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Speech and Oral Phenomena: Tastetexts, Memory, and the Mouth as the Scene of Writing (or, The Telepathology of Everyday Life-Death)¹

Following one of Jacques Derrida's early questions — namely, How is writing involved in speech? — this essay reconsiders the role of the tongue and the sense of taste in the oral phenomena of speaking and saying. The contact the tongue makes with the mouth or teeth is just as much a materialization of language as what is commonly called “writing.” The tongue acts as a pen and the mouth, as a blank page (or palimpsest). Mouthed writing is accompanied by sense experiences. There are various selftastes to the tastes of speaking, the tastes of words, or, even, the tastes of thoughts. Freud's notes on speaking in one's sleep, telepathy, the mystic writing-pad, and memory are revisited and supplemented with the writings of Hélène Cixous on the taste of words, telephoning, saying-to-oneself, and forgetting. The auto-affection of tasting-oneself-speakwriting is offered as an alternative to the metaphysical presumptions Derrida implicates in Husserl's understanding of speech based on the auto-affection of hearing-oneself-speak. As such, writing (haunted by the trace of death) and speech (invested with living-presence) is now confronted with the selftastes of speakwriting with one's stylangue in and on the mouth as the scene of writing (ever accompanied by tastes of life-death).

¹ This essay was written while attending the 2009-2010 seminar of Hélène Cixous at the University of Paris-VIII, “*Journées de lecture de rêve IV: La seule invention, le seul renouvellement, en vie.*”

*Une voix délicieuse [...] bruissait à mes oreilles [...]*²

Gérard de Nerval (179)

*Non pas seulement donné à voir, donné à jouir au sens de la vue (de la vue de l'esprit), non! donné à jouir à ce sens qui se place dans l'arrière-gorge: à égale distance de la bouche (de la langue) et des oreilles. Et qui est le sens de la formulation, du Verbe [...]. Ce sens qui jouit plus encore quand on lit que quand on écoute [...] quand on récite [...] quand on-pense-et-qu'on-l'écrit.*³

Francis Ponge (523-24)

Their lips were palimpsests of secret flesh [...].

Thomas Pynchon (16)

Tucked away in the last chapter of *Speech and Phenomena* is the question. Jacques Derrida asks,

How is writing — the common name for signs which function despite the total absence of the subject because of (beyond) his death [*sa mort*] — involved in the very act of signification in general and, in particular, in what is called 'living' speech [*la parole dite "vive"*]? (*Speech* 93; *Voix* 104)

How is writing involved in speech? It is on this question that the following orality tale chews, a question which, at the same time, wishes to ask: How is death involved in life?⁴

² A delicious voice [...] rustles in my ears (Octavie; translation mine).

³ Not only given to see, given to pleasure in the sense of sight (of the spirit's sight), No! Given to pleasure in that sense in the back of the throat: equidistant from the mouth (tongue) and ears. That is the sense of formulation, of the Word [...]. That sense that gives more pleasure when one reads then when one listens [...] when one recites [...] when one-thinks-and-writes-that-thinking (*Le Grand Recueil*, II *Méthodes*, Sidi-Madani, dimanche, 4 janvier 1948 (I); translation mine).

⁴ On the question of how death is involved in life, I rely on Derrida's motif of "life/death" ["la vie-la mort"] (*Ear* 4; *Otobiographies* 39; q.v. Rogues 123), which is a primitive version of what comes to be called autoimmunity, in his later texts. It proclaims that "life cannot do without nonlife" (Naas 129). In "life-death," there is no conjunction, nor disjunction. It is not life-and-death, nor is it life-or-death, but rather the indissociable double bind between the two. This idea appears as early as *Of*

In *The Five Senses*, Michel Serres analyses the oral sensation of speech. “The speaking tongue kills the tasting tongue.” Speech “passes through the mouth [...] neither smelling nor tasting.” For Serres, the tongue that speaks no longer tastes and “the zestiest conversation is tasteless.” The “mouth of discourse excludes the mouth of taste” (186, 153). This dissociation of oral phenomena smacks of the very kind of uncontaminated ideality Derrida finds in Edmund Husserl. The problem (one that lingers throughout the philosophical canon from Descartes to Kant; from Husserl to Deleuze; in the early Derrida, though not so much the later) is that this binary opposition of speech and taste has no understanding of *selftaste* — as evoked by Derrida in “Justices”⁵ — nor its corporeal and phenomenological reflexivity. The tongue that speaks can only do so as it tastes the selftaste of the speaker. Only upon appreciating the taste of self — the taste of self-as-speaking and, thereby, the taste of words — can the speech-act be disclosed as an act of writing.

In the closing pages of Derrida’s essay “Freud and the Scene of Writing,” he lists possible fields that may be opened by psychoanalysis, two of which concern oral phenomena: one, a corollary between the tongue and the pen, the other, a condensation (on the part of Derrida, himself) of tasting with eating. First, in question would be “a *psychopathology of everyday life* in which the study of writing would not be limited to the interpretation of the *lapsus calami*, and, moreover, would be more attentive to this latter and to its originality than Freud himself ever was” (*Writing* 230). Derrida cites Freud to evoke the kind of originality to which the founder of analysis was perhaps never attentive enough: “*Slips of the pen*, to which I now pass, are so closely akin to slips of the tongue that we have nothing new to expect from them.” Following Derrida — delimiting Freud’s statement from its mere slips or lapses — instead of freezing one’s gaze upon how

Grammatology, where Derrida claims that, “Rousseau knew that death is not the simple outside of life” (143). Elsewhere, he writes, “These are other names for pure life or pure death: for me it’s the same thing [c’est pour moi la même chose] and everything I say goes as much against a philosophy of life as against its simple contrary” (*Resistances* 35; emphasis added; *Résistances* 51; emphasis added).

⁵ “I am the only one, un je, an I is the only one able to say of himself, auto-referentially, autodeictally, that he is himself, in his selftaste, ineffable, that I alone can say and only say what exceeds language in the experience of my selftaste” (Derrida, “Justices” 698; q.v. *Touching* 114).

closely akin slips of the pen are to those of the tongue, an originality⁶ is perhaps lurking round how closely akin the pen, itself, is to the tongue, itself. Whereas Heidegger compares the organ of the eye with the equipment of the pen to conclude that each can serve only “for the different activities of seeing and writing” (219), this is not perhaps so easily the case for the organ of the tongue. One may dream, like Cixous, of a pen that breathes (*Manhattan* 11); tongues that pen, pens that lick, and, as such, the mouth, teeth, or lips as a scene of writing. Such a dreamer can think the lips as paper and the voice as a pencil, as Cixous does when writing of Zami (Winnie) Mandela. “Her *lips* were left her. But her *voice* was arrested. They left some *paper*, they took the *pencil*” (*Manna* 216; italics added).

Derrida’s fourth field to come — “a new *psychoanalytic graphology*” — would think of “writing as *sweet* nourishment [*l’écriture, douce nourriture*] or as excrement” and it would ask how,

can writing [...] 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* [*dans sa bouche aussi doux que du miel*]. (*Writing* 231; *L’écriture* 340; emphasis added)

Twice, one reads the word “sweet” in these lines; describing both the text (the scroll of the law) and the act of writing. Although the word “taste” [*goût*] is nowhere to be found in this particular essay, there would be a sweetness to writing and a taste to the text; perhaps a taste to reading.⁷

⁶ Perhaps that kind of originality described Heidegger: “Originality consists in nothing other than decisively seeing and thinking once again at the right moment of vision that which is essential, that which has already been repeatedly seen and thought before” (260; emphasis added), but only after thinking an “ocular throat” (Cixous, *Manhattan* 29) or eyes that speak; that “seem to be half-open lips; that “kiss [...] touch, taste” (Cixous, *Third* 119) rendering it an originality that decisively tastes again and thinks again at the right moment of savoring that which is essential and has already been repeatedly tasted and thought before. Heidegger’s panoptic originality does not yet “understand that the mouth is a third eye” (Cixous, *Third* 50) and his all-too-Hegelian “eye is quite distinct from the tongue” (Hegel, *Phenomenology* 72; §119).

⁷ This foresight is a foretaste — *avant-goût* — foreseeing a gesture he will make, years later, in *Specters of Marx* (212), which seems, itself, an aftertaste of an

And perhaps a taste to dreaming. Derrida's list of the possible psychoanalytic paths to come is, after all, but a dream. Proust's dreams, for example, are not as unsavory as Freud's. He gives the reader many tastes, long before he recounts the story of the *madeleine*. Already in the third and fourth paragraphs of the *Search* is described the reawakening from sleep

just long enough [...] **to savour** [*de goûter grâce*], in a momentary glimmer of consciousness [*conscience*], the sleep which lay heavy upon the furniture, the room, the whole of which I formed but an insignificant part and whose insensibility [*l'insensibilité*] I should very soon return to share. (*Swann* 4; *Recherche* 14; emphasis added)

But at least *one sense contaminates this insensibility* of furniture, to which the dreamer returns. Modern memory is ushered by the taste of dreams; what Cixous might call "the infinite tastes of dreams" (*Insister* 122). *Sometimes a woman*, Proust tastes his dream girl. Sometimes,

a woman would be born during my sleep [...]. Conceived from the pleasure I was on *the point of consummating* [*le point de goûter*], she it was, I imagined, who offered me that pleasure [...]. I would abandon myself altogether to the sole quest of her, like people who set out on a journey to see with their eyes some city of their desire, and imagine that one can *taste* in reality [*on peut goûter dans une réalité*] what has charmed one's fancy. And then, gradually, the *memory* [*souvenir*] of her would dissolve, and vanish until *I had forgotten the girl of my dream* [*j'avais oublié la fille de mon rêve*] (*Swann* 4-5; *Recherche* 14; emphasis added).

His momentarily conscious *goûter grâce* is of the dream/girl he is on the *le point de goûter*, which he imagines he can *goûter dans une réalité*, yet will have forgotten in waking life. It seems as if with each forgotten memory there is an unconscious taste.⁸ The foretastes of dreams precede the taste of the *madeleine* and the memories to follow.

Would there not be unconscious selftastes insofar as it is possible to transcribe or impress, so to speak, one's dreams or desires in sleep-

earlier reading of Blanchot's "l'avant-goût de la mort" from "Un récit" (*Parages*, 123, 118).

⁸ These paragraphs momentarily illuminate a letter Walter Benjamin writes to Theodor Adorno on May 7, 1940 (*Writings* 413).

talking or speaking-while-dreaming? It is remarkable how little Freud discusses these phenomena. I would add one additional quotation from Freud in regards to the sweet oral graphology Derrida foresees, from Chapter III of *The Interpretation of Dreams*:

If it can be admitted that **the talking [*das Sprechen*] of children in their sleep belongs to the sphere of dreams**, I can relate the following...: My youngest daughter, at the time of nineteen months old, vomited one morning, and was therefore kept without food all day. During the night **she was heard to call [*rufen*] excitedly in her sleep**: “Anna F(r)eud, *st’awbewy, wild st’awbewy, om’lette, pap!*” She used her name in this way to express the act of appropriation [*Besitzergreifung*]; the menu presumably included everything that would seem to her a desirable meal [*Mahlzeit*]. (*Interpretation* 40-41; *Traumdeutung* 116; emphasis added)

So conditional: *If* talking in one’s sleep — particularly in the case of children — belongs to the sphere of dreams, *then* Freud can tell us what he will tell us anyway. It’s not entirely clear that this condition is ever met, if his relating the dream, nonetheless, is an enthymematic affirmation. Yet, it invites further conditionals: *If* the storehouse of material *which* the unconscious *makes* — and *from which* the dream-work *makes use* — are repressed infantile desires and *if*, as Freud’s tone seems to insinuate here, children are prone to talking in their sleep (seemingly more so than adults; a tendentious claim, at best), *then* the material from which the unconscious draws would also include repressed *tastes of one’s unconscious self* that occur while uttering those desires fulfilled during childhood dreams. (The material utterance is mere propaedeutic, since these selftastes would be present in the closed mouth as well regardless of a nocturnal call.)

One could venture to say that little Anna describes just this. In what may well be a list of desirable tastes, rather than meals, the first of which she speaks is herself; a certain “*goût de même sur la langue*,” with regards to “*des rapports d’oralité nocturne*” (Cixous, *Anankè* 162, 160). The primal auto-affection and the expression of appropriation, par excellence, would be selftaste. More to the point, here, it would be an *unconscious selftaste*; the unconscious taste of one’s own unconscious. Anna tastes Anna first. Speaking her name is Anna’s own conditional. This anorexic is Annarexic, having tasted nothing but Anna all day. *If* and *because* I taste Anna I want to taste,

or am now tasting (in the dream) — while I simultaneously taste-again my selftaste as I speak these very words — the sweet tastes of strawberries, an omelet, and, perhaps, that of a kiss given to (or from) papa. Anna tastes Anna as her tongue touches the roof of her mouth and the back of her teeth in order to pronounce the “n” sound of her name; *writing* her dream in her mouth as she cries out her order.

J'écris et je crie.

Je crie comme j'écris.

J'écris pendant que je crie.

The tongue's capacity to taste comes about only in its capacity to touch or feel. (*Feelers-that-taste* are fated to become a crucial motif for Freud.) Its role in the phenomena of speaking, breathing, writing (and should one not go so far as to include *thinking?*)⁹ is only illuminated by the phenomenal simultaneity of these two senses, which, for the most part, is not considered with the rigor it deserves in Western philosophy after Aristotle.¹⁰ This, however, begins to change in the writings of Cixous and Derrida. Their sporadic and insightful meditations on taste that appear throughout their writings have to do with their attention to *phenomenorality*. It is, for example, no accident that the writer who gives us the portmanteau word “*tastetexts*” (*Insister* 137) and suggests a word can taste better if it is *written* with a different letter (*Philippines* 36),¹¹ writes about how “to pronounce”

⁹ Cf. Tzara: “La pensée se fait dans la bouche” (58), or Derrida: “expressing what has already been thought — we should almost say written — and faithfully reduplicating it, expression must let itself be impressed by sense at the same time that it impresses the sense” (Speech 117; italics added), or, to recite my epigraphed Ponge: “quand on récite [...] quand on-pense-et-qu'on-l'écrit” (524). The selftaste of writing will have been the selftaste of thinking, and, as such, would render “[c]ontemplating them [...] delicious”; like the thoughts of Toni Morrison's Nel, upon discovering her “new found me-ness” (29).

¹⁰ See Aristotle (Soul 125 [422a]; Parts 181 [657a]). Hegel seems to miss it, altogether, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* where the tongue's discernment of the shape of tasted salt would seem to entail a certain unraveling of the dialectic. E.g., “But in so far as [salt] is white, it is not cubical, and in so far as it is cubical and also white, it is not tart, and so on” (*Phenomenology* 73; §121; q.v. 68-69, 72; §§ 113, 119-20). With a tongue that touch-tastes (simultaneously), is there not already a synthesis or uniting of a cubictartness or tartcubicity? If taste is touch (and vice versa), in touchtaste — i.e., tangibility that has not forgotten its tang; true tangybility — it does not necessarily follow that salt “in so far as it is cubical it is not tart.”

¹¹ “*Si tu l'écris avec un a, tu goûteras son goût.*”

certain names “you have to first [*il faut d’abord*] place the tip of your tongue between your teeth” (*Third* 138; *Troisième* 165). The same would go for the philosopher, who in his later writings proclaims that “long before the *cogito*, [selfhood] senses the taste of self” (Justices 698) also goes to the trouble to point out that the “mouth touches, touches itself [*la bouche touche, elle se touche*]” in his study on touching and the phenomenal body (*Touching* 113; *Toucher* 131).

It is *the touch of telepathy*, in Derrida, that sheds light on the oralities¹² lurking within his essay, “Telepathy.” During what might be called the middle period of his works or thinking, he confesses (much like Freud on the issue of telepathy) that changes in his life are opposite of what might have been expected. There comes to pass,

a surface more and more open to all the phenomena [*une surface de plus en plus offerte à tous les phénomènes*] formerly rejected [...] phenomena of “magic,” of “clairvoyance,” [*“voyance”*] of “fate,” of communications at a distance, to **things said** [*choses dites*] to be occult. Remember / and we, we would not have moved a step forward [...] if among all these **tele-things** [*téléchoses*] we did not **get in touch with Telepathy** in person. Or rather if we didn’t allow ourselves **to be touched by her. Yes, touch, I sometimes think that thought / before “seeing” or “hearing,” touch,** [*Oui, toucher, parfois je pense que la pensée / avant de “voir” ou d’“entendre”, touché,*] put your paws on it, or **that seeing and hearing come back to touch at a distance** — a very old thought, but it takes some archaic to get to the archaic. So, to touch both ends at once, touch in the area where science and so-called technical objectivity are now taking hold of it instead of resisting it as they used to (look at the successful experiments¹³ the Russians and Americans are doing with their astronauts) touch

¹² Within “Telepathy,” alone: “**to swallow** a new metrics of time” (*Psyche* 232), “**bad taste**” (240), “**sweet angel**” (241), “**to kiss Plato**” (243), “**the ‘lip’** of my mother” and “**suspended on my lip**” (244), “**holding your breath...waiting on the telephone**” (245), the trace that “**opens the text, holds it open, mouth agape**” (246), “**me, my lip, my idiom**” (249), “**swallowing and simultaneously [...] vomiting**” (261; emphasis added).

¹³ This gesture to scientific experiments evokes more recent studies at the University of Vienna (and elsewhere) on quantum teleportation, entanglement, and the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen effect across great distances, in which photonic quantum information can be transferred to different processors across the globe. Once researchers at site B learn and apply the necessary Bell-state measurements determined by those at site A, the properties of photon A instantly become those of photon B; rendering it a new photon X. In so becoming, it “loses all *memory*, one might say,

in the area of our immediate apprehensions, **our pathies** [*nos pathies*], our receptions, our apprehensions [...]. (*Psyche* 236; *Psyché* 247; emphasis added).

Avant de voir ou d'entendre — before visually reading the written or audibly hearing the spoken — what kind of touch is there to things-said, before “seeing” and “hearing”? Re-thinking speech as writing-with-the-tongue would render the mouth, itself, “a surface more and more open” to the phenomena of things; things said; tele-things. It is a surface that sounds much like the entity described in Derrida’s 1967 essay, “Form and Meaning,” as that on which inner expression must impress itself conceptually. How to write concepts? It is as if expression, saying-to-oneself, inner monologue, or soliloquy must write itself on the mind, rendering it a kind of mystic writing-pad or a scene of writing. “The expressive noema must present itself [...] as a blank page or a clean slate, at least as a palimpsest restored to its pure passivity” (*Speech* 117). Thinking commences in expression but this commencement is impossible since it must already have been an impression written on what Derrida calls “the blank page of meaning” (117) prior to its own alleged commencement. The distance between expression and impression is that my own inner expressive thoughts are always inaugurated at a distance from themselves.

Both Cixous and Derrida are masters of communication-at-a-distance insofar as they are masters at not-writing books; or, at writing *about* books they will not write (*c'est-à-dire*: at writing the books they will not write.)¹⁴ For example, Cixous often writes within books on a certain motif that “she could write a book” on another.¹⁵ In one of her earliest texts, she writes that she “could also write the History of the

of its original state;” i.e., the B-ness of past life as photon B. But what is more interesting is the role played by classical telecommunications in facilitating quantum teleportation. *There can be no teleportation without the telepathy of telephonation.* The transference would not be possible without something like a telephone call, or (tele-graphic electronic communication, email, etc.) to set it in motion: “*All that travels materially is the message about [A’s] measurement result, which tells [B] how to process his photon [...]. Only when he learns the result of [A]’s Bell-state measurement, transmitted to him via classical means, can he exploit the information in the teleported quantum state*” (Zeilinger 38-39; passim; emphasis added).

¹⁴ Hence the tacit profundity of repeatedly proclaiming “I have never read a book by Hélène Cixous” (Robinson 17).

¹⁵ E.g., “I could write the book of lenses” (*Manhattan* 28).

telephone”¹⁶ and although that book is not yet written, a diligent reader of her works can hear the story of that history throughout.¹⁷ It may be that writers, such as these, gifted enough to write in such a way as to allow readers to hear something said within the text beyond what is *merely present* as the written words — be it through homonymy,¹⁸ amphiboly,¹⁹ enallage, intertextuality, or indirect communication (Cixous, *Portrait* 55-58) — make possible a certain kind of *transference of thought* on the verge of a telepathy; the transference of a thought *said* but not *spoken* (or directly written). This is why Cixous, in her studies of Derrida, explains, “I am speaking here of *reading what is said*. [*Je parle ici de lire le dire*]” (*Insister* 171; *Insister À* 115).²⁰ Reading is a saying-to-oneself.

In this way, one could say that the book Derrida does not write about telepathy was already written as *Speech and Phenomena*. It is his first great text on telepathy (though he never mentions the word).²¹ One reads the difficult truth in “Telepathy”:

The truth, what **I always have difficulty getting used to: that nontelepathy is possible**. Always difficult to imagine **that one can think something to oneself**, deep down inside, **without being surprised by the other**, without the other being immediately informed, as easily as if he or she had a **giant screen inside**, at the time of the **talkies** [*temps de parlant*], with remote control [*télécommande*] for changing channels and fiddling with the colors, the **speech dubbed with large letters** [*le discours étant doublé en*

¹⁶ *Les Commencements* (1970), quoted in Derrida (*H.C.* 18).

¹⁷ Similarly, in §5 of *Rogues* Derrida quickly makes a note that he “would want to devote an entire book” on the phrase “if it must be said” (57).

¹⁸ See, e.g., where Derrida might “dream in the vicinity of [a] homonym” (*Resistances* 78).

¹⁹ See, e.g., Cixous’s analysis of amphibolies such as “*les phrases [...] intelligibles de ma mère*,” which, in its French construction, can be read to say both “the intelligible sentence of my mother” as well as Derrida’s own “sentences intelligible for my mother” (*Portrait* 57; q.v., 34, 46; cf. *So Close* 18).

²⁰ “*Writing, however, is not telling. The key of Circumfession is precisely that: what is written is not said [...] it’s written, not said [...]. When the time comes to write the secrets he only writes them and doesn’t tell them.*” *Hearing what is said* in what one reads (while seeing the text) is why such texts are “poured in the ear, the ear/eye — I should say, of the reader [...]” (Cixous, *Portrait* 102, 39; emphasis added).

²¹ One could also make the case that *Speech and Phenomena* will have already been Derrida’s great book on the problem of “if it must be said.” Cf. footnote 15 above.

grosses lettres] in order to avoid any misunderstanding [...]. **Difficult to imagine a theory of what they still call the unconscious without a theory of telepathy.** They can neither be confused nor dissociated. (*Psyche* 236-37; *Psyché* 247; emphasis added)

The difficulty lies not in getting used to the possible truth of telepathy, but rather the contrary: the possibility of nontelepathy. He frames it in terms quite familiar to his early critiques of Husserl: thinking to oneself, deep down inside (as if by soliloquy or interior monologue), an inner speaking, a discourse that is always already a citation dubbed and doubled by iterability. The other that always intrudes or haunts even the deepest inner thoughts would never be dissociable from a theory of telepathy. But neither should it simply be confused with it.

That a problem, such as telepathy, is not far from Husserl's explanation of inner expression as opposed to exterior indication, can be found in the passages with which Derrida chooses to grapple in *Speech and Phenomena*. Husserl explains that it is *not* the point that "another person may *interpret* [...] our 'expressive movements' [...] and thereby become *deeply acquainted with our inner thoughts and emotions*" (qtd. in Derrida, *Speech* 36). Interpretation in no way allows the other access to our inner expression. That the inner thought of "pure expression" is a suspension of "the relation to the other" anticipates Derrida's later interest in telepathy (*Speech* 40). In Husserl, speech, movements, and gestures "mean" something to another only insofar as we *externally indicate* our interior thoughts which, as interior, have no meaning. They have no meaning to the other, because the other has no access to my inner thoughts, and they have no meaning to me, because as inner thoughts — only for me — they need no meaning.²²

This would also be the case with our *living body* or *flesh* [*Leib*]; the corporeal experience of self-feeling or feeling-oneself-felt.²³ The other can experience his or her own *Leib*, but not mine. Neither one's own *Leib* nor one's own thoughts are accessible to the other, in Husserl. Derrida is on his way to thinking this in the section on "Mirrored

²² This allegation, that expression needs no meaning for me since it is already mine, is certainly a post-Derridean understanding of Husserl, with which Husserl, himself, would disagree.

²³ See §44 of Husserl, esp. 97; <128>.

Writing” in “Form and Meaning” as he considers the-*Leib*-of-language.

On the one hand, the sensible aspect of language, its sensible and nonmaterial aspect, what could be called **the animated “proper body” (*Leib*) of language** is put out of play. Since for Husserl, expression supposes a meaning-intention [...] its essential condition therefore is the pure act of the animating intention and not the body to which, in a mysterious way, it is united and gives life. (*Speech* 113)

Yet this “mysterious way” by which sensible and nonmaterial expression is united to the sensual and material body is perhaps not so mysterious when *mirrored-writing* is reconsidered as *mouthed-writing*. Once the experience of *Leib* is considered orally (i.e., as one’s tongue touches one’s mouth, teeth, or lips, it feels itself as it touches and feels the mouth, thereby feeling feeling and its own capacity to feel) the oral *Leib*-ness of the tongue’s self-feeling at the same time experiences more than mere *Leib* as it also tastes its selftaste.²⁴ Selftaste is a richer experience of self and apperception than *Leib*. Anything *Leib* can do, selftaste can do better. If the insularity of *Leib* may be replaced by selftaste, then this additional phenomenal and sensual aspect within its experience surmounts its insularity, opening the possibility of a certain shareability (if not, a *transference*) of one’s self. For Derrida, taste of selftaste would be sharable (Justices 701); able to share with the other what heretofore has been unshareable (at the very least through *kissing*). As such, perhaps the insularity of inner *pure expression* may be transgressed by considering its oral aspects, as well. It would entail finding a taste to inner expression; the *point de goûter* of which comes about reading Husserl with Cixous.

Husserl explains that the inner thoughts do not make use of real words but only imagined ones. In solitary mental life “we no longer use real (*wirklich*) words, but only imagined (*vorgestellt*) words.” In one’s “interior monologue” a word is “only represented [...] in the imagination. We content ourselves with imagining the word” (*Speech* 43). The imagined words of Husserl (which are not really words insofar as they are only imagined) bear comparison with Cixous as she imagines and *tries out* words as she writes them.

²⁴ Cf. Brower (“Ethics” 39-41).

It's like this: I grope. I try the word "hesitation." I taste it. No pleasure. No taste. I cross out. I try: "correction." I taste. No. **I taste ten words.** Finally I fall on the word: "essay." **Before even trying I already sense a pretaste [avant-goût] ...** I taste. And, that's it! **Its taste is** strong and fine and **rich in memories** of pleasure. (*Stigmata* 18)

The imagined words of pure expression in Husserl are de-idealized as corporeal tastes and pretastes in the mouth (and from the pen) of Cixous; she, who writes in morsels; *morceaux* (*Love* 56; *L'amour* 81). Imagining words involves her tongue and her body. The taste of words is a taste of writing; "being able to taste [goûter] *all life's riches* [...] for as long as it takes to recover the lost taste of writing [*le goût perdu d'écrire*]" (*Hyperdream* 151; *Hyperrève* 199-200). She *gropes* the world of words with her pentongue; *sa stylangue*. The word has a taste as it is written and even a foretaste before so.²⁵ The ability to taste a word that is *materialized*²⁶ (indicated) in external reality would fit the Husserlian schema. But *prior to writing* and *even before* trying a word, for Cixous there is a "pretaste" that is "rich in memories." Memory involves foretaste; memory remembers with a kind of tasting-again — what Benjamin calls *Wiederschmecken* (*Writings* 413; *Briefe* 849) — by recalling the taste of a word's prior impression. Some words taste better than others. Writing, as such, is *trying*; a kind of *testing*.²⁷ Tastetexts are tastetests; *sampling* (perhaps, in German, more of a *Kosten* than a *Schmecken*).²⁸ "Each taste has its cost" (Cixous, *Portrait* 90).

²⁵ "[S]omething in the word ['macaroon'] has always attracted me, without being able to decide if *the taste of the word* seemed good to me or not." Later, in a description of memory beyond forgetting: "The fantastic word comes back. *I had not tasted it since Algiers*" (Cixous, *So Close* 5, 81; emphasis added).

²⁶ The taste of words comes about only in the experiencing the tongue feeling (or touching) the mouth, teeth, or lips in saying the word (to oneself) or speaking the word (to another). Even when a word is not described as tasted, Cixous gives attention to the capacity of the mouth to *feel* the word. "She slams down *FFFucking*, with the small satisfaction of *feeling the word fuck around her lips* [*sentir le mot foutre entre ses lèvres...*]" (*So Close* 32; emphasis added; *Si Près* 50; emphasis added).

²⁷ Note the proximity of *test* with *taste* in Cixous's placement of "disgusting" [*dégoûtable*] and "detestable" [*détestable*] (*Ànanke* 160).

²⁸ The richness of the German language has two words — *kosten*, along with *schmecken* — for the act of tasting.

*Je relèche pendant que je relis.*²⁹

Je relis comme je relèche

Je relèche et je relis.

On three separate occasions, Freud describes the process by which the ego or the unconscious (it changes over time) experiences and learns of the excitations of the external world which it could ca-thect and the protective mechanism by which it withdraws from them, should they be dangers, and, therefore, candidates for possible anti-cathexes. Following his scandalous hypothesis on the origin of life in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the cortical layer that dies off does so in order to check the nature of external stimuli: “it is enough to take small specimens of the external world, to *sample it* [*zu verkosten*] in small quantities” (*SE*, XVIII 27). Four years later in the morsel on the mystic writing-pad: “It is as though the unconscious stretches out feel-ers [...] towards the external world and hastily withdraws them as soon as they *have sampled* [*verkostet haben*] the excitations coming from it” (*SE*, XIX 231; *Werke* 387-91). This process becomes egoistic for the first time in his essay, “Negation,” in which “the ego periodically sends out small amounts of cathexis into the perceptual system, by means of which *it samples the external stimuli* [*es äußeren Reizen verkostet*]” (*SE*, XIX 238).

In each case, the German word being translated for the verb *to sample* is *verkosten*, whose root, *kosten*, means *to taste*. In perception, the ego or the unconscious spends its life projecting a thousand little tongues into the world in its inexhaustible game of cathexis and protection. More to the point is the way by which Freud uses this explanation of tasting in the “Note on the Mystic Writing-Pad” to clarify the role of writing in memory. So, Freud, himself, seems to obliquely invite us to think writing as a kind of tasting and almost offers us all the tools necessary to think the-mouth-as-mystic-writing-pad. Reality-testing is described by means of feelers that taste the world. The withdrawal of these tasters results in an interruption of the transcription or writing of perception, which Freud likens to breaking the pen’s contact with the writing pad of memory.

²⁹ Cf. Cixous (*L’amour* 15-16); Brower (“Taste” 242-43).

The *Verkosten* of the mystic writing-pad tastes better when re-read alongside a selection from Cixous when dealing with similar issues of memory and forgetting.

If I distrust my memory [...] I am able to supplement and guarantee its working by making a note in writing. In that case the surface upon which the note is preserved, the pocket-book or sheet of paper, is as it were a *materialized portion* of my mnemonic apparatus, which I otherwise carry about with me invisible. I have only to *bear in mind the place where this “memory” has been deposited* and I can then “reproduce” it at any time I like, with the certainty that it will have remained unaltered and so have escaped the possible distortions to which it might have been subjected in my actual memory. (*SE*, XIX 227)

For Freud, memory works like writing, like jotting a note on a post-it. But whereas the invisible notebook in my actual memory can become distorted, the actual note (what Freud calls the “materialized portion”) can remain undistorted as long as one can “bear in mind the place where” the note is. (The paradox would be that in order to recall the written note one must remember where the note is, as if one must also write an additional note to remind oneself that a memory is posted on another note which is located on the cabinet; notes on notes on notes, *ad infinitum*.)

This inherent aporia of writing as memory lurks about in Cixous’s passage on memory, forgetting, and a post-it note unnoticed. She supplements memory not by way of writing, but by saying — by saying to herself, but also saying at a distance. Freud’s notebook is replaced by Cixous’s telephone.

I look at my mother while suffering [*souffrance*] what is only the **foretaste** [*l’avant-goût*] of the suffering [*souffrance*] that awaits me in the kitchen when I go in there later, and when looking at the cabinet **I will not see** on its door the bright pink post-it on which she wrote last night [...]. I’ll see nothing, I’ll not see that there is no post-it. I might even Forget my mother, I say to the Telephone [*dis-je au Téléphone*]. Saying it to you [*Te le dire*] is the only way of saying it to myself [*me le dire*] and **I insist on saying it to myself** [*me le dire*]: it’s the only way to resist Forgetting for as long as possible, the only way to delay it [...] it will be from then on one with me like the Python with the Proustian narrator, and I will spend the rest of my days digesting [*digérer*] what is dearest to me in the world. If at least we knew how to think Forgetting, but it’s impossible. (*So Close* 40-41; *Si Près* 60-61)

The written note — bright and pink as it is — goes unnoticed. Instead of writing a note to oneself, Cixous insists on a saying-to-onself and *the only way* to say-to-onself is to say-to-another; another far away. One telephones oneself as one telephones the other in order to delay forgetting. The saying is framed by two oral phenomena. First is the note on the “foretaste of suffering” — and one should not forget that “suffering” often translates the Greek *pathos* of *tele-pathy* — as well as the later one on digesting. Cixous pits the failing of memory with the python she finds in Proust. Forgetting is the devouring or digesting of memory.³⁰ Remembering is a kind of tasting; the taste of saying (to oneself, the other, or the telephone) that refrains (or at least delays) devouring those memories. The taste of what one says is always a foretaste to suffering the possible forgetting and the cruel life-long battle of the slow devouring, swallowing, or digesting of those very words, once said.

Every text is a tastetext. It would be a thought of the other — a telething — that comes about through reading and writing; whereby an indirect thought of an other that is said but not written can be heard by a self while reading what is directly written; an indirect communication the likes of Kierkegaard. Reading would be to *saying-to-onself* as writing would be to *saying-to-another/to-the-telephone*. The very fleshy role of the tongue discloses how the tele-thing that can arrive through reading/writing — that could be called telepathy — is not merely the transference of a thought, but, inevitably, a transference of tastes; like the ants who are *claimed* to transfer a “memory” in the very tastes that pass from mouth to mouth in the social feeding process of trophallaxis (Provecho & Josens, *Olfactory* 3221-23). The

³⁰ “All my life is a battle between what I forget what I do not forget, what I want to forget, what I shelter [...] what I fight to pull from the **mouth** of death [*la gueule de la mort*], which I tear from its jaws [*mâchoires*].” It is noteworthy that Cixous uses *la gueule*, here — instead of *la bouche*. *La gueule* is a more bestial (perhaps vulgar) word; often translated as “maw,” insinuating a bestial *maw-that-devours* distinct from a *mouth-that-tastes*. The maw devours as it forgets. A mouth tastes as it remembers. Later, in a passage on telepathy and the python, she describes forgetting as *swallowing* and *ingestion*. “Memory continues to tell no one its little stories, forgetting awaits its hour. What is frightening [...] is the patience of the python [...] it beings by mentally **swallowing** [*ingurgiter*] [...]. This virtual **ingestion** [*ingestion virtuelle*] that goes on right up to the last second is perfectly real [*réelle*]” (*So Close* 81-82; emphases added; *Si Près* 113-14; emphasis added).

materialization of speech is not limited to the sound-image or the violence of the alphabetic letter, alone. Distinctions between speech and writing, expression and indication, one's own inner thought and the other's thought, forgetting and memory, incorporeal and corporeal are blurred by the tongue that writes in the mouth; materializes speech with its flicks and licks, simultaneously tasting selftaste and speech, as it says-to-itself what it says-to-the-other.

This would also blur the distinction between life and death. If writing relates to death as speech relates to living-presence, then the sense of taste discloses itself as the phenomenal embodiment of the indissociable double-bind between them, as well as the deferral of death ever haunting the animated speech of living-presence. Selftaste, now understood as both speech-writing and auto-affection, supplement the closing pages of *Speech and Phenomena* in which Derrida indicts the role of the ideality of speech in the history of the metaphysics of presence.

Only a relation to my-death [*ma-mort*] could make the infinite differing of presence appear [...] compared to the ideality of the positive infinite, this relation to my-death becomes an accident of empirical finitude [...]. Since absolute self-presence in con-consciousness is the infinite *vocation* of full presence, the achievement of absolute knowledge [*savoir absolu*] is the end of the infinite, which could only be the unity of the concept, logos, and consciousness in a voice without differance [*une voix sans différence*]. *The history of metaphysics therefore can be expressed as the unfolding of the structure or schema of an absolute will-to-hear-oneself-speak* [*le vouloir-s'entendre-parler absolu*]. This history is closed when this infinite absolute appears to itself as its own death [*sa propre mort*]. *A voice without differance, a voice without writing, is at once absolutely alive and absolutely dead* [*une voix sans écriture est à la fois absolument vive et absolument morte*]. As for what "begins" then — "beyond" absolute knowledge — *unheard-of thoughts* are required [*Pour ce qui "commence" alors, "au-delà du savoir absolu, des pensées inouïes sont réclamées...*] (*Speech* 102; emphasis added; *Voix* 114-15; emphasis added).

In the mouth as the scene of writing, the selftaste of speaking is no longer a "voice without *differance*" at the moment which it is no longer a "voice without writing." As voice writes with the tongue, not

only is the auto-affection of hearing-oneself-speak [*s'entendre-parler*] replaced by a tasting-oneself-speakwrite, but the heretofore “unheard-of thoughts” [*des pensées inouïes*] required — if not demanded — by any possible move “beyond” heard-of thoughts and words always invested with the metaphysics of presence and absolute knowledge are replaced by tasted thoughts and words. One can only taste these unheard thoughts. Like that sense at the back of the throat, evoked by Ponge, here, the sense of taste auto-affects itself (pleasures itself) as it reads that written in the mouth over and against the auto-affection of listening to heard-of thoughts: “*Ce sens qui jouit plus encore quand on lit que quand on écoute*” (Ponge 524). The unheard-of thoughts required will have been the tasted words of speech written in one’s mouth by the tasted self as speakwriter of those spoken words written by one’s *stylange*. The telepathology of everyday life-death is experienced as what Cixous calls the inexhaustible “taste of life’s dying between your teeth, on the tip of your tongue, the taste of death in life” (*Hyperdream* 14). The selftaste of speechwriting is precisely the taste of life in death on the tip of one’s tongue, where the aftertaste of living-presence contaminates (and is contaminated by) the foretaste of death that haunts writing. The metaphysical subject and unified self that has kept itself “absolutely alive and absolutely dead” by way of “a voice without writing” is at last survived by the taste of life-death, by way of a voice that writes with its tongue in and on the mouth as the scene of writing.

As such, one tastes of death because one is *writing*.

As such, one tastes of life because *one is writing*.

Parce qu'on é/crie, il y a un goût de la vie la mort.

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