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# Buccal Reading

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How, for example on the stage of history, can writing as excrement separated from the *living* flesh and the *sacred* body of the hieroglyph [Artaud], be put into communication with what is said in *Numbers* about the parched woman drinking the inky dust of the law; or what is said in Ezekiel about the son of man who fills his entrails with the scroll of the law which has become sweet as honey in his mouth?

—Jacques Derrida, “Freud and the Scene of Writing” (1978)

## ORAL LAW (DERRIDA)

Love your neighbor as yourself. But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

—Galatians 5:13–15

In “‘Eating Well,’ or The Calculation of the Subject”—an interview with Jean-Luc Nancy—Jacques Derrida undertakes to recast the tragic theaters of thinking, in particular those apparently radical discourses of ethics and politics in which there remains “a place left open . . . for a noncriminal putting to death” (1991, 112).<sup>1</sup> This opening signals the enduring humanism at work in adamantly antihumanist (or antivirilist) discourses, including those of Martin Heidegger and Emmanuel Levinas. Whereas Heidegger (in positing *Dasein*) and Levinas (in formulating a structure of hostage) figure a subjectivity apparently foreign to virility, Derrida is concerned with isolating the insistent carnivorousness that accompanies these discourses and recognizing them as profound (if antithetical) humanisms.<sup>2</sup> Yet rather than suggest, simply, that supporting animal rights or consenting to a vegetarian diet could save us from this constitutively sacrificial structure, the interview derives its force and its import from recasting the ethical frontier—that is, from articulating an ethical law ordered by the mouth rather than the face, a mouth that does not simply function as a face. Derrida does this by proposing “il faut bien manger” (the interview’s title—at once: one must eat well/one must eat the good/it is good to eat) as an originary imperative.

In itself, Derrida’s analysis stands as a major (if apparently outrageous) contribution to our understanding of a responsibility that would precede or preclude the subject. Moreover, as an attempt to radicalize the ethical command by demonstrating that, so long as ethics remains ordered by the face (by the injunction, “Thou shalt not kill”), the priority of the subject that the ethical critique of humanism would seem to dismantle is instead reasserted, Derrida’s interview also can be understood to provide a preliminary clue for a rethinking of the rhetoric of figures—that other discourse in which a radically antihumanist claim is effected through a consideration of the face, the figure as face, and the face as figure, the figure as what gives and takes faces.

Derrida’s examination of responsibility in “Eating Well” and his reorientation of the ethical frontier opens up, by example, a long overdue rethinking of the rhetoric of figures. Yet to undertake this rethinking is not to re-launch the critique of the so-called antihumanism of rhetorical readers like Paul de Man or J. Hillis Miller or Cathy Caruth (or for that matter,

Jacques Derrida himself), but rather to ask what would happen if we were to displace prosopopoeia as the figure of figure—the figure that orders rhetorical reading. What would happen if we began to think about language and literature not in terms of the giving and taking of faces (or figures), the giving and taking of voice and visibility? What if we began to read according to the mouth—the opening, eating, kissing, biting . . . mouth—and its depths? How might this reorientation of rhetorical reading, a turn from *figural* reading to *buccal* reading, allow for a rethinking of the crucial and contested relationship between literature and ethics?

In order to initiate this reorientation, I begin with Derrida's reading of Levinas and the opening that it effects. As early as *Existence and Existents* (1947), Levinas articulates a responsibility that precedes subjectivity and describes the passivity that attends this undeniable obligation. For Levinas, it is the face that "signifies" this responsibility: "the face is what forbids us to kill" (Levinas 1985, 86). The face is absolute exposure and fragility (it—and the eye especially—remains unclothed even when one is clothed), and it is this fragility itself—this apparent index of *my* power to kill—that also forbids me from killing, leaving me more passive still than the fragility before me.<sup>3</sup> This passive responsibility precedes any identification or any sharing (of a language, for example) between myself and another. Yet, as Derrida points out, Levinas's preoccupation with the face (*vis-à-vis*) as the "locus" of an at once excessive and originary (and hence, preoriginary) ethical obligation actually limits the responsibility that it solicits.

While Levinas's account of responsibility apparently resists the heroism or virility that Derrida associates with the subject, it also recovers the subjectivity that it seems to withhold. Because "Thou shalt not kill" is what Levinas calls "the first word of the face," and because this commandment never has been understood as a prohibition against "killing in general," the injunction, as Derrida shows, means only the more limited "Thou shalt not kill *thy neighbor*" (Levinas 1985, 89). It is an imperative that "is addressed to the other and presupposes him. It is destined to the very thing that it institutes, the other as man" (Derrida 1991, 112). In other words, although Levinas's account bears witness to an anoriginal structure of subjectivity and the passivity (or the trauma) that attends responsibility, it nevertheless

assumes as an already existent addressee the subject “who” this obligation is understood to precede.

Levinas’s discourse, then, can be understood as twofold: it supports a rigid and knowable division between persons and animals (or human and nonhuman animals), the very division that his preoccupation with an ethics that precedes subjectivity would seem to contest.<sup>4</sup> It also assumes the subject or man prior to the face of the other in order to articulate the responsibility that, indeed, is said to precede it.

Responsibility—disarticulated from a sacrificial structure—would coincide with a recasting of the “ethical frontier,” with a refiguring or disfiguring, a defacing of ethics ordered by faces. Derrida elaborates this defacement of ethics with the following proposition (in the mode of hypothesis, in the conditional):

If the limit between the living and the non-living now seems to be as unsure, at least as an oppositional limit, as that between “man” and “animal,” and if, in the (symbolic or real) experience of the “eat-speak-interiorize,” the ethical frontier no longer rigorously passes between the “Thou shalt not kill” (man, thy neighbor) and the “Thou shalt not put to death the living in general,” but rather between several infinitely different modes of the conception-appropriation-assimilation of the other, then, as concerns the “Good” of every morality, the question will come back to determining the best, most respectful, most grateful, and also most giving way of relating to the other and of relating the other to the self. For *everything* that happens at the edge of the orifices (of orality, but also of the ear, the eye—and all the “senses” in general) the metonymy of “eating well” (*bien manger*) would always be the rule. (1991, 114)

Here, two presuppositions condition the deconstruction of ethics. First, Derrida hypothesizes an analogy—a calculation of instability between two limits: the limit between the living and the nonliving and the limit between “man” and “animal.” Second, Derrida hypothesizes that the experience of “eating-speaking-interiorizing,” a constellation of indissociable actions,

“no longer” supports the division between the prohibition against killing man (one’s neighbor) and the prohibition against killing in general that serves as the foundation of ethics. Because one may eat when speaking, speak with a full mouth or eat with an empty one, or eat-speak-interiorize all at once and indistinguishably, the difference between these two imperatives cannot be upheld, and the opposition “speak or kill” no longer maintains. The limits between animal and human, living and nonliving, proliferate and come undone, as does the limit that would distinguish murder from killing. This means that the ethical is not and “no longer can be” ordered by the difference between “do not eat” or “do not kill,” “do not eat man or animal” or between the human and nonhuman others; rather, ethics comes into question at every instance that something (some word or some substance) passes the frontier of the mouth—or the eye or the ear, as metonymies of the mouth (rather than parts of a face). Ethics thus is ordered by one rule alone: *il faut bien manger*.

When Derrida offers “eating well” as the rule of the senses, eye [*oeil*] and ear [*oreille*] are made mouths. “All the ‘senses’ in general” become orifices (Derrida 1991, 114). This orification of face, eye, and ear both translates Levinas’s account of the face as a word or a saying (the saying of “Thou shalt not kill”) and radicalizes it by acknowledging that, insofar as the face speaks, it participates in the constellation of “eat-speak-interiorize”—a constellation that precludes the distinction between an injunction against killing thy neighbor and an injunction against killing in general.

Furthermore, if the ethical dilemma had been understood through the formula “speak or kill,” once speaking is understood as orification (“eat-speak-interiorize”), the opposition “speak or kill” becomes indeterminate. In fact, Derrida’s reading suggests that as soon as the ethical frontier was determined by the face as word (“Thou shalt not kill”), the face already will have been a mouth and the ethical frontier already will have become “the edge of the orifices (of orality).” By recognizing the limitation of Levinasian ethics as its reliance upon the face as speaking face, and by opening the Levinasian face and considering the face as an opening—an orifice—Derrida indicates a more radical disruption of humanism.

## MOUTH WITHOUT FACE (NANCY)

*There is—there once was—a mouth that opens and says: I write, I mask myself, I fabulate, I am my body, I am a man—always inextricably uttering: I take refuge in myself or I distinguish myself.*

*Ego says, or say, neither the presence nor the absence neither the structure, nor the feign of the subject—but the utterly singular experience of the mouth that opens and closes [itself] at once. A tongue moves there.*

—Jean-Luc Nancy, *Ego Sum*<sup>5</sup>

Recalling Artaud, for whom “Being, which is nonsense, has teeth,” we can say that in “Eating Well,” Derrida demonstrates that ethics has teeth (Deleuze 1990, 91).<sup>6</sup> The interview raises the question of whether ethics, like Being, is nonsense—a plunge into the orificial depths. The primary orality—or primary orificiality (in which the mouth opens and disarticulates the face)—that Derrida offers as the disruption of ontology and ethics recalling Jean-Luc Nancy’s analysis of the radically open and linguistic character of subjectivity. Indeed, in *Ego Sum*, Nancy demonstrates that the mouth is the occasion of a constitutive disruption of subjectivity, that is, the emergence of the so-called subject in and as this disruption.

While it is the force of *Ego Sum* to articulate the performative status of the *cogito*, in the book’s final section, entitled “Unum Quid,” Nancy recasts Cartesian subjectivity according to a convulsive chasm, which is also a chiasm: the opening of the mouth and the *saying* of the *ego* [*ego, ego sum, ego existo*] are mutually constitutive.<sup>7</sup> It is on the basis of this reorientation that Nancy will go so far as to claim that Descartes founded “neither humanism, nor anthropology, nor the so-called human sciences” (Nancy 1979, 160).

In attempting to represent this anoriginal emergence, Nancy is concerned with differentiating between a consideration of the mouth that would preexist this articulation, a mouth that therefore would belong to (and serve as the metonymy of) a face *and* a mouth that would be an initial opening, one that would mark the opening or incompleteness of the “I.” It is this second mouth, the mouth without a face that Nancy associates with the emergence (and constitutive interruption) of the Cartesian subject.

After Paul Valéry, he calls this mouth—which is “neither a substance nor a figure”—“buccal”:

*Bucca* is not *os*, but a later and more trivial term. *Os*, *oris*, mouth of orality [*bouche d'oralité*] is the face [*visage*] itself, understood as the metonymy of the mouth that it surrounds, bears, and renders visible, the passageway of all sorts of substances, above all the ethereal substance of discourse. But *bucca*, is puffed up cheeks; it is the movement, the contraction and/or distension of breathing, of eating, of spitting, or of speaking. Buccality is more primitive than orality. Nothing has taken place yet; nothing has been spoken there yet. But an opening—unstable and mobile—forms at the instant of speaking. For the instant, one discerns nothing: *ego* does not mean anything, *ego* only opens this cavity. Every mouth is a shadow mouth, and the true mouth also opens onto this darkness, and as this darkness, so as to form its inner hold [*for*]. (1979, 162)<sup>8</sup>

In distinguishing between *buccality* and *orality*, *bucca* and *os*, Nancy distinguishes between figure and nonfigure and, in doing so, links figure and face [*visage*]. For Nancy, the difference between buccality and orality is not accounted for by the accidental history of the Latin language (that *bucca* came into use later than *os*), but rather by the difference between a mouth that is a figure, for which all activities (including eating, crying, spitting, etc.) are metonymies of speaking, and the mouth that is an opening; the difference between the face as metonymy of the mouth (a mouth that belongs to someone, to a subject who speaks) and the mouth that belongs to no one, that becomes a mouth in the opening of one who—opened, disfigured—has no face.

*Bucca* is the more primitive term in two senses. It signifies an *underdeveloped* or faceless cavity in which eating-speaking-breathing-spitting, incorporation and introjection, contraction and distension are undifferentiated. It is also *more originary*, indicating a “mouth” before the *ego*, a mouth that does not communicate, but that is formed by the word *ego*, a mouth prior to the articulated subject (always already the speaking subject) and through which the articulation occurs, a mouth prior to signification,

prior to the face, prior to the eye, except insofar as the eye is a mouth.<sup>9</sup> The buccal mouth withholds the face in its movement (breathing, eating, yawning, speaking). Devouring (indeed, engulfing) the surface, buccality is the opening that orders Derrida's *il faut bien manger*, as it indicates a linguistic predicament irreducible to figure.

In *On Touching*—Jean-Luc Nancy, Derrida makes explicit the extent to which *Ego Sum* is a theory of rhetoric. He understands Nancy's analysis of Descartes as a response to the question: "How do two incommensurabilities—of psychical thinking and of the body, unite [*s'unissent-elles*] in an extension that is itself incommensurable?" (Derrida 2005, 28). In other words, he asks how that which has neither figure nor measure can unite and unite in its enduring dispersion. The answer is "contained in a single word (itself obscure and gaping): mouth—embouchure of the mouth, originary spacing of a mouth opening (*itself*) [*s'ouvre*] between the lips and at the other's breasts, within the other [*aux seins de l'autre*]" (28; translation modified.)<sup>10</sup> Thus, Derrida translates Nancy's analysis as a fundamentally ethical account of the subject that coincides with a nonfigural rhetoric.

Derrida is particularly interested in the gesture by which Nancy acknowledges that this mouth is not initially my own and opens (as) the mouth of the other in its first birth cry. The mouth opens—in surrounding the breast [*seins*] of the other—within [*aux seins*] the other. By "scooping out" the breast in the doubling of *sein* as "breast" and *aux seins* as "within" (as womb or entrails) and by recalling that *sein* means both breast and womb, Derrida undertakes to return the mother (who remains unnamed in Nancy's account of origins and primary buccality) to this discussion, yet he does so by hollowing her out.

In unveiling a metonymic relation between the part-object (breast) and the whole (mother)—in remembering her as an opening and insisting that the mouth without a face (as her sex) should return a name (the name of the mother)—Derrida undertakes to remember the other that one eats, to remember that one eats the mother and participates in a relation that, at this "stage" "is marked by the meanings of *eating* and *being eaten*" (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, 287).<sup>11</sup> These acts of remembrance issue in the

name of responsibility, and Derrida's recollection of the unnamed mother in Nancy's essay responds to the imperative *il faut bien manger* ("one must begin to identify with the other who is to be assimilated, interiorized, understood ideally" [Derrida 1991, 115]). Thus he elaborates:

The mouth's answer to the first question is held between a nonspeaking mouth (*bucca*, without the orality of *os*) and a mouth that starts detaching itself from the breast [*se détacher du sein*] and is ajar even before the "oral stage." Beating time, the opening of the mouth responds to the lips moving—the other's lips, the mother's lips in birth, then mine, if I may say so—always nearest to birth into the world, and from a mother, a noun and name Nancy never pronounces . . . despite Nancy's obvious and explicit reference to her (at the time of birth and nursing), despite his reference to the edges of the orifice, to the lips parting and opening the passage for the newborn (the labia between the mother's legs, as well as the infant's lips in their first cry), despite his reference to the breasts parting the nursling's mouth. (2005, 28)

Whereas Nancy's only account of the mouth attached and detached from the breast coincides with a thorough displacement of the "oral stage"—a reminder that there is no oral stage in Freud and that the infantile sexuality that has been categorized as a stage instead indicates an opening (and what he will call a "spacing"), Derrida understands Nancy merely to claim a more originary sexual stage in which the child forces the mother open from within, in which the child is this opening, as the mouth opened by a cry. Twice, Derrida points out that the "word" or the "name" (are these the same?) "mother" [*mère*] does not appear in *Ego Sum*, even as her body—and the metonymies of her body—remain an important reference [Nancy: "It opens first of all in a mouth, the mouth opened by a cry, but also the mouth closed around a breast . . ."] (1979, 162). Derrida describes buccality as an encounter of more than one mouth, and the mouth as more than one. Buccality is a relation to the other prior to the self that is ordered by the mouth and not the face.

## BUCCAL READING (DE MAN)

*Buccal space. One of the most curious inventions of the living thing. House of the tongue. Kingdom of reflexes and of different durations. Discontinuous gustatory regions. Compound machines. There are fountains and furniture.*

—Paul Valéry, “Bouche”

If in “Eating Well,” Derrida can be understood to “de-face” ethics, the reading that he performs in the interview would seem to have as its model or its match those rhetorical accounts of language and literature that understand prosopopoeia as a master trope—whether of lyric (de Man), autobiography (de Man), narrative (Miller), or witnessing. In each of these theories, facing is tied inextricably to defacement. Literature or language is understood as the donation of face or sense to the inanimate, dead, or faceless, the donation of figure to what has no figure (sense or shape), thus indicating not the priority of the human and the conceit of infinite appropriation and self-discovery (everywhere!), but rather the deflating acknowledgement that our understanding or sense is conditioned by acts of facing, which is to say that we are deprived of sense, a privation that figures sometimes help us to forget. Yet, I wonder whether this description of language in terms of facing and defacement (that is, in terms of figures) itself masks other accounts of literary negativity. In other words, does the rhetoric of figures—the discourse that has perhaps gone the greatest lengths to separate literature and language from powers of restoration or humanization, and that (along with psychoanalysis) has demonstrated the unmaintainability of distinctions between the human and the inhuman, the living and the nonliving—cover over (by facing) another defacement that does not pass by way of the face? An absence of the face that the articulation of face and figure in de Man’s work seems to mask?

In “Wordsworth and the Victorians,” one of the essays in which he most clearly explains this donation of faces, de Man sets out to read the Blessed Babe passage in *The Prelude* as an allegory of autoformation, specifically to explain how an infant nursing in its mother’s arms can become a passionate poet. In some sense, the answer to this question is “poetry” itself, or figure.<sup>13</sup>

Just as Nancy described the opening of the subject as the opening of the mouth that belongs to no one, and just as Derrida set out to demonstrate the belatedness, the secondariness, of the opening—this opening that opens in an opening—de Man considers the possibility of a relation to the mother, a relation that is “possible” only through poetry and language.

The infant is able to emerge as a loved subject, as someone who can appear in his mother’s eyes rather than the hungry thing at her breast through what Rei Terada has called a “fictive transfer of properties” (2003, 54). Two models of relation—between the infant nursing and its mother’s breast, and the face to face or eye to eye of recognition—cross in the memorable displacement in the poem of the breast by the eye.

*Blessed the infant babe—  
For with my best conjectures I would trace  
The progress of our being—blest the babe  
Nursed in his mother’s arms, the babe who sleeps  
Upon his mother’s breast, who, when his soul  
Claims manifest kindred with an earthly soul,  
Doth gather passion from his mother’s eye.*

(Wordsworth 1979, 37–42)

De Man reads this displacement—as the inscription of an eye in the place of the breast, the cutting off of one source of sustenance and the substitution of another—to introduce (and to represent) a totalizing system of figure. Yet, it strikes me that these lines—which never mention a face—might instead render another, less symmetrical, perhaps even less apparently restorative scene in which the child draws and drinks not only from the mother’s breast, but from her eye. It is this relation—the mouthing of the eye, a relation that takes place (to recall Derrida’s interview) at the orifices—that does not simply designate a face, but that indicates the confusion of speaking and sucking, claiming and crying, which indicate the opening of the system. In other words, I would like to suggest that the figures that de Man understands to indicate both a totalizing understanding and no understanding at all may actually initiate another logic and another rhetoric. Rather than read

this passage as the establishment—through a displacement or figure—of a scene of recognition, one can consider it as witness to a fundamentally distorted and distorting relation ordered not by the eye, but the mouth. Not by seeing, but by (in this case) eating or drinking. The possibility of this reading becomes even more explicit in the apparently less interesting (and thus much less read) 1850 version of the poem, in which the infant’s “active verbal deed” (“Claims manifest kindred”) of 1805 is displaced by (or remembered as) an ingestion.

*Blest the infant Babe*  
*(For with my best conjecture I would trace*  
*Our Being’s earthly progress), blest the Babe,*  
*Nursed in his Mother’s arms, who sinks to sleep*  
*Rocked on his Mother’s breast; who with his soul*  
*Drinks in the feelings of his Mother’s eye!*

Here, “drinks” takes the place of “claims”—the verb that allows de Man to affirm the performative aspect of figure and the linguistic condition (which is also a displacement) of self-consciousness. If the substitution renders more explicit the crossing of souls and bodies through which the infant incorporates the “feelings” (at once touch and passion) of his mother, through which the infant comes to feel, and feeling (more than other men) becomes a poet, this consolidated narrative relies upon the mouth—or the eye as a mouth, the eating eye—in order to account for poetic origins. Wordsworth’s revision might allow us to consider the “conjecture” through which poetry effects autobiography in its relation to other “-jections,” and the constellation of “introjection-projection-reintrojection” through which Melanie Klein (1986), for example, has described the infant’s relation to its mother. Here, the child is rocked—moved back and forth or side to side—in order that he may fall (indeed sink, drown) into sleep. But beyond the horizontal and vertical movements through which an infant might enter into self-consciousness—into a rhythm of consciousness and unconsciousness—these lines describe an active nourishment: the infant’s active appropriation, through the mouth, of its mother’s feelings, as if they

were a fluid that could be drunk. This drinking assumes the materialization of passion (more of a seventeenth-century than a nineteenth-century notion); it consolidates “claiming” and “gathering,” which are displaced in the strange and surreal scene of drinking the eye (as if tears were a nourishment) and of a drinking eye (as one “drinks in” a scene). If this passage can be read to describe the liquification of the mother through figure, it also accounts for her liquidation, and thus becomes another way of characterizing her status. As several critics (above all Andrzej Warminski and Cathy Caruth) have shown, Wordsworth’s mother is as a surface onto which the infant projects a face and through which the child obtains a face.<sup>14</sup> Read as an account of mouthing, rather than facing, however, this passage may no longer serve as an exemplary occasion in which the substitution of eye and breast assumes a face and the totalizing system of figure (as de Man suggests), but rather it might indicate a becoming mouth—an opening or a contraction—in which kissing, drinking, and crying may become confused but do not emerge as metonymies of speaking or of the face. This constitutive defacement, this opening [*béance*] of the face, and the question of eating well that it seems to evoke, aligns the origins of language and poetic language not with a facing, but with a mouthing. If Wordsworth shows that poetry (and autobiography) begins with the buccal mouth (rather than the face), it is Samuel Beckett who demonstrates what this means—what it means to produce a work without figure and without face, a mouthwork.

Beckett’s “Not I” (1984) is a dramatic monologue with two actors: the one, a mouth, the other, a silent, shrouded body. Between the opening of the mouth and the deformation of the body, there is a work without face and without figure, a work of testimony and violence, an autobiography of buccality:

MOUTH: . . . out . . . into this world . . . this world . . . tiny little thing . . . before its time . . . in a godfor— . . . what? . . . girl? . . . yes . . . tiny little girl . . . into this . . . out into this . . . before her time . . . godforsaken hole called . . . called . . . no matter . . . parents unknown . . . unheard of . . . he having vanished . . . this air . . . no sooner having buttoned up his breeches . . . she similarly . . . eight months later . . . almost to the tick . . . so no love . . . spared

that . . . no love such as normally vented on the . . . speechless infant . . . in  
the home . . .

—Samuel Beckett, *Not I*



#### NOTES

A longer version of this essay will appear as “Buccality” in *Derrida, Deleuze, Psychoanalysis*, edited by Gabrielle Schwab (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

1. Derrida writes: “Discourses as original as those of Heidegger and Levinas disrupt, of course, a certain traditional humanism. In spite of the differences separating them, they nonetheless remain profound humanisms *to the extent that they do not sacrifice sacrifice*” (Derrida 1991, 113). This interview responds to the question “Who Comes After the Subject?,” which Jean-Luc Nancy posed to 19 French philosophers. Note that the interview is also reprinted in *Points . . . Interviews, 1974–1994* (1995) and *Points de suspension: Entretiens* (1992). All English references are to *Who Comes After the Subject?* (1991); all French references are to *Points de Suspension*.
2. Derrida aligns “virility” with “generosity” (as a mode of “fraternity”) in *Le Toucher*, *Jean-Luc Nancy*, a work to which I return: “Briefly, what embarrasses me in the word ‘generosity,’ as in the word ‘fraternity,’ finally amounts to the same thing. In both cases, one acknowledges and nods to some genealogy, some filiation, a principle having to do with ‘birth,’ whether or not it is ‘natural,’ as it is often thought to be. Above all, the word privileges some ‘virility’” (2005, 23).
3. On the naked eye, see Levinas (1997, 8). See also Derrida’s discussion of “Thou shalt not kill” in “The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow):” “What does this bottomless gaze [of the animal] offer to my sight? What does it ‘say’ to me, demonstrating quite simply the naked truth of every gaze, given that the truth *allows me to see and be seen* through the eyes of the other, in the *seeing* and not just *seen* eyes of the other?” (2001, 381).
4. Derrida explains his use of “animals” (as a multiplicity of species) rather than the monolithic “the animal” to designate every nonhuman being in “The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow).” For another account of these sacrificial structures, one that has more in common with Derrida’s than is regularly acknowledged, see Giorgio Agamben’s discussion of “bare life” in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998).
5. This is printed on the back cover of Nancy’s book. While several chapters of *Ego Sum* appeared in English translation, “Unum Quid,” the chapter upon which my discussion will focus, has not been translated. All translations are therefore my own.
6. For a reading of Deleuze’s account of Carroll and Artaud, see Guyer (2004). Also note

that Deleuze's text *The Logic of Sense* was originally published in 1982 as *Logique du sens* (Paris: Editions de minuit).

7. Here Nancy refers to both the Second and Sixth Meditations. In the Second Meditation, Descartes writes: "So after considering everything very thoroughly, I must finally conclude that this proposition, *I am, I exist*, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived by my mind" (1996, 17). In the Sixth Meditation, in accounting for the relation between mind and body, he explains: "I am not merely present in my body as a sailor is present in a ship, but that I am very closely joined and, as it were, intermingled with it, so that I and the body form a unit (*unum quid*)" (Descartes 1996, 56). On the *unum quid*, Nancy writes:

Unum quid, a something neither-mind-nor-body opens the mouth [*ouvre la bouche*] and says or conceives: *ego sum*. But this is still to say too much. Unum quid does not have a mouth that it can manipulate and open, no more than it has an intelligence that it can exert to reflect on itself. But something—*unum quid*—opens itself (it has, therefore, the appearance or the form of a mouth) and this opening articulates itself (it has, therefore, the look of a discourse, and so of thought), and this articulated opening, in an extreme contraction, forms:  
I. (Nancy 1979, 157)

For an excellent reflection on this text that also focuses on the open mouth, see (Kamuf 2002, 37–56).

8. *Fors* can also be translated as "heart of hearts," which we would want to consider within the frame of all that Nancy has written about and experienced, in particular the reading of his *L'Intrus*. Moreover, *Fors* names Derrida's introduction to Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok's *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*, a study of melancholic language as encryption that would, on another occasion, have to be read alongside Deleuze's analyses of schizophrenic language (see Derrida 1986, xi–xlviii). It is perhaps worth noting that Nicholas Rand dedicates his English translation of Abraham and Torok's book to Paul de Man.
9. See Derrida, for example, on kissing eyes in the opening pages of *On Touching* (2005).
10. Derrida's question draws its idiom from both *Ego Sum* ("The immeasurable expanse [*étendue*] of thought is the opening of the mouth" [Nancy 1979, 161]) and "Psyche," a fragment that Nancy devoted to Freud's posthumous, and intentionally (even if not actually, given Nancy's readings) anti-Cartesian note: "Psyche ist ausgedehnt, weiss nicht davon" (The psyche is outstretched [*étendue*], without knowing it). Nancy's fragment is translated in *The Birth to Presence* (1993).
11. This is to suggest that Derrida is talking about the oral stage—except, as we will note, what has been recognized as the oral stage (in Freud) now may be recast as "buccal."
12. See de Man (1984).
13. See Warminski (1987) and Caruth (1991).

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