard, “Facing the Animal You See in the Mirror”, 3.

nature” (humans and animals alike),⁴² Derrida takes a somewhat different turn. Derrida is keen to avoid any certainties on characterisations of nature, but he does, similarly to Korsgaard, situate his thesis in regard to a *capacity* for a *sharedness*.⁴³ Derrida draws us back to non-power rather than the power or property “to die” (and thus *having* death as if it too were a human power to possess) by positing mortality

as the most radical means of thinking the finitude that we share with animals, the mortality that belongs to the very finitude of life, to the experience of compassion, to the possibility of sharing the possibility of this nonpower, the possibility of this impossibility, the anguish of this vulnerability, and the vulnerability of this anguish.⁴⁴

Because we cannot know anything about the “as such” relation to death or measure in any tangible way whether animals do or do not have such a relation (nor whether humans do), he emphatically reorients the question towards a shared capacity for suffering, stating that no one “can deny the suffering, fear, or panic, the terror or fright that can seize certain animals and that we humans can witness”.⁴⁵ Derrida follows Jeremy Bentham here on asserting that the question that ought to be asked in regard to animals is whether they can suffer.⁴⁶ The very form of this question, Derrida writes, changes everything about the discourse on human/animal distinctions that is built on a theorization of *power*, what powers the human possesses and what powers the animal is deprived of. Asking about animal suffering reorients this discourse to non-power, vulnerability, and towards a thinking of and in compassion.⁴⁷ Following this, then, and in light of the absurdity of the catch-all concept animal in the general singular, it would be hard if not impossible to justify a rigid distinction between killing and murdering as anything but a dogmatic or myopic decision to accept such an artificial differentiation. Troubling the distinction between killing and murdering in the face of the undeniable possibility and reality of animal suffering, opens up Derrida’s “immense question of pathos and the pathological”, that is, suffering, pity, and compassion; “and the place that has to be accorded to the interpretation of this compassion, to the sharing of this suffering among the living, to the

⁴² *Ibid.*, 3, 5.

⁴³ TATTIA, 28. Korsgaard wonders whether there might be a difference between the complexity of a human life in comparison to animal lives, but goes on to say: “a human being and a non-human animal who lose their lives both lose everything that they have. There is something imponderable about the comparison”. Korsgaard, “Facing the Animal You See in the Mirror,” 6.

⁴⁴ TATTIA, 28.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ In *The Principles of Morals and Legislation* Bentham famously pointed out that the point was not whether animals can reason or talk but whether they can suffer.

⁴⁷ TATTIA, 22-28.

law, ethics, and politics that must be brought to bear upon this experience of compassion".⁴⁸

Derrida marks the condition for ethics as an opening to *any* other, exemplified in the animal other as the irreducibly different and unknowable "fellow" or "neighbour". The animal as the other is a particularly pertinent figure for the otherness of "any other" precisely because this word animal designates such a vast and complex array of living creatures with such hugely different contexts, habitats, characteristics, forms, habits and modes of life. At the same time, however, he suggests that the difference between a human and animal, also marks the difference between any two humans in the world. As Derrida argues in *The Beast and the Sovereign vol. II* in regard to the concept of "world", world is what all share in an objective sense, humans and animals alike, what is undoubtedly different between the species we call humans and the group of living beings we all animals, and:

In spite of this identity and this difference, neither animals of different species, nor humans of different cultures, nor any animal or human individual inhabit the same world as another, however close and similar these living individuals may be (be they human or animals), and the difference between one world and another will remain always unbridgeable, because the community of the world is always constructed, simulated by a set of stabilizing apparatuses, more or less stable, then, and never natural, language in the broad sense, codes of traces being designed, among all living beings, to construct a unity of the world that is always deconstructible, nowhere and never given in nature.⁴⁹

In other words, the difference that can be said to exist between a human and an animal also exists in principle between any two living beings. There is a sense in which the world is shared in certain ways by the human species. But this difference is not absolute, nor does it provide the ground for ignoring the similarities between animals and humans, or a reason to exclude animals from ethical consideration.

Derrida's "after you" is a specific demand to humans to take responsibility and cease to put human well-being *first* in an unquestioned, unthinking manner. At the same time, his emphasis on following, excessive responsibility and mortality testifies to the nonpower of humans too, coming after the animal other in response to the animal and in sight of a God who sees and takes account. The main points of discussing the commandment that prohibits murder is to question why this applies only to the group of

⁴⁸ Ibid., 26.

⁴⁹ BS II, 8-9.

living beings we call humans and not to this vast, amorphous term the animal. What power structures are at play in such a restricted, discriminating, carnivorous ethics? What is it about the life of animals that does not count in the face of death? Why is it not a crime to kill animals, and who (or what) is encompassed or encompassable in this word “animal”?

Acts 10 on Edibility, Animality, and Hospitality

The commandment “Thou shalt not kill” appears in Exod. 20:13, Lev. 24:17 (24:21) and Deut. 5:17. In regard to killing, this commandment is qualified further by more detailed laws regarding which animals are in fact killable and edible, along with instructions on methods of killing and eating. These so-called “purity laws” of clean and unclean animals are expounded in Leviticus 11 and Deut. 14.3-20. But instead of going over the textual landscape of these laws which are rooted in the Ten Commandments with a focus on the sixth commandment not to kill, I propose that we turn to a different biblical text, namely chapter 10 of the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament.⁵⁰ This is a segment of the biblical archive in which questions of law and killability play out in both continuity with, and rupture from, the commandment not to kill in the Torah. There are three reasons why I think this particular text warrants discussion in relation to Derrida’s discourse on the commandment not to kill. The first is that Derrida is less interested in the commandment itself, but rather its legacy, manifestation, and negotiation in discussions about the animal as other: who is *in* the ethical circuit and who or what stands outside? The narrative of Acts 10 stages questions of fellowship, hospitality and the other who becomes a fellow. But it is also about the laws that underlie or limit fellowship. It is a passage that grapples with the legacy of the law “Thou shalt not kill”, in relation to legitimized and lawful killing and dreams for universal, shared fellowship. Following on from my discussions in the previous chapters on Noah and the edibility of animals, and then Daniel around questions of fellowship and hostility, I show here too that power is oriented around acts of eating in relation to the other. As Richard I. Pervo points out in his commentary on Acts, Peter’s

⁵⁰ For discussions of notions of clean/unclean in the Hebrew Scriptures, see for instance Walter Houston, *Purity and Monotheism: Clean and Unclean Animals in Biblical Law* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) and Elijah Judah Schochet, *Animal Life in Jewish Tradition* (New York: Ktav, 1984), particularly page 33 and on. Scholarship in animal studies that takes account of Jewish and Christian traditions and scripture has dealt with this material quite extensively, such as in *Animals on the Agenda, Questions about Animals for Theology and Ethics*, eds. Andrew Linzey and Dorothy Yamamoto (London: SCM Press, 1998) as well as *After Noah: Animals and the Liberation of Theology*, eds. Andrew Linzey and Dan Cohn-Sherbok (London: Mowbray, 1997).

initial refusal to eat the animals that are presented to him in his vision reflects “the classical Jewish rejection of forbidden food in the face of pressure”, linking him thus to Daniel and the Maccabees.⁵¹ As demonstrated in 1 Macc. 1:62, refusing to eat unclean food becomes a way to ascribe identity and assert resistance.⁵² But in Acts 10 Peter retracts his refusal to eat unclean animals and comes to accept the edibility, or *cleanness*, of *all* animals. I will explore the significance of this for the conception of animality in relation to concepts of hospitality, fellowship and the “other”.

The second reason for turning to Acts 10 is that scholarship on this book frequently describes Acts as promoting a concept of universalism – that is, a religion and God for *all* and a subsequent universal or common equality and fellowship – that is linked particularly to this chapter, and that would appear favourable to animals. But the category which, I propose, has been forgotten in this “universal” fellowship is precisely *animals*, despite their prominent place in the vision that leads to the very concept of universalism. I argue that this universalism is grounded *on* the animals of this text, but that this foundation has been eschewed. It is necessary to bring Derrida’s debate on the commandment not to kill to Acts 10 and more explicitly examine its crucial but neglected animal figures, their significance, function and logic in the text. Acts 10 both espouses a universal fellowship founded on the idea of animals as fellows, and, at the same time collapses into a *human* fellowship that limits its universalism in ways that are detrimental to more than animal others. It thus plays out both Derrida’s dream for an unconditional hospitality and is a textual manifestation of the consequences of legitimized and lawful forms of killing and killability.

The third reason is that to engage critically with the rather limited references to the “Judeo-Christian” in Derrida’s work on animality, Acts 10 forms a crucial point in the biblical archive between the “Jewish” and the “Christian”. The Acts of the Apostles, thought to be written by the same author as the Gospel of Luke, and as a supplement to this Gospel, is a narration of the events and challenges of the time and mission of Jesus’ followers after his earthly life. It is a unique text for providing a narrative of the Jewish sect that becomes the Christian movement in the middle of the first century CE under the Roman Empire. Written towards the end of the first century, it is focused around the figures of Peter and Paul as early founders of what becomes known as Christianity. Acts 10

⁵¹ Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 271.

⁵² *Ibid.*

is frequently seen as a crucial moment for the history of Christianity; from the Jesus movement being a Jewish sect to its mission to the Gentiles. But it is also seen as distinctly “Jewish” in many respects. Acts is thus an important document in the biblical archive regarding early Christianity, its gestation and formation, and its relationship to Judaism. One of the crucial points over which this formation and discussion takes place is the question of the traditional Mosaic laws regarding animal classifications as clean or unclean – showcased pertinently in Acts 10. It is a text that has evoked, and still evokes, much debate over the extent of its Jewishness or break from Jewishness, emergent Christianity, or its embedded Jewish references and framework.⁵³ The narrative raises questions concerning law, killability and edibility in relation to categories of animals as well as categories of humans. While scholarship has mostly staged these categorisations in reference to Jew and Gentile, Jew and Christian, or Jewish-Christian and Roman, the “Judeo-Christian” is here inextricably tied to the animal figures of this text.

What takes place in Acts 10 is a scene in which Peter has a vision on a rooftop, where a sheet descends before him. ‘In it were all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air’ (10:12). In this vision Peter hears a voice say to him: “‘Get up, Peter; kill and eat.’” Peter responds that he cannot do so as he would not, and never has, eaten anything that is ‘profane [κοινό] or unclean [ἀκάθαρτος]’ (10:14), but the voice persists a second time, saying: “‘What God has made clean, you must not call profane’” (10:15); this is said to be repeated three times. Peter’s vision coincides with a visitation from a group of messengers sent by a Roman centurion called Cornelius, who have come to invite Peter to return with them to meet Cornelius who is a ‘devout man who feared God with all his household’, who also has had a vision and message from ‘an angel of God’ (10:3) that has asked him to meet with ‘a certain Simon who is called Peter’ (10:5). Peter goes with these men and, as a consequence of his vision, he eats in fellowship with Cornelius and his household despite the prohibition of Jews to eat the “unclean” food of Gentiles. To explain, Peter declares that he now understands ‘that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him’, that he is ‘Lord of all’ (10:34-36). Chapter 10 ends with the Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit, and all the ‘circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in

⁵³ See Jacob Jervell, for instance, on these debates, in “The Law in Luke-Acts,” *Harvard Theological Review* 64: 1 (1971): 21-36.

tongues and extolling God' (10:45-46). The Gentiles are then baptised 'in the name of Jesus Christ' and Peter stays with them for several days (10:48).

The central point that plays out in Acts 10, then, is the difference between laws concerning clean/unclean animals and Gentiles without such laws, how such difference is overcome by Peter's vision of the cleanness of all, the impartiality of God, and the fellowship made possible in the aftermath of this vision. Peter's vision and visit to Cornelius is one of the longest narrative units in Acts, making it a crucial episode for the main concern of Acts, namely the legitimacy of the gentile mission.⁵⁴ Early on in Walter Houston's essay on clean and unclean animals in *Animals on the Agenda: Questions about Animals for Theology and Ethics*, he conveys the relationship between the laws of Leviticus and Deuteronomy and Acts 10.⁵⁵ The point of the author of Acts, Houston writes, is opposite of that in God's words in Lev. 20:24-6, where God makes a 'clear separation' between the Israelites and the non-Israelites (20:24), 'and you are to make a clear separation between clean beasts and unclean beasts, and between unclean and clean birds' (20:25).⁵⁶ There is here a relation, seemingly, between God's exclusive relationship to Israel and to the distinction between clean and unclean animals. Houston argues that the purpose of this is "to mark the chosen people out as distinctive".⁵⁷ Now, in Acts 10, "a major component of the purity code has been abolished",⁵⁸ and thus what Acts 10 seemingly radically undoes is this major distinction, first between animals and then between Jews and Gentiles.

Acts 10 is a biblical narrative with a vision of and about animals at its centre. At the same time, it is part of a text, The Acts of the Apostles, that is frequently associated with universality, with Acts 10 as a prime example of such universality. This universality is frequently seen as unique, a mark of social advance, characterized by an impartial attitude towards people and one God for all. It is conceived as a liberation from distinctions and discriminations: a universality that commends equality and fraternity towards the other as any other based in a universalism concerning a religion and God for *all*. This indiscriminate attitude of universal fellowship is crystallized by the encounter between Peter and the Roman centurion Cornelius, and symbolized in the hospitality and table-

⁵⁴ Pervo, *Acts*, 264.

⁵⁵ Walter Houston, "What was the Meaning of Classifying Animals as Clean or Unclean?", in *Animals on the Agenda, Questions about Animals for Theology and Ethics*, eds. Andrew Linzey and Dorothy Yamamoto (London: SCM Press, 1998), 18.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵⁸ Pervo, *Acts*, 269.

fellowship at the heart of Acts 10 between these two figures. A central concern of this text, then, is the question of the fellow and other in regard to hospitality and customs of eating, that in turn depend on attitudes to what animals can be killed and eaten and how. What is interesting to note in regard to Acts 10 and the two points mentioned so far – that is, animals and universalism – is that the animals are never again referred to in the narrative after their appearance in the vision. On top of this, they are barely mentioned in scholarship, certainly not seen as important, despite their position as the central content of Peter's vision. The universal fellowship espoused in regard to this text is seemingly *never* imagined beyond a human fellowship.

The animals of Peter's vision, like the Gentiles Peter later associates with, are made "clean" in his vision, making this text appear a moment in the biblical archive that would be favourable to animality. It would be a moment of Derrida's "after you": a human fellowship (between Jews and Gentiles) coming after the altered relationship with animals. Peter's vision is, after all, first of all *about* animals. Why, then, are the animals completely forgotten in the text as well as in scholarship? With the emphasis on a universalism marked by an impartial God of all, and the possibility of hospitality opened up beyond what is portrayed as distinct groups, it would seem a prime text for a greater regard for animals too. It is necessary to return to the vision of Acts 10 with its animals in order to interrogate how the notion of universalism as equality and hospitality is generated as a result of this vision and how it relates to the animals in question. I will do this by showing that there are two quite contrary conclusions that can be drawn from closer attention to Peter's vision, the analogy it sets up, and the logic that ties Peter's vision to the fellowship between Peter and Cornelius's household. One is of indiscriminate killability and the other is of unconditional hospitality. Finally, I will point out that there is a further category that appears to be bypassed in scholarship on this passage in conjunction with the theme of universalism as hospitality, fellowship and equality. This is the reference to the living and the dead. I will tie this back in with the discussion of Derrida's reflections on mortality that relate to his critique of the "Thou shalt not kill" and the question of life.

Universalism

Joseph Tyson draws attention to the symbolic importance of the setting of Acts, with the early chapters of Acts (1-12) situated around Jerusalem and Judea, and then broadening out

to Damascus and Antioch, referring also to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Cyrene. The setting highlights a movement that begins in Jerusalem and that gradually emerges beyond towards a larger world, thus placing the origins of Christianity first within Judaism and then broadening out to include Gentiles.⁵⁹ One way this chapter has been interpreted in scholarship is as a pivotal moment in such a movement from localized particularity in a distinctive tradition with particular laws, rituals and customs (most prominently circumcision and purity rules for food) to concerns for the world more generally or universally.⁶⁰ This is often seen precisely as a universalizing, inclusive move away from a religious particularism associated with exclusivism and laws that separate people into different categories, to the emergence of a universalism unbound by such laws and differentiations.

It has almost become a reflex in scholarship to deem Acts a text that promotes universalism, with its impartial God (10: 34). F.F. Bruce, for instance, argues that Acts 10 “marks a definite step in the extension of the church from a Jewish fellowship to a universal basis”,⁶¹ Philip Esler speaks of Luke’s “universalist tendency”,⁶² and David Pao too mentions the “universalistic emphasis” of Acts.⁶³ François Bovon is another example of a scholar who discusses the ways in which Luke-Acts is open to “universalism”,⁶⁴ C.K. Rowe argues for the Lukan conception of “universal” Lordship up and against the Roman Imperial power;⁶⁵ Robert F. O’Toole mentions the theme of universality that weakens “any rigid distinctions between the people of God and the world”,⁶⁶ Marion L. Soards writes that the “universality of God’s work and Jesus’ lordship are emphasized” in the speeches of Acts.⁶⁷ In his analysis of Peter’s sermon in vv. 34-42, Pervo outlines the “distinctive

⁵⁹ Joseph B. Tyson, *Images of Judaism in Luke-Acts* (Columbia, SC: University of South Columbia Press, 1992), 100.

⁶⁰ For a discussion of conceptions of “world” in authors of the narratives of early Christian missions, see Janet E. Spittler, “Christianity at the Edges: Representations of the Ends of the Earth in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles”, in *The Rise and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries of the Common Era*, eds. Clare K. Rothschild and Jens Schröter (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013).

⁶¹ F.F. Bruce, “Acts of the Apostles”, in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, eds. Charles Pfeiffer OT, Everett F. Harrison NT (London/Edinburgh: Oliphants LTD, 1963), 1143.

⁶² Philip Francis Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lukan Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 34.

⁶³ David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic Exodus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 217.

⁶⁴ But as I mention below, Bovon at the same time concedes that it is also favourable to Judaism. François Bovon, *Studies in Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 31.

⁶⁵ C.K. Rowe, “Luke-Acts and the Imperial Cult: A Way through the Conundrum?”, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27.3 (2005): 298.

⁶⁶ Robert F. O’Toole, “Luke’s Position on Politics and Society in Luke-Acts”, in *Political Issues in Luke-Acts*, eds. Richard J. Cassidy and Philip J. Scharper (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 2.

⁶⁷ Marion L. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts, Their Content, Context, and Concerns* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 73.

theme” as universalism.⁶⁸ He notes that this concern with the mission to the Gentiles and its connection to notions of divine impartiality and universalism are reinforced by allusions to Paul’s letters.⁶⁹ But Luke appears to apply and reinforce such ideas in the context of Greco-Roman views about the unity of the human race.⁷⁰ Laura Nasrallah too proposes that “Luke-Acts crafts a universalising narrative of Christian identity that would be attractive or at least comprehensible to philosophical and political minds at the time”, thus aligning this sect with a contemporary Gentile, Greco-Roman culture.⁷¹ David L. Matson discusses the way this first report of a household conversion in Acts affirms the theme of universalism signified by a move from the temple to the home as the focus of Christian life and worship.⁷² James D.G. Dunn mentions the “more universal destiny” Acts 10 appears to foreground as a salvation for all rather than only the restitution of Israel.⁷³ In her discussion of early Christianity in the missionary activity exemplified in Acts 10, Clare K. Rothschild talks about a “universalizing form of Judaism”.⁷⁴

In a similar way to Derrida’s hope that animals too could be included in the compassion extended towards human life in ethics, (and thus liberated from a category, “animal”, that ensures their killability), many scholars have clearly seen in Acts 10 a liberation from the exclusivity of a particular people of God, thus extending the people of God to a universal category for one and all. This can be traced in large part to passages of Acts 10 that showcase the fellowship between Jews and Gentiles with the emphasis on a ‘Lord of *all*’ (10:36) and Peter’s reference to an ‘impartial’ God (10:34). Universalism, in this context, is frequently seen as a break-through, as social advance in terms of equality and a fraternity towards, or fellowship with, the other, specifically exemplified by the Gentile other. O’Toole, for instance, identifies Luke’s theme of the mission to the Gentiles as “social advance”: “No longer does one have to belong to a given people or observe all the details of the Torah (cf. Acts 15:28-29) to be saved.”⁷⁵ Martin Hengel conceived of the figure of Peter as a bastion of tolerance, propagating a form of liberalism that mediates

⁶⁸ Pervo, *Acts*, 277.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* Pervo draws specific attention to Rom 2:11; Gal 2:6; cf. Col 3:25; Eph 6:9.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 278.

⁷¹ Laura Nasrallah, “The Acts of the Apostles, Greek Cities, and Hadrian’s Panhellenion”, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127: 3 (2008): 538-539.

⁷² David L. Matson, *Household Conversion Narratives in Acts: Pattern and Interpretation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 86-134.

⁷³ James D.G. Dunn, “Why and How did Embryonic Christianity Expand Beyond the Jewish People?”, in *The Rise and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries of the Common Era*, eds. Clare K. Rothschild and Jens Schröter (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 189.

⁷⁴ Clare K. Rothschild, “Introduction”, in *The Rise and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries of the Common Era*, eds. Clare K. Rothschild and Jens Schröter (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 1.

⁷⁵ O’Toole, “Luke’s Position on Politics and Society in Luke-Acts”, 10.

between Jewish and Greco-Roman extremities.⁷⁶ Dunn seemingly espouses Hengel's figure of the liberal Peter⁷⁷ calling him "the liberated Jew".⁷⁸ Dunn further describes the events from Peter's vision to his encounter with Cornelius as a "major" "transformation", an "epochal" step, a "decisive breakthrough",⁷⁹ "a step forward of momentous significance".⁸⁰ But, forgetting its animal figures, the text and its reception also seemingly forget the possibility of more radical implications for an actual universalism of and for *all*. Pervo points to this when he admits that the concept of divine impartiality is difficult "because it often occurs in contexts that seem to assert partiality".⁸¹ The scholarship that is keen to emphasise universalism has failed to recognise that a universalism that is limited, with conditions, the worst kinds of abuses toward those beings who are left outside the scope of moral concern".⁸² "Universal consideration", Calarco proposes, "would entail being ethically attentive and open to the possibility that anything might take on a face",⁸³ or perhaps rather, as I will discuss later, the *life* and death of the other, to be judged only by the "Lord of all".

Apart from focusing on Jewish-Gentile, or Jewish-Christian-Roman social interaction, scholarship has seemingly seen the universalizing theme of Acts 10 in *human* terms, without regard for what this might mean for the animals that set in motion the disregard for the Levitical and Deuteronomic laws in the first place. Bovon asserts that the "way to God" is "for human beings", for a "human salvation".⁸⁴ Despite seeing Luke-Acts as a demand for radical social reform in the erasure of special treatment for some over others and speaking of the "radically new" entering history with Luke's writing, O'Toole

⁷⁶ Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1979), 92. Hengel writes further of the liberal Peter: "The fact that in Joppa he stayed with a tanner who was despised because of his unclean trade is another indication of Peter's broad-mindedness. It also says much of his 'liberalism' that in the earliest period – when he was still the leader of the Twelve in Jerusalem – he tolerated the relative independence of the 'Hellenist' group by allowing them to have their own assembly for worship without expelling them from the church, and that at a later stage he was involved in mission in Samaria." Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*, 93.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁷⁸ James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1996), 141. Dunn continues: "...willing now to recognize that the God-fearer (see on 10.2), the one who fears God, is as acceptable to God as the Jew (cf. Deut. 10.12; Ps. 2.11; Prov. 1.7; Mal.4.2), without meeting any further stipulation of the law (circumcision in particular)". Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 141. Circumcision is of course the other crucial "issue" alongside rules of purity concerning animals.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 134. At the same time, Dunn notes, Peter's position as a Jew and one who shows himself as knowing and abiding by traditional Jewish laws is crucial for guaranteeing some continuity with tradition.

⁸¹ Pervo, *Acts*, 278. He notes Rom. 2:11; Gal 2:6; Col 3:25 as examples. I will go on to show how there are implicit partialities at play also in Acts 10.

⁸² Calarco, *Zoographies*, 72.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁸⁴ Bovon, *Studies in Early Christianity*, 32.

circumscribes this radical dignity and eternal hope he finds in Luke-Acts only to “human nature”.⁸⁵ Dunn reads Peter’s vision as leading to the recognition “that God does not make distinctions between *human beings in general* as to their acceptability or unacceptability on grounds of their basic identity (ethnic, social or religious)”.⁸⁶ Rothschild refers to the “premise” of Acts as bringing people and events together in such a way that “all of *human life*” “is interrelated under the broad auspices of divine guidance”.⁸⁷ Mostly however, the specifically human universality is left implicit. It is clear from overlooking the animals of Peter’s vision and the emphasis, as shown, on the human characters and who or what they represent in the text. Presumably, this happens because it seems unthinkable that animals should form a part of universal fellowship, however impartial this God may be. Animals in this passage are only referred to in passing as particular objects of laws around categories of clean/unclean, or in referential, explanatory terms to describe the difference between traditional Jewish relationships with animals in opposition to the more “free for all” Gentile relationship to animals as food. Animals are thus primarily killable and edible, the only difference in regard to Jewish tradition is the more particular rules and rites around which animals are killable and edible. It appears to be clear then, as Houston argues, that Peter’s vision “is not really about animals”.⁸⁸ Rather, it is about calling “no *human being* profane or unclean”.⁸⁹ I will go on to show why this is problematic and misses crucial aspects of the text.

Before doing so, however, it is worth pointing out that the text itself to some extent supports this emphasis on the specific relationship between two humans and the groups they represent. As such, it is perhaps not strange that this fellowship has become generalized to a human universality. In 10:25-26, Cornelius falls before Peter, worshipping him and Peter raises him from the ground, saying: ‘Stand up, I too am a man’ (Acts 10:26), thus emphatically asserting the similarity and even fraternity between Peter and Cornelius in the aftermath of Peter’s vision. Justin R. Howell proposes that Peter’s response in correcting Cornelius “implies that they are both *humans* under the authority of another, namely Jesus”.⁹⁰ Further, in his speech Peter explains the shift that is taking place:

⁸⁵ O’Toole, “Luke’s Position on Politics and Society in Luke-Acts”, 3.

⁸⁶ Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 134-135. Emphasis added.

⁸⁷ Clare K. Rothschild, “Etymologia, Dramatis Personae, and the Lukan Invention of an Early Christian Prosopography”, in *The Rise and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries of the Common Era*, eds. Clare K. Rothschild and Jens Schröter (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 298. Added emphasis.

⁸⁸ Houston, “What was the Meaning of Classifying Animals as Clean or Unclean?”, 18.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* Original emphasis.

⁹⁰ Justin R. Howell, “The Imperial Authority and Benefaction of Centurions and Acts 10.34-43: A Response to C. Kavin Rowe”, *The Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 31:25 (2008): 27. Emphasis added.

“‘You yourselves know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit a Gentile; but God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without objection’ (10:28-29). This scene precedes the hospitality Cornelius extends to Peter. It stages the equality between Jews and Gentiles to make the point that hospitality is now possible, and the distinctions previously separating them are erased. It shows the underpinnings of Peter’s own interpretation of the vision, as triggering the possibility for the relationship and fellowship between the Jewish Peter and the Gentile Cornelius.

Gilhus suggests that the shift from sacrificial cults to Christian cults without animal sacrifice is associated with cultural progress, while animal sacrifice is considered primitive.⁹¹ She argues that this became entangled in a sacralization of the human and concomitant desacralization of the animal.⁹² The laws and rituals around purity and animality could also be perceived in this light as becoming associated with “primitive” as opposed to “progress”, universalism becoming thus connected to social advance as discussed earlier, and to what became identified as Christianity. Gilhus suggests that in the emergence of Christianity there was a gradual shift of emphasis from animal bodies in sacrificial rituals to the human body. Acts 10 could thus be seen as a site from which such a shift from animals to humans could take place as Christianity became Christianity. Explaining the importance of animal sacrifices in the Roman Empire and the cult of the emperor Gilhus explains how multitudes of animals were sometimes slaughtered in orgies of ritual killing. On the accession of Caligula, for example, 16, 000 cows are recorded to have been sacrificed in Rome over the course of three months.⁹³ There was criticism of such blood sacrifices; after the first century, Christian polemic against blood sacrifice was presented, she argues persuasively, “in an apologetic context and was an ingredient in standard Christian counterattacks against paganism”.⁹⁴ She proposes that Christians

⁹¹ Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans*, 2-3. Mary Douglas discusses this too in her discussion of purity and its relationship to religion and conceptions of holiness. She describes this issue of purity and cleanliness as a criterion for classing religions as either advanced or primitive. “If primitive, then rules of holiness and rules of uncleanness were indistinguishable; if advanced then rules of uncleanness disappeared from religion. They were relegated to the kitchen and bathroom and to municipal sanitation, nothing to do with religion. The less uncleanness was concerned with physical conditions and the more it signified a spiritual state of unworthiness, so much more decisively could the religion in question be recognised as advanced.” Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966), 11.

⁹² Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans*, 4.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 148. Gilhus describes how pagan gods were imagined as demons and blood sacrifice was seen as feeding such evil demons. This can be seen in Athenagoras’ *A Plea for the Christians* (from the second half of the second century) and Origen’s *Exhortation to Martyrdom* (from the late second to mid-third century).

substituted the animal body for the human body, most prominently “in the master body of Christ”.⁹⁵ Essentially, then, Greco-Roman sacrificial discourse was continued but combined with the spiritualizing and personalizing religious trends associated with early Christian groups. In the Eucharist the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ was celebrated and seen as a higher form of sacrifice, thus implicitly trumping animal sacrifice with not only human sacrifice but a death considered to be *the* human sacrifice.⁹⁶ Thus, for Christians, Gilhus goes on, “the animal sacrifice was a significant cultural borderline between themselves and pagans”.⁹⁷ While animal sacrifice became linked to barbarism⁹⁸, much sacrificial language can be found in the New Testament.⁹⁹ “Real animals were excluded from Christian rituals, but animal imagery was still used, for instance when Christ was identified with the sacrificial lamb.”¹⁰⁰ But the human body essentially took the place of the animal body; to become Christian was also sometimes construed as passing from a bestial state to full humanity.¹⁰¹ Baptism was one important trope for being reborn and receiving true life, and has a prominent place in Acts 10 as the pinnacle of the fellowship portrayed.¹⁰² Through the ritual of baptism, humans could become “real” humans, while pagans remained animals. “To be an animal implies not being fully alive”.¹⁰³

Discussing the Christian reaction to dietary laws Gilhus mentions Acts. She makes the connection between the reaction against dietary prescriptions and animals fading out of focus, becoming thus less relevant to what became Christianity in contrast to their important place in the Mosaic laws.¹⁰⁴ As she notes, this subject is most vividly described in Acts 10:10-16, and Acts 11:5-10. In the narrative of Peter’s vision the verb θύω – to sacrifice – is now used for the *killing* of animals rather than the special sacrifice of some selected animals. Now animals fulfil “their true destiny as food for humans”¹⁰⁵ and

Such arguments grew in the third and fourth centuries. In *The Preparation for the Gospel*, Eusebius follows Porphyry in criticizing animal sacrifices as a degeneration of humanity. He holds up the Eucharist as the proper form of ritual, celebrating the only proper sacrifice, that is Jesus. Tertullian’s *Apologeticus* from the turn of the third century and Arnobius’ *Against the Gentiles* from the turn of the fourth century expand on such critiques. At the end of the fourth century animal sacrifice is banned by Theodosius I. *Ibid.*, 147-159.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 158.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 166.

Christians need reject no food.¹⁰⁶ The implications are that the butchering of animals from now on is to be secularized. Gilhus concludes that

it is clear that one important way in which the Christians defined their relationship to other people was through their attitude to these people's use of meat and sacrifices. Christians differed from Jews because they ate meat that was prohibited according to Jewish dietary proscriptions and from pagans because they did not sacrifice animals or eat meat that they knew had been taken from animals that had been sacrificed. By eating some types of meat and not eating others, the Christians erected barriers against Judaism and paganism and laid a foundation for their emergence as an independent religion.¹⁰⁷

This is not a shift about animals, but about the people who eat and sacrifice them, about distinctions of difference. According to Gilhus the New Testament more generally takes away focus from animals.¹⁰⁸ With its emphasis on the human instead of animal body, she describes a hermeneutic movement in many New Testament texts that point away from literal meaning of animals towards allegorical meanings.¹⁰⁹ Thus, to be a fisher of men and casting one's net for those who will be part of the Kingdom of God is not about *fish* at all, but rather the fish function as mere ciphers for humans. "When differences are wiped out, sameness abides, and from now on the internal differences between animals were made subordinate to their fundamental difference from man."¹¹⁰ But arguably it is not as simple and clear-cut as that. Is the distinction between "humans" and "animals" drawn quite so starkly in Acts 10? I will argue that it is possible to read Acts 10 in more disquieting ways for both humans and animals. On the one hand, it can be read in a far *more* sinister way for inter-human relationships as well as human-animal relations. On the other, it could be read as a radical opening of hospitality to animals as fellow creatures.

The Animal Vision: Killability or Hospitality?

It is perfectly clear that Peter's vision refers to the distinction between, and designation of, clean and unclean animals. From the actions that follow this vision and Peter's own comment about no longer considering 'anyone profane or unclean' (10:28), it is also clear that when he utters these words to Cornelius he is referring both back to his vision and to

¹⁰⁶ See also I Cor. 8:8, I Tim. 4:4, Matt. 15:11-19.

¹⁰⁷ Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans*, 166. Of course, another way of seeing this is precisely as the opposite to erecting boundaries, namely in the desire for a *lack* of boundaries in a universal fellowship where distinctions in tradition, law and ethnicity precisely do not become barriers to fellowship.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 167.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 167-168.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 166.

the Gentiles he is in company with. Pervo highlights that the revelation to Peter is not simply given, rather, the “revelation is an interpretation of the vision” that unfolds in Peter’s encounter with Cornelius.¹¹¹ “That interpretation is the moment of decision.”¹¹² This, Pervo argues, is *Peter’s* moment of conversion, which is presented not as a direct command, although this is implied in the vision itself, but as the result of Peter’s reflection.¹¹³ Seemingly, this interpretive move draws a connection between the vision of animals and accepting the hospitality of Gentiles. Gentiles are conceived as analogous to the now universally clean animals. *Like* animals, the Gentiles must *similarly* not be considered profane, common or unclean. The NRSV translation of this verse states that Peter has learnt he must not call “anyone” unclean, but in the original Greek the word that is used is ἄνθρωπος, that is a man or human. Peter has understood his vision as: he must call no man or *human* unclean. This is the crucial interpretive leap that takes place in this text. Acts implies that that the impetus for the gentile mission is a consequence of the decision to interpret the vision in a non-literal way.¹¹⁴ In other words, to understand the vision as being about Gentiles or humans more generally rather than *about* animals per se. Dunn spells this out in two stages, first, that Peter recognises God makes no distinctions between “human beings in general as to their acceptability or unacceptability on grounds of their basic identity (ethnic, social or religious)”.¹¹⁵ Secondly, “on the basis of that recognition” Peter sees that God accepts Cornelius and his fellow Gentiles in the outpouring of the spirit in 10:44-46.¹¹⁶ Peter tacitly constructs an analogous connection between the animals once considered unclean and the Gentiles once considered not to be the people of God.

Derrida proposes that analogies designate “the place of a question rather than that of an answer”.¹¹⁷ An analogy “is always a reason, a *logos*, a reasoning, or even a calculus that moves back up toward a relation of production, or resemblance, or comparability in which identity and difference coexist”.¹¹⁸ In other words, difference between the elements involved in an analogy is imperative in order to set up a relation between one distinct element and another. But at the same time, by setting up such a relation, the analogy is

¹¹¹ Ibid, 274.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Pervo, *Acts*, 274-275.

¹¹⁵ Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 134-135

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 135.

¹¹⁷ BS I, 14.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

assuming, or perhaps rather creating, a comparability or resemblance between the two anomalous elements to become analogous. If notions of “clean” and “unclean” are not arbitrary designations but concerned with the *ordering* of ideas, or a way to map out moral analogies on the bodies of animals, as Mary Douglas has suggested,¹¹⁹ what sort of re-ordering takes place and what happens to the analogous elements in play? What happens in the analogical leap from animals being clean to Gentiles being clean? If analogies draw different elements into play in order to shift from one to another, are there not necessarily connections conceived between these elements, even if the original element is conceived as merely a cipher to be moved away from? Can such connections be entirely dismembered or ignored?

The vision could of course be read as referring *only* to food laws and the dismissal of such laws regarding animal distinctions. In this case the hospitality accepted by Peter from Cornelius would merely be the consequence of foregoing such divisive laws. There is thus no practical, ritual obstacle to their eating together any longer. But in that case Peter's comment to Cornelius would appear strange, where he refers back to his own vision about animals but replaces the animals with “human”, thus mapping the meaning of the vision onto Gentiles. Peter clearly makes a connection between the now universally clean animals and the Gentiles he encounters, now no longer to be considered ‘unclean’ (ἀκάθαρτος) or ‘common’ (κοινός) in 10:28, the very words used of the animals in the vision (10:14). A reasoning is at work in this analogy that sets up a closer resemblance between animals and humans than has been acknowledged. Rachel Muers discusses the way in which Adams, in *Neither Man Nor Beast*, suggests that nonhuman animals in Christian history do not even get so far as being marginalized.¹²⁰ This is perhaps the case with the reception of Acts 10 (and its own narrative trajectory after the appearance of the animals), whose animals are so erased that they are not even side-lined. Muers points out that in many cases, *how* to read nonhuman animals in texts depends on the question of how to treat the “literal sense”.¹²¹ Reading Acts 10 more “literally” then, will yield other interpretive results than the human universalism emphasised that neglects animal life altogether. Crucially, if the emphasis on

¹¹⁹ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 41, 43.

¹²⁰ Rachel Muers, “The Animals We Write On: Encountering Animals in Texts”, in *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans and Other Animals*, eds., Celia Deane-Drummond and David Clough (London: SCM Press, 2009), 138.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, 139. Reading the biblical texts more literally is perhaps also in tune with Derrida's own encounters with biblical literature, as Sherwood's characterisation of Derrida notes: “against all stereotypes, Derrida is something of a literalist” when it comes to the Bible, desiring to interrogate its symbols and metaphors and its material productions. Sherwood calls his approach “faithfulness-rupture”. Sherwood, “Introduction: Derrida's Bible”, 2-3.

universalism in scholarship is to be followed, then the cessation of distinctions between animals is precisely the ground upon which distinctions or discriminations amongst humans cease. What, then, does this mean for animals when read more literally, rather than the immediate analogical jump from animals to *humans* or *Gentiles*?

To recapitulate, in his vision, Peter is shown a large sheet descended from heaven, on which all kinds of four-footed animals, reptiles and birds of the sky feature (10:12). When Peter is told by a voice: 'Get up Peter; kill and eat' (10:13), Peter refuses, asserting: 'By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean' (10:14). The voice then says a second time that what 'God has made clean, you must not call profane' (10:15). This message is emphatically driven home by its repetition three times before the sheet ascends (10:16). As Dunn notes, the interlocking visions of Cornelius and Peter (recalled again in 10:30; 11:5-10) similarly emphasise the divine approval given by the narrative: "God approves and wills the next step."¹²² What appears to have taken place is that the animals that were once considered unclean or profane are now deemed clean, and Peter, already described as hungry (10:10), can eat freely. As a result of Peter's vision, all animals ought to be considered clean – thus making it possible for Peter to kill and eat any of the previously prohibited animals shown in the sheet – and so *all* animals are indiscriminately killable and edible. Linzey and Cohn-Sherbok exclaim about this passage: "the implications for the moral status of animals are" "not encouraging".¹²³ Seen in this light, this is a biblical text that might furnish an example of the "Bible" or the "Christian" tradition as de-sanctifying and demoting animal life by turning animals from distinct and differentiated creatures into the catch-all concept of the animal in general singular – as Gilhus suggested. If the Leviticus and Deuteronomy passages that delineate clean and unclean animals and the particular ways in which animal slaughter and sacrifice should take place could be said to afford animals a somewhat more sacred status for clean animals, and a non-killable, non-edible status for unclean animals,¹²⁴ then Luke's supposed undoing of this demarcation is a de-sanctification and expansion of killability to *all* animals. As all clean and thus killable and edible, the category of "the animal" that Derrida criticizes so forcefully could be seen to emerge. As we saw with Gilhus, this change seemingly involves a sacralizing (humans)/desacralizing (animals) movement. Perhaps,

¹²² Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 131.

¹²³ Linzey and Cohn-Sherbok, *After Noah, Animals and the Liberation of Theology*, 4.

¹²⁴ I am not suggesting that protection of animal life was a motive behind the purity laws, rather that they might be seen as somewhat better for animals in that some were not deemed killable and so presumably fared better than in a world-view where most or all animals are seen as de facto killable, edible objects, though there are perhaps few human cultures that do regard *all* non-human animals as equally edible.

however, the distinction between humans and animals here is too starkly drawn, and the desacralizing movement is not so easily referable to animals only, but also to any *other*. If as Houston proposes, the object of dietary prescriptions, along with the prohibition of blood, was “to inculcate reverence for life”¹²⁵ then this change would imply a negation or rejection of such reverence.

A significant point arises from a more “literal” reading of the animal vision and its import, concerning the analogous connection between the animals of the vision and the encounter between Peter and Cornelius. What happens to the command that accompanies the vision of the animals to ‘Get up, kill and eat’ (10:14)? This command seemingly remains contained within the vision, and, like the animals, the command is never referred to again in regard to the rest of the narrative in Acts 10. But if it is Peter’s vision that furnishes the ground for his fellowship with Cornelius in the analogical connection he sets up from all kinds of animals to *humans* (and specifically to Cornelius), then there might appear to be a more sinister logic to this passage. The haunting command to “kill and eat” given to Peter in his vision, remains a tacit remainder in the encounter with the Gentiles in Cornelius’s home. Instead of retaining the specialness of God’s people as the people of Israel with laws of clean and unclean animals, this new commandment and vision undoes such distinctions, correlatively contracting any regard for the specialness of some life forms into the killability of *all* life as “clean” and thus edible and killable. As such, the universally killable animals are analogous to universally killable Gentiles. Not only detrimental to *all* animals in a wholesale way, but also, the logic of this analogy circumscribes Gentiles – and *all* – as similarly edible and killable. Further, as Gentiles in this passage seemingly symbolise the other who becomes a fellow, it is the other in general who becomes always already vulnerable to the carnivorous violence lurking between self and other in any community.

One objection to my reading is to see the animals of Peter’s vision purely as a cipher for Jewish-Gentile fellowship and not intended to be taken literally in any sense. But such an objection fails to take account of the specificity of the context of Acts 10, situated as it is in the interaction between Jews and Gentiles over matters of the specific laws and relationships concerning animals. Additionally, it fails to recognize the impossibility of regarding a metaphor or analogy as merely the arbitrary construction of resemblance between two or more elements. Where there is an analogy, there also is a

¹²⁵ Houston, *Purity and Monotheism*, 76.

logic of similitude and a reason(ing) at work. Regardless of authorial intention, any metaphor or analogy continues to function and does so beyond control. If the analogy is held to mean one thing, namely that because animals are now all clean, Gentiles too are all clean, then it would be difficult to see why the other central tenets of the vision ought not to bear significance for the movement of meaning from clean animals to now clean Gentiles. Who can police what takes place in the symbols and play of an analogy? Who can say that “kill and eat” can be erased in relation to Gentiles whereas other aspects of the vision are significant, when Peter clearly states an analogical resemblance between the animals and Gentiles? Or erase for all time the animals altogether when their presence as the source of fellowship is so crucial? The relationship between Peter and animals as all clean takes place, after all, *before* his fellowship with the “cleansed” Cornelius. The human other comes *after*, following the animals. To hold that animality as a subject is entirely irrelevant to Acts 10 would be strange, considering the entire narrative context around fellowship, hospitality, eating and its relationship to food laws that build on laws relating to *animals*.

One way of understanding this, would be to see in this movement a fantasy for access and appropriation of those who could become missionized and baptized to be followers of Jesus. Such a desire for access and appropriation might be characterized as a *consumption* of what has been off limits but which now can be consumed or converted. Bovon suggests that conversion is clearly of the highest priority in Acts, and this drive for conversion could be understood as a desire for consuming and controlling the other.¹²⁶ Consumption and conversion become two sides of a coin, in the analogical resemblance between the edible, killable animals and the convertible, appropriable Gentiles: just as now the hungry Peter can eat *all* animals, he can consequently convert all others, thus construing a link between the possibility of indiscriminate consumption and indiscriminate conversion. Like Peter's hunger on the rooftop, prior to his vision, and the correlative admission to kill and eat all animals and any animal, a hunger for conversion and mission might be said to drive the “consumption” of Gentiles to also become followers of Jesus as Messiah. This would be a drive to make the other same or similar, and thus, the Gentile, who has hitherto, in caricature anyhow, remained an other to Jews, becomes made same. Rowe argues that Peter's “Lord of all” with his emphasis on “this one” as Lord of all, is a sign of rivalry against the Roman Emperor as Lords, intimating that an emergent Christian

¹²⁶ Bovon, *Studies in Early Christianity*, 32.

community of God under *their* Lord might fight back, teeth and claw. If as Ben Witherington III claims, Acts 10 shows the beginnings of the Christian movement spreading from Jerusalem to other parts of the Roman Empire, it seems that this origin point is located in this very issue of animals and power: social interaction and its power-dynamics. Esler reminds us of a later passage in Acts, namely 20:17-35 in which the Ephesian ἐκκλησία is portrayed as a flock, fighting against fierce wolves. What Luke conveys in terms of the troubles of the first Christian communities was, he argues, the notion of a flock, threatened by various enemies.¹²⁷ As such, the image of animality and violence in the proposed killability of all would be a recognition of both the power needed to survive as a new and emerging religious movement, and of the vulnerability as “edible” or killable in the face of enemies.¹²⁸ It is a case of Lawlor’s conclusion, that every “single other is wholly other (*tout autre est tout autre*), and therefore every single other might be the enemy”,¹²⁹ and further, that every fellow or neighbour who is lived *with, besides* or *near*, is always already potentially threatening rather than hospitable.¹³⁰ In other words, understood with the concomitant command to kill and eat, the violent undertones driving the mission to the Gentiles might be a potent response to Roman power¹³¹ as well as potentially strong Jewish opposition. Denise Kimber Buell too remarks on the way early Christianity has become associated with “an inclusive movement that *rejected* ethnic or racial specificity as a condition of religious identity”.¹³² She posits the view that many early Christian texts in fact utilized discourses relating to ethnicity, race and religion to promote itself as authoritative,¹³³ showing how this often went hand in hand with an anti-Judaism.¹³⁴ Buell suggests that early Christianity used “ethnic reasoning”¹³⁵ to “legitimize

¹²⁷ Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*, 26. Esler also reminds us that this “separateness” and “fragility” is also reflected in Luke 12.32 around the notion of a flock. *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ It is much debated how harmonious or deleterious the relationship between early Christianity and the Roman Empire is in Luke’s writings. Nasrallah, for example, sees in Acts the attempt to find a place for “the Way” *within* a system of Roman power. As such, Acts tells “a story of the origins of a Christian city league that might be comprehensible and attractive to Rome, and in its logic offers seeds for a Christian empire that resembles the Roman Empire”. Nasrallah, “The Acts of the Apostles, Greek Cities, and Hadrian’s Panhellenion,” 534-536.

¹²⁹ Lawlor, *This Is Not Sufficient*, 71.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ As Rowe admits, however, it is a complex matter to conclude on the loyalties of Luke-Acts in regard to the Roman Empire, and whether Luke can be said to pay obeisance to Rome (in his address to the clearly Roman Theophilus or in his favourable portrayal of the Roman centurion Cornelius), or whether underlying tensions and protestations against Rome can be discerned and unpacked in the text. See Rowe’s work for fuller discussion.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 1.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹³⁵ Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race? Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 1.

various forms of Christianness as the universal, most authentic manifestation of humanity”, offering a way for Christians to define themselves up and against others and a way to assert superiority as precisely the universal.¹³⁶ As she points out, ethnicity was played out in a dynamic of fixed race and mutable identity, arguing that Christianity capitalized on this discourse with the possibility of conversion as *rebirth* and baptism as *new life*. To gain rebirth or new life, however, one must first be killed/“killed”.

Another way of understanding such a carnivorous logic of conversion-consumption is by identifying it with the shift from animal symbolism and sacrifices to an at least symbolic form of human sacrifice, as I discussed earlier in regard to Gilhus’ views. In the discourse around Jesus as the sacrificial human victim, and the “cannibalistic” symbolism of the Lord’s Supper, we find a table fellowship in which the eating and drinking of Jesus’s flesh and blood become one of the primary rituals for Christianity.¹³⁷ Like Gilhus discussed above, Hans-Josef Klauck writes about the centrality of sacrificial practice as a social and religious ritual in classical antiquity. In addition to pagan animal sacrifices, of course sacrifices were offered in the temple in Jerusalem, which was in full function until its destruction in 70 CE.¹³⁸ Klauck argues that, like Judaism, one of the striking aspects of the emergence of Christianity was the way in which it took on a sacrificial culture.¹³⁹ “Not only does sacrifice remain alive in Christianity as a theological and spiritual category; it even achieves a stable position in the heart of Christian thought and Christian piety.”¹⁴⁰ As I discussed above, while Judaism was associated with certain practices in relation to animals and sacrifice, a form of controlled and systematized ritual violence, Christianity’s focus on sacrifice is less a break from Judaism and could thus be seen more as a shift from animality to a *human* or humanist emphasis. Thus, a carnivorous and cannibalistic logic emerges in Acts 10 that arguably could be seen as foregrounded in the understanding of Peter’s vision as the edibility and killability of animals *and* humans as clean. However this is glossed, it is impossible to disregard the direct commandment to kill and eat in the vision that haunts the fellowship with Gentiles when transferred from animals to men, or by extension, to *all*.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹³⁷ References in the New Testament to this table fellowship can be found in 1 Corinthians 10.16-17, with references to the body and blood of Christ, and in Luke 22.15-20.

¹³⁸ Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions*, trans. Brian McNeil (London/New York: T & T Clark, 2000), 12.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* For a further discussion of sacrificial cults and their context, see particularly Klauck’s first chapter “Daily Life and Liminal Experiences: Civic and Domestic Religion,” in *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions*.

What the narrative of Acts 10 stages is a shift from an acceptance of the law of clean and unclean animals to the animal in general singular, and, a shift from the separation between Jews and Gentiles to an all-encompassing and indiscriminate mission and fellowship in the erasure of the food-laws. No laws, then, protect any animals, in principle, from killability and edibility. Further, read more closely, the shift that takes place ensures the killability of all humans too who are similarly deemed “clean”. If Peter correlates Gentiles with these now killable and edible animals, the mission to the Gentiles takes on a more sinister appearance. By this logic, Gentiles – like all animals – fall into a universal category of creatures that are *all* in principle killable. Without the distinctions between animals – as clean or unclean – and the rituals associated with slaughter and sacrifice, animals arguably could become *unthinkingly* and *generally* killed and eaten without notions of law, ethics, fellowship or hospitality coming into play. As a result, shifting analogically towards Gentiles or humans, the “other” in general thus becomes vulnerable to a carnivorous logic. Such a foundational violence at the heart of this universalism would spell out a power-play couched in the terminology of accepted consumption and killability of animals, but extended beyond animals to others. Rather than a universal openness to all, such a dynamic would be characterized by a limitless carnivorous logic.

The second possible conclusion derived from the logic of Peter’s vision and its consequences is contradictory to the first. Namely, that if the Gentiles are thus conceived of as equals under an impartial God and Lord of all, it would seem the animals too – now no longer perceived as unclean – are clean in the sense given to the Gentiles, *as fellows*. Pervo draws attention to the evocation of Gen. 1:24-25, 6:20 and 7:14 in the animal categories of Peter’s vision, as a form of Gentile Christian apologetic that is arguing against Mosaic regulations by appealing to “the original intent of the creator, in this instance, the goodness of creation”.¹⁴¹ In other words, the vision – with its different kinds of animals that mirror the groups of animals in Genesis – is revealing the goodness of *all* creation, without separation between animals as clean or unclean. Difference is preserved without qualitative distinctions in terms of goodness. If the link between Gentiles as clean and thus fellows is so clear, then why is the relation to animals as those who first became clean equally clear, as the very ground upon which an understanding of clean Gentiles is founded? The transformation of the category of “Gentile” to be considered clean and thus

¹⁴¹ Pervo, *Acts*, 269-270.

included in Peter's mission and fellowship *is founded in* the transformation of animals from partially clean to all completely clean, and thus, they too presumably are to be considered fellows, included in this hospitality. In fact, the animals would form the very foundation for fellowship and hospitality. Rather than an indiscriminate killability then, the vision leads to an unconditional hospitality. In this sense, Acts 10 could indeed be read as a universalizing move, but not in the exclusively human terms usually assumed, or merely in regard to the Jewish-Gentile, Jewish-Christian-Roman, but in a larger embrace of animals too as fellows. The premise for Gentile fellowship would be precisely animal fellowship, thus inscribing the animal other as the first-comer, and the logical next step extending to Gentiles, and as such every other. The vision stating that nothing God has made clean should be considered unclean would refer not only to humans or particular group identities in the context of this text. Rather, it could be read as deeming nothing "profane" or "common" and thus not demoting or discriminating against *anyone* on the grounds of profanity or impurity. As the animals are at the heart of this conclusion with regard to Gentiles, it would seem strange to exclude them from consideration. Douglas suggests that to "some extent men covenanted with their land and cattle in the same way as God covenanted with them".¹⁴² Clean animals, such as cattle, were "literally domesticated as slaves. They had to be brought into the social order to enjoy the blessing".¹⁴³ Here the ambiguity of this position is at its most poignant: being "clean" involved being brought into a social order as fellow creatures, but the cattle of course, are also deemed "slaves".

If scholarship has followed in Peter's interpretive footsteps and accepted the equality of Jews and Gentiles, of humans, rather than attend to the implications of the vision in both a closer and larger sense, it is perhaps because of the automatism that marks animals off from the ethical circuit as edible and killable by tacit common sense agreement. The command to kill and eat is thus left unquestioned because we all know *who* is eaten and who is not: Gentiles would not be suitable subjects for consumption, whereas animals are. Gentiles might be suitable subjects for hospitality; animals are "naturally" not. Animals are not seen as a central concern for a biblical text even if they constitute the central tenet of a visionary experience in such a text. What the analogy of Acts 10 foregrounds, however, in the most basic sense, is the way in which various groups of people might categorise one another as too other for fellowship, and the ease of limiting fellowship and "fraternity" – itself of course a limited and limiting name. If Peter's vision

¹⁴² Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 54.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

undoes such distinctions and exemplifies this with the hospitality given by Cornelius “the unclean Gentile” and accepted by Peter “the clean Jew”, then it also opens up for the possibility of other distinctions being undone and reconstructed with a greater regard for the life of all.

Like the hospitality now open to Gentiles, then, animals too would be possible subjects of hospitality, open to a fellowship and recognition in difference but not domination or demotion. Of course, this sounds somewhat absurd, as if I (or the text) were proposing a C.S. Lewis Narnia scene of human and animal fellowship, or inviting to a Lewis Carroll Mad Hatter Tea party overlooked by the Cheshire Cat.¹⁴⁴ It is not that I am attempting to conflate humans with animals or animals with humans and am thus proposing an invitation of animals to our dinner-tables or humans to the drinking-trough. It is not about erasing or conflating difference and complexity. But it *is* about rethinking the boundaries of hospitality when it comes to power and the very real performance of power regarding who or what sits *on* the table awaiting to be eaten – as life that is categorised as fundamentally edible – and *who* are privileged to partake and participate *around* the table in this spectacle of power, man over beast, humans over non-humans, or, as this text shows between different groups of people. Further, then, the automatic assumption that violence and murder is only prohibited between humans by law, might be opened to a law that – on principle – forbids deliberate and unthinking violence and killing of animals. In this sense, the change in status of animals as now all *clean* would not be a death sentence to “the animal” but rather the contrary, an elevation of animals to hospitality in a dream for universal and unconditional fellowship.

Animal Categories and the “Judeo-Christian”

Derrida’s critique of the “Thou shalt not kill” as an ethical principle that contains the corrosive effects of exclusion and exception shows how the acceptance of the killability of some life forms opens up for the calculability of the “other” who can be included or excluded, met with violence or welcomed according to ethnic, national, cultural, political, economic, or religious strategies. Implicit conceptions of universalism as “Christian” and

¹⁴⁴ Incidentally, another less explicit consistent reference-point throughout Derrida’s *The Animal that Therefore I am* is precisely Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, and he himself admits that although he does not have time to do so, he would have liked “to inscribe my whole talk within a reading of Lewis Carroll. In fact you can’t be certain that I am not doing that, for better or for worse, silently, unconsciously, or without your knowing”. TATTIA, 7.

exclusivity and intolerance as “Jewish” sometimes lurk in scholarship on this text.¹⁴⁵ Such an assessment would fit with Derrida’s reading of the “Thou shalt not kill” as an ethical law that has posed as universal but rests on an exclusion of the animal other.

If there is in some scholarship on Acts 10 a tendency to map an emergent Christianity onto concepts of universalism and openness to the (Gentile) other, then the failure to perceive this second possible reasoning of the passage of animals also as fellows, becomes a way to forge a universalism embedded in an embryonic *humanism*. In other words, the universal conceived of as Peter’s Lord of all and impartial God, would only be partial in fact to human life, and a Lord not to “all” but to all *humans*. Or, indeed, as a humanist universalism.¹⁴⁶ This universalism is thus undercut by the tacit exclusion of the animal lives that are at the source of the so-called universalism. If the interpretation of Acts 10 as a universalist-humanist move has been used as an attempt to dismember a perceived “Jewish” past (signifying exclusive particularity and primitivism) and forge a ruptured or reformed Judaism in Christianity, such a humanist universalism is still wholly in line with the “Thou shalt not kill” understood as “Thou shalt not murder (humans)”. A generous interpretation of such views – seeing in it more than anti-Jewish, pro-Christian propaganda – might conclude that Acts 10 represents a dream for universal hospitality, fellowship and liberation from entrenched separations between groups of people, but that – perhaps inevitably – remains limited in scope – inevitably, because any dream for such an infinite, open hospitality is perhaps the impossible. A less generous interpretation would propose that at the very foundations of the emergent Christianity in Acts, there is an unacknowledged violence in the exclusive humanism allied to the command to kill and eat that has been forgotten and repressed. Muers argues that negative views of “‘the animal’, ‘the literal’ and ‘the Jew’ have often gone together in Christian history, with results ranging from the faintly problematic to the disastrous”.¹⁴⁷ “For multiple reasons, therefore, including the rethinking of relationships between and within human communities, it may be time to look again at the animals in the margins.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ In the Wycliffe Commentary of 1963, F.F Bruce construes Acts 10 as staging an opposition between Jewish obstinacy and Gentile openness, in discussing “the rejection of the Gospel by the Jews and its reception by the Gentiles”. Rather patronisingly and with anti-Jewish tones, he adds that this impartiality of God “was a great lesson for a Jew to learn”. Bruce, Wycliffe, 1143.

¹⁴⁶ Buell suggests this point in her criticism of a Christian universalism that is construed as superior and above ethnic difference, but that is nonetheless rooted in ethnic discourse and exclusions. Buell, *Why This New Race?*, 11.

¹⁴⁷ Muers, “The Animals We Write On: Encountering Animals in Texts”, 150.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Much discussion in scholarship on Acts is given to questions over the explicit or embedded “Jewishness” or emergent “Christianness” of the text. This is also important for Acts 10 in particular, for judging the import of Peter’s meeting with Cornelius. I suggest that the apparent “sectarianism” of the text, *and*, at the same time, difficulties in delineating who belongs to what group or group identity, could be read as exemplified in the various groups of animals mentioned in Peter’s vision and their emphatic similitude as all similarly *clean*. If this is recognised, then the differences between various groups or group identities as well as a “universalism” after all the animals are made *similarly* clean, can be seen as staged on this blue-print of animal difference and sameness (as clean). The “Judeo-Christian” is thus both a designation for a complex and ambiguous inter-mingling, and a performance of “same” and “other”, played out over the animals in Peter’s vision.

In Bovon’s assessment of Luke-Acts he proposes that it is a text that is “both the most open to universalism and the most favourable to Israel”,¹⁴⁹ identifying the Jewish roots and a desired universal expansion in equal measure.¹⁵⁰ David Pao sees Acts as continuous with a Jewish past and tradition in what he calls the “model of the Isaianic New Exodus in which the salvation of the Gentiles becomes part of the program of the reconstitution of Israel”,¹⁵¹ thus paving the way for a narrative attuned to its Jewish tradition. How much Jewish-Gentile separation was upheld in terms of social intercourse is debatable,¹⁵² and how this took place in practice is difficult to verify.¹⁵³ Tyson, for instance, calls Acts profoundly anti-Jewish and pro-Jewish at the same time.¹⁵⁴ In regard to Luke’s writings, Jervell asks whether it is “mere coincidence or solely pious ornamentation that the alleged universalistic gospel of Luke insists on a circumcised Messiah?”¹⁵⁵ Jervell is keen to point out that scholars have been too quick to promote Luke as an advocate of Christianity as a universal people of God.¹⁵⁶ In other words, it is too early a text to speak of coherent, systematic theologies of “Christianity” and too simplistic to cut across people

¹⁴⁹ Bovon, *Studies in Early Christianity*, 31.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic Exodus*, 96.

¹⁵² One example of this is Cornelius’s slightly more complex position as a figure neither wholly Gentile nor Jewish, but as a so-called “God-fearer”, a category thought to denote a group of Gentiles during the first century CE in the Roman Empire who were attracted to Judaism and took on some of its customs and beliefs, without undergoing circumcision or necessarily abiding by all the purity laws. See Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*, 36.

¹⁵³ See for example Esler who argues for a general separation of eating habits between Jews and Gentiles, in his chapter on “Table Fellowship” in *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology*.

¹⁵⁴ Tyson, *Images of Judaism in Luke-Acts*, viii.

¹⁵⁵ Jervell, “The Law in Luke-Acts,” 27.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 23.

along stark lines of religious affiliation and separation. Jervell proposes further that it is significant that the notion of the law in Luke-Acts appears to be tied to ritual aspects rather than moral, and so is about “the mark of distinction between Jews and non-Jews”.¹⁵⁷ Hence, the text plays out the construction of difference in visible signs or the negation of expected signs.¹⁵⁸ Although it is misleading to read Acts in terms of a rupture between Judaism and Christianity, Tyson draws attention to the fact that if – as is commonly thought – Luke wrote after the Roman destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70 CE, and after the surrender of the Jews to the Romans at the end of the first rebellion, i.e. 73-74 CE, this would be a crucial time for these communities to reflect and rethink their own identities.¹⁵⁹ Dunn notes the “sibling rivalry” or “sectarian” tension conveyed in Acts 10, and proposes that this tension was “integral, in fact, to Christianity’s emerging identity”.¹⁶⁰ Acts 10 stages both such connections and such tensions.

What seems to be overlooked is that this is played out in the classifications of different kinds of animals in Peter’s vision. The categories of animal presented in 10:12 are: four-footed (τετράπους), reptile (ἑρπετόν) and bird (πετεινός) (10:12). In other words, unlike Derrida’s animal in the general singular, the divisions here are three-fold, suggesting further ‘all kinds’ in πάντα preceding four-footed animals (10:12). Human groups and terms for different groups of people mirror this, featuring prominently, and suggesting the way in which the “animal” is not singular, but neither is the “human”: ἔθνος (10:45, Gentiles), λαός (10:2, 10:41, 42, people), ἀνὴρ (10:5, 10:17, 10:19, 10:21, man), συγγενής (10:24, relatives), φίλος (10:24, beloved or friend), ἄνθρωπος (10:26, man or human), Ἰουδαῖος (10: 28, Jew), ἀλλόφυλος (10:28, foreigner), περιτομῆς πιστοὶ (10:45, the circumcised believers), υἱοὶς Ἰσραὴλ (10:36: sons of Israel), μάρτυς (10:40, 10:41, witness). Such signifiers might well be evidence of what Nasrallah, following Buell, deems the prominent use of commonly available discourses about civic identity and ethnicity as well as notions of correct religious practice in Acts, to pose questions of affiliation, belonging and group loyalties within the Roman Empire, both for purposes of distinction and unification.¹⁶¹ But the implication is that while such differences might remain in discourses about identity and community, when *all* animals are made *similarly* clean and so enter into a shared state of life, so these human groups and classifications too are *similarly* brought together as

¹⁵⁷ Jervell, “The Law in Luke-Acts”, 25.

¹⁵⁸ Jervell discusses this passage in “The Law in Luke-Acts”, (in footnote no. 24) 26.

¹⁵⁹ Tyson, *Images of Judaism in Luke-Acts*, 4.

¹⁶⁰ Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, xii.

¹⁶¹ Nasrallah, “The Acts of the Apostles, Greek Cities, and Hadrian’s Panhellenion”, 535.

“clean”, for better or worse, as fellows or enemies. In this sense, the human fellowship discovered and emphasised in Acts 10 mirrors the shared state of life given to all animals, despite their differences. This explains, then, the way in which Acts 10 is on the one hand riveted by discussions of “Jewishness” and “Christian” identity as if they were clear-cut and differentiated, but at the same time is marked by the professed impossibility of delineating such stark identities and dividing people into distinct categories.

A Messianism for the Living and the Dead

There is another aspect of Acts 10 that becomes relevant regarding categorisations of humans and animals. This aspect comes to the fore in Peter's speech to the Gentiles in Cornelius's house. Although important – Rowe, for instance, calls it the climax of Acts 10¹⁶² – it is not usually mentioned in regard to the universalism of this chapter or its characterisations of different groups. Following on from Peter's speech about the impartial God and Jesus as Lord of all, Peter speaks of Jesus as the one ‘ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead’ (10:42). Directly before the Gentiles receive the ‘gift of the Holy Spirit’ (10:45), Jesus Christ as ‘Lord of all’ is also the one who will come to judge: not some groups, not even some groups of humans, but ‘the living and the dead’ (ζώντων καὶ νεκρῶν). Although nothing further is made of this here, arguably any latent humanism is undone in this category that orients itself around finite life and mortality. Pao calls this a “soteriological equality of the Jews and the Gentiles”.¹⁶³ He argues that the ancient Israelite tradition with its national story and special relationship with God is in fact a foundation narrative for Acts and the identity of the early Christians,¹⁶⁴ leading to a “redefinition of the people of God”.¹⁶⁵ At the same time, like the others who have commented on the potential radical nature of the equality and fraternity in Luke-Acts, Pao does not specifically discuss the soteriological equality as an embrace of all the living and all those who die – in other words, presumably, humans and animals alike. Rather he specifically identifies an equality between Jews, Gentiles, Christians as “all” and “living”.

However, amongst the complexities over who should be considered clean or unclean, Jew or Gentile, Acts 10 contains this point of opening to all who *live* and all who

¹⁶² Rowe, “Luke-Acts and the Imperial Cult: A Way through the Conundrum?”, 289.

¹⁶³ Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic Exodus*, 250.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

die as the condition for the “all” of Peter’s Lord of all. Such a reference to the living and the dead would confirm the interpretation of unconditional hospitality that posits animals too as fellows, moving beyond a *human* universalism to an equality of all *life* in the hands of the one who will come to judge. It would correlate with Derrida’s remark that “the *logos* of Christianity defines itself as the life of the living”,¹⁶⁶ beyond such classifications of “human” and “animal”. Such an understanding of this passage would be potentially open to “an *unconditional hospitality* that exposes itself without limit to the coming of the other, beyond rights and laws”¹⁶⁷ and also perhaps beyond “the profound strategy of all nationalisms, patriotisms, ethnocentrism” that work to limit fraternity.¹⁶⁸ Perhaps what the indiscriminate killability in Acts 10 shows, then, is Giorgio Agamben’s point about “life” in that it appears to be what is open, “*what cannot be defined, yet, precisely for this reason, must be ceaselessly articulated and divided*”.¹⁶⁹ In terms of the “ethics and politics of the living”, Derrida writes, we know “less than ever where to cut – either at birth or at death”.¹⁷⁰ “And this also means that we never know, and never have known, how to *cut up* a subject. Today less than ever.”¹⁷¹

In *The Beast and Sovereign vol. II*, Derrida obsessively returns to the questions of life and death, especially in regard to Heidegger and his contention that the animal does not die as such (as I explained above). To distinguish between man and animal “we must clarify the essence of the animality of the animal” “and the essence of the humanity of man” he writes.¹⁷² “Now we can determine the animality of the animal only if we have already shed light on life, the essence of the life of the living, what makes life life (*Lebendigkeit des Lebenden*, the livingness of the living), as opposed to the inanimate, the lifeless (*Leblosen*), of what cannot die.”¹⁷³ It seems clear to Derrida that it “belongs to the essence of life, and thus to animality, that the animal lives, that it is alive, because it can die”.¹⁷⁴ For Heidegger, he shows, the animal does not only have no relation to death as

¹⁶⁶ R, 146. I problematize and expand upon Derrida’s notion of the Christian *logos* in the following chapter.

¹⁶⁷ R, 149.

¹⁶⁸ PF, 237.

¹⁶⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004 [2002]), 13. Emphasis in original. See also Derrida’s critique of Agamben in BS I and his conception of life. Derrida comments on how Agamben *thinks* he can find a distinction between *bios* and *zoe* in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), and offers a critique of Agamben. BS I, 316.

¹⁷⁰ EW, 285.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² BS II, 113.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 115.

such, but to the structure of the “as such” in general.¹⁷⁵ Rather than pursue this line of thought, however, what Derrida does is to shift the parameters of the question of life and death, beyond that of the solipsistic subject contemplating its own mortality or relation to death. Derrida, as before, turns the question to what comes *after*, and death as a relation to the other “after you”, which is inscribed in a non-power and vulnerability. He reflects on death as a being-dead in the hands of the other. Derrida writes “that being dead, before meaning something quite different, means, for me, to be delivered over, in what remains of me, as in all my remains, to be exposed or delivered over with no possible defence, once totally disarmed, to the other, to the others”.¹⁷⁶ But having to presuppose that the others are those who might die after me, who might survive me, have at their disposal my remains. Derrida thus shifts the terms to the inherent powerlessness of the life of the living in their death, not their own death *as such*, whatever that might mean, but death as the limitation of the “I”, autonomy and responsibility, in the hands of the other who could be any other and do anything with my remains.

The other appears to me as the other as such, qua he, she, or they who might survive me, survive my decease and then proceed as they wish, sovereignly, and sovereignly have at their disposal the future of my remains, if there are any. That's what is meant, has always been meant, by ‘other’.¹⁷⁷

The category of “living and the dead” in Acts 10 could also be read in this light as a giving over of power to the judge to come, thus deferring judgement of distinctions, and rather yielding to a “to come” in which every life and death is given over to the other. In Derrida's reflections on the death of the self in the hands of the other, he proposes that the sovereignty of this other can also assert itself before I am dead. I can always die a living death at the hands of the potentially violent and violating other, they might put me to a living death.¹⁷⁸ “If there is an other to whom I am delivered over when I die a living death, it is par excellence, if I may say so, the one I call my fellow, the other mortal, the cannibal: not just the living carnivore (the beast), but the anthropophagic man, the cannibal.”¹⁷⁹ The other – as animal or human – is thus not automatically a responsive or welcoming other, but is always already potentially the powerful carnivore. This might well describe the power-play that lurks in Acts 10, the putting to death of another's life, the skulking cannibalism and carnivorous logic towards the other, the clean Gentiles and clean animals.

¹⁷⁵ TATTA, 142.

¹⁷⁶ BS II, 126.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 127.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 139.

Whether we are speaking about carnivorous consumption or a zeal for mission, the taking of another's life to name it otherwise, from one form of life to "death" or to "new life", there is a violent appropriation potentially at play.

But the issue raised in Acts 10 over Jewish/Christian and Gentile social intercourse is not finally resolved in or by chapter 10. Chapter 15 revisits this theme and brings it to a head. Here, the legitimacy of the mission to the Gentiles is more systematically questioned and confronted. As Pervo comments, this might seem surprising to the readers of Acts, as the issue seems wholly resolved with Cornelius' conversion in Acts 10.¹⁸⁰ But chapter 15 is "central in that it brings together the various threads of the plot": Peter with his mission, Paul and Barnabas with theirs, and those concerned with observance.¹⁸¹ It is the question of circumcision that sparks the debate afresh, prompting Paul and Barnabas amongst others to go to Jerusalem to resolve the issue once and for all (15:2). Speaking to members of the church, apostles and elders, some Pharisees amongst them exhort that believers must be circumcised and follow the Mosaic Law (15:5). In response to this and the discussion that follows, Peter gives a speech (15:7-11), where he again emphasises the lack of distinction between 'them and us' (15:9). Paul and Barnabas then tell the council about the work they have done with and through the Gentiles (15:12). Finally, James steps in and offers a speech (15:13-21), where he concludes they should not 'trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God' (15:19) but, as a compromise, they should ask that they will 'abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood' (15:20). The 'apostles and the elders with the consent of the whole church' (15:22) decide 'unanimously' (15:25) to adhere to James' suggestion and issue a letter with this request to 'the believers of Gentile origin in Antioch and Syria and Cicilia' (15:23), repeating James' words, to 'abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication' (15:29). The chapter ends in a triumphant tone (despite a rift between Paul and Barnabas), with exaltation (15:31), peace (15:33), the proclaiming of the 'word of the Lord' (15:35) and the 'strengthening of the churches' (15:41).

Clearly, this chapter with its so-called Apostolic Council serves the purpose of systematizing and confirming through explicit discussion and agreement what chapter 10 has already laid out through its narrative of vision, divine command, interpretation and

¹⁸⁰ Pervo, *Acts*, 368.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

encounter. Pervo confirms that this chapter does not break new ground but provides a further *theological* justification for Jewish-Gentile intercourse in James' reference to scripture (15:15-18), where he cites Amos on the possibility of *all people* to seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles (15:17).¹⁸² It is striking that although this chapter refers back to Peter's vision, the allusions to Mosaic Law do not include any reference to animals. Rather, the issue focused on is circumcision, which is abandoned as a demand for Gentiles. What remains, then, is the prohibition against 'pollution' (ἀλίσημα), 'fornication' (πορνεία), what is 'strangled' (πνικτός) and from 'blood' (αἷμα) (15:20), but Peter's animals are not mentioned, nor are the terms for profane (κοινός) or unclean (ἀκάθαρτος) used. It is as if the terms of debate have here already shifted from what could be seen as Peter's view of Gentiles essentially *as* or *like* unclean animals to a request for Gentiles to abstain from *associating* with particular practices, thus ensuring some continuity with Mosaic Law. In other words, chapter 10 has provided a foundation for chapter 15 in laying out the connections between unclean animals and Gentiles and breaking this connection by dismissing the category of "unclean" from God's creatures. Now, in chapter 15, the debate can be performed with a softer and more malleable perspective on the distinction separating Jews from non-Jews. The terms of profane and unclean are not brought up as measures for sharp distinctions; rather the issue of blood, strangulation and fornication is a compromise and question of association. This could be seen as a move from a formal and clear categorical distinction between clean/unclean to a rather more informal difference in degree between Jew and Gentile.

As Acts 15 shows, however, the category of "unclean" does not wholly disappear but continues to haunt this nascent Christian discourse. Acts 10 does not in fact successfully banish the idea of the "unclean". But, instead of being associated with Gentiles in general, the haunting form of "unclean" becomes a mark now of what is not-Christian. Gentiles might now be Christians: they are not *de facto* unclean. However, whoever does not follow the "Lord of all" and its advocates, or ignore the authority of the Apostolic Council, risk falling onto the side of the "unclean", a *persona non grata* outside-position. A discourse of pollution and association with what is unclean thus continues to linger as a different "them and us" discourse emerges in the multiplying Christian groups in Palestine. In this sense the Lord of "all" could potentially become a violent constraint to missionize and homogenise people into this "all" that is always already marked by particular power dynamics as to "same" and "other". The brother or fellow then risks

¹⁸² Pervo, *Acts*, 368.

becoming a *Christian* brother, and the other whom is outside is neither determinedly human nor animal but simply the non-Christian. This would be a *penning in* of difference in order to affirm the “all” in Christian terms. Such a perspective would erase otherness in the name of a universalism that is always prone to particular ideologies or theologies, and to the power of *this* ideology-theology over *that* ideology-theology. Even after the neat discussions and agreements of the Apostolic Council of chapter 15, then, irresolvable tensions persist as to who is a fellow and who is not as an “unclean” other.

At the same time, the desire to avoid blood could be read in conjunction with Jesus as the judge of the living and the dead, in a testament to the shared mortality of humans and animals as creatures of flesh and *blood*. The reminder to avoid blood, then, would be a reminder of the mortality of *all* and the Lord who is precisely Lord of *all life*, all-the-living, all-the-dying. As I argued in the chapter on Genesis 9, the reference to “life blood” and the life-blood of the other/brother is confused and confusing. Who is this other? Who is my brother? Do I abstain from consuming the blood of every other or only who I *deem* or recognise *as* my brother? If animals are all clean, as Peter’s vision affirms, but blood must be avoided, as Acts 15 confirms, perhaps the conclusion is indeed that animals – like Gentiles – are fellows that are to be *lived with* rather than lived off.

Mortability

Rather than being merely an evil to be avoided, the tension between otherness and risk of violence is arguably inherent in the very structure of the relationship between self and other for Derrida. An ethics that is awakened, is awakened precisely to the dangers and risks of otherness, to the impossibility of a guaranteed safe encounter with the other, because this other cannot be programmed in advance, nor can a violent response to an “after you” be foreclosed absolutely and thus immunized against. To immunize against such potential violence is to refuse encountering the other *as* other, in the same vein as a system of ethics that precludes animals would be a programmed relationality to the other as a prescribed, particular and pre-ordained “other”. Ways in which Lordship and power are understood are also pertinent in Acts 10. Rowe argues that the Lordship Luke proposes for Jesus as the universal Lord of all in Acts 10 is not as one wielding “overwhelming and intrusive power, or, as Seneca put it for the young Nero, arbitrating ‘life and death for the nations’”, rather, Lordship is construed as humility or service.¹⁸³ In this sense, the deferral

¹⁸³ Rowe, “Luke-Acts and the Imperial Cult: A Way through the Conundrum?”, 289.

of Jesus's judgement as the one who will come again, is not an awaiting of a powerful force to violently or forcefully re-insert distinctions and assessments, but also participates in the encounter with the other that abides in vulnerability and an "after you": the judge too will come *after*.

Here we return to the God Derrida describes with regard to God's human subjects, the brothers Cain and Abel. God is a figure who waits to see how the two brothers will act, and whose judgement appears suspended, giving over responsibility to the two brothers to decide how to respond to animals, to one another and to God. The "Thou shalt not kill" – for Derrida's condition for ethics as a principle protecting all life – then, would be an opening to killability as the *mortality* of *all* the living, the vulnerability and non-power of the capacity to die. In addition to symbolizing the vulnerability in regard to the other as precisely an other (who may kill), killability would become not the legitimization of one's death at the hands of the other but rather *mortality*: the ability or capacity to die. It would mark the beginning of the possibility of hospitality, of a decision to not kill and eat the other that would instantiate a possible fellowship in a *shared* mortality and vulnerability. Such an ethics would do justice to the "unsubstitutional singularity" and incalculability that is the mark of every other.¹⁸⁴

The aporia of the two conclusions from the vision in Acts 10 must perhaps remain an aporia. But, there is a way of thinking this contradiction together, in Derrida's awakening to the conditions for ethics in the response to the animal other. What Derrida's discussion of the "Thou shalt not kill" arguably leads to is precisely these two strands of thought. He proposes a radicalised position in regard to the other and ethics that resists programming the other in advance as human, or otherwise, before deciding what is owed to this other. This takes the form of an unconditional hospitality. In this sense, he opens up to the animal as a fellow or neighbour; animals ought, as such, be included in an ethical circuit that always already prescribes more responsibility. The ethical response to every other, then, is always excessive and thus always culpable, at fault. Naturally, not *all* life can be protected at every time. Of course there are numerous lives we sacrifice by not saving them from being trod underfoot, from the streets, the animal depots, starvation and extinction. But Derrida refuses an easy answer that would redeem such sacrifice of life as acceptable, as killable. Many such deaths are perhaps inevitable but they cannot for that reason be enshrined in ethics or law as acceptable or legitimized by allowing in advance a

¹⁸⁴ TATTIA, 9.

vast number of living creatures be subsumed in a category as “killable” or dispensable, or simply not worthy of our ethical consideration and compassion. His condition for ethics as a regard for all life is perhaps the impossible, but as such it opens up for the only possible attitude that could be regarded as ethics at all: a radical regard for the life of the other whom I come after, and the vulnerability of their life in a finitude that is shared. This takes the form of a vision of an infinite and unconditional hospitality in the recognition of every other as a fellow, a neighbour to whom I respond. Such a foundation for ethics might be considered idealistic, but Derrida’s notion of the other is not uncritically naïve. This is where the first interpretation of the vision in Acts 10 comes in, as indiscriminate killability. The killability of all that this interpretation prescribes is perhaps nothing but the recognition of the mortality and vulnerability of all life and the potential violence and risk of every other. The sovereignty of the other might always present itself as a carnivorous consumption of my life, a taking of life or putting to death. Such a risk is inherent to any encounter, and perhaps even more so in the scenes of hospitality foregrounded in a fellowship that welcomes in principle every other and allows this other to go before me and take a place besides me at my table.

Conclusion: Hospitality Now

I have discussed the ways in which Derrida uses the biblical commandment “Thou shalt not kill” as a spring-board to challenge the accepted killability of animals. He uses the notion of a stark divisibility between humans and animals to think further about the life of (all) the living, the fellow and the other, the pathos of compassion and mortality, the finitude of life. The purportedly universal law against killing is founded on an exclusion that undercuts the very possibility of upholding such a law without the possibility of further and potentially limitless exceptions and exclusions. The animal other is conceived of as killable in principle, and as such, other “others” become construable as “animal”.

Interpreting Acts 10 has demonstrated the tension over animal killability in regard to classifications of what it means to be Jewish, Christian and Gentile as well as in regard to notions of fellowship in the biblical archive. The narrative showcases this tension in relation to the law not to kill and its concomitant clauses of clean/unclean. While scholarship on Acts 10 has frequently emphasized the differentiations between Jews, Jewish Christians and Gentiles, exegetes have at the same time endowed this passage with

a strong sense of universalism and a move towards universal fellowship. By interrogating these claims to universalism, I have been able to show that both the scholarship and the narrative seemingly lean towards a *human* universalism, undercut by the forgetfulness of, or disregard for, the animals on which inclusive fellowship and equality is founded.

Examining more closely the animal vision in Acts 10 and its analogy between clean/unclean animals and Jews/Gentiles, I have shown that it yields two possible interpretations in seemingly stark contrast to one another. The first interpretation emphasises the command in Peter's vision to kill and eat in the new cleanness of all animals and by extension Gentiles. The shift from laws of clean/unclean, then, and the opening up to Gentiles, is a move that carries with it a violence and acceptance of the killability of *all* animals, human and non-human. In the analogical resemblance set up between animals and Gentiles, Gentiles too are similarly killable, as what Gentiles stand for in this text is precisely the "clean" "other". The second interpretation posits the cleanness of all animals as a redemption of animal life for fellowship, in the same way that Peter accepts and establishes the fellowship and hospitality of the Gentile Cornelius. The other thus becomes a neighbour or fellow, building analogically from animals having gained a new status as no longer profane. Animals, then, are the fellows of otherness upon which fellowship is founded.

The separations of different human groups set up in Acts 10 shows precisely the way in which an ethical outlook that is programmed in advance and in principle to exclude some as too other, becomes potentially corrosive more generally. In this context, this corrosion is exemplified in either describing Jews as exclusive and non-universal, or, in "consuming" Gentiles as clean animals. As I have shown, Acts 10 could be read as a point in the biblical archive in which the conception of the animal in general singular emerges and universalism becomes *human* and sometimes also Christian. At the same time, Acts 10 arguably presents a dream for an impartiality and unconditional hospitality that recognises all fellow mortals as precisely *fellows* in a shared life whose finitude resides in the prospect of a judgement to come of *all* those who have lived and died.

The aporia presented here in the two interpretations must remain unresolved. The narrative of Acts 10 resists both a simplistic opening to animals as fellows in the move to redeem them from profanity, and a reductive purely violent proclivity toward the cleanness of animals, Gentiles and the other as killable and edible. In the category asserted towards the end of chapter 10 of the living and the dead, however, the boundaries between both

humans and animals appear to be widened and fixed at mortality and the finitude that marks life, humans and animals alike. Such a mark of mortality, or *mortality*, would perhaps be something like Derrida's *capacity* to die, a power as a non-power, in the hands (or mouths) of the other, who, in Acts 10 is configured as the messianic Jesus who will return as a figure of judgement over the living and dead. In this deferral of judgement lies perhaps the hope of a hospitality *now* for the living – human and non-human – as well as for those deemed killable.

Chapter 4

Derrida's Wolf and Lamb:

Revelation 17 on Sovereign Beasts and Sexual-Animal Others

In *The Beast and Sovereign vol. I*, Derrida explores “sovereignty” as a conceptualisation of the human, or “man”, in relation to the subjection of animals. While the so-called sovereign powers defining humans are precisely for humans rather than animals, there is a sense in which this discourse is oriented around the human as *man*. Discussing this through the specifically French genders to the word *le souverain* and *la bête*, Derrida asserts that the question of sexual difference is an important aspect of human/animal distinctions. Derrida outlines the way in which man as a “political animal” and a “rational animal” has been perceived as superior to animals. But he also points out the opposite notion, namely political man as animal, or perhaps rather, as a beast.¹ On the one hand, man as a political animal is “superior, in his very sovereignty, to the beast that he masters, enslaves, dominates, domesticates, or kills, so that his sovereignty consists in raising himself above the animal and appropriating it, having its life at his disposal”.² On the other, conceptions of the human political realm are frequently characterised precisely *as* animal or beast-like.³ Derrida is interested in outlining the contradictory ways in which animals are excluded from properties thought exclusive to humans, such as the political, but at the same time how animals feature as prominent representations of the political.

While Derrida alludes to women as a category that has been treated in somewhat similar ways to the animal, on the side of the beast up and against the human as *man*, he never develops this argument, at least not in reference to female figures of sovereignty or animality.⁴ He refers to the animal as a “living thing to be subjected, dominated,

¹ BS I, 26.

² Ibid., 26

³ See also Mary Midgley, *Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978) on ways in which “beast” is used as the negative or positive image for humanity.

⁴ Judith Still makes the same point in “Derrida, Rousseau, Cixous and Tsvetaeva: Sexual Difference and the Love of the Wolf” and discusses the figure of the wolf in relation to Cixous and love. Judith Still, “Derrida, Rousseau, Cixous and Tsvetaeva: Sexual Difference and the Love of the Wolf”, in *The Animal Question in*

domesticated, mastered, like, by a not insignificant analogy, the woman, the slave, or the child".⁵ In regard to Hobbes's *De Cive*, he states that the sovereign appears "most often in the masculine figure of the king, the master, the chief, the *paterfamilias*, or the husband".⁶ Derrida refers repeatedly to the significance of sexual difference for the discussion of animality, sovereignty and what is proper to "man".⁷ Sexual difference is relevant to the question Derrida raises between the responsiveness of humans as opposed to the automaticity of animals around the figure of the marionette. Marionettes, he writes, are generally associated with the figure or figurine of a girl, a virgin, "since the name marionette comes first from a miniature representation of the Virgin Mary".⁸ With the example of the marionette Derrida is implying that the woman and the animal have been conceptualized as marionette-figures (automatically driven and reacting by instinct) while "Man" represents the sovereign: responsive, responsible, rational. Further, in the grouping of women, slaves and children with animals, they stand on the side of the *weak*. When Derrida further discusses sexual difference in regard to the marionette he emphasizes the phallus, as an example of body parts as automatic reflexes, and so to some extent he remains with the question of "man" rather than turning to female figures of sovereignty or non-sovereignty. This is not wholly an avoidance manoeuvre, but a way to show how the "male" and male potency can be construed in similar marionette-like ways. Nonetheless, it does draw the discussion back to the human as man, rather than tackle the issue of women and power. It is crucial to address the question of women in this context, and tease out some of the ways in which representations of sovereignty and animality play out over female figures. The Whore of Babylon in Revelation 17 provides such a figure, both demonstrating woman as a strong sovereignty and a weak victim, a sexualized whore and a devoured animal carcass. I am thus able to build on Derrida's allusions to sexual difference in regard to representations of sovereignty, animality and the political. If *humanity* has tacitly provided a privileged place for *man* to dwell, it is crucial not only to critically respond to consequent animal representations but also those of women, in order to reorder the power dynamics in the concept of the "human".

Deconstruction, ed. Lynn Turner (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013). See also Marta Segarra's article on animality, deconstruction and sexual difference where she discusses the mole as an embodiment of sexual difference and writing. Marta Segarra, "Deconstructing Sexual Difference: A Myopic Reading of Hélène Cixous's Mole", in *The Animal Question in Deconstruction*, ed. Lynn Turner (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

⁵ BS I, 66.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 32, 65, 66, 175.

⁸ Ibid., 188.

In this chapter, I will focus my reading of Derrida to the figures of the wolf and lamb in his discourse, to delineate the way in which Derrida presents essentially two types of animal figures. The first is the “human-beast” as a figure of sovereignty, a hyperbolic way of presenting the worst aspects of human power, domination and mastery over its so-called animal-subjects. The second is the “animal other”, which is the figure of animality as the subjected living being, condemned to edibility, killability, *seen as lacking* what is thought proper to “man”. These two figures are characterised by Derrida’s reading of Jean de La Fontaine’s fable-poem of the wolf and the lamb.⁹ But in this discourse Derrida mentions another lamb, namely the Christ-lamb. This Christ-lamb is for Derrida allied to life and the *logos*, two properties that become powerfully linked to the human: having *life* as autonomous sovereignty and *having* *logos*, conceived of as word, concept, language, reason. Derrida connects the life and *logos* of man to the figure of Christ-as-man-as-lamb. Gilhus shows how Stoic arguments concerning animals gained popularity in the first centuries CE. According to the Stoics, she writes, *logos* is what distinguishes humans from animals, animals are *aloga*, without reason.¹⁰ So what happens to the animality of this Christ? What becomes of the “lamb-ness”? Could this Christ-figure not also be an animal other, like La Fontaine’s lamb, or is he, as Derrida implies, merely a weak but nonetheless potent sovereign power? First I will outline Derrida’s reading of La Fontaine’s wolf and lamb and its significance, before discussing the references in *The Beast and Sovereign vol. I* to the Christ-lamb. Secondly, I will examine the representations of sovereignty and animality in Revelation chapter 17 over the representations of woman and animal.

Derrida’s Wolf and Lamb

Derrida’s conception of the sovereignty of man is complex and multi-faceted and would warrant an extensive discussion to do it justice.¹¹ But for the purposes of this chapter, I summarize how Derrida’s human sovereignty becomes linked to the concept of the beast in analysing his reading of La Fontaine’s fable-poem of the wolf and the lamb.¹² It is from

⁹ This fable comes from Aesop’s fables, but Derrida draws on La Fontaine’s poetic version.

¹⁰ Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans*, 3.

¹¹ For instance, Derrida undertakes substantial readings of Thomas Hobbes, Jean Bodin and Carl Schmitt in BS I, that, while interesting and important to his discourse on sovereignty, are not wholly relevant to this context and so cannot be recalled in detail here.

¹² There are many other fascinating examples, such as his reference to Plato’s tyrant-wolves from the *Republic* or his reading of Niccolò Machiavelli’s fox-prince. BS I, 60, 84. Focusing on Derrida’s reading of

this reference to the lamb as the non-sovereign creature that we arrive at the Christ-lamb in Derrida's discourse, which is what I will discuss further in this chapter. In fact, Derrida's reading of La Fontaine's fable is itself caught up in a theological understanding of the lamb, Genesis and original sin. The lamb is described as original "culpability": the "*ursprüngliche Schuldigsein* of the lamb".¹³ To go back a few steps, La Fontaine's fable stages the encounter between a wolf and a lamb at a stream, where the lamb is quenching its thirst. A hungry wolf appears and admonishes the lamb for drinking from his water. The lamb, addressing the wolf as "Sir" and "Your Majesty", tentatively defends itself, says it cannot possibly threaten the wolf's supply of water. The wolf disagrees and further adds that the lamb spoke ill of him last year, to which the lamb responds, how could it have, it was not yet born. The wolf replies: if not you, your brother then. The wolf then carries away the lamb and eats it. The lesson learnt from this fable, as La Fontaine's epigraph states it, is that "the reason of the strongest is always best".¹⁴ Derrida writes:

The lamb is accused of having muddied the wolf's water, his source or his resource, before even being born. And when the lamb argues back and says, 'I wasn't born yet,' the wolf replies forthwith and without a moment's hesitation the famous phrase that accumulates all the perversions of collective, transgenerational, familial or national, nationalistic and fraternalistic accusation: 'If not you, your brother then'.¹⁵

Derrida likens the sovereign carnivorous power of the wolf to the "human" as a sovereign "I" in the world. The lamb, on the other hand, becomes the victim in being already ordained to killability as are its brothers, that is, animals in general, as the subjects of sovereign, carnivorous power. The reference to the original sin of the lamb is Derrida's way of showing that the word "animal" is like the curse of original sin, a taint that marks it out in advance as "guilty". But the "reason of the strongest" in the wolf also points to how Derrida proposes that the exclusive understanding of "reason" as human, has become caught up in a logic of violence and force that excludes and condemns animals to suffering and subjection.

Essentially, with this reading, Derrida outlines two figures of the animal. One is the animal as beast represented by the wolf. This is in fact, he shows, the idea of the *human* as beast or animal. It ties in with political man as animality. The beast is thus Derrida's

La Fontaine cannot encompass all the aspects of Derrida's discussion, but this example does to a great extent provide insight into Derrida's reflections on political animals, animality and sovereignty.

¹³ BS I, 209.

¹⁴ Ibid., 78.

¹⁵ Ibid., 209.

concept of the sovereign human or “Man”. The properties belonging to the beast as a human animal are properties thought to *resemble* animal properties but are in fact assumed to be properly human, such as *bêtise* or stupidity and cruelty.¹⁶ This would be exemplified in the figure of the wolf in La Fontaine’s poem-fable as the sovereign figure, the “Majesty” who acts out his sovereignty powerfully and violently.¹⁷ To be stupid and cruel, Derrida argues, are traits that are in fact exclusively linked to humans. This is because animals are thought to lack the capacities for rationality, reason and responsibility, and cannot be said to be properly “cruel” or “stupid”, whereas a human is thought naturally to possess capacities for intelligence and rationality. Deprived of them, humans would appear *bête*, or animal-like.¹⁸ Similarly, only humans are thought of as culpable, responsible, capable of contracts, conventions and keeping the law, in the modern political structures of the nation-state, and so only humans can be condemned for cruelty and held responsible.¹⁹ For animals, this would merely be their nature, automatic reflexes and reactions, not properly *responses* to and in the world. Only humans, thus, are sovereignly autonomous. This, reasoning, Derrida argues is linked to particular translations of the *logos* as rationality, language, word, knowledge; it is what animals are deprived of.

The second figure of the animal is exemplified in the lamb. This would be the animal as an animal other: destined by its very name, its exclusion from the human political and ethical realm and from everything thought proper to “man”, to being subjected, eaten, and killed. The wolf is linked to the idea of sovereign man because of its “I can” attitude in this fable. As mentioned already, Derrida uses this “I can” to express the idea in the French word *pouvoir*, meaning both power and “to can”, “to be able”.²⁰ While sovereignty is characterised by an “I can” – free, autonomous, above the law – the animal is what is deprived of the “I can”. This is because it is thought not to be capable of language and the sense in which language relates to saying “I”, and thus also to accounting for itself as an “I”.²¹ Further, animals are also presupposed to be deprived of the capacities

¹⁶ Derrida cites Avital Ronell’s *Stupidity* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003) at length here.

¹⁷ For a response to the uses of the “wolf” as a figure for human brutality, see Glen A. Mazis’ highly informative “Animals, before Me, with Whom I Live, by Whom I am Addressed: Writing After Derrida”, in *Divinanimality: Creaturely Theology*, ed. Stephen D. Moore (New York: Fordham University Press, forthcoming).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 70.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 301.

²¹ This is discussed at length in TATTIA in regard to autobiography. “Whosoever says ‘I’ or apprehends or poses herself as an ‘I’ is a living animal”, but a ‘living animal’ as the *human*. “By contrast, animality, the life of the living, at least when one claims to be able to distinguish it from the inorganic, from the purely inert or cadaverous physic-chemical, is generally defined as sensibility, irritability, and *auto-motricity*, a spontaneity

or *powers* thought to be proper to humans more generally, such as “language, history, culture, technique, relation to death *as such*, and the transmission of acquired knowledge”.²² They do not, then, have the *capacities* or *powers* of the *pouvoir* and are thus non-sovereign to the sovereignty of the human.

In this same volume, Derrida makes a reference to the “zoological” Jesus and the example of Jesus as a baby and a lamb.²³ Despite the ostensible difference between Derrida’s characterisations of sovereignty as what is fearful and powerful as exemplified by Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan*²⁴ or Jean Bodin’s *Majestas* “as the superlative of magnitude or grandeur, the majority of the great, of the *magnus*”,²⁵ Derrida nonetheless calls the Christ-lamb a figure of “divine presence or sovereignty”.²⁶ What characterizes sovereignty is “excess, hyperbole, an excess insatiable for the passing of every determinable limit: higher than height, grander than grandeur”.²⁷ But this, Derrida explains, is not necessarily a matter of size or magnitude but a matter of *power*, potency.²⁸ In the potency of the “I can” of sovereignty, absolute power can also be manifested in the figure of the small.²⁹ With Christ as a baby or lamb “sovereignty passes through the small”, the smallest, the weak.³⁰ What, precisely, is meant by such a seemingly contradictory comment is not further explicated. But, as I shall go on to show, such a paradoxical dynamic of weak *and* strong can be found in the Lamb of Revelation 17. The clue to Derrida’s association of Christ with sovereignty despite the latter’s “lambness” might be in his connection to the *logos*. Following this example of sovereignty as the small

that is capable of movement, of organizing itself and affecting itself, marking, tracing, and affecting itself with traces of its self.” TATTIA, 49.

²² BS I, 106.

²³ BS I, 258.

²⁴ Derrida discusses Hobbes and the Leviathan as an example of the sovereign state as an “animal machine”. Such a sovereignty is seen as an institution, an artificial prosthesis in the figure of a fearful beast. BS I, 26-29, 39-42. He also uses Hobbes’s Leviathan to discuss the opposition between nature and law, and nature and convention, concepts that have been crucial to the designation of animality as nature in opposition to state, law, civilisation. At the same time, properties thought to be human, such as the ability or power to have law, to be civilised, to found politics, are posited as given and stable properties. Derrida writes that “law, sovereignty, the institution of the state are historical and always provisional, let’s say deconstructible, essentially fragile or finite or mortal, even if sovereignty is *posited as immortal*. It is posited as immortal and indivisible precisely because it is mortal and divisible, contract or convention being destined to ensure for it what it does not have, or is not, naturally”. BS I, 42.

²⁵ BS I, 215.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 258.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 257.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 259.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 257.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 258.

and weak in Christ, Derrida discusses Christ as *logos*.³¹ The Christian *logos*, Derrida argues in his reading of Heidegger, is linked to at least two sources: *logos* as performative commandment, and *logos* as life.³² He describes how in the Septuagint, the *logos* is the name given to the word of God as commandment, the ten commandments, hence the *Decalogue*.³³ However, "Christ is the *logos* of redemption", the *logos* of eternal life, the *logos* of *zōē*.³⁴ Derrida understands Christ as a figure who unites in itself "both *logos* and *zōē*".³⁵ "Christ, qua man, not only has the *logos*; he is the *logos*. Incarnate."³⁶ This is significant for placing the Christian tradition in relation to Derrida's discourse on animality and the legacy of distinctions between humans and animals. What Derrida argues, essentially, is that certain understandings of the *logos* and of *life* have set humans and animals apart, with humans who have the *logos* and a higher form of life while animals are deprived of *logos*, and thought to have "less" life. This would, in other words, yet again imply that the Christian legacy is complicit in a disregard for animal life, associating Christ with a life and *logos* that draws humans into its sphere but where animals become left out, living a lesser life without the *logos*.

Derrida argues that in the very structures of philosophical thought, in what is called theory and ontology there is an understanding of knowledge tied to a particular understanding of *logos* as reason, word, language, rationality, concept. Determining the essence of the sovereign or the beast, we are always already caught up in a "a logic, a knowledge, the supposedly rational discourse of a knowledge; as for animality or bestiality, biology or zoology, these also are kinds of knowledge, discourses of knowledge".³⁷ Conceptualising the living being, the human or animal "is a theoretical knowledge, with its *logos*, its logic, its rational and scientific order".³⁸ This, he suggests, is tied up with the trope of "seeing, a theatrical *theorein*, a gaze cast onto a visible object, a primarily *optical* experience that aims to touch with the eyes what falls under the hand,

³¹ Derrida mentions John's Gospel here and the *logos*. For a focus on John's *logos* in response to the animal question after Derrida, see Eric Daryl Meyer, "The Logos of God and the End of Humanity: Giorgio Agamben and the Gospel of John on Animality as Light and Life", in *Divinanimality: Creaturely Theology*, ed. Stephen D. Moore (New York: Fordham University Press, forthcoming). Meyer provides a re-reading of John's prologue in which he aims to show God's incarnation as "the deconstruction of humanity from within" for the sake of all creatures, humans and animals alike. Meyer, "The Logos of God and the End of Humanity: Giorgio Agamben and the Gospel of John on Animality as Light and Life", 148.

³² BS I, 320.

³³ Ibid., 320.

³⁴ Ibid., 321.

³⁵ Ibid., 321.

³⁶ Ibid., 321.

³⁷ Ibid., 277.

³⁸ Ibid.

under the scalpel – and this optical model can be a sovereign autopsy”.³⁹ Derrida argues that seeing is akin to sovereignty because it does not concede that the animal looked at and theorized may return the gaze, may be an incalculable, singular, unsubstantial and infinitely complex living being with an autonomous view of its own.⁴⁰ Assuming the animal cannot respond, or possess an autonomous view-point of its own, the animal is thus conceived as already dead, before actual death, a “thing” to be examined and categorised by humans as if by sovereign decree.

Derrida explains that the original meaning of “autopsia” was “the experience that consists in seeing with one’s own eyes, and thus of being able to bear witness”.⁴¹ Later, it acquired two meanings in Greek, a rare meaning “that of a participation in the all-powerfulness of the gods and an intimate connection with them” and “the ceremony of dissection, namely the autopsy of a cadaver”.⁴² In the connection he makes between *logos* and the Creator God of Genesis, Derrida writes that “sovereignty equals *arkhē*, *arkhē* equals *logos*, the *logos* that creates, that causes to come or advene, and that creates the living being, the life of the living (*zoē*), the evangelic *logos*, which basically repeats genesis and speaks of an origin of the world created by the sovereign, God”.⁴³ What Derrida appears to be suggesting is that one way the human has been configured is on the model of such a sovereign *seeing*, as a powerful God-like figure; depriving the animal of all that is proper to humans is a form of sovereign command caught up in the guise of scientific, rational knowledge. It is “a question of a violently imposed sovereignty of *logos* as reason, understanding, logic”⁴⁴ that *sees* and *condemns*, even performatively commanding animals to the non-human: non-rational, without language, without response, history, culture, technology, relation to death *as such*. This in turn allows for the subjection of animal life under a sovereign understanding of humans who are thought indivisibly to possess such properties.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ To exemplify this, Derrida describes a scene of autopsy between King Louis XIV and an elephant. Together in one room, “a very large animal, an elephant, and a very great sovereign, the beast and the sovereign were there together, in 1681, in the same room, for the same anatomy lesson, the one alive and the other dead, the living observing the dead, in the space and time of a ‘ceremony’ that was a dissection, i.e. an operation of knowledge, a violence on the dead to see and to know.” BS I, 250-251. See for instance Kelly Oliver’s “Elephant Eulogy: The Exorbitant Orb of an Elephant”, in *The Animal Question in Deconstruction*, ed. Lynn Turner (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013) and her discussion of this “*elephenomenelephant*”. Oliver arguably over-emphasises the “lust for autopsy” and its connection to knowledge and the deaths of animals in Derrida’s discussion, which, although present, is not nearly so gauche as Oliver implies. Oliver, “Elephant Eulogy: The Exorbitant Orb of an Elephant”, 90-91, 96.

⁴¹ BS I, 293.

⁴² Ibid., 294.

⁴³ Ibid., 313.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 318.

In regard to *logos* as life, Derrida suggests that life has become construed as “human” through the notion that to be living is to be “automotive, autonomous, absolutely spontaneous, sovereignly automotive”.⁴⁵ According to Derrida, Kant, Heidegger, Levinas, and Lacan – like Descartes – believe that “the animal neither speaks nor responds, that its capacity to produce signs is foreign to language and limited or fixed by a program”.⁴⁶ What has not been taken account of is “the essential or structural differences among animal species”⁴⁷ but also the interrogation of what a *response* is and how exactly to distinguish it entirely from a reaction, or a reaction from a response.⁴⁸ This sovereign spontaneity is closely connected to language, and as Derrida discusses, language understood as the capacity to respond, and thus to be responsible. Animals are thought to merely react. This is what ties humans to a modern political order and what excludes animals. Animals are thus construed as automatons.⁴⁹ It is not a matter of reassigning such properties to animals as if it were as simple as *giving* them the capacity to respond in a similar way to humans. What Derrida critiques is “the purity, the rigor, and the indivisibility of the frontier that separates – already with respect to ‘us humans’ – reaction from response”.⁵⁰

But there is a final understanding of sovereignty that Derrida toys with in *Rogues*, written at the same time as the *Beast and Sovereign* seminars, that opens up for the possibility of a different conception of power. First he explains that in “speaking of an ontotheology of sovereignty, I am referring here, under the name of God, this One and only God, to the determination of a sovereign, and thus indivisible, omnipotence”.⁵¹ It is the *indivisibility* of sovereignty that Derrida, throughout his thinking of human/animal distinctions has been critiquing, and the all-powerful, all-seeing force of reason that makes man wolf to the animal lamb. Any reasoning that constructs absolute differences risks being a reason as “force”, precisely because the properties often thought “proper to man” are construed dogmatically as *powers* of reason, language, response, that ensue the subjection of, or mastery over, animal life. But he goes on to say:

wherever the name of God would allow us to think something else, for example a vulnerable nonsovereignty, one that suffers and is divisible, one that is mortal even, capable of contradicting itself or of repenting (a thought that is neither impossible

⁴⁵ Ibid., 221

⁴⁶ TATTIA, 89.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 89.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 8-9.

⁴⁹ Derrida reads Descartes in this regard, and Lacan following this tradition. TATTIA, 76, 122-124.

⁵⁰ TATTIA, 125.

⁵¹ R, 157.

nor without example), it would be a completely different story, perhaps even the story of a god who deconstructs himself in his ipseity.⁵²

Here, then, is Derrida's dream of a deconstructed sovereignty. The question is whether Derrida connects the Christ-lamb as "both *logos* and *zōē*"⁵³ to a legacy of the *human* life with *logos*, thus excluding animals, or whether the Christ-lamb could be such a suffering non-sovereign figure? If the former, what happens to the "lamb-ness" of this Christ figure? Is this a sovereign figure that allies the *logos* and life of his person with the divine and the human at the expense of animals? Is Derrida implying that Christ as *man* became part of a legacy that has believed in the all-powerful sovereignty of humans, and particularly the human as *male*, for humans to see themselves as commanders and sovereign lords over animals? What or who is Christ as lamb, as animal? Is he Derrida's figure of sovereignty configured in the power of the small, or is he rather the figure of suffering weakness, the divisible, deconstructed sovereignty Derrida outlines in *Rogues*?

Revelation 17: The Sovereign Lamb and its Sexual-Animal Other

Building on Derrida's discussion of the concept of sovereignty in relation to the "human-beast" and in opposition to the non-power of weakness or vulnerability of the "animal-other", I will analyse what we might call another religio-political fable, namely the warring Lamb with the Beast and the Whore of chapter 17 in the Book of Revelation.⁵⁴ Revelation 17 presents the figure of a whore riding a beast in war with a lamb, somewhat like La Fontaine's wolf and lamb as an encounter between two opposing figures. But unlike La Fontaine's fable, the Lamb is the one who triumphs in Revelation 17. The Lamb is a sovereign force: more sovereign than the sovereign Whore-Beast. How might the Whore and Beast that represent Rome be understood and seen? Discussing ways in which the political is represented as beasts, Derrida briefly mentions "the beasts from John's

⁵² R, 157.

⁵³ BS I, 321.

⁵⁴ For a broader discussion of the creatures of Revelation, see Moore's article in "Divinanimality and (Post)humanity: Ruminations on Revelation's Ruminant, Quadrupedal Christ; or, the Even-Toed Ungulate That Therefore I am", in *The Bible and Posthumanism*, ed. Jennifer Koosed (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2014). Moore provides a close and critical "neoliteral" reading and argues that on the one hand Revelation can be seen as undercutting Cartesian dual distinctions between human and animal and suggests an "animal Christology". On the other hand, it most frequently resides in *metaphorical* allusions to animals and a sacrificial logic in which animals are inferior to humans. Moore, "Divinanimality and (Post)humanity: Ruminations on Revelation's Ruminant, Quadrupedal Christ; or, the Even-Toed Ungulate That Therefore I am", 17, 45. See also Moore, "Ecotherology", in *Divinanimality: Animal Theory, Creaturely Theology*, ed. Stephen D. Moore (New York: Fordham University Press, forthcoming), which additionally provides a critical response to ecological readings of Revelation.

Revelation, which clearly present themselves as political or polemological figures, the reading of which would merit more than one seminar on its own".⁵⁵ However, this was a reading that never took place, at least in the published seminars of *The Beast and the Sovereign*. Picking up on this reference, I will analyse the Whore-Beast and Lamb in regard to their dynamics of sovereign power and animality, but also, importantly, of sexuality and the female in alliance with the animal.

Why Revelation 17? Thought to be written sometime between the 60s of the first and the beginning of the second, century CE,⁵⁶ and set in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey, John's Revelation is a text in the Christian biblical archive that caused and still causes controversy. Nonetheless, or perhaps because of this, it is one of the most influential books of the Bible in terms of its reception history. Christopher Rowland for instance, suggests that the text of Revelation "has probably had more effect on Christian doctrine, art and literature than almost any other".⁵⁷ Michael Gorman lists Martin Luther's hesitant and ambiguous attitude towards it and John Calvin's reticence;⁵⁸ Thomas Paine professed its impossible obscurity, and Friedrich Nietzsche disparaged it as an outcry of sheer malevolence.⁵⁹ D.H Lawrence wrote that as Judas was to Jesus, so is Revelation to the New Testament: it apparently has none of the "real" Christ or the "real" Gospel to it.⁶⁰ Positioned at the end and edge of the Christian Bible, its canonical status is slippery. But its apocalyptic genre and symbolism has commanded much attention. As Norman Cohn points out, this text has "proved extraordinarily adaptable and long-lived".⁶¹ As a prime exemplar of the "apocalyptic", Revelation has been reinterpreted "again and again to fit ever-changing circumstances" and has "continued to affect the perceptions of millions of both Christians and non-Christians right down to the present day".⁶² As such its political animal figures form an important legacy alongside those Derrida himself comments on. Derrida suggest that:

⁵⁵ BS I, 24. Derrida also mentions cursorily Daniel, the Behemoth or Leviathan of the Book of Job (noting Job 40:15; 41:1-12), Is. 27:1 and Psalm 74: 13, 14. BS I, 24-25.

⁵⁶ Jonathan Knight discusses how Justin Martyr (c. 150 CE) and Irenaeus (c. 185 CE) apparently knew the text, and that the earliest documented use of it is from the reign of Hadrian, probably between 125 and 135 CE, by Papias of Hierapolis. Jonathan Knight, *Revelation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 18.

⁵⁷ Christopher Rowland, "Foreword", in *Studies in the Book of Revelation*, ed. Stephen Moyise (Edinburgh/New York: T&T Clark, 2001), xvii. See his and Judith Kovacs' *Revelation: The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004) for a discussion of the reception of Revelation in art and literature.

⁵⁸ Michael J. Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness, Following the Lamb Into the New Creation* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2011), 2-3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Norman Cohn, "Biblical Origins of the Apocalyptic Tradition", in *The Apocalypse and The Shape of Things to Come*, ed. Frances Carey (London: British Museum Press, 1999), 41.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 41.

the texts from Aristotle's Politics, for example, or Bodin, or so many others, and texts that are not always books of philosophy or political science, or even books at all, are to be read, difficult as they may be to decipher, indispensable in all their abyssal stratifications, be they bookish or not, if we want to understand politics and its beyond, and even the bio-powers or zoo-powers of what we call the modernity of 'our time.'⁶³

Revelation too, is a significant text in the Western cultural canon that has been mapped onto political scenes, struggles and situations, with its animal figures and zoo-powers as prominent examples of the religio-political. Stephen Moore suggests that it is more "thickly populated with nonhuman animals than any other Christian text".⁶⁴

Similarly to La Fontaine's wolf and lamb and Lawrence's "I" and snake in Derrida's readings, Revelation 17 too revolves around a scene by the water: "Come, I will show you the judgement of the great whore who is seated on many waters" (17:1). This too is a scene we, as readers, are called on to witness: "Come, I will show you..." (17:1). The emphasis on witnessing and spectacle in Revelation is analysed by Christopher Frilingos who suggests that the monsters and martyrs of Revelation act as spectators in the text, with the Lamb as the most important spectator figure.⁶⁵ But at the same time the Lamb is a *spectacle* at the centre of Revelation.⁶⁶ Here, in chapter 17, the invitation to *see* is also for the readers of this book as "spectators". Derrida's emphasis on poetic scenes and fables are a way of bringing his focus on "seeing" as a scientific rational mode of knowing into conversation with the "moral" of a tale: it is a matter of the ethics and responsibility of the gaze and encounter with representations of animals in dominant textual canons and their legacies for encounters with living animal others. When he orients the question of the animal around the suffering of animals that "we humans can witness",⁶⁷ it is because *seeing* animals is not merely a neutral theoretical gaze that gives or deprives animals of concepts thought to be proper to humans, but because every *seeing* is a *witnessing*, and witnessing always involves responsibility and testimony *to* someone or something. Taking account of animal representations by paying attention to them, or affording them the scholarly gaze, is not, then, a singular, solipsistic, sovereign seeing, but a relational being-with and curious attention to subjects encountered.

⁶³ BS I, 333.

⁶⁴ Moore, "Divinanimality and (Post)humanity: Ruminations on Revelation's Ruminant, Quadrupedal Christ; or, the Even-Toed Ungulate That Therefore I am", 3.

⁶⁵ Christopher A. Frilingos, *Spectacles of Empire: Monsters, Martyrs, and the Book of Revelation* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 6.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁶⁷ TATTIA, 28.

The reader, like John the witness of this scene, is invited to observe a spectacular, theatrical scene with this 'great whore' (17:1), a 'scarlet beast' (17:3), and 'the Lamb' (17:14). Beginning with the political, "polemological" – that is, Derrida's allusion to the "logic" of war – animals Derrida himself was so intrigued by, I will outline the dynamic between the Lamb as a triumphant sovereign in opposition to the powerful Beast with its figure of the whore seated on it. In brief, what takes place in Revelation 17 is that an angel takes the writer of this revelation, John, to see a scene in the wilderness in which a woman is 'seated on many waters' but who also sits on a many-headed, many-horned Beast (17:1, 3). The woman is seen to be 'drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses to Jesus' (17:6). John is amazed at this spectacle (17: 6) but the angel swiftly explains 'the mystery' of the Beast and woman (17:7). The Beast 'was, and is not, and is about to ascend from the bottomless pit and go to destruction' (17:8). The angel explains the seven heads as seven mountains on which the woman is seated, and as seven kings, some who have reigned, some who reign, and some who will reign (17:9-10). The ten horns also represent ten kings, united with the Beast (17:12-13). It is said they will make war on the Lamb, 'and the Lamb will conquer them'; those with the Lamb 'are called and chosen and faithful' (17:14). The waters on which 'the whore is seated' (17:15) and that John has been shown are said to represent 'peoples and multitudes and nations and languages' (17:15). The kings and Beast are eventually predicted to 'hate the whore; they will make her desolate and naked; they will devour her flesh and burn her up with fire' (17:16). This is said to be God's purpose, agreeing to give over power to the Beast 'until the words of God will be fulfilled' (17:17). Lastly, the woman is described as 'the great city that rules over the kings of the earth' (17:18).

The Lamb of Revelation 17: Diminutive or Dominant?

On the surface of it, the Lamb stands as the weak yet heroic animal figure of this text in opposition to the Beast and Whore. Michael J. Gorman's 2011 publication on Revelation is entitled: *Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness, Following the Lamb Into the New Creation*. But what does it mean to *follow* the Lamb of Revelation? What does it mean to respond to it and how to do so responsibly? What do readers "witness" in the scene of this Lamb? Who or what is worshipped in worshipping the Lamb? Does the Lamb respond responsibly? Or is it for *human* readers to tackle this animal responsibly, as Gorman seemingly has it? Allusions to the Lamb in Revelation 17

are scarce but significant. In 17:14, it is said that the Beast and its kings 'will make war on the Lamb', and then crucially adding, 'and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of Lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful' (17:14).

At first glance the Lamb, or little lamb, – ἀρνίον – stands in stark contrast to the description of the wild Beast (θηρίον) who is 'like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth' (13:2). Using the image of the Lamb is a way of grounding sympathy in an innocent counter-part to the Beast who is associated with ferocity and prostitution. In 14:9 it is clear that those who follow the Beast are following a sovereign power – with its ten kings, δέκα βασιλεῖς – in opposition to God and the Lamb. Those who worship the sovereignty of the Beast, 'and its image, and receive a mark on their foreheads or on their hands' will 'drink the wine of God's wrath' and 'will be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb' (14:10), and there will be no rest for them (14:11). Sores appear on those who have worshipped the Beast and its image (16:2). As for God's 'bowls of wrath' (16:1), one is poured on the 'throne of the Beast' (16:10), the kingdom is 'plunged into darkness' and 'people gnawed their tongues in agony' (16:10). Foul spirits 'like frogs' come from the mouth of the Beast (16:13), and in 18:2 'Babylon the great' who rides the beast has become the haunt of 'every foul and hateful beast'. The Beast has armies and is allied with the kings who make war on the 'rider of the horse' (19:19); those who did not worship the Beast but who were beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and to the word of God are brought back to life and reign with the Messiah (20:4), while the Beast is captured and is thrown alive into a lake of fire (19:20) (along with a false prophet and the devil). Akin to La Fontaine's wolf, this Beast is presented as a sovereign power and a ferocious one at that.

Like La Fontaine's killed lamb, the Lamb of Revelation 17 is said to be slaughtered (5:12; 13:8) and is thus a weak, pitiable victim figure. As Christopher Rowland points out, the lamb with its "marks of sacrifice" "is also the Messiah".⁶⁸ Thus the logic of this text posits the triumphant "good" to be on the side of the weaker animal figure, the Lamb. Rowland calls this "a Messiah with a difference, one who comes to the divine presence as a suppliant and with the marks of suffering".⁶⁹ Rowland emphasises the significance of

⁶⁸ Christopher Rowland, *Revelation* (London: Epworth Press, 1993), 74.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

such a “weak creature” as an “agent of God’s purposes”.⁷⁰ He argues that this is God’s way of being present, *as* the Lamb on the throne.⁷¹ This suffering lamb figure is often linked to the Passover lamb from the Exodus narrative as a sacrificed and saving animal.⁷² But in Revelation 17 it is also a sovereign force. As Matthias Reinhard Hoffmann argues, the apparent synonymous sharing of the throne and worship between God and the Lamb in Revelation 4 and 5 conveys the tight connection between sovereign divinity, Christ and animality.⁷³ Richard Bauckham notes that the word “Lamb” referring to Christ occurs 28 times.⁷⁴ Seven of these refer to God and the Lamb together (5:13; 6:16; 7:10; 14:4; 21:22; 22:1, 3). The throne of God in heaven figures frequently as a Hebrew Bible motif, reappearing here as a “symbol of divine sovereignty”.⁷⁵ As Hoffmann argues, Lamb and God are “on par”.⁷⁶ The messianic Lamb is thus seemingly a paradoxically sovereign animal-divine constellation of weak power.⁷⁷ As such it would appear to be an example of Derrida’s deconstructed sovereignty, the God who is vulnerable and suffers, or the zoological Jesus as Christ-Lamb.

However, pointing to the messianic status of the Lamb, Rowland also notes Rev. 5:5: ‘the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the shoot growing from David’s stock’,⁷⁸ one who will be able to open a scroll and who in 5:6-7 turns out to be none other than the Lamb. Another animal, the lion, is thus linked to the Lamb and its sovereignty.⁷⁹ This is perhaps the most explicit glimpse of the way in which the Lamb in fact takes on the role of a competing sovereignty to the Beast that is not Lamb-like as a purely diminutive, suffering, sacrificial creature but rather *like* the Beast. What appears to happen in this biblical fable is that the Lamb, despite all appearances, ups the ante: its sovereignty is a higher sovereignty

⁷⁰ Ibid., 75.

⁷¹ Ibid., 64.

⁷² In Exodus, followers of God are saved by the blood of the passover lamb while the Egyptians are punished. See for instance Matthias Reinhard Hoffmann, *The Destroyer and the Lamb: The Relationship between Angelomorphic and Lamb Christology in the Book of Revelation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 250, for more on the significance of the connection between Revelation and Exodus.

⁷³ Hoffmann, *The Destroyer and the Lamb*, 105. Bauckham also makes this point when he writes: “the worship of the Lamb (5:8-12) leads to the worship of God and the Lamb together (5:13).” Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 60.

⁷⁴ Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 66.

⁷⁵ Wilfrid J. Harrington, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1969), 41.

⁷⁶ Hoffmann, *The Destroyer and the Lamb*, 105.

⁷⁷ See Hoffmann’s *The Destroyer and the Lamb* for further christological discussions of the lamb.

⁷⁸ For references to the people of Judah, Israel, Jacob as a lion or lioness, see for instance: Gen. 49:9, Num. 23:24, Mic. 5:8, Ezra 12:31-2, also see 2 Esdras 11.

⁷⁹ In their discussion of William Blake’s use of the lamb figure from Revelation in his poetry, Kovacs and Rowland write that just as the apparent opposition between the Lion of Judah and the Lamb that is slain in Revelation 5 challenges ideas about the character of the Messiah, so Blake complements Christ’s mercy in ‘The Lamb’ with his justice in ‘The Tyger’ in *Songs of Experience*. Kovacs and Rowland, *Revelation: The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ*, 73.

to that of the beast, its power is *more, better, stronger*. As Moore argues, the paradox of the Lamb is that it appears to be “a docile trope for domination”⁸⁰ but who becomes a “Celestial Superwarrior, icon of apocalyptic hypermasculinity” whose God is as terrifying as the Beast in his ‘great supper’ of ‘the flesh of all’, animals and humans alike (19:17-18).⁸¹ Derrida writes of sovereign power and the idea of the “most” sovereign, that it is a matter of “placing one majesty above another, and thus upping the ante with respect to sovereignty”.⁸² This “dynamics of majesty or of sovereignty” is precisely a *dynamic* because it is about a show or movement of power, of “potency (*dynamis*), with the deployment of the potentiality of the dynast and the dynasty”.⁸³ It is as if Revelation 17 stages a revenge scenario to the fable of the lamb and the wolf, where the wolf has taken on an even more startlingly terrifying guise as a lion-leopard-bear-Beast and the lamb has returned from the jaws of the wolf to wreck its revenge with a superlative sovereignty, now with a make-over as a hybrid Lion-Lamb. Here, as opposed to La Fontaine’s tale, it is the reason of the lamb that wins. But does it mean that the reason of the weaker has won? That a deconstructed sovereignty triumphs? What is it that wins when the lamb wins?

Wilfrid J. Harrington emphasises the lamb as a “striking antithesis” to the Beast.⁸⁴ But, arguably, the Lamb and its opposition, the Beast, are *like* one another in striking ways, taking on sovereign and particularly male forms. Paul B. Duff points out that “one of the most fascinating and puzzling literary techniques employed by the author of the Book of Revelation is to describe contrasting characters in *similar* ways”.⁸⁵ While Duff makes this comment in regard to the two female figures of Revelation,⁸⁶ I propose it is significant that it also holds true for the Beast and the Lamb. The Lamb is described in analogous ways to the Beast, marking them side by side as oppositional forces but that, significantly, mirror each other *similarly*. As Moore puts it, Revelation constantly “undercuts its own insistent dualisms”.⁸⁷ Like the Beast with its seven heads, the Lamb is linked to the number seven: described with ‘seven horns and seven eyes’ (5:6; 17:3, 7). Like the Beast with its kings,

⁸⁰ Moore, “Divinanimality and (Post)humanity: Ruminations on Revelation’s Ruminant, Quadrupedal Christ; or, the Even-Toed Ungulate That Therefore I am”, 37.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁸² BS I., 230.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Harrington, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 37.

⁸⁵ Paul B. Duff, “Wolves in Sheep’s Clothing: Literary Opposition and Social Tension in the Revelation of John”, in *Reading the Book of Revelation, a Resource for Students*, ed. David L. Barr (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 65.

⁸⁶ The woman clothed with the sun from chapter 12 and the Whore of Babylon.

⁸⁷ Moore, “Divinanimality and (Post)humanity: Ruminations on Revelation’s Ruminant, Quadrupedal Christ; or, the Even-Toed Ungulate That Therefore I am”, 34.

the Lamb is also sovereign-like, associated with thrones in 5:13; 6:16; 7:10; 22:1, 3. While the Beast has a lion-like mouth (13:2) the Lamb is linked to the Lion of Judah (5:5).⁸⁸ Like the terrors of the Beast, the Lamb is full of 'wrath' (6:16). Just as the Beast is worshipped (13:4), the Lamb too is hailed by a multitude of peoples with palm branches in their hands (7:10-11). A beast (linked with the Beast of chapter 17) has horns 'like a lamb' (13:11), as if the Lamb could feasibly be mistaken for a beast. The Beast is described as the one that 'was and is not and is to come' (17:8), resembling the description of God as the one 'who is and who was and who is to come' (1:8) as if the appearance of the divine-Lamb could be comparable or mixed up with the Beast who also is to come. Parallel to the Beast in chapter 17 with its seven heads as seven mountains (17:9), the Lamb stands on Mount Zion (14:1). They are both seemingly male with sexual needs, as the Beast has its woman in the Whore of Babylon, and virgins follow the Lamb (14:4). Like the ferocity of the Beast, torment and wrath will take place in the 'presence of the Lamb' (14:10). As such this animal-divine becomes beast-like, akin to Derrida's wolf that ravages the lamb.⁸⁹ Or as Tina Pippin puts it, there "is no democracy in the Apocalypse; God is as much a power of domination as any other power".⁹⁰ Further, the Lamb presented as a specifically male sovereignty and ferocious animality evokes a sense of its carnivorous violence and carnal virility. As if an erect man, the Lamb *stands* (5:6). In 7:17 the Lamb is at 'the centre of the throne' and shall act like a shepherd (ποιμαίνω), as if representing the man of political power who leads, rules and protects its animal subjects. Mimicking the figure of Master, husband or Head of a household 'he' has a woman or bride (19:7 γυναῖκα) and in 21: 9 the 'bride' or young woman (νύμφη) is referred to again; there is also a blessing on those who are invited to the 'marriage supper of the Lamb' (19:9). The Lamb thus appears under the guise of its weak animality *as* a lamb in opposition to the leopard-bear-lion-like Beast

⁸⁸ Bauckham argues that Revelation presents a contrast between what John *hears* (an announcement of the Lion of Judah) and what he *sees*, namely the slaughtered suffering lamb, thus offering a different prospect of a messianic figure to the militaristic and nationalistic one. But it is not so simple with respect to the other similarities between the lamb and the beast. Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 74.

⁸⁹ Bauckham notes the key concept of conquering in Revelation and the idea of the messianic war. Conquering "is applied both to the Messiah himself (3:21; 5:5; 17:14) and to his people, who share his victory (2:7, 11, 17, 28; 3:5, 12, 21; 12:11; 15:2; 21:7). ...That the image of conquering is a militaristic one should be unmistakable, although interpreters of Revelation do not always do justice to this. It is closely connected with language of battle (11:7; 12:7-8, 17; 13:7; 16:14; 17:14; 19:11, 19)". Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 69. In this sense, the Lamb truly does become a Beast-like figure of violence, no less terrifying than the man-headed beast who is lion-like, bear-like, leopard-like.

⁹⁰ Pippin, *Apocalyptic Bodies*, xi.

whose ten horns are kings, but operates with the very same logic of this sovereign Beast as Derrida's political "man" as "wolf".⁹¹

Robert Seesengood explains this dynamic by emphasising the use of words connected to the verb *νικάω* (to conquer, prevail, be victorious), which attests to the language of war-fare but with an increasing association with the spectacles and violence of Greco-Roman sport.⁹² He writes that when *νικάω* is used in the New Testament it generally refers to the victory of Jesus and the early Christians over pagan culture. In other words, early Christian discourse was making use of Greco-Roman culture to articulate its own claims about "a triumphant Jesus".⁹³ When this verb form is used in Revelation,⁹⁴ it tends to conform to this pattern, Seesengood suggests, and refers to the "'Lion of the tribe of Judah'", the eviscerated lamb – throat cut, disembowelled, tiny – which has *conquered* (5:5), as well as the rider on the white horse marches out 'conquering and to conquer' (6:2). Additionally, the dragon and his allies are *conquered* 'by the blood of the Lamb' (12:11). The martyrs of the church who have 'endured to the end' are the *victorious conquerors* of the beast (15:2).⁹⁵ Just before the Lamb is described as 'Lord of lords and King of kings' he is said precisely to *conquer* the kings and beast who yield their power and authority (17:14). The Lamb is not a wholly different or opposing power to the Beast, then, but is an "upping" of the powers of the Beast, presented as *more* sovereign: 'Lord of lords and King of kings' (17:14). Derrida states that in discourses on sovereign power it "is not only an alternative between sovereignty and nonsovereignty but also a struggle *for* sovereignty, transfers and displacements or even divisions of sovereignty".⁹⁶ The Lamb participates in Derrida's concept of sovereignty as a logic of competition: an "I can" of violence that is continuously played out as higher, a continuous and performative *pouvoir*. "What counts is the *more*, the economy of the *more*, the economy of the surplus or the economy of the supplement, the smaller able to be more powerful or even larger than the

⁹¹ Frilingos argues similarly but in regard to gender, suggesting that the Lamb vacillates between being portrayed as a feminized passive body and a masculinized active figure who dominates. See Chapter 4, "As if Slain", in Frilingos, *Spectacles of Empire: Monsters, Martyrs, and the Book of Revelation*, 64-88. If the slaughtered Lamb is the passive feminized figure who becomes a dominant masculine "beast" in Revelation 17, the Whore of Babylon arguably becomes the female *and* animal other to the Lamb's sovereign masculinity.

⁹² Robert Paul Seesengood, *Competing Identities: The Athlete and the Gladiator in Early Christian Literature* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 71.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ As Seesengood testifies, Revelation contains nearly two thirds of its use in the New Testament. Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ BS I, 290.

largest”.⁹⁷ This is, as David F. Krell puts it, an order of knowledge that “operates as the hubris of the *more*, the sovereign *plus que* that is never satisfied”.⁹⁸ As seen with this warring Lamb “the weaker can be stronger than the stronger”.⁹⁹

What, then, becomes of the Beast and Whore who are defeated by the most sovereign Lamb? I propose that while the Beast and Whore are depicted – in the logic of the text – as abhorrent objects of evil, they become “animal others” as this logic is overturned, when the Lamb takes on its sovereign guise and so becomes the stronger, dominant and thus suppressive party. Within the logic delineated by the image of the Lamb, with the weak as the innocent and pitiable, that is, the suffering weak as allied to the good, the Whore and Beast become this locus for powerlessness. They can be read as subjects of compassion, of pathos, and even a form of deconstructed sovereignty. But this takes place in the conceptualisation of Derrida’s animal other as the weak subjects to power, in this context the animals of Roman arenas, and female prostitutes in Roman society. I will first show how the Beast is represented as an evil figure of terror but can be read as subjugated animal others. Then I will turn to the Whore as the other composite emblem of evil, who can also be seen rather as a figure demanding compassion. Revelation 17 can thus be seen to present a denigrating vision of animals and women as associated with evil, but simultaneously provides the glimpse of a deconstructed sovereignty in the Whore and Beast as creatures demanding response and responsibility in a compassion to come for the suffering subjects of political systems. Together they present an alternative image of Rome as a space of marginalized, animal and female subjects, social others hidden from view in the symbolic figurations of political evil so often focused on as the central theme of this biblical text.

The Beast of Revelation 17: Villain or Victim?

The Beast of Revelation 17 is ‘scarlet’, ‘full of blasphemous names’, with ‘seven heads and ten horns’ (17:3). It is a multi-political figure, representing kings ‘of whom five have fallen, one is living, and the other has not yet come’ (17:10), and a belligerent figure, with ‘power and authority’ (17:13), making war (17:14). But it is also a geographical figure, its seven heads symbolizing seven mountains (17:9). Elsewhere in Revelation the Beast is

⁹⁷ Ibid., 259.

⁹⁸ Krell, *Derrida and Our Animal Others*, 28.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

described as coming up from the bottomless pit who makes war, conquers and kills two witnesses to God (11:7), in 13:1 it 'rises out of the sea, having ten heads and seven horns' and 'on its horns were ten diadems, and on its heads were blasphemous names.' It is 'like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth' (13:2). It is linked to sovereign power by the mention of a dragon giving it power, authority and throne (13:2) and as such it is worshipped (13:4).

Just as Derrida explains that representations of beasts are frequently linked to human sovereign power, the Beast of Revelation 17 has been used to symbolize numerous powers in the human political world.¹⁰⁰ In its historical context, however, it is commonly agreed that the Beast with its heads and horns refers to the Roman Empire and Roman Emperors. In other words, to denote the evil of Rome, Rome is likened to various wild, carnivorous animals, making a negatively perceived political domination synonymous with the animal as "beast". As Leonard Thompson puts it, this myth-like beast conveys "the Roman order as demonic".¹⁰¹ But it is rather that the Roman order is portrayed as *beast-like*, as hyperbolically ferocious, threatening, carnivorous, violent, and powerful, whereas the Lamb is thus set up as its innocent, weak counterpart. Craig Koester notes that Revelation is not unique in using animal images to depict nations and political powers.¹⁰² He mentions the Book of Daniel and his vision of empires as animals (Dan. 7:1-8), proposing that the author of Revelation amalgamates properties from Daniel's four beasts into the single seven-headed beast.¹⁰³ It is also customary to link the beast who 'was, and is not, and is about to ascend from the bottomless pit and go to destruction' (17:8) to the legend of *Nero redivivus* (54-68) as an emperor who, although dead, continues to haunt the political imagination and is feared to return.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ For a historical overview of how the various figures and images of Revelation have been interpreted and appropriated, see for instance Craig Koester, *Revelation: the End of All Things* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001).

¹⁰¹ Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 185.

¹⁰² Koester, *Revelation*, 29.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* Koester also notes another apocalypse, where Ezra sees a vision of an eagle with twelve wings and three heads, which is said to be the fourth kingdom mentioned by Daniel (2 Esdras 11:1-12:3; 12:11).

¹⁰⁴ George H. van Kooten, for instance, explains the "complex of beliefs surrounding the figure of Nero Redivivus, who was supposed by many not to have died in 68, but to have fled to the East, from whence he was expected to return". He suggests this influence on Revelation has been understated and argues that many passages in Revelation bear "Neronian overtones", although "most New Testament scholars opt for a date under Domitian (91-96)". George H. van Kooten, "The Year of the Four Emperors and the Revelation of John: The 'pro-Neronian' Emperors Otho and Vitellius, and the Images and Colossus of Nero in Rome", *The Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 30 (2007): 207.

Friesen suggests that the anti-Roman rhetoric of Revelation is a means to bind communities together against imperial cults.¹⁰⁵ This was, he argues, a prominent part of Roman imperial society: “Emperors were worshipped in their own temples, at temples of other gods, in theatres, in gymnasia, in stoas, in basilicas, in judicial settings, in private homes and elsewhere.”¹⁰⁶ Friesen argues that the passages in chapter 17 in which Rome is portrayed as a beast-riding prostitute, committing fornication with kings and inhabitants of the earth, can be interpreted as emperor-worship or the worship of other deities than John’s sovereign Lord.¹⁰⁷ In a sense this narrative thus confirms Derrida’s model of sovereignty as tied to an all-seeing, all-powerful God-like power.¹⁰⁸ The Beast associated with Roman human sovereignty *imitates* divine sovereignty, while the Lamb is presented as the divine sovereign who is the sovereign’s sovereign.¹⁰⁹ Arguing that this text was part of a larger context of criticism against the Roman Empire, Peter Perry too proposes that “divine sovereignty” is pitted against “Rome as a city of excess, luxury and conspicuous consumption” in this passage.¹¹⁰ Thompson calls the beast a “superhuman” figure, revealing the way in which this figure represents the human political power modelled on the logic of “more than” that puts human power in the seat of ultimate sovereignty.¹¹¹ In Revelation, then, the Beast represents Rome as an evil, artificial power that is ferocious like a beast and sovereign like the divine. As Perry puts it, the problem the author of Revelation appears to present is that “the Roman Empire does not appropriately imitate divine rule”.¹¹² The Beast, in Koester’s words, “is the great mimicker of God, for if God is the one who ‘was and is and is to come’ from heaven (4:8), the beast ‘was and is not and is to ascend from the bottomless pit’ (17:8)”.¹¹³ It is thus a mere prosthesis and parody of power but a terrifying one at that. As such, animality as “beast” becomes a decidedly adverse metaphor for the human political order at its worst, associating the political with the animal, and the animal with the deleterious.

¹⁰⁵ Steven J. Friesen, “Satan’s Throne, Imperial Cults and the Social Settings of Revelation”, *The Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27.3 (2005), 352. Friesen argues this was a rhetorical ploy rather than a reflection of crisis and persecution relating to imperial cults in the author’s own time. Imperial cults were a way of criticizing Roman imperialism more generally.

¹⁰⁶ Friesen, “Satan’s Throne, Imperial Cults and the Social Settings of Revelation”, 363.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 370.

¹⁰⁸ BS I, 50.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Peter S. Perry, “Critiquing the Excess of Empire: A *Synkrisis* of John and Dio of Prusa”, *The Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 29.4 (2007), 476. Perry specifically compares the author of Revelation to Dio of Prusa, or Dio Chrysostom as he is also known, showing a larger context of criticism against Rome, existing across class and social status.

¹¹¹ Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 174.

¹¹² Perry, “Critiquing the Excess of Empire: A *Synkrisis* of John and Dio of Prusa”, 493.

¹¹³ Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, 159.

Stripping the Beast of its metaphorical and symbolic layers as wolf-like human political power or a faux-divine sovereignty however, the Beast could be seen otherwise, in line with the lives of wild animals in the Roman Empire, as suggested also in Frilingos' instructive study on spectatorship and the Roman arena in Revelation, *Spectacles of Empire: Monsters, Martyrs, and the Book of Revelation*.¹¹⁴ Following Frilingos, Seesengood deems Revelation to be more like a spectacle than a vision.¹¹⁵ He argues that the "repeated pattern of combat scenes and exotic displays found in the Apocalypse may be deliberately evocative of the spectacles of the Roman arena".¹¹⁶ Embedded in the language of games, sports and violence in the Roman arenas that is reflected in Revelation, I suggest that the discourse of *animality* and *sovereignty* is paramount for constructing sympathy for the good "team" and antipathy for the opposing "team" – and, as I will go on to show, the way this collapses.

Gilhus explains two particularly pertinent performances of Roman power involving animals, namely *venationes* and *damnatio ad bestias*. The former were essentially hunting spectacles that took place in arenas, often involving large numbers of animals being killed and were a form of mass entertainment in antiquity.¹¹⁷ In contrast to animal sacrifice which was an age-old institution, the arena was relatively new and its popularity increased with the growth of the empire.¹¹⁸ Constructing stone amphitheatres in the first century CE made it easier to control animals and offered more room for spectators. This was a version of hunting but in controlled spaces, and dependent on an imperialistic state system that made it possible to catch, keep and deliver the animals to Rome or other areas in the Empire.¹¹⁹ Hence, perhaps, the association in Revelation of Rome with a many-headed beast. Gilhus recounts how this use of wild animals in relation to spectacles of power could be seen in Mesopotamia and Egypt, where conquering lions was a royal sport and aristocratic elites

¹¹⁴ Frilingos, *Spectacles of Empire: Monsters, Martyrs, and the Book of Revelation*, 1.

¹¹⁵ Seesengood, *Competing Identities*, 74.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹¹⁷ Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans*, 31. The first such known hunting spectacle, involving lions and panthers was in 186 BCE organised by Marcus Fulvius Nobilior (Livy, 39.5.7-10; 39.22.2). *Ibid.* For more on this see J.P.V.D Balsdon, *Life and Leisure in Ancient Rome* (London: Bodley Head, 1969) and K.M Coleman, "Fatal Charades: Roman executions staged as mythological enactments", *Journal of Roman Studies* 80 (1990): 44-73. For animals in Rome more generally see particularly J.M.C Toynbee's *Animals in Roman Life and Art* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1996). The *damnatio ad bestias* was introduced for deserters in the middle of the second century BCE by Scripito the Younger and took on increasing popularity as a form of punishment. Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans*, 33. See O.F Robinson's *Ancient Rome: City Planning and Administration* (London: Routledge, 1994).

¹¹⁸ Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans*, 31. Gilhus describes how such spectacles developed into large-scale massacres under the Roman Empire, as is described by Pliny in his *Natural History* (8.20.53; 8.24.64.) Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans*, 32.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

hunted big game. A zoo with exotic animals, for example, had been proof of Pharaoh's claim to rule the ordered world.¹²⁰ In the Roman arenas animals were both imported and indigenous, carnivorous, wild and domestic; they had to be captured, put in menageries, and then were kept in cages in lower levels of the Colosseum and special areas outside the city.¹²¹ For the fights animals were brought into arenas in Rome: "bulls were set against panthers, rhinoceroses against bears and lions against tigers, as well as all types of animal against humans."¹²²

The *venationes* can be seen as a display of power through the use of animals. As Gilhus explains: "The hunt had become a spectacular show over which the emperor presided as its patron and all classes of people participated as spectators."¹²³ In a sense these were hunts that had been "democratized", not just for those in power but now also for a mass audience. Here, numerous animals were killed. While domesticated animals were already under human control in agriculture, such entertainment including wild animals showed them too as under human domination.¹²⁴ "The *venationes*, as well as the gladiator contests, contributed to demonstrating the authority of the emperor as well as the extent of the empire and the wealth of those who paid for the shows."¹²⁵ Roland Auguet recounts the killing of a lion in Rome that was considered by Romans a symbol of their total power over the universe.¹²⁶ Such accounts testify to the symbolically important and real exercise of power of man controlling animals and Rome controlling the world through the lives (and deaths) of animals.¹²⁷ With the diversity of animals in the Roman arenas, it also showed off the geographical expansion of Rome's power and influence.¹²⁸

Probably from the time of Augustus (63 BCE -14 CE) the *venatio* also included the execution of criminals and gladiator fights (*munera*).¹²⁹ Gilhus explains the *damnatio ad bestias* as the sentencing of humans to beasts as punishment for severe crimes. These killings were staged in amphitheatres of the great cities at the celebration of feasts and for

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., 33.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 34.

¹²⁵ Ibid. The fighting and killing of beasts was associated with Hercules, an image emperors frequently wanted to identify with. Ibid., 35.

¹²⁶ Roland Auguet, *Cruelty and Civilization* (London: Routledge, 1994), 112-113. Gilhus also describes how some emperors kept lions as pets, such as Elagabalus and Caracalla, who thought of them as status symbols. Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans*, 30.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 34.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 32.

general entertainment of spectators. "Humans being killed by animals, together with arena performances, were part of the mass entertainment of antiquity, viewed by virtually everyone, even if not everyone appreciated it."¹³⁰ Parading the wildness and ferocity of the animals thus demonstrated the ferocity and power of Roman rule but also portrayed the animals as puppets, doing as they are staged to do and dying for the entertainment and law of human rulers and citizens. Moore calls the Beast of Revelation a "martyr-making killing machine" (such as is depicted in 11:7), thus highlighting the objectification of the Beast as such an instrumentalised or objectified puppet or machine.¹³¹ The Beast of Revelation 17 who is leopard, bear and lion could be read as an amalgamation of such animals used for Roman spectacles, representing quite literally the *bestly* powers of Rome.¹³² The war between Lamb and Beast could be seen as a battle of beastly Roman power against its innocent opponents. Polemically construed as humans treated like lambs, such opponents are portrayed in Revelation 17 as if a lamb thrown to the wild beasts of the Roman arenas. Revelation provides a "textual theatre" that narrates spectacles for its ancient Christian audience, and thus draws on available discourses in the Roman Empire.¹³³ Frilingos suggests that such spectacles were a "particularly effective mode for the production of authoritative knowledge about other and self under the Roman Empire".¹³⁴ Crucially, this can be tied in specifically to conceptualisations of animality as Derrida's "human-beast" and "animal-other" around a dynamics of sovereign power, or the lack of it. Thompson argues that rather than *describing* conflicts amongst Christians in the Roman Empire, the author of Revelation "*encourages* his audience to see themselves in conflict with society; such conflict is part of his vision of the world"¹³⁵ and Duff too argues for the persuasive

¹³⁰ Ibid., 183. Gilhus cites Cicero's distaste for such spectacles in *Letter to his Friends*, 7.1.3.

¹³¹ Moore, "Divinanimality and (Post)humanity: Ruminations on Revelation's Ruminant, Quadrupedal Christ; or, the Even-Toed Ungulate That Therefore I am", 32. This is resonant with Descartes' animal as an animal-machine, akin to the machinery of clocks.

¹³² I am not trying to suggest that this was the author's intention or that Revelation is a direct, conscious engagement with such spectacles, but rather, that with the records of such treatment of animals in the Roman Empire, the Beast of Revelation 17 might be placed within such a historical and cultural context in order to discern a broader framework of associations and understandings of human political representation, animal representations and human-animal relationships.

¹³³ Frilingos, *Spectacles of Empire: Monsters, Martyrs, and the Book of Revelation*, 40.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 11.

¹³⁵ Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 174. Thompson's influential view is that Christians in Asia Minor were not a particularly suffering group in the Roman Empire, but that the author of Revelation is nonetheless highly critical of Roman power and perceives a conflict between Roman way of life and a commitment to following Jesus. "Imperial officials did not seek out Christians to persecute them; in fact, they preferred not to get involved with the sect. But if local residents opposed Christians and reported them through proper channels, they could force them to trial. For the most part, however, Christians lived peacefully with their neighbours in the Roman political order." Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 172.

purposes of Revelation to alternative perceptions of political power.¹³⁶ In much Christian discourse, Gilhus writes, martyrs were turned into “cultural performers” who conveyed how fighting and dying for God as “lambs” became both a proper and noble sacrifice and a triumph against Roman power.¹³⁷ Eusebius, for instance, suggests that John the author of Revelation had been persecuted and exiled to Patmos because of his testimony to the word of God, despite no evidence of this, and so Revelation too becomes caught up in a discursive cultural performance of victimhood and victory.¹³⁸ Whether many martyrs actually were fed to animals or not, victims of *damnatio ad bestias* functioned as an opposition and even competition to Rome and its power dynamics as an attempt at upping sovereignty. Read in this light, with regard for the portrayal of the Lamb in Revelation 17, the idea of the innocent, weak lamb is in fact more like a discursively drawn lion in its triumphant power in “the ring”.¹³⁹ The Lamb as a weak figure of domestic animality and sacrificial victim in Revelation 17 becomes thus the figure of a lion or beast: capable of fighting back and winning.¹⁴⁰ Accordingly, the Lamb participates in the power games of the Roman order, in “a mimicry”, adopting the actions of the enemy.¹⁴¹ As such, the author of Revelation is not critiquing violent sovereign power but is rather caught up in a discourse that aims to identify “the proper colonizer”, that is, the Lamb or God.¹⁴² What are the implications for Revelation’s animal figures of “good” and “evil”? How does the

¹³⁶ Duff, “Wolves in Sheep’s Clothing: Literary Opposition and Social Tension in the Revelation of John”, 65. As well as persuasive, it could be said to be persistent. Mapping the figures of Revelation onto various evils is commonplace. For instance, Teresa Okure suggests that the economy as the modern “god” can be compared to the beasts of Revelation. Teresa Okure, “From Genesis to Revelation: Apocalyptic in Biblical Faith”, in *Is the World Ending?* eds. Sean Freyne and Nicholas Lash (London: SCM Press, 1998), 29.

¹³⁷ Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans*, 186. Gilhus recounts how Ignatius, martyred in Rome early in the second century CE wrote a letter in which he describes himself as God’s sacrifice and as the bread of Christ, while Polycarp describes himself as a ram and burnt offering. Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans*, 159.

¹³⁸ Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3. 18.1, cited by Knight, *Revelation*, 21. Knight discusses Eusebius’s claims to first century persecutions by the Romans but suggests these are difficult to verify and clearly caught up in a mixture of legend and history. Gilhus sites the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, the *Martyrdom of Perpetua* and the anonymous second-century Christian apologia the *Letter to Diognetus* in using such sacrificial discourse in the face of martyrdom and specifically also in being thrown to animals in Roman arenas. Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans*, 188.

¹³⁹ Thompson discusses the way in which death and dying became admired throughout the latter half of the first century as modes of protest against oppressive political powers. Literature was especially crucial for such a discourse of protest and critique. “Tyrannicide” became a genre and use of satire and mythologies about Agamemnon and the house of Atreus provided codes for contemporary critiques against emperors. Writings by martyrs, especially last words and idealized presentations at the moment of death in the face of a tyrant were collected. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 182.

¹⁴⁰ Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans*, 187. See also D. S Potter, “Martyrdom as Spectacle”, in *Theatre and Society in the Classical World*, ed. R. Schodel (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), J. Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representations in the Early Christian Era* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), and B.D Shaw, “Body/power/identity: Passions of the Martyrs”, *Journal of Early Christianity Studies* 4,3 (1996): 269-312.

¹⁴¹ Seesengood, *Competing Identities*, 78.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

logic of this political fable function when the weak animal victim becomes *like* the sovereign beast and the sovereign beast comes to look *like* a victim of sovereign power?

In light of these questions, the Beast takes on a somewhat different appearance. It is not merely the ferocious, many-headed negative representation of violence but – more literally viewed – the vulnerable, victimized exploited bodies of the hunted, captivated, coaxed and cajoled animals in a human arena, made to perform the image of power and ferocity in the place of human rulers and for the entertainment and loyalty of human citizens. While these animals may well be ferocious, their place in such a context is also that of creatures robbed of their habitat, freedom, made puppets or machines to human mastery, and killed for the sake of human law and entertainment. They are thus in a sense rather La Fontaine's lamb than the wolf, or Derrida's animal other, as creatures who are condemned in advance as mere puppets, killable and usable, in being animal. While portrayed as the "evil", the Beast in Revelation inadvertently draws attention to such a practice, and thus shows the sovereign Lamb as participating in the violent modes of power Rome is criticized for. The "Beast" thus becomes the weak and suffering creature that the Lamb supposedly denotes.

The Whore of Babylon: Abject or Annexed?

The woman on the beast is also thought to symbolize Rome. As a 'whore' (17:1 πόρνη) and 'woman' (17:3 γυνή) who rules over the kings of the earth, she is the very opposite to Derrida's virgin marionette figure; she is presented as an arch-nemesis, a powerful, wild woman, riding the Beast of Rome. This 'great whore' (17:1) 'with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and with the wine of whose fornication the inhabitants of the earth have become drunk' (17:2), is 'clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication' (17:4). As already mentioned, the Whore of Babylon is a significant part of the image of Rome in Revelation 17 that offers possibilities to develop Derrida's thinking of "la bête" further in regard to sovereignty, animality and sexual difference. In Revelation 17, it is, as I showed, the Lamb who appears to embody the male sovereign, a husband, king, lord and shepherd. But, associated with the kings who presumably are the same kings represented by the many heads and horns of the Beast, the Whore too is a sovereign figure, *more* "sovereign" than the Beast and its kings. In the last

verse of chapter 17 she is described as ruling 'over the kings of the earth' (17:18); in 18:7 the word "queen" is used of her: βασιλίσα. She is the rider of the Beast, and so when the Lamb triumphs it is by laying her bare through turning the Beast against her, making her desolate, eaten and burnt (17:16). How are we to understand this woman, then – a sovereign whore and a victim – in the power dynamic between Lamb and Beast, in the battle for sovereign power?

Along with the Beast, the Whore of Babylon symbolises Roman power as well as the ancient symbol of a super-power and enemy in the Hebrew Bible, Babylon. She is thus a layered and hyperbolic symbolic figure of tyrannical evil political power. As Koester points out, seated on seven hills, connecting her to the seven hills of Rome, the Whore could be seen as a representation of Rome as the destructive source of the second temple, and Babylon as the Babylonians destroyed the first temple.¹⁴³ She can be understood as the Goddess Rome, *dea Roma*, who as David Aune attests, is depicted on a Vespasian sestertius minted in the Roman province of Asia in 71 CE.¹⁴⁴ On this coin the goddess Roma is clothed in military dress and seated on Rome's seven hills with the river god Tiber reclining at the right and the she-wolf with Romulus and Remus at the lower left.¹⁴⁵ Aune suggests that the author of Revelation might have utilised this popular image as a way of framing his attack on Rome.¹⁴⁶ The fact that the Dea Roma is holding a parazonium – a small sword – on the coin might be seen as a reminder of Roman military might, which is amplified in the violent image of Rome in Revelation 17.¹⁴⁷ Koester emphasises the caricature nature of this figure as an exaggerated political fable¹⁴⁸ with a clear moral: this figure of evil will fall to destruction, but meanwhile, followers of the Lamb must avoid affiliating with the Roman powers associated with her.¹⁴⁹ She could thus be seen as the female figure of Roman power that controls the animals it captures, hunts, displays and kills, just as she rides the Beast and guzzles the blood of 'saints' and 'witnesses to Jesus' (17:6).

In order for Roman authority to be polemically portrayed as an arch-enemy it is thus represented as wild animals and a specifically female radical evil, conveyed, to use

¹⁴³ Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, 31.

¹⁴⁴ David Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 52C: Revelation 17-22* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 920.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 920-922.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 927.

¹⁴⁸ Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, 155.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 31.

Julia Kristeva's concept, as *abject*. Kristeva's concept of the abject is primarily characterised by revulsion at food, corpses and female sexual power, all qualities embodied by the figure of the Whore. Further, abjection is tied to ambivalence, particularly to the ambivalence of female sexuality as both a threat and competition to male potency and at the same time desirous. I have shown how the Beast can be seen as a figure both for Roman power over its subjects, human and non-human, but also of its victimized animal subjects akin to Derrida's "animal other". Now I will explore how a particular sexualized woman also appears as such a double-sided image of abject and dangerously seductive sovereignty on the one hand and pitiable suffering subject of sympathy on the other.¹⁵⁰ Both are linked specifically with her representation as woman *and* animal. With the Beast, the Whore is Roman imperial power as Derrida's "the worst", "radical evil"¹⁵¹ but the way in which Rome becomes inextricably linked to the prostitute and beast undercuts this evil and turns the logic around, making the Lamb appear the figure of sovereign violence and the Whore and Beast as a version of Rome that elicits sympathy and compassion. In order to defeat this "evil", in becoming *more* sovereign, the Lamb turns into the killer and destroyer of such suffering subjects of Rome.

Derrida relates the "more than" logic of sovereignty to height and virility, making the connection to erection and thus the automatism and rigidity of the erect phallus.¹⁵² As a male sovereign, the Lamb that battles for power could be read as fantasy for a virile sovereignty constructed as the "good", as well as the highest, most potent. Rome, as the enemy of the Lamb, is conceptualized specifically as a prostitute, and it is the implications of this imagery that I will explore here more closely. The imagery of the Great Whore draws on many texts of the Hebrew Bible that liken prostitutes to cities, such as Tyre in Ezek. 27:3 and Isa. 23:17, Nineveh (capital of Assyria) in Nah. 3:4 and 2 Kings 16:5-16.¹⁵³ By characterising the figure of the Whore of Babylon as Rome, but also such cities as Tyre, Nineveh and Babylon, Koester suggests she is a figure for human evil power more generally but fails to note the specifically *female* association with evil.¹⁵⁴ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza argues that because Revelation draws on the prophetic language of the Hebrew Bible, with its traditions of gendered imagery and language, the Whore of Babylon

¹⁵⁰ For a study of women in classical antiquity more generally, see Sarah B. Pomeroy's *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975).

¹⁵¹ FK, 56.

¹⁵² BS I, 215. Erection is of course a reference to the distinctions between humans and animals that Aristotle draws as to reason, speech and an *upright* stature. The sovereignty of the human, then, is also related to being *erect* and *upright* (with all the connotations of height and morality this brings with it).

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

should not be thought of as an actual woman.¹⁵⁵ She suggests that just as the Lamb should not be thought of as an animal, the Whore's symbolism for "human culture and political institutions" does "not tell us anything about the author's understanding of actual women".¹⁵⁶ This may well be the case but that does not mean that her specifically female characterisations and context can be ignored or set aside as irrelevant or arbitrary.¹⁵⁷ It would be impossible to "read" her without these particular characteristics.

The debates in animal studies over the animal as an "other" to the human of course mirror Simone de Beauvoir's famous characterisation of women as the "other" to man.¹⁵⁸ Just as she drew upon Aristotle's understanding of women as *lacking* certain qualities reserved for man, and the Genesis story where Eve is created from Adam's rib,¹⁵⁹ the animal debate has similarly located such discursive sources as detrimental for animals. The Whore is such an "other" to the male figure of the Lamb, and thus Rome as evil is associated with a particular kind of woman, the prostitute, as well as the carnivorous brutal animal, thus associating evil with a sexualised woman and animal subjects in opposition to the Lamb's male-divine sovereignty. Pippin argues we must refocus readings of Revelation on the gender-specific violence in this text, and that scholarly readings have too easily eschewed such images of violence.¹⁶⁰ The Whore of Babylon is certainly one such image of violence *of* a woman and violence *towards* a woman, with her drinking of human blood (17:6) and then the later devouring of her own naked flesh (17: 16). In the same way that the Beast of Revelation 17 has been mainly connected to Roman emperors rather than seen in the light of animals suffering in the Roman arenas, the Whore too is perhaps too easily eschewed as a symbolic emblem of Rome or indeed, of *evil*.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁵ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 96.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Caroline Vander Stichele makes this point, arguing she cannot be taken purely as a metaphor. Caroline Vander Stichele, "Re-membering the Whore: The Fate of Babylon According to Revelation 17.16", in *A Feminist Companion to The Apocalypse of John*, eds. Amy-Jill Levine and Maria Mayo Robbins (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 106-107.

¹⁵⁸ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Vintage, 2010).

¹⁵⁹ De Beauvoir, "Introduction: Woman as Other", in *The Second Sex* (London: Vintage, 2010).5-6.

¹⁶⁰ Tina Pippin, *Apocalyptic Bodies: The Biblical End of the World in Text and Image* (London: Routledge, 1999), x.

¹⁶¹ There are many connections made between gender studies and animal studies. See for instance Josephine Donovan's "Animal Rights and Feminist Theory", *Signs* 15.2 (1990): 350-75, and more recently the special issue "Animal Others", eds. Lori Gruen and Kari Weil, *Hypatia* 27. 3 (2012), as well as *Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics: A Reader*, eds., Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams (New York: University of Columbia Press, 2007).

John W. Marshall draws attention to the specifically sexualised violence in the scene with the Whore of Babylon of chapter 17,¹⁶² in that she is a distinctly *female* figure, made naked and also, as he puts it, cannibalistically eaten.¹⁶³ As such she is both woman and animal. It is not easy to say “where the woman Babylon ends and the Beast begins, and not only because both are figures of imperial Rome: the woman’s savage appetite for human blood makes her akin to a predatory animal”.¹⁶⁴ She is the tempting image of female sexuality to be voyeuristically viewed in an invitation to ‘Come’ (17:1) as a specifically female sexual seduction but ultimately a subject of destruction or annexation as Rome. As La Fontaine’s lamb is eaten, the Whore of Babylon is to be burned (17:16) like the remains of a sacrificial animal carcass and ‘devoured’ or consumed (17:16). Stripped of the marks of her seductive power, her flesh – σάρξ – will be made naked (γυμνός), like an animal or a raped woman. Roman power is associated with female powers: sexually seductive, gloriously clad ‘clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls’ (17:4). The great wonder proclaimed at the first sight of the Whore in 17: 6 could be read as curious allure or as abhorrence, with the first person use of the verb ἐθαύμασα, to wonder or marvel at, followed closely by the noun, θαύμα, signalling amazement or admiration.¹⁶⁵ But she is also construed as repellent force and bestial unrestrained power, breaking taboos relating to blood as if she/Rome were a carnivorous animal. In *Powers of Horror, An Essay on Abjection*, Kristeva discusses the abject or demoniacal potential associated with the feminine. This association “does not succeed in defining itself as *other* but threatens one’s *own and clean self*, which is the underpinning of any organization constituted by exclusions and hierarchies”.¹⁶⁶ As Rome, the Whore is not wholly other but a space within which a battle must be fought, where what she represents must *become* excluded and demolished by the Lamb. Rome as abject is represented as a female prostitute *and* wild animal and thus “becomes synonymous with a radical evil that

¹⁶² John W. Marshall, “Gender and Empire: Sexualized Violence in John’s Anti-Imperial Apocalypse”, in *A Feminist Companion to The Apocalypse of John*, eds. Amy-Jill Levine and Maria Mayo Robbins (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 32.

¹⁶³ Marshall, “Gender and Empire: Sexualized Violence in John’s Anti-Imperial Apocalypse”, 29.

¹⁶⁴ Moore, “Divinanimality and (Post)humanity: Ruminations on Revelation’s Ruminant, Quadrupedal Christ; or, the Even-Toed Ungulate That Therefore I am”, 35.

¹⁶⁵ G.K Beale too suggests that admiration could be considered a plausible element to the seer’s reaction, although he explains that shock, fear and confusion are more likely. He argues that even if the author of the vision temporarily admires what he sees, the visions of the Whore on the Beast are “too horrific” to continue such admiration. He admits in the end (having given several reasons to the contrary) that despite these considerations they “do not nullify the likelihood that John was also attracted in some way to the Babylonian woman”. He suggests a good translation might be “awestruck”, which would contain the ambiguity of abjection and admiration. G.K Beale, *The Book of Revelation, A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans), 862-863.

¹⁶⁶ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 65.

is to be suppressed".¹⁶⁷ Related to a mother (μήτηρ) of whores and to blood (αἷμα) in 17:5-6, the Whore of Babylon becomes a prime image of an abject woman-animal. She is explicitly associated with what is unclean (ἀκάθαρτος) in 17:4 over her 'abominations' (βδέλυγμα) and fornication (πορνεία). While the link between the Whore of Babylon and the Dea Roma seems probable, it is not as clear where the association with prostitution stems from. The connection between the Whore and animality might, however, shed light on this. As already mentioned, the image on the coin in which the goddess of Rome is depicted also shows the well-known Roman legend of the infants Romulus and Remus being nursed by a she-wolf. Aune explains that the Latin term *lupa*, she-wolf, had the connotation of prostitute.¹⁶⁸ Revelation's figure of the Whore could thus be toying with Roma's proximity to the she-wolf as a prostitute-cum-animal. Further, her appearance in Revelation, colourfully clad and laden with jewellery draws on stereotypical descriptions of prostitutes in ancient literature.¹⁶⁹ Aune goes on to discuss how the Roman deity was thought to have a secret name, widely thought to be "Amor", the Latin name for love and "Roma", spelled backwards.¹⁷⁰ Romans were popularly viewed as descendants of Aeneas the son of Venus/Aphrodite – the goddess of love and sexuality – hence the link between Rome and love.¹⁷¹ "Since John depicts the goddess Rome as a prostitute, he may be consciously dragging the popular view in the dirt."¹⁷²

Robert Knapp argues that in Roman towns and cities there was no shortage of prostitutes, hence the use of the figure of a whore as metonymic with Rome in Revelation.¹⁷³ Paul Chrystal suggests that Rome alone had at least 45 brothels.¹⁷⁴ "Prostitutes were, quite literally, everywhere."¹⁷⁵ Prostitution was thus a widespread phenomenon in the Roman-Greco world, "a possibility for children, women and some few men, and a normalized sexual outlet for males".¹⁷⁶ This was a "familiar and popular aspect" of Roman life.¹⁷⁷ In their article on the Whore of Babylon, Jennifer A. Glancy and

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 70.

¹⁶⁸ Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 925.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 926.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 927.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Robert Knapp, *Invisible Romans: Prostitutes, outlaws, gladiators, ordinary men and women...the Romans that history forgot* (London: Profile Books, 2013 [2011]), 244.

¹⁷⁴ Paul Chrystal, *Women in Ancient Rome* (Gloucestershire: Amberly, 2013), 161.

¹⁷⁵ Knapp, *Invisible Romans*, 245.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 263.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. Knapp cites a Roman author who perhaps comes close to the author of Revelation's view of Roman prostitutes as beastly, namely, T. Quinctilius Atta, first century BC who described audacious prostitutes in his *Aquae Calidae*: "they whores through the streets like wolves looking for their prey." Another, this time

Stephen D. Moore, propose that readings of Revelation have been too “bookish” in their dealings with this figure, thus failing to take account of the Whore *as a whore*.¹⁷⁸ It is perhaps another instance in which the “animal” and “woman” become too rapidly deflected as symbolic ciphers, and in this way disappear from view, fudged and forgotten. Glancy and Moore focus on the way in which the Whore is akin to a brothel or street prostitute rather than a courtesan. They argue that the references to πορνεία “would have conjured up first and foremost in the minds of the urban Christians addressed in Revelation a certain category of flesh-and-blood person” rather than a figure of high class literature and art in the form of a courtesan.¹⁷⁹ As a prostitute in John’s “discourse of contempt”¹⁸⁰ the Whore in Revelation would thus participate in commonly used sexual invective in Roman political discourse.¹⁸¹ The way in which the author of Revelation makes use of such imagery of prostitution, in conjunction with the image of the Dea Roma on the coin, demonstrates what Frilingos calls “the pulsing rhythms of Roman culture at play in the book of Revelation”.¹⁸²

But in addition to this reference to prostitution, there are other elements to the disgust conjured up by this representation of Rome as a Whore. Kristeva links notions of abjection to conceptions of the mother, as what every “man” comes from and what is necessarily *left* behind, retrojected *from*, thus becoming separate, other. Coming from the mother is associated with the abjection of the bodily, the unclean, blood, gore related to birth and separation from the body of the mother. Perhaps a primary symbol of the abjection of the mother is the way in which the vagina, birth and blood are related. This is ambiguous, however. As a vital element blood “refers to women, fertility, and the assurance of fecundation. It thus becomes a fascinating semantic crossroads, the propitious place for abjection where *death* and *femininity*, *murder* and *procreation*, *cessation of life* and *vitality* all come together”.¹⁸³ Blood becomes associated with the female also in menstrual blood as the lack or failure of procreation and thus an improper sexuality not

Christian writer, Lactantius, presents the shame of prostitution: “For besides the out-of-control, filthy language and the outpouring of every kind of obscenity, harlots are stripped of their garments at the rhythmic demand of the people, and then they play the part of mimes, and are kept on stage before the appreciative audience until even shameless eyes are sated with their shameful gestures.” Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 1.20.10, cited by Knapp, *Invisible Romans*, 252-254.

¹⁷⁸ Jennifer A. Glancy and Stephen D. Moore, ‘How Typical a Roman Prostitute is Revelation’s “Great Whore”?’ , *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130:3 (2011): 551-569, 552.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 557.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 555.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 568.

¹⁸² Frilingos, *Spectacles of Empire: Monsters, Martyrs, and the Book of Revelation*, 13.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 96.

tied to reproduction. It is thus “unclean”, “improper”, abject, a sign of the mother’s sexuality beyond the offspring and so conceived as excessive. As Glancy and Moore state, “the monstrous spectacle of a sexualized woman utterly out of control serves as a trope for imperial autocracy – absolute power exercised to excess, entirely without restraint.”¹⁸⁴ But this is crucially dressed up in the apparel of animality. Like the blood the Whore drinks, blood here connotes also animal blood, in animal sacrifices and prohibitions against drinking blood. The Whore is thus associated with improper, boundless sexuality, the unclean, taboo, *and* animal carnivorousness, but remains a *vital* and *powerful* figure of such abjection. A “Terrible Mother” figure,¹⁸⁵ the Whore is allied to the female prostitute as faithlessness or impurity as well as the animal wildness and carnivorousness of her Beast-like power. As a “mother” of whores *and* prostitute she is portrayed as Kristeva’s “excessive matrilineality” in relation to male power – that is, an organisation of power traced and inherited from the mother, and thus in competition with a male sovereignty.¹⁸⁶ Rome thus becomes the excessive woman-animal to the Lamb’s male sovereignty. The woman is *too* potentially (and potently) generative, uncontrollably so, and in domination over the male kings she seduces.¹⁸⁷ The Whore is made an abject sign of the improper woman who is associated with excessive fertility in her boundless sexuality but also as one associated with the menstrual blood that signals waste, spreading her sexual powers in impure and uncontrollable ways, situated in the wilderness (17:3 ἔρημος) as if an untamed (and perhaps untameable) beast. In this sense, the Whore becomes inextricably bound up with the wild animals of Revelation’s Beast as Rome, and Roman society becomes metonymic with unbounded promiscuity and wild animality.

The faithlessness of the Whore could also be understood as Friesen sees it, in relation to eating meat of sacrificed animals. Such sacrifices took place in pagan rituals to Roman gods or in honour of human Roman power as divine-like, and so the act of eating is seen as faithless participation in Roman mainstream society while the animal meat here is seen as abject by association.¹⁸⁸ To imbibe such animal flesh is thus associated with a disapproving view of faithless woman and a particular carnivorous carnality. Friesen argues that this fornication refers first and foremost to the unfaithfulness of eating

¹⁸⁴ Glancy and Moore, ‘How Typical a Roman Prostitute is Revelation’s “Great Whore”?’ 566.

¹⁸⁵ Adela Yarbro Collins, “Feminine Symbolism in the Book of Revelation”, in *A Feminist Companion to The Apocalypse of John*, eds. Amy-Jill Levine and Maria Mayo Robbins (London: T & T Clark, 2009).

¹⁸⁶ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 77.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Friesen, “Satan’s Throne, Imperial Cults and the Social Settings of Revelation”, 369.

sacrificial meat,¹⁸⁹ and so the way in which the Whore of Babylon is understood as a fornicator or prostitute and a negative symbol of Roman imperial power with its imperial cults and animal sacrifices underscores the resemblance imposed between a sexually licentious woman to abject animality, animal flesh and paganism.

Kristeva suggests that what causes abjection is “what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite”.¹⁹⁰ Abjection is above all ambiguity, Kristeva argues, and this ambiguity of abjection is tied to perpetual danger and risk.¹⁹¹ Abjection is a “composite of judgement and affect, of condemnation and yearning, of signs and drives”.¹⁹² Further, a certain logic of prohibition founds the abject.¹⁹³ The Whore of Babylon's ambiguity, and therefore abjection, is in part related to her particularly female sexual powers. With the description of her luxury she is also an alluring figure, seductive and tantalizing. As the prohibited other, the Whore is the power the Lamb desires to usurp and the power it is repelled by as “unclean”. Perhaps what she represents here is not only the sheer brute force of Roman power embodied in the Beast she rides, but rather the temptation to and of power: the seduction of sovereignty as an imagined space of unrestrained potency projected onto the female body in the wild, as if a free, untamed, unrestrained animal. The Whore of Babylon thus presents a dangerous boundary between the desired power of Rome and the rejected and despised Roman power: what must be killed and destroyed as too beastly and what is *desired* in consumption as satisfaction of desire. She is a dangerous boundary between desire and threat embodied in “the paradox of an enthroned prostitute”.¹⁹⁴ Ambivalence haunts the description of her as naked, her flesh as if uncovered and relished in sexual rapture and between the violence of her desolation and letting the fire consume her. She is shown as abject in the need to repress such a desire for power and flesh.

Caroline Vander Stichele notes the stereotype of the woman out of control, demanding mastery,¹⁹⁵ reinforced by the image of the Whore as drunk (17:6), associated with the wine and drunkenness of the kings and inhabitants of the earth seduced by her

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 4.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 9.

¹⁹² Ibid., 10.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 64.

¹⁹⁴ Glancy and Moore, ‘How Typical a Roman Prostitute is Revelation's “Great Whore”?’ , 562. Glancy and Moore suggest she can be understood in comparison to the Roman Empress Messalina, *meretrix augusta*, whom Juvenal labels a ‘whore-empress’. Ibid, 565.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 118.

(17:2).¹⁹⁶ Jean K. Kim connects the Whore to the references to whores in Jeremiah, particularly Jeremiah 3, as a metaphor for the relationship between the faithless people of Israel and the Lord. Kim points out that Jeremiah uses animal sexual imagery that could be compared to the lustful woman in Revelation 17, with the 'restive young camel interlacing her tracks' (Jer. 2:23), the 'wild ass at home in the wilderness' who is also licentious (Jer. 2:24), and the 'lustful stallions' of Jer. 5:8.¹⁹⁷ She argues that both "female imagery and animal imagery are here used to convey disgusting behaviours",¹⁹⁸ but the implication is that women are accountable for this behaviour, while animals are not.¹⁹⁹ But there is more going on here than a simple distinction of accountability. The abject confronts us "with those fragile states where man strays on the territories of *animal*".²⁰⁰ Just as the question is asked in Jeremiah about the 'wild ass': 'Who can restrain her lust?' (Jer. 2:24), the connection made between these animals and the woman of Revelation 17 as Rome is perhaps rather one of similar subjection to sovereign power as male, virile and carnivorous. The desire and wildness of such a woman-animal is thus an otherness that potentially escapes suppression, that poses a challenge, in that she also evokes the fragile state of male sovereign power.

Concerning the relation between the Whore of Babylon and the Beast she rides, Pippin makes further interesting connections between the woman and animal. She refers to the Beast being said to 'ascend from the bottomless pit' (17:8). Pippin reads this as the jaws of an animal mouth but also as the vaginal opening of a woman,²⁰¹ as if such a Beast could only be spawned by a woman or be retrojected from a beast's mouth. And as if the jaws of a beast and the vaginal opening of a woman were similar, even interchangeable. Pippin states that "the image of the mouth of hell develops during this period and is fully imagined in the medieval hell-mouth iconography of a beast's or bird's (owl's) mouth".²⁰² Pippin also makes reference to Isaiah with its image of Sheol as an 'enlarged' 'appetite' and opened mouth 'beyond measure' (Is 5:14).²⁰³ She asks: "Does this mouth have lips? Could this be the poison kiss – the kiss of death? Or are these "lips" the vulva? Does this

¹⁹⁶ Both Knapp and Chrystal note the frequent association in the Roman Empire between bar-maids and prostitutes. Knapp, *Invisible Romans*, 248; Chrystal, *Women in Ancient Rome*, 160.

¹⁹⁷ Jean K. Kim, "Uncovering Her Wickedness": An Inter(Con)textual Reading of Revelation 17 from a Postcolonial Feminist Perspective," *The Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 73 (1999), 72.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 12.

²⁰¹ Pippin, *Apocalyptic Bodies*, 74.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 68.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

mouth devour? Does this mouth have teeth – the *vagina dentate*, the agent of castration?”²⁰⁴ This would fit the imagery in Revelation 17 of the seductive, fornicating woman and the references to devouring and being devoured. Or to the temptation of this figure as well as her danger. There is, here, seemingly an implicit and sinister connection between eating and sexuality, the mouth and the vagina in being eaten by a wild beast or seduced by a woman. Rome as a wild animal/prostitute is thus what might eat its subjects or seduce them, and as such its force must be resisted in order to remain a sovereign subject rather than a slave or victim, but in doing so the risk is to participate in the very logic of power critiqued in the first place in a competition for sovereignty.

Food, Kristeva writes, “becomes abject only if it is a border between two distinct entities or territories. A boundary between nature and culture, between the human and the non-human”.²⁰⁵ Kristeva discusses the way in which corpses too are a typical example of abjection. The Whore is imagined as both food and a corpse in the description of her fate (17:16). For Kristeva, as Lipschitz explains, “nothing is more abject, and hence more dangerous to the autonomous self, than the raw literalness and materiality of the corpse”,²⁰⁶ which is both seen as part of the finite mortal creature and as other to its proper living body. “It is this abject return of the dead animal body and the embodied threat of the ‘becoming-corpse’ of the subject” that the signs of a dead animal evoke in relation to the human form.²⁰⁷ Corpses and food are related in the animal body when the animal goes from life to flesh to be eaten. The Whore’s abjection is conveyed as an uncontrollable threatening female power which must be destroyed, but as a destruction that is legitimized as the Whore’s body is made non-human animal flesh, eaten and burnt like the carcass of a beast. But as a woman-animal, her status as “food” is ambiguous and haunting, on the boundaries between what is edible and what is not, what is clean and unclean, desirable and disgusting. The burning of the flesh is also significant in resembling something like a sacrificial ritual where the animal is turned from a living creature to become meat.²⁰⁸ The

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 71.

²⁰⁵ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 75.

²⁰⁶ Lipschitz, “Skin/ned Politics: Species Discourse and the Limits of ‘The Human’ in Nandipha Mntambo’s Arts”, 556.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Gilhus writes about the way sacrificial rites involved a religious elevation before being reduced to objects of consumption as well as prediction. The sacrifice thus “transformed” parts of the bodies of animals to food for the gods, food for humans, and “texts” to be read as their intestines were used to read the future. Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans*, 17. See particularly 114-138. See also M.H Jameson, “Sacrifice and animal husbandry in classical Greece”, in *Pastoral Economies in Classical Antiquity* ed. C.R. Whitaker (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1988). Rather than refer to sacrifice this might well, as Koester points out, refer to Nero, as under Nero the city set on seven hills was devastated by fire once before as described in

Lamb is the figure who has died (5:12 'that was slaughtered') but who does not remain dead (5:13 who will have dominion for ever and ever), whose flesh somehow avoids final death and so retains autonomy: the Whore, on the other hand, is entirely in the hands of, or rather mouths and claws of, the other who kills and survives her. Kristeva's *abject* is marked by one quality of the object, namely that it is opposed to the "I", the sovereign ipseity of the "I".²⁰⁹ In the death of the Whore this is precisely what she is robbed of, her sovereignty, her ipseity and her life, made into an abject woman-animal other and a non-living object.

Stichele argues that the Whore of Babylon represents an "other" in colonial terms, "viewed as alien territory to be conquered and eventually destroyed".²¹⁰ She proposes that this rhetoric is founded in the female body of the Whore, thus presuming "an analogy between military and sexual invasion, the colonizer presented as male, the colonized as female".²¹¹ The Whore's body, as Rome, is thus what is desired to be conquered, to be possessed like a rape in a tension between desire and aversion towards the woman-animal other and the power of Rome. But, while the abject is conceived of outside or apart from the "I", Kristeva argues that "from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master".²¹² It is interesting to note that while the Whore is shown to be a figure who will be killed off in Revelation 17, chapter 18 is almost wholly devoted to her, recounting descriptions of her and supplementing them as if she remains an obsessively haunting power impossible to banish. In fact, like the Beast as animals of the Roman arenas, the Whore might be seen as a challenge to her master, the Lamb, in being rather more like the weak power the Lamb supposedly signifies and thus is in fact the figure who elicits sympathy and compassion on the side of the good. Having erected this logic of the good, weak position of the Lamb against the evil, strong sovereignty of Rome, the logic of Revelation works against itself, by revealing the Whore as the pitiable, weak power and the Lamb as the strong sovereignty.

Tacitus' *Annals* 15.38. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, 161. At the same time, the burning of naked flesh that is not only killed but also eaten strongly suggests the mixture of sacrifice as an offering of the body and as flesh to be eaten. As such the images of the destruction of a city by fire and the sacrifice of a female body to be eaten come together to portray the magnitude of the destruction, and thus the power of the city/woman, as well as the power *over* this woman symbolized in laying her bare and eating her body.

²⁰⁹ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 1.

²¹⁰ Stichele, "Re-membering the Whore: The Fate of Babylon According to Revelation 17.16", 114-115.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 2.

In depicting Rome as beasts and a prostitute, the animal and the woman take on particular roles as terrifying abject and powerful enemies to be destroyed by the Lamb. But as a female prostitute, the Whore is perhaps more like a lamb surrounded by wolves. Because prostitution was not illegal or seen to be breaking moral laws, as it was not considered adultery, prostitutes in the Roman Empire were generally left alone, unprotected.²¹³ As Knapp testifies, with very little protection for prostitutes and a frequent conflation of prostitutes with slaves, these women were considered “fair game” when it came to social and physical abuse.²¹⁴ “The opportunities for exploitation and physical abuse were rampant”.²¹⁵ While it was a source of income, and was recognised by the law in being a taxable trade,²¹⁶ it frequently fell upon the vulnerable. Sarah B. Pomeroy, for instance, notes that baby girls and daughters were sometimes sold into prostitution by their parents²¹⁷ and it can be assumed that many unskilled poor women made a living through prostitution, in a status lower even than slaves, whose welfare was at least maintained according to their value in a household.²¹⁸ It was thus a dangerous life, most often located at the bottom of the social order. In his *Ancient Women in Rome*, Paul Chrystal links the way in which images of the phallus were popular throughout Rome, emphasising the dominance of male virility, or Derrida's sovereign man, in the social order.²¹⁹ Chrystal relates how female prostitutes and slaves were perceived as objects for men who desired to satisfy their sexual appetite, or to “demonstrate their virility and prowess over women: the prostitute allowed the client to assert his manhood and virility through serial penetration”.²²⁰ In Roman literature prostitutes are predominantly represented as marginalised, second-class citizens, vulnerable to male desire and the real and symbolic powers of the phallus.²²¹

In Revelation 17, then, Rome is represented as an alliance of the animal and the female, the animal specifically as the beast: the wild, feral, threatening, and the female specifically as the sexually faithless and abject prostitute. As such, Revelation 17 associates both animals and women with evil others to be captured, devoured and burnt. But, as this construction of Rome can also be unveiled as the exploited, vulnerable,

²¹³ Knapp, *Invisible Romans*, 239.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 261.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 261.

²¹⁶ Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves*, 201.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 192.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 202.

²¹⁹ Chrystal, *Women in Ancient Rome*, 160.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 164.

captured animals of its arenas and the endangered, abused prostitutes of its cities and streets, the so-called "evil" figures of Revelation 17 emerge at the same time as weak suffering subjects. Rather than straightforward symbols of Roman imperial power and force, they prompt an awakening to the suffering of a more complex and deconstructed sovereignty within Rome.

Deconstructed Sovereignities: An Other Rome and a Compassion Come

Rather than upping the ante further over the Lamb and participating in this logic of violent competition, the Whore of Babylon as a woman-animal might be said to represent Derrida's alternative conception of sovereignty, namely a weak force. As a wild animal and prostitute she is both an other force and vulnerability: the rogue and the quarry. She is depicted as carnivorous violence, but she is also vulnerable weakness, attacked, and so deprived of sovereignty. She becomes an "other" to the Lamb, and "the other", importantly, as "a *weak force*".²²² Barr suggests something similar when he remarks that "John's story can certainly be read as an instance of patriarchal misogyny" but it also opens up for the possibility of seeing "John's images of women Otherwise".²²³ He calls the Great Whore or Whore of Babylon the Queen Ruler.²²⁴ While admitting she refers to the city of Rome, Barr also suggests that as a great city destroyed she could also signify Jerusalem, a 'great city' John has earlier referred to (11:8). He concludes that she is in other words a multifaceted symbol.²²⁵ Barr does not, however, draw conclusions as to what this signifies for concepts of power or sovereignty in Revelation, or for how these concepts tie in with representations of women, political power and animality. Nor does his deconstruction go further than describe this apparent paradox between the Whore as Rome and the Whore as Jerusalem. Stichele too proposes that "the righteous rhetoric of Revelation readily deconstructs itself, as the dualistic conceptual framework too easily allows for the colonized to play out a role reversal as colonizer, focused, sadly, on the dismemberment of the female body in text and history".²²⁶ Building on this, and developing the idea further, I would like to explore what exactly such a "deconstructed" figure might signify.

²²² Ibid., xiv.

²²³ Barr, "Women in Myth and History: Deconstructing John's Characterization", in *A Feminist Companion to The Apocalypse of John*, eds. Amy-Jill Levine and Maria Mayo Robbins (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 56.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid., 59.

²²⁶ Stichele, "Re-membering the Whore: The Fate of Babylon According to Revelation 17.16", 119.

Derrida puts forward the idea of the “other” as a “weak force” in *Rogues*, where he touches on many similar themes to *The Beast and the Sovereign* seminars. In fact, in *Rogues* too he refers to La Fontaine’s wolf and the lamb.²²⁷ Here he argues for the idea of a deconstructed sovereignty. Derrida refers to this in relation to the figure of God as the ultimate sovereign. Referring to God as an ontotheology of sovereignty, he is describing a model of sovereignty as the One and Only, an indivisible, omnipotent sovereign power.²²⁸ It is the *indivisibility* of sovereignty that Derrida throughout his thinking of human/animal distinctions has been critiquing. That is, the idea that there might be an indivisible concept of the “human”, an indivisible threshold separating once and for all humans from animals. Indivisible sovereignty has thus been mapped onto the idea of the sovereign human or, rather “man”, in the conceptualisation of humans as the living being with powers of authority, language and reason, powers that denigrate animals to a lack of these sovereign properties and so to become subjects to human sovereignty. With the Lamb as a male figure of sovereignty against the female Whore and beast-riding queen, it is her otherness that threatens the indivisible power of the Lamb as King of kings.

To repeat what was briefly mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Derrida goes on to say that it might be possible to think the name of God otherwise, even as a vulnerable nonsovereignty. Such a God would be a sovereignty that suffers and is divisible, even mortal, capable of contradiction and repentance – a God who deconstructs himself in his sovereignty and ipseity.²²⁹ With this thought, it is as if Derrida is referring to the comment in *The Beast and Sovereign vol. I*, where he, as mentioned above, points to Jesus as human and as lamb, a mortal, vulnerable creature. In that case, however, Derrida resisted this connection, presenting the Christ-lamb as a sovereign power, becoming allied with a translation of the *logos* as reason, word, language and life that becomes purely human in the Western philosophical tradition he examines. Having examined the Lamb figure of Revelation 17 it would appear that the Lamb is indeed allied to notions of sovereignty as divine-male force and power, indivisible as the sovereignty of sovereigns. It is the Whore of Babylon with the Beast who becomes the figure of divisible sovereignty, “a vulnerable nonsovereignty, one that suffers and is divisible, one that is mortal”.²³⁰ Bauckham recounts how the image of God as an almighty powerful sovereign judge in

²²⁷ In fact, *Rogues* opens with La Fontaine’s fable-poem, and the first line is: “The strong always best at proving their right”.

²²⁸ R, 157.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

Revelation has come under heavy criticism in recent theological discussions.²³¹ He notes that particularly feminist theologians have balked at this imagery and eschewed the patriarchal power dynamic displayed by this representation.²³² As a divisible sovereignty the Whore of Babylon becomes an alternative figure to patriarchal power as triumphant, indivisible sovereignty.²³³ For Derrida, this “vulnerable force, this force without power” is what “exceeds the condition of mastery”.²³⁴ This would be for Derrida the horizon of a different thinking of power and sovereignty, a sovereignty that would not be linked to mastery, power, man, or to sovereign indivisibility.²³⁵ This would be the emergence of another vision of Rome, not as grittily whorish and brutally animal, but a Rome of socially and marginalized subjects: its captured arena-animals and its prostitutes. This Rome is not “lamb” through and through as merely weak; the animal and the female here remain other as wild, threatening powers that challenge male mastery. But this otherness is also vulnerable, weak, subject to virile, carnivorous powers. What are the implications of such an other sovereignty?

The destruction of the Whore could be read in line with what Derrida calls autoimmunity. Autoimmunity is when something “can spontaneously destroy, in an autonomous fashion, the very thing within it that is supposed to protect it against the other, to immunize it against the aggressive intrusion of the other”.²³⁶ The woman is the one who rules over the kings represented in the many heads and horns of the Beast, and yet it is these members of her own “body” or alliance who destroy her when the Beast devours her flesh. It is a self-weakening, then, a self-destruction. Koester makes this point when he comments that evil “self-destructs” in regard to this scene, but does not draw further inferences from this point.²³⁷ But there is more to this than a “sobering message” “that

²³¹ Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 43. While he states this is not the only image of God in Revelation he concedes that it is a dominant one.

²³² Ibid. See e.g. D. Hampson, *Theology and Feminism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 151-3.

²³³ In their book on the reception of Revelation, for instance, Kovacs and Rowland write about the way in which women have historically found ways of expressing power through Revelation. “Perpetua and Felicity, Teresa of Avila and Hildegard of Bingen found in this authoritative visionary text a licence to transgress convention and function in a male domain. Anna Trapnel, one of the large number of women visionaries and prophets in seventeenth-century England, uses imagery from the Apocalypse in describing a heavenly court populated with herself and her woman companions.” *Revelation: The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ*, 188-189. This is presumably more often than not with reference to the woman clothed with the sun in chapter 12, however, or the wife and bride of the Lamb, rather than the more rogue Whore of Babylon.

²³⁴ R, xiv.

²³⁵ Lawlor relates this idea of a weak force to a particularly Christian idea, referencing Paul in 2 Cor. 12:12. Lawlor, *This Is Not Sufficient*, 112. This would be an interesting topic to pursue further, perhaps especially in the increasing interest in Paul by contemporary philosophical thinkers such as Jacob Taubes, Slavoj Žižek, Alain Badiou and Giorgio Agamben.

²³⁶ R, 123.

²³⁷ Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, 161.

God's judgement is carried out when he allows those who wreak destruction to become victims of their own practices".²³⁸ For Derrida, facing the other in the figure of the animal other involves a passivity, and so a renunciation of power and the "I" as sovereign autonomy. Only this would make an encounter with the other *as other* possible. For such a confrontation with the animal other to be able to take place,

it must, beyond all mastery, affect a passivity. It must touch an exposed vulnerability, one without absolute immunity, without indemnity; it must touch this vulnerability in its finitude and in a nonhorizontal fashion, there where it is not yet or is already no longer possible to face up to the unforeseeability of the other.²³⁹

Derrida connects this to autoimmunity in the sense that such a self-weakening gesture actually opens up a vulnerability and so a space for the encounter with the other. As Lawlor explains it, "the weak force will be a vulnerability that makes life unconditionally open to what comes: it receives".²⁴⁰ "In this regard, autoimmunity is not an absolute ill or evil. It enables the exposure to the other, to *what* and to *who* comes – which means that it must remain incalculable".²⁴¹ The deconstructed sovereignty of Derrida's other is connected to the messianic as the coming of good or evil. This messianism "follows no determinate revelation".²⁴² It is linked to an "invincible desire for justice" but is marked by a not-knowing; in the face of it one cannot "be certain of anything, either through knowledge, consciousness, conscience, foreseeability or any kind of programme as such".²⁴³ Derrida writes further:

This justice, which I distinguish from right, alone allows the hope, beyond all 'messianisms,' of a universalizable culture of singularities, a culture in which the abstract possibility of the impossible translation could nevertheless be announced. This justice inscribes itself in advance in the promise, in the act of faith or in the appeal to faith that inhabits every act of language and every address to the other.²⁴⁴

Mansfield sees this messianic coming as an openness to the other as a justice linked with the idea of *gift*: "a gift-justice".²⁴⁵ It is only in being open to this spectrum of possibility that any event in regard to the other as other takes place. What this means for relations to the (animal) other, is what Mansfield calls "gift-justice as pre-justice"; "It is the giving to

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ R, 152.

²⁴⁰ Lawlor, *This Is Not Sufficient*, 8.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² FK, 56.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

the other the conditions that make giving possible.”²⁴⁶ As Shakespeare points out in regard to Derrida's messianism, he “does not promise another world after death, or a revelation of absolute knowledge, but institutes a different relation to the other here and now”.²⁴⁷ But this encounter with the other in the “here and now” is what institutes a promise oriented towards the future because it denies the sovereign competition that leads to the death or subjugation of the other that is the opposite of *gift*. Only in such an encounter and the promise of peace and commonality in *giving* or offering response and responsibility towards the other as other can the hope of a justice exist and compassion come. This other Rome, then, with its deconstructed subjects, the prostitutes and the animals who are both powerfully “other” and “weak” subjects, could be read as the invitation to another relation to the other. Rather than as a mere marionette of “evil”, this other Rome unmask the suffering subjects buried in the layers of this text, to be encountered, to be *given* attention and compassion.

Of course, there is something grotesque, or monstrous, about my reading of the Whore of Babylon as an abject woman-animal whose “Rome” can be seen as an exemplar of a deconstructed sovereignty. In a sense, this is an impossible reading. She is both too marred by negative associations to become an anti-hero of this kind, and, crucially, the implications of turning her into an anti-hero appear to glorify prostitution or more generally, violence done to female and/or animal bodies. The vulnerable, beaten, consumed and destroyed woman and animal body thus becomes potentially held up as an idealized deconstructed sovereignty, as if it was a sadomasochistic eulogy to abused bodies. As such, viewing her Rome as a deconstructed sovereignty presents a potential glorification of the broken female or animal body as well as of violent blood-thirstiness in the hope for a compassion to come. Did Derrida, then, not imagine the implications of his deconstructed sovereignty when imprinted on real weak and subjected women or animals in political systems? Further, what of the issue of amalgamating women and animals in this way, as if to be an animal in the Roman arenas were essentially similar to be a prostitute in the Roman Empire, thus surely reinstating age-old misogynistic connections between woman and animals? There are clearly numerous reasons why this reading might be viewed as problematic, even perverse.

²⁴⁶ Nick Mansfield, *The God Who Deconstructs Himself: Sovereignty and Subjectivity Between Freud, Bataille, and Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 118.

²⁴⁷ Shakespeare, *Derrida and Theology*, 142.

In their introduction to the issue of feminism and animals, Lori Gruen and Kari Weil argue that despite the criticism Derrida has sometimes come under by feminists in animal studies,²⁴⁸ he in fact mirrors many of the concerns feminist scholars have propounded on the related concerns between gender and animality.²⁴⁹ The two aspects in his work they emphasise, and that I too have emphasized in my accounts of Derrida's question of the animal, are compassion and the particularity of every context and encounter. If, as Schüssler Fiorenza puts it, "Revelation's central problem and topic is the issue of power and justice"²⁵⁰ the alternative vision of Rome, then, is a recognition of powerlessness and in this, the demand of *pathos*, the presence of suffering, justice becomes as a call for compassion and gift of response. Derrida poses the question: what if the political were based in the fabular? What if political discourse and even action were instituted by "something fabular, by that sort of narrative simulacrum, the convention of some historical *as if*, by that fictive modality of 'storytelling' that is called fabulous or fabular" "and which administers, right in the world of the *hors-d'oeuvres* of some narrative, a moral lesson, a 'moral'?"²⁵¹ This would certainly fit to a great extent with the afterlife of Revelation with the Beast and Whore as "evil" and the Lamb as the "good" in a viral biblical fable.²⁵² In his remarks on the history of the interpretation of Revelation, Barr notes how Origen of Alexandria promoted a symbolic interpretation, with Revelation not predicting the future but "presenting images of the struggle between good and evil in the world".²⁵³ There has been endless speculation as to who the seven kings referred to represent, that do not appear to quite fit the Roman emperors and so become endlessly pliable to other figurations of "evil". Whether the Beast refers to Nero,²⁵⁴ however, or to particular emperors, or to other "evils", it is important to note Derrida's point about the political and the fabular. The point he makes is that conceptions of the sovereignty of man and the political constellations of human societies become symbolically caught up in

²⁴⁸ Most famously perhaps by Haraway in *When Species Meet*, see particularly 20-23.

²⁴⁹ Lori Gruen and Kari Weil, "Animal Others – Editors' Introduction", *Hypatia* 27. 3 (2012), 482. They cite Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams' *Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics: A Reader* (New York: University of Columbia Press) as having suggested that without explicitly saying so, Derrida has in fact adopted a feminist "ethic-of-care" approach. Donovan and Adams, *Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics: A Reader*, 14.

²⁵⁰ Fiorenza, *Revelation*, 117.

²⁵¹ BS I, 35.

²⁵² Barr, "Introduction", 2.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Van Kooten posits that modern research tends to agree that Nero redivivus figures as a haunting idea to the author of Revelation, in the guise of Domitian (91-96). Domitian then, is thought to be Nero returned. "In this way one is able to do justice to the Neronian overtones and at the same time reconcile them with the supposedly Domitian dating of Revelation." As already mentioned, Van Kooten himself, makes the case for an earlier setting, for around 68-69. Van Kooten, "The Year of the Four Emperors and the Revelation of John: The 'pro-Neronian' Emperors Otho and Vitellius, and the Images and Colossus of Nero in Rome", 208.

spectacles and symbolisms of animality that escape further notice and attention, such as Roman power represented in the animals of its arenas. Real living animals and women become invisible or forgotten in this human fabular zoo-politics.

Taking account of a deconstructed sovereignty, then, is perhaps no more than an awakening to a justice that is never enough or flawless yet which never ceases to pay attention to the infinite particularity of irreducible singularities of contexts and creatures, who cannot be straightforwardly mapped onto, or remain within, symbolic territories of good or evil, villain or victim, figurative or literal. Responsibility and justice in regard to ethical encounters with others demands attention to the irreducible singularity of every context and every other. This is founded first of all in *compassion*. Suffering, pity, and compassion, for Derrida, and “the sharing of this suffering among the living” has to be brought to bear on the thinking of law, ethics, and politics.²⁵⁵ Josephine Donovan critiques the determination in early and influential animal rights theory to abstemiously avoid compassion in the risk of sentimentality.²⁵⁶ But for Derrida, the emphasis on the *life* of the animal other in an awakening to ethics, and thus also to justice and law, *is* about compassion, even about pathos. There can be no justice without a *living with* that is founded in compassion towards the other, as it is only in such an encounter with the other that justice can be hoped for. This is a dream for a universal compassion but one that does not homogenize or generalize, and as such remains perhaps the impossible. Nonetheless, it pays heed to specific encounters and contexts in which the status of the other as abject or object, as human or non-human, sovereign or non-sovereign, cannot be determined in advance as enemy or ally, but rather, must be curiously followed and continuously awakened to. Curiosity, as Derrida explains, “is primarily the desire to know, to see, and to inform oneself – but also to take care, to provide care (*cura*, treatment, both domestic and therapeutic, hospital-based), to inspect with care, and to care for”.²⁵⁷ This would be a knowledge, not as *pouvoir*, an “I can”, but as an “I follow” curiously, caringly, compassionately. At the same time, following can never be completely immune from hunting or persecution, and as such always abides in the tension between curiosity and captivity. This also, is something that must be lived with. Knowledge must be turned to not

²⁵⁵ TATTIA, 26.

²⁵⁶ Josephine Donovan, “Animal Rights and Feminist Theory”, *Signs* 15.2 (1990), 350-75. She analyses the way in which Peter Singer seeks to avoid animal rights being *sentimentalized*. Tom Regan professes similar concerns about animal studies not being about emotions or sentimentality. “Animal Rights and Feminist Theory”, 350-351.

²⁵⁷ BS I, 296.

only as Derrida's "reason of the strongest" but as a curiosity and care for reading and treating otherwise, in resisting a regard that fixes the other *as* the already-guilty quarry.

Conclusion: Compassion Come

In this chapter I have outlined the figure of the lamb as the animal other in Derrida's discussion of animality and sovereignty in *The Beast and Sovereign vol. I*. While the lamb is the exemplar of the animal other for Derrida's thinking of human-animal relations in regard to the other and the ethics of otherness, the beast is the figure of the human as a sovereign indivisible "I" with the power and privilege of its supposedly exclusive "I can" and "I see". Alluding to another lamb, the Christ-lamb, Derrida briefly engages with what might be sketched as the Christian legacy on conceptualisations of the "human" as that which has *logos* and *life* as they are tied to reason, autonomy and sovereignty. Derrida appears to designate the Christ-lamb as an example of sovereignty in the figure of the small or weak, but nonetheless characterised by potency and power. In fact, it appears that what Derrida implies – although it is not stated explicitly – is that the Christ-lamb as *logos* and *life* is complicit in the model of sovereignty in which the human or man plays God as indivisibly sovereign, with animals, women and slaves as subjects to this sovereignty.

Presenting the scene of Revelation 17, I suggested that in the competition for sovereignty the Lamb becomes a divine-male sovereign figure of power akin to La Fontaine's carnivorous wolf; as the Lamb instrumentalises the Beast to devour, lay bare and kill the Whore of Babylon, the Lamb himself becomes (symbolically) a carnivore and "beast". As such he is no longer the victim of the Roman domination the author of Revelation critiques, but rather a participant in its logic of power. Revelation 17 could be seen as denigrating both animals and women in one fell swoop by characterising political evil – Rome – as a beast and whore. A logic of sympathy for the weak is implied in the figure of the Lamb up and against the evil powers of Rome as a many-headed Beast ridden by a blood-drinking prostitute. But the Lamb is not in fact such a weak figure, rather, he becomes a hyper-masculine representation of indivisible sovereignty that participates in the very logic of carnivorous, virile force it supposedly critiques. As the Lamb becomes Beast-like, another image of Rome emerges. This image is the Rome of suffering animals and women, in the captured and killed animals of the Roman arenas and the abused and vulnerable prostitutes of its cityscape. Revelation 17 thus seemingly presents both a

denigrating vision of animals and women as emblems of evil political power, but simultaneously overturns this vilification by providing the glimpse of a deconstructed sovereignty in the Whore and Beast as creatures demanding a compassion (to) come for the suffering subjects of political systems. My reading shows, then, that Revelation 17 does contain the possibility of a sovereignty that is deconstructed, allied to animals and a woman, thus presenting a way of reading sovereign power otherwise, but that is hidden in the shadow of the Lamb who becomes wolf.

Conclusion

Living On (With) Derrida, the Bible, and Animals

Derrida's tone in *The Animal that Therefore I am* is perhaps surprisingly earnest with its "naked words", as Matthew Chrulew notes.¹ He judges this earnestness "far from the habitual mode of deconstruction".² One reason for the slowness of catching up with Derrida's work on the animal might be the persistent investment in Derrida as an abstract philosophical thinker whose work, for all its emphasis on context and current issues, can be generalised into a "deconstructive" *how* to question, interrogate, unravel and cleverly reveal, without taking account of the particular *what* (or *who*) of his thinking. The temptation might well be to succumb to a deconstructive methodological machine in reading Derrida, this becoming its own obsessive point of orbit, merely churning out questions that remain in the atmosphere without orientation or destination. To identify Derrida's interest in canonical traditions is undoubtedly correct, but fails to follow through the *what* or *who* of such an interest, and the singularity of such a subject. Derrida's deconstructive thought is indeed "a way of inheriting" texts, traditions and canons, "following in the foot-steps of what was done and breaking from it in its name, opening up from the past a never closed future".³ It is perhaps a "a recurrence of the past that facilitates the possibility of a future",⁴ but this is not an end point. What are we inheriting? Or who? *Who* do we carry, as Leonard Lawlor might ask.⁵ And where to? Into what future? Or, to echo Derrida, who are we following? This question is of course linked to inheritance. While "*To follow* and *to be after*" are indeed at the heart of the question for

¹ Chrulew, "Feline Divinanimality: Derrida and the Discourse of Species in Genesis".

² Ibid.

³ Fagan et al, *Derrida, Negotiating the Legacy*, 5.

⁴ Ibid., 2.

⁵ See Lawlor's discussion of carrying and what he argues is its importance for Derrida's discussion of animals, in *This Is Not Sufficient*, 10, 74, 92, 96-97, 113. With the notion of carrying, Lawlor is adding his own trope to Derrida's emphasis on following, by drawing together Derrida's discussion of responsibility for, and in the face of, the other and of *Kraft* and *tragen* in BS II, 105-112.

Derrida – indeed, “the question of the question”⁶, and thus of philosophy – they are also crucially “the question of what we call the animal”.⁷ Why the animal? Because the animal denotes for Derrida the foreclosed subject of philosophy, the other who has been conceived as so “other” that it is not followed, or not even attended to. Why? Perhaps because such a subject appears silly, too easily associated with children, fables, and, with a sentimentalism that appears awkwardly out of place in the corridors of critical theory. Derrida is perhaps also increasingly perceived as rather passé, associated with the 1968 thinkers, now seen as somewhat crusty around the edges; or with the French “high theory” associated with the 1980s, having overrun its due-date. “[I]s not the spirit gone?”, as Bruno Latour asks.⁸ He continues: “While we spent years trying to detect the real prejudices hidden behind the appearance of objective statements, do we now have to reveal the real and incontrovertible facts hidden behind the *illusion* of prejudices?”⁹ Latour is writing in frustration about the lack of public trust in scientific discourses around climate change, due, perhaps to postmodern suspicions of objective claims to the “real”. A similar question could be posed as to the importance of acute animal suffering, the perceived “strangeness” of such a subject for someone so embroiled in the mires of “theory” as Derrida. As I have tried to show – and will go on to discuss further in this conclusion – taking account of animal suffering is a matter of critical thinking addressing legacies that have come to impact on conceptions of human power and animal inferiority. The question of the animal is a matter for critical thought that cannot be reduced to a facile dichotomy between theory and practice.

As if confessing to the absurdity of his hope, Derrida calls his interest in autobiography and animals a “crazy project of constituting everything thought or written within a zoosphere, the dream of an absolute hospitality and an infinite appropriation”.¹⁰ Such an absolute hospitality would be an opening or openness to every other, as well as the texts which we inhabit. An infinite appropriation would be the testament to the tension between the necessity of appropriation in engaging with any other, text or topic, and the

⁶ TATTIA, 10.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Bruno Latour, “Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern”, *Critical Inquiry* 30 (Winter 2004): 225. Latour takes on a particular critique of French intellectual thinkers in this reevaluation of critical thought, for instance, in his disgust at Jean Baudrillard’s assertions that the Twin Towers were destroyed, not by planes, but by the nihilism of capitalism. Ibid., 228.

⁹ Ibid., 227. Latour argues that the point of critical suspicion and constructionism was always to get closer to empiricism rather than away from it. It might seem that Derrida’s later work agrees with him, considering its charge against the lack of empirical evidence in philosophical discourse over the differences between humans and animals. Ibid., 231; cf. BS II, 193-198.

¹⁰ TATTIA, 37.

way in which this engagement must be ceaseless, never resting, so as not to “capture” the other and put an end to relationality by asserting an overpowering control. In the emphasis on autobiography and the autobiographical “I” throughout *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida describes himself autobiographically as a philosopher-animal. For Derrida this involves reflecting over the philosophical tradition he *follows*, and questioning what such *following* means. “What does one do when one follows? What is it I am doing when I am (following)?”¹¹ There is no way of being without following and no following without responsibility; there is no stance of solitude “away from” the ethical, the political, the demands of justice, compassion and critical thought. The other that I follow may see me, may demand of me a response, it is to the other that I follow that I respond and I return his or her gaze. The “I”, the philosopher, the subject, does not stand solipsistically or in superiority as a powerful super-subject. There is always vulnerability before the other who *sees me*. Through the risk of vulnerability, Derrida’s thought orients us towards response and responsibility, to a future that is always other, never the result of a fixed program continuous with monolithic traditions or a given history, but that is always still to be thought. As such, Derrida’s work is not stable or static. While animals might be a pertinent and urgent appeal to challenging notions of the other as a *human* other, thus implicitly denoting a calculating ethics that attempts to control and curb otherness, this is not the end point to thinking the otherness of the other. Nor is it an end point to thinking ethics, justice and hospitality.

I have proposed that Derrida inscribes his own signature as a thinker into the history of philosophy in a particularly self-conscious way over the question of the animal. Reflecting on his method, Derrida asks of the steps of his thought-process:

Do they not resemble the running of an animal that, finding its way on the basis of a scent or a noise, goes back more than once over the same path to pick up the traces, either to sniff the trace of another or to cover its own by adding to it, precisely as though it were that of another, picking up the scent, therefore, of whatever on this track demonstrates to it that the trace is always that of another, demonstrating also that in following the consequence or direction of this double arrow (it is a matter of the scent, and the scent one smells is anyways the trace of another), the animal becomes inevitable, and, before it, the animot.¹²

¹¹ Ibid., 54-55.

¹² Ibid., 55.

Derrida thus quite openly characterises his particular style and legacy as a thinker of animality.¹³ The final word – “animot” – connects an abiding interest throughout his work that is also at the heart of his work on animals, namely, language, words, what a word means – *mot* – but further, for the question of the animal, what a word can *do* in naming something or someone, its power, potency, and performativity. At the same time, Derrida maintains a sense of a word’s vulnerability, its changeability and capriciousness from one language to another, its elusiveness *as* a signifier and the connection between the particular and the general in language.¹⁴ “The said question of the said animal in its entirety comes down to knowing not whether the animal speaks but whether one can know what *respond* means. And how to distinguish a response from a reaction.”¹⁵ This distinction made between a response and a reaction captures Derrida’s critique of the Western philosophical tradition he examines, it becomes the leading force behind his engagement in this distinction as a matter of language, with its relation to responsibility, technology, life, and power, or, as Derrida is keener to emphasise, powerlessness in being deprived of the possibility of *response*.

Speaking from this “island of exception”¹⁶ he declares that since he began writing “I have dedicated to the question of the living and of the living animal...I have addressed it a thousand times, either directly or obliquely, by means of readings of *all* the philosophers I have taken an interest in”.¹⁷ Whether this can be said to be correct or not (and who is to say what Derrida’s work will have been “about”?), I have argued that his legacy cannot be thought without the question of the animal being of utmost importance for his signature as a thinker, in his unique contribution, but equally in the attempt he always makes to situate his work in context(s), in relation to traditions, and to reflect on what living in the world means. Contrary to an island existence of abstract reflection in isolation, Derrida’s thinking on animality is always about what living *with* means, and living *after*, and these terms quickly become about animals – living *with* animals, living *after* animals. As Turner puts

¹³ In *Fichus*, his Frankfurt address for receiving the Theodor W. Adorno prize in 2001, Derrida describes an imaginary book he would have wanted to write on Adorno and in gratitude for this prize. “Finally I get to the chapter that I would most enjoy writing, because it would take the least trodden in my view one of the most crucial paths in the future reading of Adorno. It is about what we call, in the singular – which has always shocked me – the *Animal*. As if there were only one of them.” Derrida, *Fichus*, 180.

¹⁴ In his reflections on animality in *The Beast and the Sovereign* seminars, Derrida is consistently concerned with the French language, idiom, and the question of translation.

¹⁵ TATTIA, 8.

¹⁶ TATTIA, 62.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

it, “subjects after Derrida are never alone”.¹⁸ This calls for an anti-solipsistic engagement with the past and the present – who and what we follow – with the other, a heteronomous otherness whose law we stand before, but further, for Derrida, this is directed towards a future horizon of a justice to come, and the dream of an indiscriminate hospitality.

Royle goes on to suggest that in many ways “the reading of his work is still ahead of us, scarcely begun”.¹⁹ I agree with Royle on this point, due to the complexity and challenge that Derrida’s work presents, but almost equally, in light of the misunderstandings and obscurantism that orbit his name. Royle’s point is even more clearly the case with Derrida’s work on animality. To start to think Derrida’s legacy, it is imperative that we begin to follow this later work on animality and thus respond to it, as an inheritance that we do not wholly own; that is still to come, and yet that must be received and continue to be received and responded to, curiously and responsibly, properly and improperly. In what follows I will first summarize the points I made in the four chapters, regarding Derrida’s question of the animal and his biblical references, and the biblical texts I put forward as responses. Secondly, I pose some potential critical questions as to the question of the animal as merely yet another apocalyptic shibboleth that allows armchair-intellectuals to feel smugly conscientious. In response, I discuss what it means to read and engage with Derrida today, in light of his methodology and philosophy, as well as picking up on a turn to religion in the Humanities.

The Bible: An Ambiguous Animal Archive

In this thesis I have drawn attention to the biblical themes of Derrida’s work on animality. Explaining how these themes and references relate to his question of the animal more broadly, I have also developed them further with reference to other significant texts in the biblical archive about animals: Genesis 9, Daniel, Acts 10 and Revelation 17. As I outlined in the introduction, this is important for two reasons. The first is that Derrida’s thinking on animals is oriented around his biblical examples in crucial but somewhat implicit ways, in the shadow of the Western philosophical tradition he pursues and the haunting idea of Judeo-Christian blame concerning animal life. I suggest that Derrida’s legacy for animal studies as well as his own corpus can only be gauged with an engagement with his biblical

¹⁸ Lynn Turner, “Introduction: The Animal Question in Deconstruction”, in *The Animal Question in Deconstruction*, ed. Lynn Turner (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

references and readings, their function, significance and implications. At the same time, as mentioned, these are haunted by the uncritical blame apportioned to the “Judeo-Christian” as complicit with Cartesianism and a carnivorous, patriarchal culture. The second reason for developing Derrida’s biblical themes and supplementing them with explorations of further biblical texts is that this archive cannot be categorized easily as either blame-worthy or redemptive for thinking about animals today, despite responses in scholarship on both sides of this divide. Whether “the Bible” is guilty or emancipatory, it is an important cultural archive that lives on in cultural memory as “commencement” and “commandment”. Perceived as an origin point and a normative corpus for Western culture and civilization, it is a significant locus for tracing relationships between animal, human and divine, for culture, religion, philosophy, politics, ethics, law and literature.

To recap, I suggested that Derrida uses the themes of nakedness and shame in relation to Gen. 1-4. Staging his own thinking as a nakedness before “cat or God” becomes the foundation for his two tropes of *being seen* and *being after*. Being seen by God sets in motion his thinking of, and demand for, accountability, responsibility and autobiography as confession. Being after the animal is conceived in the gaze of his cat before whom he feels ashamed and called into being as a naked human, as well as Adam’s creation *after* the animals in the first creation story. Nakedness and shame in relation to Genesis and its God become Derrida’s way to portray the vulnerable exposure of humans to accountability, crime and guilt. By orienting the human “I” around shame and consciousness of good and evil in his allusions to Genesis, Derrida turns the autobiographical solitude of the human subject in the philosophical tradition he traces into a confessional relational stance of *living with*, living accountably *before* the law of the other as a justice in abeyance, and *after* the animal other as the first-comer. For Derrida, the nakedness of the body connotes the vulnerability of exposure to the other and the impossibility of separating the “I think” from a physical body and from relations to other bodies in the world. Nakedness is the sign of exposed vulnerability. Humans and animals share such an embodied and finite state. Derrida’s theme of nakedness is thus intended to draw attention to the vulnerability of the body as a mortal thing *capable* of suffering, humans and animals alike, in their living bodies and shared finitude. The self-consciousness delineated in nakedness and shame is an “awakening” experience to the other who sees me, which becomes the condition for ethics as a relational response and responsibility coming from the other and given to the other. In the “or” between cat or God, a justice done to his cat as a singular, particular other is synonymous with a justice before the law of God as the one who sees, takes

account, but does not intervene. The God who sees is thus the name of a justice to come, while the animal other is the particular encounter that demands my response and responsibility in the *here and now*.

In relation to Derrida's scene before the animal who sees him naked and the God in whose sight he stands, I provided a reading of Genesis 9 that builds on Derrida's reflections on nakedness and accountability before God and in relation to animals. I showed that on the one hand, Genesis 9 is a prime site for locating the sovereignty of "Man" given by God to humans, *in order to see* the power of humans over the animal world. On the other hand, however, Genesis 9 stages the tensions in such a power dynamic, in light of the emphatic covenant with *all* life and the "reckoning" or "accounting" for *all* life prescribed as a justice to come by God. Because animals are now in principle killable, this justice is a space of decidability: animals become a site in which humans must decide how to respond, with "good or evil". Such a justice cannot be wholly programmed in advance or it would not *be* a justice to come that demands responsibility in the face of such a horizon. With the scene between Noah, exposed naked, animal-like, in the gaze of his son, and the following curse and demotion of Canaan to servitude, tensions in the differentiation between humans and animals are played out further over the exposure of nakedness and the performance of sovereign power. Noah's exposure as naked and Canaan's demotion to a non-brother or even non-human convey the fragile, slippery divisions between human life and animal life, showcasing thus the difficulties in delineating who or what is in fact killable and edible and who or what is a brother and neighbour. In the face of God as a horizon of justice, who will take account of all the living and whose covenant is with *all* life, the differentiations and distinctions between humans and animals are thus more problematic and questionable than a simple acceptance of carnivorous, sovereign human power would appear at first glance. Rather, in the face of such a horizon of justice, a demand for response to, and responsibility for, all life is seemingly what is relentlessly required.

In the second chapter I explored how Derrida's thinking of a deconstructed subject becomes linked to the response "here I am". Derrida only touches on this in *The Animal that Therefore I am*, but it forms the only response he specifically formulates to his emphatic themes of response and responsibility. It is also the response he proffers in turning from autobiography to confession and thus an always already responsible relation to the other rather than the solipsism of the singular "I". Building on his reference to "cat

or God”, where the cat is identified, but God is rather more ambivalent, the “here I am” response features importantly also in his reading of Abraham’s response to God in Genesis 22 in *The Gift of Death*. In order to pursue further what it might mean to follow Derrida’s God, then, I examined what such a “here I am” response signifies. As an example of automaticity and responsibility at the same time, Derrida shows how such a response to God is both a sign of radical responsibility in trusting the other *as* other, who calls and demands the incomprehensible and impossible of me, as well as the least responsible response in the “blind” faith it asks. I suggested that the Book of Daniel also presents a scene before “cats”, or rather lions, and God. Exploring this text further thus provided a way of extrapolating on what it might mean to follow God in relation to animality. In relation to the Book of Daniel I argued that two visions of following animal and divine are presented, one fantasy for a world in which the domesticated animal status of all living subjects under divine rule is revealed as empowering and life-giving, and another in which the collapse of such a shared animal domesticity takes place in envisioning how such subjects are vulnerable to becoming prey to carnivorous and brutal political power-play. To respond “here I am” in this context is thus both to follow God in a triumphant levelling of human power to an equal status – kings and animals alike – under the only powerful ruler, God, who gives life, and to recognise the exposure to risk of such vulnerability under other, more ferocious, less domestic (human) animals and to a potentially less domestic God.

The third biblical reference I examined in Derrida’s response to the question of the animal was the commandment “Thou shalt not kill”. Derrida indicts the way in which this has been understood by the Judeo-Christian tradition as “Thou shalt not murder”, or “Thou shalt not kill *humans*”. In this sense he posits this commandment as a negative biblical legacy that still resonates in modern ethics. Referring to the story of Cain and Abel, Derrida shows how the sacrificial killing of an animal in a competition for favour and show of power leads to the killing of a brother. He suggests that the accepted sacrificial killability of animals is a foundation for ethics that prompts the possibility of further acceptances of exclusion, violence and killability. Derrida implies that God regrets the favouring of sacrificial flesh, as if taking account of its negative consequences. Derrida’s point with this is to show how quickly the human other, or the “brother” or “fellow”, becomes potentially exclusive, making others *ipso facto* killable. Animals are one significant, but by no means only, example of such an exclusion. Derrida’s dream for an unconditional hospitality is linked to the possibility of a regard for *all* life and for every

other. His dream for an unconditional justice is linked to an ethics in which the deconstructed subject stands before the other, coming after, offering an “after you” to the other as *any other*, in which each stands in an asymmetrical but nonetheless *shared* dynamic of vulnerability and power.

Picking up on the biblical legacy of killing, I pointed out that the correlative laws about clean/unclean in the Pentateuch is a way of positing categories of the living between killability and non-killability. By turning to Acts 10 I was able to explore this further over the question of the killability of animals and the hospitality of humans in relation to the awkward and thwarted category of the “Judeo-Christian”. Two prominent discussions in scholarship on Acts and Acts 10 in particular are its universalism and the extent to which it is more “Jewish” or more “Christian”. What is neglected is the way in which its presentation of groups of animals along with the categories of clean and unclean could be read as foundational for both discussions, of universalism *and* of the “Judeo-Christian”, its divisions, fissions, amalgamations and intermingling. The animals in Acts 10 and their significance for both these debates are not taken into account because of the swiftness in which animals are perceived in non-literal ways, with purely symbolic functions and with *anthropologic* and *anthropocentric* meanings. Reading Acts 10 more literally in regard to its animals, I showed two possible interpretations: one that presents something akin to Derrida’s dream for an unconditional hospitality, and one that leads to indiscriminate killability. Both could be read together in light of Derrida’s reflections on life and death. The first interpretation would follow on from the line in Acts 10 referring to “the living and the dead”, where humans and animals are similarly “sacred” or “clean” lives: *all* equally under the Lord of all. The second interpretation also refers to such a shared state of life, only it emphasises the killability of both humans and animals as mortal creatures vulnerable to the potential carnivorous violence of every other. While killability would be the sanctioned “killableness” of particular living beings, I posited *mortality* as the shared condition of mortal life and in being given over to the hands of others after death. Those who come after me will always *live on* beyond my power. Further, the other can always condemn me to a living death, eating and killing me in a close encounter. As such, the aporia of Acts 10 showcases Derrida’s dream for unconditional hospitality as well as the risk of every hospitable encounter and relation as to the other’s possible violence and my vulnerability.

In the fourth and final chapter I explored Derrida's thinking of sovereignty and animality as categories of the political. Derrida outlined how conceptions of the political in modernity has been grounded both in a human order that has subjugated animals and excluded gods, setting the human up as god, and how the political order is represented as animal. In this chapter I drew attention to the way Derrida conceptualized the figure of the wolf as a model of sovereignty as male, virile, carnivorous power. The lamb became a symbol of the weak and innocent animal other, subject to such wolfish power. In his discussion of various representations of sovereignty, I showed that Derrida touches on the symbol of the Lamb in the New Testament as a figure for the zoological Jesus. In this case, Derrida suggested the figure of the Lamb is sovereign, in becoming associated with the *logos* as sovereign powers of reason. While he brings women and sexual difference into his discussion of animality and sovereignty on multiple occasions, these allusions remain elusive – an aspect of Derrida's work that I suggested needed developing further.

Extrapolating on this, I presented a scene in the Book of Revelation, in chapter 17, where the zoological Jesus as Lamb features as a triumphant sovereign figure. Analysing this influential religio-political fable it is clear that a logic of sympathy for the weak is implied in the figure of the Lamb up and against the evil powers of Rome as a many-headed Beast ridden by a blood-drinking prostitute. But the Lamb is not in fact such a weak figure; rather, it becomes a hyper-masculine representation of sovereignty that participates in a logic of carnivorous, virile force. Rome is represented as an amalgamation of a beast and a prostitute, as if to be associated with wild animals and women denote its utter abjection, violence and brutality. As the Lamb becomes beast-like, however, another image of Rome emerges. This image is the Rome of suffering animals and women, in the captured and killed animals of the Roman arenas and the abused and vulnerable prostitutes of its cityscape. I argued that Revelation 17 thus presents a denigrating vision of animals and women as associated with evil political power (Rome), but simultaneously overturns this by providing the glimpse of a deconstructed sovereignty in the Whore and Beast as those who take on the weak positions in the battles for sovereignty and so become the call for a compassion to come.

In conclusion, it is clear from my examination of Derrida's biblical themes that the Bible constitutes an ambiguous archive for the question of the animal; on the one hand, nakedness, following God as a justice to come, and the "here I am" response, are motifs that emerge from biblical texts and function as a positive resource; on the other, the *logos*

and commandment “Thou shalt not kill” are held up as negative legacies for animality. On summing up my own interpretations of the four biblical texts of this thesis, the complexities and ambiguities of the biblical archive are merely multiplied. That is not to say, however, that the banal conclusion is simply that the status of animals in the Bible “depends on how you read the text”, thus offering up a menu card of different options for readers to choose as they see fit. Rather, the more challenging conclusion is that the biblical archive, in the examples I have presented, abides in an irreducible tension regarding animality. On the one hand, there emerges a plateau in which humans and animals alike are equally and similarly under God as a justice to come that calls for a radical similitude and solidarity as fellow creatures in the world. On the other, animals are also portrayed as the subjects that humans appropriate in playing God or in conveying God’s power over life. God is a double bind: both the justice to come that demands response and responsibility to one’s fellow creatures, showing all creatures alike to live in finitude and fellowship, but simultaneously, the idea of a higher divine power provides a model for demonstrations of power and subjection of others.

Another Apocalyptic Shibboleth?

In *The Illusion of the End*, Jean Baudrillard proposes that the modern world has lost “the glory of the event”, and that history has become “cannibalistic and necrophagous”, constantly calling for new victims and new events “so as to be done with them a little bit more”.²⁰ His contention is that modern history is dominated by an apocalyptic presentiment and that we live in age of *ressentiment* and *repentance*.²¹ “Rather than pressing forward and taking flight into the future, we prefer the retrospective apocalypse, and a blanket revisionism”.²² My own starting point, reflecting on Derrida’s last work before he died, his legacy as an important intellectual thinker, and his – as well as my own – interest in the Bible could perhaps be classed as such a revisionism. The theme being animals and emerging out of the acute problem of animal suffering, with two of my biblical texts characterized as apocalyptic, merely reinforces Baudrillard’s point as to a certain tone of repentance and apocalypticism. I could indeed be accused of “trawling over

²⁰ Jean Baudrillard, *The Illusion of the End*, trans. Chris Turner (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 21.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

²² *Ibid.*

our own culture”,²³ “rifling through its own dustbins and looking for redemption in the rubbish”.²⁴ Apparently with some scorn, Baudrillard diagnoses the current intellectual context the latest stage of colonialism as a “New Sentimental Order”, with ecological concerns for nature as a subject of pity and sympathy.²⁵

In line with my introductory remarks regarding a certain sense of disillusionment marking current intellectual attitudes towards the “human” and the place of humanity in the world, Fukuyama’s infamous end of history thesis is also brought to mind. He writes:

We in the West have become thoroughly pessimistic with regard to the possibility of overall progress in democratic institutions. This profound pessimism is not accidental, but born of the truly terrible political events of the first half of the twentieth century – two destructive world wars, the rise of totalitarian ideologies, and the turning of science against man in the form of nuclear weapons and environmental damage. The life experiences of the victims of this past century’s political violence – from the survivors of Hitlerism and Stalinism to the victims of Pol Pot – would deny that there has been such a thing as historical progress.²⁶

Does the question of the animal in fact veer between guilt and a desire for repentance that manifests itself in an anxious and desperate revisionism, a deflated disillusionment at human “progress” and “civilization” (or the lack of them, thus the necessity of ironizing them in inverted commas), and a saccharine sentimentalism as a quick-fix solution to salvage the wounds? Atterton and Calarco suggest that the “death of the author”, the “death of God”, the “end of philosophy”, the “end of humanism”, the “death of man” are apocalyptic shibboleths that have become self-defeating pronouncements in a modern and postmodern discourse that has barely said anything about animals.²⁷ But what is the question of the animal if not another such shibboleth that could equally be termed “the death of the animal” and be added to the above list?²⁸ It could already be said to persist as an apocalyptic “death of...” announcement in the ecological anxieties over animal extinctions, or, indeed, the urge to proclaim the death of the “human”.

The animal as a subject of intellectual study in the Humanities is caught up in a discourse that flits between the idealistic and the cynical. Animals are appropriated as intellectual currency in reams of words that appear to have little to do with actual animal lives and deaths. There is something acutely important and disturbingly highfaluting about

²³ Ibid., 25.

²⁴ Ibid., 26.

²⁵ Ibid., 67.

²⁶ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and The Last Man* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), xiii.

²⁷ Calarco and Atterton, “Introduction: The Animal Question in Continental Philosophy”, xv.

²⁸ As indeed Cavalieri’s book is named: *The Death of the Animal*.

animals as a subject of study. This is because it offers academic discourse in the Humanities generous scope for intellectual pieties and finger-pointing semi-sermons that aspire to engage with “real” suppression and suffering outside the ivory towers of academic theory. It reveals a glimpse of the hideous reality of the material conditions for millions of animals outside what now sounds like the cosy enclose of “animal studies”. With the sometimes implicit, sometimes explicit references to slaughter, factory farming, the unbearably bleak conditions of so many animals in the world today, a reality of pain, suffering, impossible living, and grotesque death haunts this area of study. A gruff inertia at the impossibility of *doing* anything is difficult to resist for those who want to address these issues within institutional academic spaces today. And so, the different tones of animal studies range from polemical, pious, moralizing, persuasive, self-righteous, beseeching, incensed, defeated, hopeless, to hopeful.

Further, explaining why animals ought to be taken seriously is sometimes met with a palpable sigh: oh not another repressed and marginalised group who demand academic attention, now animals too! As if ethnic minorities, black people, women, homosexuals, and animals are all victim groups queuing to get their due done in intellectual circles and be redeemed from the invisible margins. And, as if academics cannot wait to cash in on such victim-groups, scoring intellectual advantages from the smug vantage points of virtuous abhorrence at how anyone could possibly have failed to face up to such an outrage before, thus settling further into the arm-chair-throne of self-righteousness. To emphasise the reality of pain and suffering that is the impetus of such studies, ought one to insert images of the horrors of factory farms? Ought one add links to youtube clips of suffering animals? Or of one’s cute pets at play? Of clever creatures surprising us with their human-likeness? Ought one to exhort people towards vegetarianism or veganism or asceticism?²⁹ To throw red paint at fur-clad women? Is there not something insufferably superfluous about reams of *words* on animal suffering? Or elements of unbearable sluggishness about an academic approach to such current issues? Is such work merely a matter of shuffling deck-chairs on the Titanic as the water rushes in below?

²⁹ Lawlor, for instance, advocates asceticism. Lawlor, *This is Not Sufficient*, 105.

Thinking with Derrida Today

But turning to the biblical archive with Derrida provides a prime position for thinking today and thinking anew. Derrida's insistence on tradition, legacy and hauntologies³⁰ is a testament to his ceaseless passion for re-examining classics and canons, and thus revealing the ongoing vitality of texts and traditions. Elizabeth Weber describes how such a hauntological focus is a challenge to not merely apocalyptically proclaim the "death" of various concepts but to face up to their powerful and persistent legacies.³¹ They *live on*. Just as Derrida critiques the word "animal" as a performative construction leading to practices that frequently condemn living beings to death, so too, intellectual discourse must persist in grappling with legacies conceived of as archetypal as well as those conceived of as extinct (sometimes the very same legacies). Paul Strohm suggests that "the archive does not arrest time, but rather exists as an unstable amalgam of unexhausted past and unaccomplished future. Open toward the future – that is, toward activities of future interpreters – the archive consists of texts that await meaning".³² Thus, even "when we try to stop time, to freeze a moment for synchronous investigation as a part of a literary cross-section, that moment nevertheless turns out to bear within itself intimations of past and future that amount to a form of implicit diachrony".³³ This is "an unruly diachrony, referring in the most surprising and unpredictable ways to what has been and what is not yet, to the residual and the emergent".³⁴ Derrida is a thinker who orients us towards a past that can always be rethought – which is always already rethinking itself – and thus is never stable or fixed as an immovable inheritance. Nicholas Royle describes deconstruction in the following way:

a logic of destabilization always already on the move in 'things themselves': what makes every identity at once itself and different from itself: a logic of spectrality: a theoretical and practical parasitism or virology: what is happening today in what is called society, politics, diplomacy, economics, historical reality, and so on: the opening of the future itself.³⁵

³⁰ That is, the way in which intellectual spectres – such as the legacy of humanism – are neither a form of being or non-being, but haunt philosophical ontologies in elusive ways.

³¹ Elizabeth Weber, "Suspended from the Other's Heartbeat", in *Late Derrida*, ed. Ian Balfour (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 340.

³² Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 80.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 93.

³⁵ Nicholas Royle, "What is Deconstruction", in *Deconstructions: A User's Guide*, ed. Nicholas Royle (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 11. This last part of Royle's quote, "the opening of the future itself" is a citation of Derrida. Derrida, "Afterwards: or, at least, less than a letter about a letter less", trans. Geoffrey Bennington, in *Afterwords*, ed. Nicholas Royle (Tampere: Outside Books, 1992), 200.

The Bible is an archive we come *after*, but that we *follow* in a way that remains *with* it. It abides in a tension between being thought of as the most popular and widely read “book” – found in hotel bed-sides, quoted in films, political speeches and literature, used for popular rites and rituals – and by an impression of its “heaviness”, its impenetrability, as an obscure, weird, exotic artefact. It is both archetypal and archaic, marked by ubiquity and extinction. It is crucial that scholarship intervenes in this tension between “what we all know the Bible is about” and what appears to be shrouded from general view in the esoteric enclaves of biblical studies. To grapple with popular and generalised perceptions of the biblical archive and challenge views that become staid or merely repeated till they appear true, is surely a testament to Derrida’s passion for combining erudite, complex analyses of etymologies, concepts and texts with their more obvious interpretation, use, and colloquial connections and context. Who can measure exactly what impact the biblical archive has, will have had, and will continue to have for current attitudes to animals? It seems clear, however, that if such canons and textual traditions have any influence whatsoever then the Bible would be an obvious and essential archive to explore more closely and critically for conceptions of animal, human, divine.

Lawlor writes that “Derrida is and always has been a thinker of today”.³⁶ Of course, “today” is not an easily determinable time or place. How to comprehend what “today” signifies, to grasp it and hold it tight, before its spirit dissipates in thin air. Today, as Derrida suggests, attitudes towards animals of the past and present need to be challenged. Today, it is necessary to do everything possible to *limit* the violence done to animals.³⁷ He exhorts that the “relations between humans and animals *must* change”.³⁸ And this “both in the sense of an ‘ontological’ necessity and of an ‘ethical’ duty”.³⁹ These words are in quotation marks because both ontology and ethics will have to be rethought with this question of the animal. While he asserts his great respect for conceptions of human rights, he nonetheless suggests that their foundations, implications and exclusions must be “relentlessly analysed, reelaborated, developed, and enriched (historicity and perfectibility are in fact essential to it)”.⁴⁰ Not to “destroy the axiomatics of this (formal and juridical) solution, nor to discredit it, but to reconsider the history of law and of the concept of

³⁶ Lawlor, *This Is Not Sufficient*, 6.

³⁷ VAA, 74.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

right”.⁴¹ Derrida asks, “can one take into account the necessity of the existential analytic and what it shatters in the subject and turn toward an ethics, a politics (are these words still appropriate?), indeed an ‘other’ democracy (would it still be a democracy?), in any case toward another type of responsibility that safeguards against” what he calls the worst kinds of violence taking place today? This, he concludes, “can only take place by a way of a long and slow trajectory”.⁴² Derrida also, then, invites “a slow and progressive approach”,⁴³ akin to the “slow motion” reading I, following Sherwood, suggested in the introduction with regard to the biblical archive. There is a sense of urgency in Derrida’s imperative for change and his “today” but also for an interminable patience in his call for on-going critical thought as to the structures that underpin social, political and ethical relations in the world, or indeed, our many worlds, when it comes to the “other” and how this other is conceived, welcomed or excluded.

There are some who might feel irritated and impatient with the above tension between urgency for change and the injunction for slow, on-going intellectual thought and ceaseless critical analysis. This is perhaps especially the case for animal studies. Where does it leave us? The difficulty lies in “that the response cannot be formulated as a ‘yes or no’; that would be too simple. It is necessary to give a singular response, within a given context, and to take the risk of a decision by enduring the undecidable”.⁴⁴ As Wolfe points out, it is in our “confrontation with an ethical situation that is always precisely *not* generic (hence its demand and, in a sense, its trauma); it obeys instead a double articulation in which the difference between law and justice is always confronted in *specific* situations whose details matter a great deal”.⁴⁵ Writing on the ethical and political stakes of Derrida’s work on animals, Calarco asks why Derrida does not go on to provide an ethical platform from which moral change and action can take place. But he rightly points out that Derrida is attempting to think ethics and animality at another level, of the very conditions for any ethics, and what principles must be in place in order to think or do ethics at all.⁴⁶ This attempt at something like a disruptive gesture at the very foundations of relations to the other, and the engagement with traditions, canons and philosophical inheritance, is why Derrida is such a valuable thinker for the question of the animal today. As Calarco puts it: “Deconstruction is situated precisely at this level, namely, that of trying to articulate

⁴¹ Ibid., 74.

⁴² EW, 266.

⁴³ VAA, 74.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 76.

⁴⁵ Wolfe, “Humanist and Posthumanist Antispeciesism”, 54.

⁴⁶ Matthew Calarco, “Thinking Through Animals: Reflections on the Ethical and Political Stakes of the Question of the Animal in Derrida”, *Derridanimals, The Oxford Literary Review* July (2007), 12.

another thought of relation (ethics) and practice (politics) that moves beyond the limits of anthropocentric traditions and institutions”.⁴⁷

As I outlined in the beginning, what Derrida ultimately calls for in his work on animality is: (1) greater vigilance in thought, perhaps especially philosophical thought, over the supposedly distinct differences between humans and animals; (2) compassion and what he calls an “awakening” to the animal other as a condition for ethics, that forms the impetus for his dream of an unconditional hospitality; (3) responsibility in the face of a horizon of justice that will always be to some extent excessive, incalculable and impossible, but that nonetheless demands our interminable response with respect to the other as *any* other. Ian Balfour conveys how Derrida has been accused of relativism, scepticism, irresponsibility. But, he states, “the opposite is far truer: his thinking, writing, and speaking is characterized, rather, by a hyperresponsibility, a responsibility to the complexities of the moment, of history, and the history to come, and to the discourses in which we think and judge, all the while committed to resisting some of the suspect and exhausted modes of thinking we have inherited”.⁴⁸ This is clearly a concern in Derrida’s work on animality. Unconditional hospitality is not merely an impossibility or dream, but an interpretive and intellectual practice that seeks to question the way the “other” is related *to* in and outside our homes, on the streets, in supermarkets, at our tables and in nature, in texts, traditions, canons and legacies, as well as places such as zoos, laboratories, enclosures, kennels – without pretending there are simple or straightforward solutions to human-animal interactions and obligations.

Graham Ward criticises what he sees as the “tyrannous demand for infinite responsibility” that can only be endured, implied by the impossible responsibility and regard for life signified in Derrida’s God, and represented in my reading of Genesis 9.⁴⁹ He suggests that such an ethics becomes a Sisyphean task, questioning whether there is anything ethical about the “infinite guilt” which, Ward suggests, this thinking of responsibility entails.⁵⁰ But as John Caputo’s response to Ward testifies, it is rather a matter of “always responding and at the same time always asking what we are responding to, always choosing and at the same time asking what we have chosen or has chosen us, what we are doing in the midst of the concrete decisions we always and invariably

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Balfour, *Late Derrida*, 207.

⁴⁹ Graham Ward, “Questioning God”, in *Questioning God*, eds. John D. Caputo, Mark Dooley, and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 285.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

make”.⁵¹ The biblical texts I examined showed this aspect too, of the tension in not knowing exactly who one follows when one follows the animal or God, most pertinently showcased in my interpretation of the Book of Daniel. Deconstruction is “not a philosophy of undecidability *tout court*, but of deciding-in-the-midst-of-undecidability”.⁵² There are two movements in deconstruction, Caputo suggests, historical association and messianic dissociation. It situates itself *in* the contexts, histories and traditions given to us *and* dissociates itself from these names, terms, narratives and dreams for a messianic justice to come. “If the first movement, historical dissociation, has to do with the *fore-given*, the second movement has to do with the *un-fore-seeable*, which is *never* given”.⁵³ Although in a sense, Derrida’s thinking of God and responsibility, as I have outlined, does testify to a state of being always already at fault, it is also a radical thinking of hope, of dreaming. But this is oriented within the specific, the contextual, the “here I am” in a here-and-now that demands my response and responsibility *today* and every day.

Derrida flits between this sense of what is dreamt of – an unconditional justice, infinite responsibility, a hospitality without limits – and the awakened, urgent, contextual and material that must be lived *with* and lived *in-the-midst-of*. With the case of the question of the animal, there is a very real sense in which the entrenched views that condemn animals to a separate sphere as a non-other, a non-neighbour, to killability or utilisation, requires the hope and dream of another way of living, another response to the *life* of others. My reading of Acts 10 raised this point, with its rethinking of the relationality to the other, and demand for a solidarity amongst the living and the dead, in other words, mortal creatures. At the same time, the urgency and reality of animal suffering is a demand for an eyes-opened attention *now*, an awakened state that *sees* animals and the suffering going on in the name of this word “animal” and refuses to look away, that affords compassion, that calls for change. As I suggested with regard to Revelation 17, to recognise weakness and suffering and side with the victim is to awaken to conditions that subjugate women and animals as powerless objects of consumption. This is not merely a historical exercise or act of literary criticism, but to critically question how discourses of human and animal allow for such conditions to continue, if the category “human” is not destabilized and questioned.

⁵¹ John D. Caputo, “What Do I Love When I Love My God? Deconstruction and Radical Orthodoxy”, in *Questioning God*, eds. John D. Caputo, Mark Dooley, and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 296.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 304.

Animals and Religion On the Table

Turning to Religion?

This thesis might also be seen within the so-called “turn to religion”, with its focus on the biblical and Judeo-Christian and Derrida’s own biblical engagement. Hent de Vries, for instance, diagnoses this important shift in modern philosophy, particularly exemplified by Derrida’s later work.⁵⁴ Recent scholarship within this turn to religion argues “that citations from religious traditions are more fundamental to the structure of language and experience than the genealogies, critiques, and transcendental reflections of the modern discourse that has deemed such citations obsolete and tended to reduce them to what they are not”.⁵⁵ It is as if religion “dies an ever more secure and serial death, it is increasingly certain to come back to life, in its present guise or in another”.⁵⁶ The biblical archive becomes an urgent source of critical study as it appears, on the surface, to be less relevant, known, or read, in a modern Western world. If biblical citations and legacies become all the more blurred and less overtly discussed it risks becoming a locus no longer critically explored and mapped out. It is perhaps noteworthy that Derrida calls both the question of religion *and* the question of the animal “the question of the question” and of response.⁵⁷ Why religion *and* the animal?⁵⁸ As Sherwood and Moore diagnose a “turn to the Bible” within the “turn to religion”, “the Bible is coming to be seen as a key site where foundational, but unsustainable, ‘modern’ separations were made”.⁵⁹ In this case, of course, it is a question of the “human” or “man” and the separations between human, animal, divine. In renegotiations of “the Bible as symptomatic cultural space”,⁶⁰ they argue that the Bible has

⁵⁴ Hent de Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1999).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁷ FK, 76; TATTIA, 10.

⁵⁸ Perhaps the interest I characterised in the introduction as to the connections between religious legacies and the question of the animal can be charted within such a double turn. Along with Derrida’s interest in the religious and the animal, Luce Irigaray’s piece entitled “Animal Compassion” is notably marked by religious language. Her last sentence on facing animals is: “It means learning to meet the other and to welcome them in their difference, to be reborn thus in a fidelity to ourselves and this other. Towards this accomplishment we must force ourselves along the way with the aid or friendship of animals, or angels, and of gods who agree to accompany us in a course towards the accomplishment of our humanity.” Luce Irigaray, “Animal Compassion”, in *Animal Philosophy: Ethics and Identity*, eds. Matthew Calarco and Peter Atterton (London: Continuum, 2004), 201. Further, Erika Murphy writes of Hélène Cixous’ experience of being bitten by a dog and the connections she makes between this dog-bite and the figures of Job and Christ. Erika Murphy, “Devouring the Human: Digestion of a Corporeal Soteriology”, in *Divinanimality: Creaturely Theology* (New York: Fordham University Press, forthcoming).

⁵⁹ Stephen D. Moore and Yvonne Sherwood, *The Invention of the Biblical Scholar: A Critical Manifesto* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 128.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 128.

become a site in which “settled identities” and “established concepts” might be disrupted.⁶¹ Any notion of a settled identity or established concept for the “human” in the biblical archive, is, as I have shown, impossible to maintain. But that does not mean that we are left bereft, stuck with the shards of a broken-down concept, concluding only with W. B. Yeats that “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold”. Rather, it shows that the concepts of human, animal, divine are both more fluid and particular than can be easily generalised. Just as Derrida does retain the word “animal” and “human” and never lets go of them entirely, it is not a matter of falling into a homogenous conceptual swamp or of iconoclasm. But it is a matter of critically interrogating how such terms are used and manipulated, of analysing the tacit exclusions they entail and recognising the constant need to re-examine the stakes of our intellectual enterprises. Such enterprises thus become a means of gathering ideas that multiply impressions of the staid spaces of “man” or “human”, that add, grow and provide places to think with others, with otherness and not merely the self-same.

In the last line of their critical manifesto on biblical scholarship, Moore and Sherwood suggest that, paradoxically, what needs to be re-found is precisely religion.⁶² Perhaps, also then, Derrida’s coupling of religion and animality occurs because in every address to the other – and as Derrida emphasises, the *animal* other too – there must be an element of faith; because bearing witness and testifying to another or for another is in part always already an act of faith.⁶³ Such a faith is perhaps particularly notable for the animal other as an other I cannot pretend to wholly *know*; the animal other marks the limits of human knowledge, it marks the ends and limits of the knowledge of any and every other and so the incalculability of this other whom I encounter, and in whose encounter a relation is established that instantiates the very condition for ethics as response and responsibility. The “suffering, fear, or panic, the terror or fright that can seize certain animals and that we humans can witness”⁶⁴ is a *capacity*, a question, not an automated given, and so involves a demand for response or responsibility, to testify to such suffering in a faith or hope. Such a faith might always be at fault as not *enough*, as inadequate, as misplaced, but it is perhaps nonetheless all that can be attempted in reaction to a knowledge founded in an unquestioned and unquestionable *power* to subject, exclude, ignore or deem irrelevant, rather than a destabilization of such knowledge in the sight of suffering and the recognition

⁶¹ Ibid., 129.

⁶² Ibid., 131.

⁶³ FK, 98-99.

⁶⁴ TATTIA, 28.

of the “perspective of an animal request, of an audible or silent appeal that calls within us outside of us, from the most far away, before us after us, preceding and pursuing us in an unavoidable way”.⁶⁵

But of course, as de Vries points out, the real reason of the return of the religious is because of the “resurfacing of religion as a highly ambiguous force on the contemporary geopolitical stage”.⁶⁶ De Vries suggests that “*retracing* the religious means also – and, perhaps, first of all – *tracing it otherwise*, not allowing it to take on one particular – that is, universal – meaning once and for all”.⁶⁷ This would tally with Derrida’s call for a relentless, interminable attention to, and analysis of, the structures of ethics, rights, law and society that underpin, constitute and determine our relationships to others. This is what I have attempted with the four chapters of this thesis too, of tracing these texts otherwise with Derrida’s question of the animal in mind, in order to foreclose the possibility of the “Bible” becoming either a universal pamphlet for animal-welfare or a discarded anti-animal relic.

On and Around the Table

While the Bible and its Judeo-Christian legacy are ostensibly, for Derrida, complicit with the philosophical tradition he critiques, I have tried to show that on closer examination the biblical archive implicitly provides a significant ground for his thinking of animality in alternative fashion to this philosophical tradition. In fact, it is some of his biblical examples that furnish the ground on which his call for a response and responsibility is founded. Namely, the finitude and vulnerability of nakedness that humans and animals share that he draws from Genesis, and the response “here I am” to God and animals. Animals and God become Derrida’s figures for the nonhuman other: God is thus the demand for responsibility in the horizon of a justice to come that arises always from, in relation to, and after, the other, and the animal is the figure of the other whom I encounter and respond to in the here-and-now as a particular, relational living being. Derrida’s God is not a teleological entity which will judge at a particular end-time; this God might rather be understood as the interminable hope or aspiration for justice, for response and responsibility, in being seen and being held accountable before the law of the other. Such a

⁶⁵ Ibid., 113.

⁶⁶ De Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion*, 6.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 31.

justice is the hope for a culture or community of irreducible singularities nonetheless in a *shared* space, a space hospitable to such singularities in which every other remains other but nonetheless *related to*, in relation and response.

At the same time, as Sherwood puts it, the Bible is not “some solid *arche*, given once and for all (like the image of the Bible epitomised in the 5200 pound granite monument of the ten commandments erected outside an Alabama courthouse), *nor* some newly discovered, exotic (dis-Orientating? Hebrew? Jewish?) other, come to seduce a Greco-Christian West”.⁶⁸ The biblical archive is thus a complex compendium fraught with tensions and ambivalences that can, with its animals, only be held in abeyance. There can be no final “ownership” proclaimed of this archive and its animals, nor can this conclusion dis-suspend them from such an ambivalent state. The four biblical texts I have explored and interpreted ultimately add a multivocal response to Derrida’s question of the animal. In fact, what the biblical archive seemingly “holds” is a contradictory web of relations between human, animal and divine, sometimes derogatory towards what we call “animals” and at other times radically overturning anthropocentric attitudes. What I contribute with this thesis, then, is a close and critical engagement with the theoretical stakes of Derrida’s work on the animal, especially in regard to his biblical references, and detailed but wide-ranging readings of four biblical texts in order to show the ways in which this archive might be read as both a denigrating source for anthropocentrism and a resource for thinking otherwise.

Many of the themes emerging in the biblical texts I have presented have revolved around the relationship between eating and being eaten. One common theme, then, has been the *table* as a locus of power but also a symbol of hospitality. This theme is also important for Derrida, and it is with the question of eating that Derrida’s ambivalence as to the animal question fully emerges. It is not enough to avoid eating animals, he states: the other is also consumable in more symbolic and unconscious ways.⁶⁹ Predominantly, what this highlights is that there can be no simple solution that avoids the suffering of others or that abstains from violence. There can be no hospitality of the table that is immune from appropriation and consumption of my other. For Derrida a justice to come is not teleological, but rather, it remains as a horizon of justice in which his dream of hospitality to the other as any other and the first-comer can awaken but is never free from the risks of

⁶⁸ Yvonne Sherwood, “Introduction: Derrida’s Bible”, 5.

⁶⁹ VAA, 67-68.

“evil”. The “opening to the future or to the coming of the other as the advent of justice”, is what Derrida calls the messianic.⁷⁰ The “messianic exposes itself to absolute surprise and, even if it always takes the phenomenal form of peace or of justice, it ought, exposing itself so abstractly, be prepared (waiting without awaiting itself) for the best as for the worst, the one never coming without opening the possibility of the other”.⁷¹ The table can thus be seen as the metaphorical place on which subjects are drawn from the margins and placed on for discussion, *to do (or give) them justice*: putting animals *on the table*. But the table is also that place on which animals are eaten and appropriated – done justice in the sense of a sentencing to edibility and killability. The table is the place for fellowship with my neighbour, fellow and friend, but it is also a place of exclusion, for those who are not invited. The table, like the biblical archive, is an ambivalent site for animals. But following Caputo, it is a matter of ceaselessly thinking and offering hospitality while always already questioning what kind of hospitality we are offering, and what or who are left outside the *oikonomia* of the table. As Derrida ended his paper entitled “The Ends of Man”, the words that must interrupt our thinking are perhaps these three: “But who, we?”⁷²

The biblical archive is haunted by a sense of the *archaic*, of an archetypal archive and particular kind of canonical authority that is marked by de Vries’ notion of religion as a “highly ambiguous force”.⁷³ Its short-hand name, “Bible”, masks the sense of an archive of books that is potentially ambiguous in the sense that it is frequently diverted into polarized positions of either defunct or potent, conservative or liberal, liberating or oppressive, rather than left suspended in ambivalence and abeyance. To leave such a collection of books in this ambivalent state would perhaps signal a dangerous move: it could be left in the hands of others to name and shame it as determinedly “this” or “that”. In the context of the question of the animal, the issue of ambivalence and ambiguity is perhaps also pertinent in a somewhat similar way. Animals emerge in this discourse as either in need of liberation or pity, as dangerous others better left to themselves or as complex beings humans will never comprehend. Of course, what haunts animal studies is the impossibility of determining exactly what might be “right” for “animals”.⁷⁴ But it is not only in the challenge of this generality of the word “animal”: even thinking in individual cases of species or particular

⁷⁰ FK, 56.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² EM, 57.

⁷³ De Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion*, 6.

⁷⁴ Some obvious examples are what would happen to farm animals if they were suddenly “liberated”?; is it wrong to love and keep pets, even in the best conditions? What are the limits of veganism, when almost any food is produced from the toil and exploitation of some living creatures, whether human or non-human?

creatures we are faced with a challenge as to what this being *is*, *signifies*, desires, thinks, needs, asks of me. This, however, must be lived with as a ceaseless question. Seeing Derrida's work as "an ironic and constantly shifting world without borders and without the moral teleology of apocalyptic thought, that is, without final solutions", as Juliet Flower MacCannell puts it,⁷⁵ and thus avoiding such a "world", would be to accept a cessation of thought, of critical attention, and of final, or one might say terminal, appropriations of texts, others, topics.

Perhaps the only way to conclude, then, is with Derrida's double imperative. On the one hand, we must do everything we can now to significantly decrease the suffering and systematic exploitation and industrialization of animal bodies. This might involve imperfect short-term solutions, even clumsy practical attempts that risk contradiction and unsustainability. On the other hand, it is crucial to be and remain critical to the practices, institutions, canons and customs that regulate and inform our lives in relation to others, human and non-human. Here, a slow, analytical and rigorous approach can be hoped for, to ensure that systematic and accepted abuse of animals is stopped or at least limited. "All the archaic, anachronistic forms are there ready to re-emerge, intact and timeless, like the viruses deep in the body", Baudrillard writes of history.⁷⁶ "History has only wrenched itself from cyclical time to fall into the order of the recyclable."⁷⁷ But it is perhaps in the recyclable that an engagement of the past that is allied to the future may be found: an engagement that does not naively suppose that the past and its intellectual inheritance can be shrugged off, that does not balk at relocating "the 'new' ground on the older one",⁷⁸ and thus reside in a world in which the resources of the past may come in handy to think critically today.

⁷⁵ Juliet Flower MacCannell, "Kristeva's Horror", in *The Kristeva Critical Reader*, ed. John Lechte and Mary Zournazi (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 71.

⁷⁶ Baudrillard, *The Illusion of the End*, 27.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ EM, 56.

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