

critical realism makes it well worth the effort in future iterations of Finn's project and those like his. Indeed, Finn notes that critical realist social analysis "applies equally well to ... the environment, racism, sexism, homelessness, health care, and economic inequality" (96). One hopes that Finn's work continues to inspire these desperately needed applications.

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*Christian Flesh*. By Paul J. Griffiths. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018. xv + 153 pages. \$25.00 (paper).  
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*Christian Flesh* is a creative and constructive theological exegesis on human flesh. Griffiths is clear that his meditation on the flesh, while grounded in the Catholic tradition and written using the grammar of Christian thought, is *speculative*; he takes teachings on the flesh to places where orthodoxy has not yet gone, but where it might go. The book contains six chapters, each a rumination on some aspect of human flesh and its relationship with other flesh—of a human person, of a divine-human person (Jesus), or of an animal—and the conventions that shape how we view and judge the flesh. Throughout, Griffiths penetrates the meaning of *verbum caro factum est* and how after baptism "Jesus's flesh is closer to [Christian flesh] than anyone else's" (64).

Griffiths' method is precisely an exegesis on the flesh and not on previous theological utterances on the flesh. Aside from biblical passages, he eschews any citational engagement with previous works of systematic, biblical, moral, and constructive theology. Three pages' worth of "works consulted" are provided at the end of the book, but the list lacks proper bibliographical references and reflects merely works he "recall[s] having read and been stimulated by (as often negatively as positively) while preparing for and writing this book" (147).

The opening chapter is an extended elegy of postlapsarian flesh. Griffiths describes the flesh's interactions with other humans and with the world around it, emphasizing the limits of porous flesh in this world marked by suffering, lament, and death. In discussing everything from "leakage into the world [including] blood, sweat, tears, piss, shit, semen, milk, and breath" (14) to the necessity of fleshly caresses for the survival of humans (20–24) and the fragility of flesh marked with mortality (24–26), this chapter's content comes from the immediate experience of being-in-the-flesh-in-this-world and is thus comprehensible to any reader, whether or not they believe the flesh to be devastated because of original sin.

This is the flesh that the Lord becomes in the Incarnation, and thus in chapter 2 Griffiths describes how Jesus' flesh comes into this world in Mary's womb, lives a life wounded by devasted flesh, transfigures it, and succumbs to the suffering and death essential to human flesh. In a way, Griffiths is tacitly engaging the Christological controversies of the early church and offering his own creative interpretation of what it means for the Word to become flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Two areas of insight are worthy of mention. First, his brief exposition on Jesus' flesh as Jewish flesh is a necessary counter to Christian anti-Semitism (implicitly tackling Gil Anidjar's *Blood* [2014], listed in his works consulted, perhaps). This anti-Semitism is produced by a Christian theology that forgets this genealogical fact, rendering "the Gospel homeless and Jesus's flesh a phantasm," thereby implicating Christianity in "violence against the flesh of actual, living Jews" (33). Second, his speculation regarding Jesus' ascended flesh and the Eucharist suggests that the Incarnation is an atemporal fact; here, Griffiths dwells creatively on Johannine passages regarding the flesh, from its prologue to Jesus' disquisition on eating and drinking the flesh and blood of the Son of Man.

The final four chapters are a theological exploration of what it means for flesh to cleave to Jesus through baptism. Griffiths does not offer universal claims on Christian discipleship regarding moral theology. Rather, he recognizes that moral reasoning regarding the flesh, including sartorial questions, matters of eating and drinking, and caresses from the parental to the sexual, are shaped by conventions; he frequently recalls Paul's claim that all things are permitted, but not all things are expedient (cf. 1 Cor 10:23). His arguments on sartorial gender norms, on habits of slaughtering animals, eating flesh, and fasting, and on the ethical consequences of "eros transfigured" regarding sexual caresses from copulation to masturbation and cunnilingus are worthy of discussion in any appropriate course. Griffiths ends his book with a *dubium* on magisterial teachings worthy of classroom conversation (144–45).

Griffiths' speculative and theological reflection on Christian flesh thus spans several topics of Catholic theology: sacramental theology, Christology, theological anthropology, moral theology, sexual ethics, eschatology, and more. But the way he weaves multiple theological discourses together is at once the book's enticing and frustrating characteristic. Nonetheless, I urge teachers of upper-level undergraduate or graduate students to consider this book as speculative interludes to any of these topics.

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