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### **On Being Eaten**

This essay is an endeavour to think about questions of sacrifice and self-sacrifice, violence and non-violence, carnivory and vegetarianism in three parabolic instances, drawn from the domains of literature, religious narrative, and contemporary lived practice in early modern England and ancient and contemporary India. As such, it encompasses both the sphere of the gift on the one hand, and that of violence on the other. Not so much a work of comparison, it is instead a thought-exercise in imagining carnivory in relation to instances, real and imagined, of what is a little more rare: human edibility and human self-sacrifice, especially on behalf of the nonhuman. A consideration of this dilation of obligation to the other is also an occasion to meditate upon extreme forms of charity or hospitality, ones that involves a kind of a giving without reserve and without calculation, a giving to excess--to the point of abjuring in favour of a nonhuman other any property right of the subject in the human body, or any right to abstain from injuring or sacrificing this body. These parables of multi-species sacrifice allow us to pay heed to those instances when an ethical or cultic stance with respect to nonhuman life might well involve some translation of a (living) human (or superhuman) body into meat or food, and to consider whether they might yield an ethics not wholly governed by anthropocentrism. They also permit us to examine the fugitive forms that violence can assume in the sacrifice of sacrifice.