

The Taste to Come: The Lick of Faith and the Other-Mouths of Messianism

Virgil W. Brower

Abstract

This article exploits a core defect in the phenomenology of sensation and self. Although phenomenology has made great strides in redeeming the body from cognitive solipisisms that often follow short-sighted readings of Descartes and Kant, it has not grappled with the specific kind of self-reflexivity that emerges in the sense of taste with the thoroughness it deserves. This path is illuminated by the works of Martin Luther, Jean-Luc Marion, and Jacques Derrida as they attempt to think through the specific phenomena accessible through the lips, tongue, and mouth. Their attempts are, in turn, supplemented with detours through Walter Benjamin, Hélène Cixous, and Friedrich Nietzsche. The paper draws attention to the German distinction between *Geschmack* and *Kosten* as well as the role taste may play in relation to faith, the call to love, justice, and messianism. The messiah of love and justice will have been that one who proclaims: *taste the flesh*.

Messe, ça n'est pas kasher... / Il s'agit d'un léchage. [Mass is not kosher... / It is a kind of licking.]

—Cixous 2009, 12; 2006, 22-3

...gets “good taste” mixed up with “taste good,”...

—Pynchon 2009, 119

Und schmeck ich auch, wie ein Holzapfel, dir zuweilen, so keltre mich so lange, bis ich trinkbar bin. [And should I taste at times like a crabapple to you, press me for as long as it takes until I am drinkable.]

—Hölderlin 1969, 319

A messy etymology: the “mess-” that derives from the Greek μεσσίας has distinctly different etymological roots from the “mess” that derives from the Anglo-Norman *messe* and the Old French *mes* meaning a meal or a portion of food. Yet, by all indications, the “miss” of any messianic miss-ion comes from the past participle of the Indo-European *mittere*, from which also derives the “mess” eaten in a mess hall or with a mess kit. The Latin *missio* sends the son or the spirit sends as one sends *the course of a meal* (*messo* in Italian) to the mess table. The message of an evangelical mission proclaims the sending of a promise or a messiah in the way one sends for mess from the dining room. A messman (be it a cook, chef, waitress, or waiter) sends or delivers the mess as a missionary sends or delivers the promise of the messiah. Messianism delivers the promise as the messman serves up food. *Je vous fais cette promesse: I’m not messing with you, but...the messiah will have messed with us.*

There are three steps down the ladder of writing this essay on taste and messianism; destined—*credo!*—to flirt with the *costs* of a certain kind of discipleship; three steps down before it finds its footing in Luther. My “messmates” towards whom I lunge “in turn” (Joyce 1940, 14): the first comes from the closing pages of Jacques Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*, the second, from a divergent note on Proust in a letter from Walter Benjamin to Theodor Adorno, and third, in a recent text from the great writer of the ladder-of-writing, herself, Hélène Cixous. These come to bloom into oblique invitations to reread Luther as he teaches us to relick the other. In another tongue (or better, *with another tongue*) ...*ici et maintenant, je relis Luther juste au moment où il m’enseigne comment relecher l’autre*. And I relish the idea that I *relèche* as I *relis*. Once it gets its footing in Luther, the essay attempts three steps back up, through the gospel of Friedrich Nietzsche, a later essay by Jacques Derrida called “Justices,” and the recent erotic phenomenology of Jean-Luc Marion. Only then does it jump back into Luther to truly reread him in a different way; if not against himself.

Fore starters: In his wrestling with messianism, Jacques Derrida distinguishes it from a certain kind of calculation. It is the incalculable dimensions of messianism that reckon for its despairing, uncanny, and curious aspects.

One may deem **strange, strangely familiar** and inhospitable at the same time (*unheimlich*, uncanny), this figure of absolute hospitality whose promise one would choose to entrust to an experience that is so impossible, so unsure in its indigence, to a quasi-“messianism”...a despairing “messianism.” But without this latter despair and if one could **count** on what is coming, **hope** would be but **the calculation of a program**. One would have the prospect but one would no longer wait for anything or anyone. **Law without justice**... Some, and I do not exclude myself, will find that **this despairing “messianism” has a curious taste, a taste of death**. It is true that **this taste is above all a taste, a foretaste**, and in essence it is curious (Derrida 1994, 212 ; emphasis added).

On pourra juger **étrange, étrangement familière** et inhospitalière à la fois (*unheimlich, uncanny*) cette figure de l'hospitalité absolue dont on voudrait confier la promesse à une expérience aussi impossible, aussi peu assurée dans son indigence, à un quasi-« messianisme »...un « messianisme » désespérant. Mais sans ce désespoir-là, et si l'on pouvait **compter** sur ce qui vient, **l'espérance** ne serait que **le calcul d'un programme**. On aurait la prospective mais on n'attendrait plus rien ni personne. **Le droit sans la justice... Ce « messianisme » qui désespère**, certains, dont je ne m'exclus pas, **lui trouveront peut-être un goût curieux, parfois un goût de mort**. Il est vrai que **ce goût est avant tout un goût, un avant-goût**, et par essence il est curieux (Derrida 1993, 267-68; emphasis added).

There is prior taste; a taste before. This foretaste—*avant-goût*—of the taste to come has the hint of justice beyond law; beyond counting, and calculation. The security of the countable and the calculable renders law without justice/*le droit sans la justice*. But one tastes an infelicity—an element of otherness or alteration—within this curious and desperate messianism. It cannot be counted on or calculated. It's on the tip of our tongues but we just can't place it. The strange, uncanny, and curious taste-of-justice is perhaps as close as one can get to justice. One can never achieve justice—swallow it or ingest it—but can ever only taste the foretaste of it; yet it has a tinge of the taste of death. The taste prior to the taste to come relates to justice and hope (perhaps, faith). The taste of messianism—which *smacks* of death—is not the aftertaste nor the last taste but a foretaste. The "taste of death" alludes—or can allude, at least—to a particular messianic tradition that promises to elude that very taste. A kind of "messiah" is said to say that "some will not taste of death [γεωσονται θανάτου]"¹ before the coming kingdom, *basileia*—eschaton—if not the coming of god. In the very words of the gospels, taste plays a role in the revelation of the messiah.

The taste that most taste or will taste will not be tasted by all. Some [τινες], *not* all; the post-Pauline gospel of taste, here, makes humble particular and conditional claims rather than sweeping unconditional and universal ones. *O*, the \exists of it *all*: some shall not taste death—some *S* is not *P*—the Open mouth of *O* propositions. *O*, how self bites its tongue with particular negations. The taste of messianism is a negative non-universalist claim; harrowing; only to be heard, proclaimed, or tasted with fear and trembling; with a tinge (or tang) of despair. Yet there may be hope (*Glaube* or *l'espérance*)—not necessarily for *all* and *everyone*—but for "anyone" or "whoever" [τις] in the gospel of John's version of the γεωσονται θανάτου (John 8:52). Or, better, the *any*/τις of John—which is proclaimed to the Jews!—illuminates, possibly, the impossible hospitality of the some/τινες found in the rest of the gospels. No wonder Luther's most astute writings on taste come from his sermons on the gospel of John (even if he seems to

1. Matt 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27.

repress to whom it is proclaimed). Messianic taste tries to show us a *some* open to *all*; which would always have to be an understanding of *life* (living taste) that is never naively nor securely closed off from death but, rather, always tasting it; being towards it.

When Derrida writes that “*this taste* [*ce goût*] is above all a *taste* [*un goût*],” the link between “this taste” and “a taste” may be a Francophonic attempt to say something that can perhaps be best said in German, which has two words for taste, *Geschmack* (or *Schmecken*) and *Kosten*. *Ce goût* can be to *Geschmack* as *un goût* (and maybe *un avant-goût*) can be to *Kosten*.² This *Geschmack* is above all a *Kosten*. This taste is but a test. This taste *just wants a taste*, or perhaps a lick. The foretaste and the differing tastes that follow would seem a kind of *itasterability*; the enigma of repetition caught licking something other than itself.

A curious kind of *foretasting* to be distinguished from “tasting again” is perhaps on Walter Benjamin’s mind in his letter to Theodor Adorno on May 7, 1940 as he writes on the role of taste in Proust. Whereas a foretaste/first taste would have to be conscious, the aftertaste that becomes familiar between the *first-taste* and the *tasting-again* may be unconscious; a *mémoire involuntaire*. This plays well with Derrida’s discussion of the *unheimlich* or “strangely familiar” nature of the foretaste of messianism; something known but not known; *Bekannt* but *Unbekannt*; tasted but somehow—curiously—not tasted; an un-kanny un-tasty. Benjamin’s letter also discloses an issue of translation that may yield insight to the two different German words translated as “taste” (an issue on the tips of our tongues as we re-read Luther, below). Benjamin writes:

The childhood experience of **the taste** [*des Geschmacks*] of the madeleine, which returns involuntarily to Proust’s memory one day, was indeed unconscious [*unbewußt*]. But his first bite [*erste Bissen*] of the madeleine would not have been. (**Tasting is a conscious act.**) [*Kosten ist ein Bewußtseinakt.*] Yet this act [of tasting; *das Schmecken*] no doubt does become unconscious [*unbewußt*] to the extent that a taste [*der Geschmack*] becomes more familiar [*vertrauter*]. The “tasting again” [*Wiederschmecken*] by the grown man is, of course, conscious [naturally: *natürlich, bewußt*] (Benjamin 2003, 413; 1966, 849; emphasis added).

Das Schmecken becomes *unbewußt* as *Geschmack* becomes *vertrauter*! Tasting becomes unconscious as taste becomes familiar. The *trauter* of *vertrauter* is more about *trust* than familiarity. The taste becomes trusted; *vertraut*. A *trust* is unconscious; a trust that is not quite—or not yet—the *Glaube* of Luther or *l’espérance* of Derrida. It is unconscious as one continually tastes after the tasting of a “first bite.” But it is a specific kind of tasting that Benjamin gives to consciousness. It is *Kosten*—not

2. Although Susanne Lüdemann does not do so in her German translation. “Es ist wahr, daß **dieser Geschmack** vor allem **ein Geschmack** ist, ein **Vorgeschmack**” (Derrida 1996a, 265; emphasis added).

Schmecken—that is a conscious act. *Kosten* is perhaps better understood as taste-test; a sampling; a *quick lick* by which the tasted object (or other) remains. The tasted is not consumed, devoured, ingested, or eaten but merely tested. One swiftly checks the cost with one's tongue but refuses the consumerism of consumption with pursed lips.

Benjamin's *Wiederschmecken* ("tasting-again") evokes the writing of Hélène Cixous as she invites us to re-read. There is a tasting-again to reading-again and this, for Cixous, is a springboard to revisiting Luther (or, at the very least, Luther's translation of the Bible). She sends us a passage of tongues and licks:

Tout d'un coup, **je relis** toutes les bibles, je vais, je viens, je cherche, d'une **langue** à l'autre **je relis** de bible en bible, **ma Luther**, ta King James les petites vieilles les grandes jeunes, **je relèche... Ta langue**, je reviens toujours à elle, elle est bien gardée, j'essaie d'écarter tes lèvres avec **ma langue** ou bien c'est toi sur mes lèvres... (Cixous 2005, 15-16; emphasis added).

All of a sudden **I reread** all the Bibles, I go, I come, I search, from one **language** to another **I read** from Bible to Bible, **my Luther**, your King James to the old little ones, the young big ones, **I pass my tongue over them again... Your language**—I always come back to it—is well guarded, I try to part your lips with **my tongue** or else it's you on my lips... (Cixous 2008, 6; emphasis added).

Twice one reads *relis* in the French and *langue*, three times. As I reread HC in her-tongue (if indeed French is that, for her) I'm drawn into her game of mine and yours; between the your/ta King James and your/ta language and the my/ma Luther and the my tongue/ma langue. After rereading Luther, one may feel that *my-tongue* is *my-Luther*. Just as there is a difference between *taste* and *a taste* for Derrida, there is a difference between *a tongue* and *my-tongue*. No *tongue* can be a *my-tongue* without re-reading Luther. Any tongue can be part of a mouth that devours and *schmeckt*, but only a *my-tongue* can taste or *kostet*. There is certainly a profound insight in Peggy Kamuf's decision to translate the *ma langue* as *my tongue* rather than *my language*, as she does with the other two uses of *langue* in this passage.

It is for this reason, perhaps, that Kamuf's poetic translation—which is *not done justice, here, by simply citing a few lines!*—de-emphasizes the second *re-* in HC's second *relis*. She does not write *je lis de bible en bible*, but *je relis de bible en bible*. Translation is rereading and one must reread the *relis* to discover the almost lost relic of the relick. Kamuf perhaps allows herself the liberty of deemphasizing the *re-* of HC's *re-relis-ing* because of the flourish soon to follow in which Kamuf gives us an *again*—one that plays *Wieder* to Benjamin's *Schmecken*—in her translation of *relèche* as "I pass my tongue over them *again*." Mentioning the *tongue* in this translation of *relèche* helps keep the spirit of the passage near to hand since Kamuf holds her *tongue* in her translation of the first two uses of *langue* in this passage.

However, the writing, through its repetition of *relis*, seems to be flashing³ and pointing to the phonemes of *relèche* which means *to relick*.⁴ I relick as I reread.⁵ The *langue* is more than language. The *ma langue* is a tongue accompanied by an unconscious and *Wiederschmecken*. The *langue* that rereads does so only insofar as it can lick; only insofar as it goes beyond merely speaking and reading.

As such, the read/lick (again)—*relis/relèche*—of Cixous seems more efficacious than the pairings “to eat/to speak [*manger/parler*],” “to eat or to speak, to feed or to be presented [*manger ou parler, se nourrir ou être présenté*],” or “between *to eat* and *to speak* [*entre manger et parler*]” in Gilles Deleuze (1990, 24, 65, 85; 1969, 37, 82, 104); resisting the urge to devour and digest⁶ that so often accompanies the reduction of *langue* to speech or *parole*. In licking as it reads instead of eating when it speaks, the scope of *relis/relèche* moves beyond the mere edibility of denotable things since, for Deleuze, the “denotable thing is essentially something which is (or may be) eaten [*ce qui se mange ou peut se manger*]” (1990, 26; 1969, 39). *Relis/relèche* is less prone to diminishing the other to thinghood; to mere edibility on the level of *fressen*. Perhaps, the orality and licks of Cixous help avoid the danger of thingification which is an important concern for Jean-Luc Marion as he studies erotic phenomenality, discussed below.

As such, rereading—i.e., reading as carefully as one can—works on the level of the lick and taste against a bestial devouring that merely ingests and feeds. Alongside the *relèche* of *relis* in Cixous, it is noteworthy that Heidegger describes superficial reading [*Angelesenen*] as something upon which *to feed*. “Gossiping...feeds on [*speist*] superficial reading” (Heidegger 1963, 169; 1996, 158).⁷ If there is a concern on the part of deconstruction to attempt to savor (or, attempt *savoir*)⁸ the taste of messianism, the roots of that deconstructive project do not end with Heidegger. As we reread our

3. Strobe like: see Gilles Deleuze on Cixous (2003, 230).

4. When there is no phonemic play—no enthymeme on which one wants to step, but can’t—in a three-step writing; when there is no *silent relishing* to be had between *relis* and *relèche*, then Cixous leaves licking outside, as she does while writing “*I reread it*” in the past tense, “*je l’ai relu*” several chapters later (2005, 83). When an auxiliary verb, a direct object pronoun, and a hard “u” sound disrupt the flow of the phonemes, there is no *lecher* to be heard or read.

5. Cixous thinks reading and licking later in the chapter. This, again, shows that one cannot grasp the spirit of Kamuf’s translation by reading a few lines but only by engaging and rereading the book as a whole. HC writes, “*je venais de lire des poems... Je les avais léchés de la tête aux pieds*” (2005, 23). Kamuf: “I had just **read** the poems... I had **licked** them from head to toe” (2008, 12; emphasis added).

6. Deleuze suggests pairing *to speak* with *to shit*; “*chier/parler*” (1990, 85; 1969, 104).

7. Cf. Luther’s discussion of *natural feeding* and his use of *speisen*, below.

8. To know and to taste are closely related in French. The French word for knowledge—*savoir*—and the English words *savor* and *savory* all derive from the Latin *sapere* which means both to taste and to be wise.

Bibles "let us never forget the...Lutheran memory of Heideggerian deconstruction (*Destruktion* was first *destructio* by Luther, anxious to reactivate the originary sense of the Gospels by deconstructing theological sediments)" (Derrida 2005b, 60). Beyond Heidegger, it is Martin Luther who perhaps begins a certain deconstructive legacy of reading texts; in this case the gospels. In his later years, Derrida confesses: "there are literally Lutheran origins in this Heideggerian deconstruction (*Destuktion*) that I have I spent my life questioning" (Derrida 2004, 165). All the more reason, *je relis ma Luther*.

In Luther's treatment of the gospel of John, the "eatability" of the messiah is discussed at length. He considers the messiah as mess, with which he agrees to some extent but only after a certain revaluation or transvaluation of food; a transconsumption of consuming, if not a transsubstantiation of transubstantiation.⁹ For Luther, "to eat" does not mean introjection, to devour, to masticate, or to ingest in order to digest. Beyond the eating and speaking of Deleuze, Luther interprets *eating* as *believing* and finds a rift between a certain "taste" and "words spoken." For Luther, to eat is faith, itself. But this can be understood only after stripping the body of Christ from stereotypical associations with the messy meat of a meal. This is an attack on the institutionalized eucharist of the Catholic Church. He repeatedly states that his exegesis has nothing to do with the sacrament. There is an indigestible element to messianism. After Luther, the pro-mise is anti-mess:

But we must advance beyond the position of beginners or novices, who never reach the point where **they taste and experience** that God is a Man...nor do they ever find out [*erkennen nicht*] what God really is, or what a great comfort is available to them, **or how this tastes** [*auch wie es schmeckte*]. Those are false Christians. They hear [*horen*] and learn much, yet they never come to a knowledge of the truth [*erkenntnis der warheit*]. They do learn to speak the words [*die wort reden*], as a parrot or parakeet [*Papagei oder Sittich*] repeats words spoken by people [*Menschen wort*]. But their heart does not feel them; they remain unchanged and **do not taste and perceive** [*sie schmeecten und fühlen nicht*] how faithful and true God is [*warhasstigk Gott sei*] (Luther 1959, 399-400; 1907, 651-52; emphasis added).

The distinction between different kinds of eating is sometimes lost on the English reader of *Luther's Works*. The English Concordia edition of the sermons on John seems to draw from the two different drafts of them in the German Weimar edition to give one comprehensive translation. In the first version one finds: "But it is better for us *to eat* our God than for the devil *to eat us*" (Luther 1959, 115). The German reads: "*Aber es ist besser,*

9. For there will always be a "contransmagnificandjewbangtantiarity" between a "chewer of corpses" and a "toothless...superman," as there is in opening section of *Ulysses* (Joyce 1940, 39, 12, 51).

*das wir unsern herrgott **essen**, den das uns der teuffell **esse**.*" Here, Luther uses only one word—*essen*; to eat—to describe both ways of eating. However, in the revision Luther uses two different German words to distinguish "our" eating from the devil's. "*Aber es ist besser, das wir unsern Herr Gott **essen**, denn das uns der Teufel **fresse***" (Luther 1907, 177). The final version makes a distinction between *fressen*¹⁰ and *essen*;¹¹ the former more akin to animalistic devouring (or, perhaps, feeding) than eating. Yet, perhaps, devouring is not so much animalistic as it is bestial, since "the beast is not exactly the animal" (Derrida 2009, 1).

But even on the level of *essen* there are two types of eating. There is an eating that renders one *not dying* and an elevated eating that leads to *living* or *remaining alive*. For Luther, not dying ≠ living. Life does something more than not die.¹² In his response to John 6:49,¹³ he develops an understanding of eating that simply keeps one from dying until the time of inescapable death; it only "prolonged this temporal life but a little." Here, Luther begins his exercise of over-determining *eating* with *faith* [*essen* with *Glaube*] as he paraphrases critics of this claim made by Jesus in John 6:49. They mock Jesus' words: how dare he "claim that he who believes [*glaubt / glaubet*] in Him will not die [*nicht sterben*], and that he who eats [*isset*] His bread will live forever [*leben ewig*]." Luther proceeds to criticize the manna of the Hebrew Bible as still natural.

The heavenly bread was as perishable as any other food... Wonderful bread though it was, it was still natural food [*natürlich brodt / natürlich Speise und Brot*]. If our God saw fit to convert stones into bread (Matt. 4:3), it would still be bread. Or if He gives water from a rock (Ex. 17:6), it is still natural water. Or if He makes wine out of water...it is still natural wine and retains the properties of wine. Thus this manna was also flour from heaven, and this bread merely preserved and nourished the body [*nur den leib erhielt und erneeret*]. It only fed [*speisete nur*], but it

10. Luther also makes use of *fressen* in his translation of Gal 5:15. The verse reads, "*So ir euch aber unterander **beisset und fresset** / So sheet zu / das ir nicht unterander **verzeret** werdet / If, however, you **bite** and **devour** one another, take care that you are not **destroyed/consumed** by one another"* (Luther 1974, 2352; emphasis added). This comment on biting and devouring has to do with ways of love, since Paul uses it immediately to follow his supposed reiteration of "Love your neighbor as yourself." It is perhaps the case that Luther's project to reevaluate the actions of the mouth as something other than destructive consumption is indicative of his "reinterpretation of the letters of Saint Paul" which "forms the cornerstone of Reformation theology" (Taylor 2007, 44, 48; q.v., 65-66).

11. It is worth noting Hegel's ironic non-distinction of both *fressen* and *essen* in regards to thinking, as discussed in Clarke (2004, 126).

12. Though Luther does not make the following distinction, it is perhaps not unhelpful to think of the level of *not dying* as *fressen* and devouring and the level of *living* as that of *essen*. We will perhaps see that this may have something to do with the possibility that bestial *fressen* does not appreciate the taste of the mess whereas *essen* takes part in the phenomenon of taste.

13. "Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and they died."

produced no greater effect than other natural bread...he who eats [*isset*] of it will not die [*nicht sterben*] (Luther 1959, 114; 1907, 175).

To eat naturally or to eat the merely natural is to feed like a beast. To feed [*speisen*; from *speise*: food] is merely [*nur*] to nourish [*ernähren*]. Perhaps, after Luther's revised description of the devil's devouring, *feeding* can be understood on the level of *fressen* rather than *essen*, (though he insists, here, on using *essen*—*isset*—in both drafts). On the other side of the eating of manna is the eating of Christ; which Luther insists has *nothing whatsoever* to do with sacrament or eucharist, given his resistance to Catholicism.¹⁴ "All your miracles, your manna, your **Law [Gesetz]**, and your ceremonies will not help you.' The power to make alive [*lebendig machen*] and to abolish death was not given to Moses...but only to the Person who is called Christ... He who eats [*isset*] of this [Christ] will **remain** alive [*lebendig bleiben*]" (Luther 1959, 114; 1907, 176; emphasis added).

One hears a *Leib* in the German that *remains* [*bleibt*] beyond the biological/natural *Leib* that only feeds. The *Leib* of the *bleiben* is beyond the *Körper* of the feed. The latter is meat; merely a *flesh* that can only devour. A "flesh" merely feeds, whereas what will come to be called "my flesh" or "*Mein fleisch*" is for more than feeding. I shall argue (after Nietzsche and Derrida) that it tastes. Note that mere feeding is placed alongside the law. It is *the law* that seems to be commanding one to feed only; what Derrida calls *le droit sans la justice* and fits well—after Luther's *wolf* goes across our stage (below)—into what Derrida calls "lyconomy" [the law (*nomos*) of the wolf] (2009, 96). Opposed to the bread from heaven (manna) that merely helps the feeder *not die* is Christ considered as "the true bread of heaven / *das recht Brot vom Himel*" (Luther 1959, 114; 1907, 176). But Luther does not use the word "true"—*wahr*; a word he makes use of often—to describe this bread, but rather *recht*; right, or perhaps even *just* [*gerecht*], as *recht* is part of the German word for justice: *Gerechtigkeit*. There is a justice beyond the law—(*ge*)*recht* beyond the *Gesetz*—in regards to ways of eating; justice as fareness. The law feeds, consumes, and devours whereas justice does something else. (We shall see that Luther distinguishes just-eating from legal-feeding by ascribing *taste* to the former.)

In this way, a justice (to come) makes way for life [the *Leben* of *lebendig*] over and against the law that can only lead to death; though life (and death) is "prolonged a little" by way of the law in *not dying* (which is different than *living*). The curious taste of messianism has a despairing foretaste which is the taste of death; the taste of dead plants and dead animals that keep one from merely not dying. But let it be spoke: this is not the *best taste*. A *Wiederschmecken* is ever open to a justice that tastes something beyond the law the feeds.

14. Cf. Taylor 2007, 71.

Luther then tries to explain the difference between the two ways of eating by giving one the status of faith:

Therefore the Jews begin to murmur and ask: "How can one eat Your flesh? To understand this we must realize that Christ is speaking of *spiritual flesh* and of *spiritual eating*. *It is faith which eats Him*. Christ interprets Himself when He says: "He who believes in me has eternal life; such a *one eats properly*, for I am the bread of life." *It is by faith that He is eaten; faith eats and believes in Christ*. The soul and faith do not have a mouth, teeth, throat, and stomach, as the body has; they have **a different kind of mouth**... The soul does not eat like the body. It has its mind, its will, its mood, understanding, desire, or reason... (Luther 1957, 116; emphasis added).

There is much to say about this passage.¹⁵ *Fressen*, merely to eat [*nur essen*], or feeding can now be opposed to what Luther calls spiritual eating; *geistlichen essen*—*Geist*-like eating—a *Geist* with an other-mouth¹⁶ that eats otherwise than merely-eating/*nur-essen*. Christ's response to the question, given as the second quotation, is longer in the translation than it is in Luther's text. Luther only attributes "He who believes in me has eternal life" to Christ: "*da er spricht: 'wer da gleubet an mich, der hat das ewige leben.'*" The two phrases that follow—such a one eats properly, for I am the bread of life—are not given in quotes. This "one" in "one eats properly" is the translator's grappling with Luther's word *derselbige*. *Derselbe* means "identical" or "same" and contains within it the German word for self: *Selbst*. So this "one" in "one eats properly" is perhaps a kind of *oneself*; the selfsame; a self that is in some way same only with itself is what will eat "properly." But this alleged propriety, once again, is a matter of justice (or right; *recht*) rather than the proper or *eigen*. Luther's phrase reads: "*derselbige isset recht.*" It is only a certain understanding of a *self* that can do justice to eating and can attempt to avoid the injustice that might be associated with *fressen*. And, the sameness of the *derselbige* is not so simple once one reads of the *otherness* of its mouth [*ander maul*].

That which transforms a feeding/devouring mouth into an *ander maul* is nothing other than faith. Transformation may be the wrong word. Perhaps it is more a simultaneity; a kind of (ontic) maw capable always of feeding

15. It is worth noting, at least, that Luther does not mention "the Jews" in the opening sentence, but simply a "they/*sie*." This is not to say that he does not have Jews in mind. He writes (in only one of the versions): "*Daher erhect sich den ein Murren, das sie fragen.*" Any detractors—including Greeks, goys, or gentiles—therefore raise a murmur and ask how one can eat Christ's flesh.

16. Such spirit with a mouth that eats—as other as it may be from the mouth of a flesh—might be considered less a *Geist* than a *Gespenst* or specter, since it is the *Gespenst* that always evokes a kind of corporeality; "a paradoxical *incorporation*" or "a return to the body." On this distinction, see Derrida (1994, 156-58). The *other mouth* [*ander maul*] of Luther is perhaps on the way to embodying a paradoxical incorporation rather than an incorporeal Platonic soul that one—even Luther himself, at times—may associate with the German *Seele*.

yet always already bears the supplement or trace of the incursion of otherness from which emerges a kind of (ontological) other-mouth. Openness to this *andere* is faith, itself. *Faith eats*. Faith is the eater; “*der Glaub ist des Esser, der isset und gleubet an Christum.*” This paradoxical self-mouth on the way to otherness eats-as-it-has-faith and has faith only insofar as it eats in this other way. Spiritual eating doesn’t merely eat. (It will be more about tasting than eating.) Faith will always have been in touch with the tongue. If one finds Luther’s certain christocentrism distasteful here, then it is worth anticipating that the other mouth eats and has faith “in Christ” because, in the realm of this discussion, *Christ is the one who says “my flesh”* and reformulates it in a way that allows Luther to understand the *ander maul*. It is Christ’s proclamation of “my flesh” that illuminates the role of taste in faith and the other-mouth.

Luther describes the other-mouth (or, othered-mouth) as the mouth of a soul [*Seele*] that eats, but does not eat as the body eats. “*Die Seele aber und der Galube haben nicht ein maul...sondern haben **ein ander maul...** isset auch **anders** den der leib*” (Luther 1907, 178; emphasis added). There is an other other. The *Seele* and faith have no mouth but have **an other-mouth** and eat **other** than the body. They do not simply eat, consume, nor feed upon the matter or meat of the other, but encounter the other as more than mere body. *The point is not that the other has no body*. By way of the other-mouth-of-faith, the other is no longer come upon as a thing, object, or matter as any and all physical bodies in space on a phenomenal level perhaps comparable to what Heidegger might call ontic being or what Derrida might call *presence*. The other mouth [*ein ander maul*]*—it is not so much about difference as otherness [andere]**—is a mouth otherwise; a mouth on the way to the other. It has an impressive list of attributes. The other mouth functions on the level of sense [sinn], will [willen], mood [mut], understanding [verstand], desire [lust], and reason [vernunft]. The inclusion of desire/lust (and perhaps sense/sinn), alongside that of the other-mouth, makes it impossible to distort this discussion into that of an incorporeal soul or an all too Platonic other-worldliness devoid of bodies. The other-mouth is not divorced from desire—if not lust—nor sensuality.*

This revaluation is not only about the move from merely-eating into spiritual-eating—*nur essen* into *geistlichen essen*—but also of mere-enjoyment into “*Geistliche niessung*” (Luther 1907, 178). The German verb, *genießen*, when applied to food often means “to consume” but its broader meaning is “to enjoy.” The other-mouth (that does something other than eat and consume) enjoys or relishes in a new way. “The word ‘eat’ need not be confined to the idea of eating with one’s mouth / *Man kan je noch etwas anders vom Essen redder den, das man mit dem maul allein isset*” (Luther 1959, 116; 1907, 179).

How can one say “to eat” other [*anders*] than that one can alone [*allein*] eat—can only eat—with the mouth [*mit dem maul*]? How can one use the

mouth for something-other-than eating [*etwas anders vom Essen*]? What can the faithful do with-the-mouth other than eating, alone? Luther: "*was ist dein dasselbig essen?*" His answer is an altered recitation of the response Jesus gives to the same question. "Christ says: 'It is I. I am the food / *antwort er: Ich bins, ich bin die Speise.*"¹⁷ When Christ says "I am" he says "I am dinner [*Speise*]."

The pre-cogito of Luther: *Ich bin...die Speise*. The "I am" is "I am for the other-mouth." This new I—this other-I—is experienced only by the right [*recht*] tongues. Here, Luther evokes the overall project of this essay. A radical reformulation of the "I am / *Ich bin*" has something to do with the I's relation to other-mouths in which one can call oneself *Speise* or food intended for *geistlich essen*. This other-I is what Jesus calls "my flesh." It is a corporeal "self" to be shared with other-mouths. The *Ich* and *Ich bin* of Luther are ever on their way to the "*schmeck ich*" ["I taste"] and "*ich trinkbar bin*" [I am drinkable] of Hyperion (Hölderlin 1969, 319; 2008, 42).

Luther does his worst as he gets to the meat of the matter. *Es geht um die Wurst*. In a similar way to the distinctions he makes between *fressen* and *essen*, *nur essen* and *geistlich essen*, Luther distinguishes *my flesh* from *mere flesh*. We must incline our hearts to "distinguish between the word 'flesh' and the words 'My flesh.'" In the earlier draft, Luther isn't concerned so much with these fleashes as words.¹⁸ Rather, we must simply "*mache einen unterschied zwischen Fleische undt meinem fleische.*" We must make a distinction between flesh and my flesh. He draws the distinction between flesh and my-flesh in two ways. The first is alongside the difference between *fressen* and *essen*. Flesh is mere meat meant for *fressen*. There is no personhood or *identity* to flesh considered as meat to be devoured. Mere flesh remains in the sphere of thinghood or objecthood. Mere flesh is "roast pork [*Schweinen braten*]." Flesh is something "purchased in a butcher shop or is **devoured** by wolves or dogs [*wie es die Wolffe oder Hunde fressen*]." Flesh is the level on which a wolf can "**devour** an old man, and a sow a child." "*Ein Wolff kan einen alten Man fressen oder ein Saw ein Kind fressen*" (Luther 1953, 119; 1907, 183; emphasis added). *We must not forget* that Luther "puts on stage one of those wolves" to be added to the "genelycology"—the genealogy of wolves—so persistent in Derrida's later works (Derrida 2009, 7, 64, 86, 96,

17. It is noteworthy that Luther, in his translation of John 6:51, does not use the word *Speise* but *Brot*—bread—which is a more faithful translation of the Greek *artos* [αρτος]: "*Ich bin das lebendige Brot.*" He will, however, use *Speise* in John 6:55 ("for my flesh is true food") which he seems to be anticipating, here, in his commentary on v. 51. Once again he uses *rechte* [right or just] instead of *wahr* for the Greek *alethes* [αληθης]: "*Denn mein Fleish ist die recte Speise*" (Luther 1974, 1251-52).

18. The later draft considers "my flesh" as words: "*mache einen unterschied zwischen fleisch und dem wort 'Meinem Fleisch.'*" The point is not simply wordplay, but a play between fleashes; again, between the word *je lis* and the flesh *je lèche*.

passim; q.v. 2005c, 69). (Nor, before this *devouring* wolf stealthily flees our purview, should we overlook that the relation Luther finds between *fressen* and the law is also a relation to a certain kind of *sovereignty*.)¹⁹

My-flesh is found on the level of a higher—*geistlich*—*essen*:

But when Christ says "My flesh," I take notice [*da habe achtung drauff*] of the identity of the speaker [*wer der sei*]. I ask: To whom does the little word "My" [*wortlein 'mein*] pertain? Then these words will denote **more [mehr] than mere flesh**... By virtue of the word "My" it is invested with greater strength [*mehr krafft*] than plain flesh [*schlecht fleisch*] and blood. It is "My flesh." [*Es ist Mein fleisch.*] You must take note of him who speaks these words. Then it will not be a sort of flesh from which red sausages [*rote Wurste*] are made.

My-flesh is more than mere flesh. It has more strength [*Kraft*] than *schlecht fleisch*. The German *schlecht* says more than "plain." It insinuates bad or spoiled. It is meat gone bad; spoiled food. There is always an element of death and decay to *schlecht fleisch*, but not so with *Mein fleisch*. This is not to say that the *Mein fleisch* is an idyllic biology or a life untouched by or beyond death. Luther will describe the my-flesh as both living and dead; similar to what Derrida calls "*life/death* [*la-vie-la-mort*]" (Derrida 1985, 4; 1982, 15; 2003, 173; 2005c, 123)—an early version of what he will come to call *autoimmunity*—a *bios* or *zoe* always invested with or haunted by the otherness of *thanatos* or *nekron*. Thus is the Lutheran legacy of deconstruction of which Derrida speaks. *Luther's* *Mein fleisch embodies autoimmunity, itself*. "It is a **live and yet a dead** flesh." "*Es ist ein lebendig fleisch undt tod fleisch*" (Luther 1959, 123; 1907, 190). Meat and *schlecht fleisch*, on the level of *fressen*, is merely the taste of death but the *Mein fleisch*, on the level of *geistlich essen*, confronts the other-mouth with an other-taste [*ein andern schmeckte*] of the ceaseless clashing of life-death, inseparable from one another. One might call the latter *the taste of resurrection*; life always tasting-again the foretaste of death as much as an aftertaste of death ever tasted-again in one's living taste.²⁰ This has everything to do with that "taste" of which Jesus is said to

19. "Might sovereignty be devouring? Might its force, its power, its greatest force, its absolute potency be, in essence and always in the last instance, a power of devourment (mouth, teeth, tongue, violent rush to bite, engulf, swallow the other, to take the other into oneself too, to kill it or mourn it)?" (Derrida 2009, 23). [I must say that the "tongue" seems a bit out of place in this ominous list and it should not go without saying why Derrida includes it.]

20. Cf. Cixous's response to Derrida's mention of "deathly taste / *goût de mort*" in *Resistances* (Derrida 1996b, 39; 1998, 24): "—The taste of death remains. Unfinished. Unfamished. The endless attracts you. As long as there is taste there is life. / —Life has a taste of death. The taste of the death of life" (Cixous 2007, 124). Elsewhere, in a text published in French the same year, she writes, "to have the taste of life's dying between your teeth, on the tip of your tongue, the taste of death in life" (Cixous 2009, 14).

speak in Matt 16:28, Mark 9:1, Luke 9:27, or John 8:52; a curious—uncanny—taste, indeed.

The second way he distinguishes these two fleshs is by emphasizing the little word *my*, which draws one's attention to the being of the person who speaks it. It is no longer just another physical body in the world. Luther's German does not mention the "identity of the speaker." Rather when one hears "*my flesh*" one's attention [*Achtung*] is compelled to notice the being of the other: **wer der sei**—*who he is*—that says "my." The "my-flesh" confronts us with the being [*Sein*] of the other beyond its mere physical existence or what Heidegger calls *ständiger Vorhandenheit*, "constant objective presence" (e.g. 1996, 89; 1963, 96; *passim*). If I may play *messie*, for a moment: as justice approaches—as more of the *all* rather than the *some* of living being(s) live *from-hand-to-mouth*—what gets translated in Derrida as *Vorgeschmack* (foretaste; *avant-goût*) may someday show itself as a radical alternative to Heidegger's *Vorhandenheit*.

Si je relis...these two fleshs of Luther alongside the more recent bifurcation of fleshs in Edmund Husserl, one may consider the former's mere physical existence of *flesh* on the level of *Körper* and the higher *Kraft* of the *my-flesh* on the level of *Leib*. Husserl describes the journey to the *Leib* as follows:

Among the bodies [*Körpern*] belonging to this "Nature"...I then find my *animate organism* [*Leib*] as *uniquely* singled out—namely as the only one of them that is not just a body [*Körper*] but precisely an animate organism [*Leib*]... Touching kinesthetically, I perceive "with" my **hands** [*mit den Händen*]; seeing kinesthetically, I see "with" my eyes [*mit den Augen*]... As perceptively active, I experience (or can experience) *all of Nature, including my own animate organism* [*eigene Leiblichkeit*], which therefore in the process is reflexively related to itself. That becomes possible because I "can" perceive one **hand** "by means of" the other **hand** [*"mittels" der einen Hand die andere*], and eye by means of a **hand** [*"mittels einer Hand ein Auge*], and so forth—a procedure in which *the functioning organ must become an Object and the Object a functioning organ* (Husserl 1999, 97; 1973, 99).

As *my flesh* is different from all other physical flesh, the *Leib* is an experience distinct from the experiences of all other corporeal bodies. Only a *Leib* can feel itself felt, feel itself feeling, or feel itself being felt. *But he's all hands*—that "preference for the hand in boys" indicative of the "impulse to mastery" (Freud 1953, 188)²¹—a proclivity that will survive into the phenomenology of Jean-Luc Marion and is at least as old as Lucretius.²² As

21. Essay II: "Infantile Sexuality" in the *Three Essays or Three Contributions*.

22. "We perceive flavour in the **mouth** while we squeeze it out in / **munching** the food, **as if** one haply takes a sponge full of water / in **hand** and begins to press it dry. [*sucum sentimus in ore, cibum cum / mandendo exprimimus, ceu plenam spongiam aqual / siquis forte manu premere ac siccare coëpit*]" (Lucretius 1924, 292, Book IV, lines 617-19; emphasis added).

Luther will now shift his discussion of the *my flesh* to the phenomenon of *taste*, we must supplement the hands of Husserl's *Leib* with lips, mouths, and tongues.²³

To clear things up, Luther talks of taste. Taste is his refuge to make himself clear. He devotes an explanatory paragraph to the issue of taste in order to explain—as if, once and for all—the distinction between the *fressen* and the *essen*. It is followed by a further split of the concept of taste, itself, into *schmecken* and *kosten*.

Let me give you a clear illustration which may prove helpful. If a physician takes pure water and makes sugar water or syrup of it, this is no longer called simple water, but sugar water. Nor do we then say that we are drinking water. To be sure, we are drinking water. *Yet it does not taste like water* [*dennoch schmeckets nicht wie wasser*]. It has a **new flavor** [*ein anderen schmack*] and strength [*krafft*]; it tastes [*schmecket*] of sugar. It is water, yet not **pure** water, but sugar water [*Es ist wasser, aber nicht eitel wasser, sondern Zuckerwasser*]... I cannot **properly consider** [*rechnen / rechen*] it water...it has been transformed into a **different** essence [*ein ander wesen*] and now has a **new** quality and **taste** [*ein ander krafft und schmack*] (Luther 1959, 119; 1907, 184).

With the *ander maul* comes an *anderen schmack*. It's not so much about newness as otherness or difference; nor so much about pureness, as vanity. It reads as a lesson in Derridean iterability in terms of something like Benjaminian *Wiederschmecken*. The itasterability which Luther teaches has to do with a *tasting again* that is always an alteration of a prior pure taste. It is a "foretaste" become "curious." Just as every citation is an alteration, the *tasting again* that follows a certain kind of tasting is always altered taste; an othered taste; *ein anderen schmack*. The other taste [*anderen schmack*] cannot be "properly considered." The German word is *rechen*. The other taste cannot be *reckoned*—cannot properly be *calculated*—just as Derrida's "curious taste" of messianism is beyond calculation and "cannot count" on what is to come. The *anderen schmack* is wholly *ander* and cannot be predicted. One cannot count on it; it is dangerous and precarious. So it is that a "despairing messianism has a curious taste" (Derrida 1994, 212).

With this illustration Luther hopes to show that Christ is not to be "viewed like any other human being." The one who says "my flesh" (and

23. In this way, Derrida progresses beyond Husserl if only in his inclusion of the lips and the mouth in the experience of the *Leib*. "The mouth touches, **touches itself**, is touched, not only because the lips touch...this auto-affection of a mouth, the contact interrupted and repeated between the lips, the tongue, the palate, and so forth [*La bouche touche, elle se touche, et non seulement parce que les lèvres se touchent...cette auto-affection d'une bouche, ce contactinterrompu et répété entre les lèvres, la langue, le palais, etc.*] (Derrida 2005b, 113-14; 2000, 131; emphasis added).

understands it) is not like any other human. It is accessible to all humans yet an experience beyond ontic everydayness, everyday humanness, or everyday human being. It is here that Luther's German text is crucial since it is here that he moves from *Geschmack* to *Kosten*, which is lost in the translation. Such is the prescience of Cixous: *je relis ma Luther*.

As Luther's last word on eating [*essen*] moves to taste [*schmecken*], his last word on taste moves to *Kosten*. The point is an other kind of "eating" that does not devour, nor does it simply taste, but tastes in a specific way. The taste of *my flesh* is a taste that tests and licks without feeding and destroying the other taken into one's mouth.

A sugar was added to Christ's flesh, so that he who sees his flesh and **tastes** and drinks his blood [*kostet und trincket das blut*] sees God and worships God... Thus one eats [*isset*] the Godhead in human nature. This resembles our experience with the sugar water...when I drink it, I also **taste**, drink, or **lick** [*koste, tricke oder lecke*] the sugar... "If you believe [*gleubet*] in the Son, accept Him, and **taste the flesh** [*kostet das fleisch*], then you have assuredly encountered Me," says God the Father (Luther 1959, 120; 1907, 184-85; emphasis added).

The flesh of Christ has an *anderen schmack*, like that of the sugar water. But now we are instructed not only to taste [*schmecken*] it but to refrain from consuming it with a taste by licking. With *Kosten* comes *Lecken*. *The lick is there; tongue in cheek: Der Leck "isst" da.*²⁴ Such is the prescience of Cixous: *je re-lèche ma Luther*. The othered tongue can now taste without eating or chewing but by licking. Luther's entire exegesis, here, can be summed up in these words: *kostet das fleisch!* Perhaps all the law can be summed up in this one commandment—taste the flesh—that is, if one seeks a justice beyond law.

And the second one is like it: lick your neighbor as yourself.

There is a cost to *Kosten*; a fare to be paid on the way to fare [food or *Speise*].²⁵ The taste of my flesh is aneconomic and beyond profit. In devouring and simply eating, in which one perhaps tastes the devoured by way of *Schmecken*, a profit is made. The cost of the chewing and swallowing

24. See Samuel Weber's analysis of "the German words *ist* and *ißt*: 'is' and 'eats'" and the play between the copula and the lawyer Coppelius in E. T. A Hoffmann. Luther's resistance to the law (of *fressen*) is perhaps a kind of resistance to what Weber calls "Coppelius' Law" which demands that one "only *is* insofar as he *eats*" (2002, 11-12). Beyond the law (of *fressen*) Luther posits an existent—beyond an ontic *ist* that merely *ißt*—that *only eksists* (for lack of a better word) *insofar as it tastes and licks*; who "eats" otherwise; *geistlich essen*.

25. It may appear to English readers of Deleuze that he is on his way to appreciating the cost of *Kosten* when he pits *to pay* together with his understanding of *to eat*. "This duality between *to eat* and *to speak* may be even more violently expressed in the duality between **to pay/to eat and to shit/to speak**" (1990, 85). However, in the French, *to eat* never appears alongside *to pay*. Both the pairings are with *to speak*. The same sentence in the French: « *Cette dualité entre manger et parler peut s'exprimer plus violemment: payer-parler, chier-parler* » (1969, 104).

is paid off by a caloric gain extracted from the eaten. But merely to lick something in order to taste and not devour actually costs the taster. The very energy to flick the tongue is never recouped by an economic payback. *Kosten* will always be in a movement of deficit. *Every lick is hence a lick of faith*; that is, every lick worthy of the name "lick" (if there is such a thing). This is another way by which the curious taste of messianism despairs. It refuses the calculability and accountancy of market-driven values. With each taste, *Kosten* moves further into the red. Almost a proletarianization of the tongue, such a taster lives—literally—from hand to mouth. And yet *kosten* is not *fressen*; it does not *frißt*. An affront to the *conatus*, the drive of *Kosten* is not self-preservation of its own. The maw of a mere flesh becomes an othered mouth of a my flesh that tastes by way of *Kosten* in its longing for love and justice. The gift of taste is a taste for the gift beyond the economy of reciprocation. The "flesh and blood were given [*gegeben*] for me" (Luther 1959, 128; 1907, 199).

He who is called "that remote and bastard descendent of Luther" (Milbank 1997, 225) and of whom it is said "in the end he wanted to be, a Lutheran" (Adorno 2005, 154) can perhaps illuminate the ways in which the "my flesh" of Luther—understood in terms of taste—may develop into a new understanding of the self. The "my flesh" of the gospel and the *new taste* of Luther have always been on the way to a new self; one that is perhaps only recently being glimpsed in the later jaws of deconstruction. On its way, the *anderen schmack* of the "**Mein fleisch**" finds a radical expression in the mouth of Zarathustra.

Zarathustra does not taste good and he finds distasteful all who find satisfaction in tasting everything *but* themselves, for they know not the best taste. Such "swine" have forgotten their taste. Dionysus against the crucified: the Christ that proclaims *Mein fleisch* in the gospel according to Luther becomes the Antichrist that proclaims *Mein Geschmack* in the new gospel.

All-satisfiedness, which knoweth how to taste everything,—*that is not the best taste!* [*das ist nicht der beste Geschmack!*] I honour the refractory, fastidious tongues [*widerspenstigen wählerischen Zungen*]...which have learned to say "I" and "Yea" and "Nay."... / With mummies, some fall in love [*verliebt*]; others with phantoms: both alike hostile to **all flesh and blood** [*beide gleich feind allem Fleisch und Blute*] oh, how repugnant are both to *my taste!* For I love [*liebe*] blood. / And there will I not reside and abide where every one spitteth and speweth [*spuckt und speit*]: that is now **my taste** [*das ist nun mein Geschmack*] ... By diverse ways and windings did I arrive at my truth [*meiner Wahrheit*]... / Neither a good nor a bad taste, but **my taste** [*kein gutter, kein schlechter, aber mein Geschmack*], of which I have no longer either shame [*Scham*] or secrecy [*Hehl*] (Nietzsche 1999, 135-36; 1987, 158-59; emphasis added).²⁶

26. Third Part, "The Spirit of Gravity / Vom Geist der Schwere," §2.

It reads a bit like a bastardized version of Luther's reformulation of the eucharist. My taste is a new appreciation of the flesh. All flesh is permitted, once one learns to *love*. Only this taste—the best taste—can love flesh as it loves blood.

Zarathustra is not ashamed of his taste and is ready to share the secret of it. The best flavor is my-flavor; the *mein Geschmack*, which is not satisfied with tasting only other objects, as Freud believes the infant to be upon deciding on the "inferiority" of its own skin (Freud 1953, 182). There exist advanced palates and bold choosy tongues—*wählerischen Zungen*—that are not afraid of the *beste Geshmack*. This is a matter of love; *Liebe*. Any love devoid of the element of *mein Geshmack* is for that reason hostile to all flesh and, therefore, life. It is otherwise than necrophilia with mummies and corpses. A love of the flesh must include my taste. This is a new (perhaps Protestant) *veritate pabulo*,²⁷ for *my truth is my taste—meiner Wahrheit ist mein Geschmack*—and is so beyond good and evil. *Mein Geschmack* with no secrecy is one to be *shared*.

The radicality of the *Mein Geshmack* is not articulated as well by Zarathustra as it is by Derrida as he reads J. Hillis Miller reading the English poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins.

What is taste?... I regret not reading this text of Hillis' when I was writing *Touching*, Jean-Luc Nancy, for I would have learned a lot about the mysterious relations among taste, taste of self, the auto-affection that constitutes selfhood through the sensed experience of self, this auto-affection consists of *touching oneself in taste*, of tasting oneself in that "selftaste" (Derrida 2005a, 698).

One *touches oneself in taste*. Hopkins writes, "When I turn within I find only my own inimitable taste of self." Derrida finds in this the beginnings of a sensual restatement of the *cogito*. "I am the only one, *un je*, an I is the only one able to say to himself, autoreferentially, autodeictally, that he is himself, in his selftaste." But more importantly, the insular one who is served "*long before thinking itself, long before the cogito, senses the taste of self*." Derrida is aware that Descartes defines the *cogito* with a certain feeling or *sentir*. "But to feel or feel oneself, *sentir* or *se sentir*, is not specified by Descartes as taste" (Derrida 2005a, 698-99). Nor, it may now be added, is it specified by Jean-Luc Marion, even in the mouth to mouth relation of the kiss as he formulates it in the erotic phenomenon. Savoring *savoir: Je sais ce que je sais* when I taste what I taste like. Selftaste precedes the *cogito*; it is the condition for the possibility of the *cogito*. One might say that it also precedes the *Leib*, but this misses the amazing fact—*of which, Derrida does not speak!*—that selftaste is always already the *Leib* as well. Selftaste is all of *Leib*, plus taste. Beyond the *cogito* and the *Leib*, only *Mein Geschmack/Mein fleisch* is the true experience of the self.

27. Augustine: "thou **feed** Israel for ever with **the food of truth** [*unde pascis Israel in aeternum veritate pabulo*]" (1912, 48-49).

The closest Marion comes—and he does come very close—to the apperceptive, yet shareable, *Leib*-ness of selftaste is when he describes, wonderfully, the kiss that blurs the distinction between inner and outer. The word *baiser*,²⁸

concerns first of all the act of the mouth [*l'act de la bouche*], slightly open in order to **touch** another flesh [**toucher** *une autre chair*]*—in order to give the other his or her flesh...by touching one another mouth to mouth, our two mouths set off a wave that traverses our two bodies, so as to transcribe them wholly into two fleshes, without remainder* [*s'abouchant l'une l'autre, elles mettent en branle une onde qui traverse nos deux corps pour les transcrire entiers en deux chairs, sans rest*]; the mouth begins the process, because already open, without distinction between exterior and interior [*sans distinction de l'extérieur et de l'intérieur*], it offers itself from the outset as flesh, it incarnates first the lack of distinction between touching and touching oneself, feeling and feeling (oneself) feeling (Marion 2006, 124; 2003, 210; emphasis added).

The mouth can certainly touch but this does not mean that taste is touch for Marion. There is an important advance in Marion surpassing a certain corporeal solipsism of Husserl in that flesh, after the former, is given not simply by feeling-oneself-felt-by-oneself but by feeling-oneself-felt-by-another. And if this irruption of the other into phenomenality had been accomplished by the seeing-oneself-seen in Levinas, Marion further corporealizes the face-to-face relation with bodies that don't just see each other but touch each other. Yet, in an eternal return of the *mandendo manu*, while giving the other her or his flesh, the mouth still acts here in the mere capacity of a Husserlian hand. Mouths could be subtracted from this passage and the point would still be made. This same phenomenon could be described and experienced as two bodies touching one another with hands, insofar as one can make an opening with one's hand and can enter any opening of the body of the other with one's fingers. On this point, Marion overlooks the taste that is beyond mere touch that can be a *sharing-of-Leiben* rather than a proprietary *giving-of-Leiben*. The mouth may well "begin the process," but *taste and tongue* bring the process to fruition (which is not to say that the process is brought to an end; it is more a fruition that presses a crabapple until it is drinkable). As Derrida suggests with the "*la bouche touche, elle se touche*," the mouth can do everything that the *Leib* can. If the mouth "incarnates first the lack of distinction between touching and touching oneself, feeling and feeling (oneself) feeling," as Marion believes, it can do so by taste and taste alone.

Prior to the discussion of the kiss, Marion states that *only the hand can touch* as he gives his own explanation of the *Leib*.

28. As in the Violent Femmes song, "Kiss Off," the French verb *to kiss* [*baiser*] is also idiom for *to fuck* and means "in contemporary usage, more often the latter than the former." See Stephen E. Lewis's note in Marion (2007, 124). [And we should not be "shamefaced" over such "a serious matter" (Freud 1958, 20 n. 3).]

My **hand**, which **alone can touch** another thing (and not merely enter into contact with it), only touches it precisely because it feels that it touches it; and it only feels that it touches it by feeling itself touch it, that is, by feeling itself at the same time as it feels what it feels (Marion 2006, 114; emphasis added).

Is this a slip of the tongue? Is the kiss of Marion *French* at all? If taste teaches us anything it is that the tongue—precisely because it tastes—does more than “merely enter into contact.” Although Marion wishes to disclose *the insufficiency of the caress* (2006, 119), one can discern an all-too-male preference for the hand, described by Freud (1953, 188), lurking behind his fondness for the kiss that is always already a kiss with no tongue. The mouth of Marion is the hand of Lucretius. All mouth and no tongue; there is no taste in the erotic phenomenon, as Marion writes it.

The account of the *Leib* given by Marion in terms of the hand and fingers can be described in terms of the tongue and the inside of the mouth.

At once, my hand feels, with a single movement of thought, the thing and itself feeling that thing; and if it opposes one of its fingers to the others, it winds up feeling its flesh feeling its flesh feeling (Marion 2006, 114).

may, now, be restated as:

At once, my tongue tastes, with a single movement of thought, the thing and its self feeling-and-tasting that thing; and if it opposes its tongue to the inside of the mouth or lips, it winds up tasting its selftaste tasting its selftaste tasting.

Selftaste takes the place of *Leib*. But whereas the *Leib* is insular and cannot be shared, one’s selftaste is shareable. Derrida quickly insinuates love to be the sharing of selftaste.

Love and friendship are born in the experience of this unspeakable selftaste: an unshareable experience and nevertheless shared... As concerns selving, the privilege of taste, among the five senses, deserves a minute and patient analysis...taste is the only tactile sense to share, with the sense of touch in general, the privilege of auto-affection, of the touching-touched for which the most frequently given example is the touching-touched of the fingers [as it is in Marion]. But unlike the other surfaces of the skin, taste is at once contact with the outside and contact with self inside the *mouth, lips, and tongue*. And the mouth, lips, and tongue are places of passage for speech, voice, and ingested food, thus for interiorization in general—along with auto-affection...introjection, or incorporation, and so forth (Derrida 2005b, 699; emphasis added).

In the kiss, Marion takes us to the contact with outside and inside. However, in this inside, Marion does not have a contact with self, and this has something to do with the strange fact that these things spoken of by Derrida “*lips and tongue*” are nowhere to be found in *The Erotic Phenomenon*. *À savoir*: taste must be added to the erotic phenomenon.

Je relis/relèche. I, the taster, have this ability: itasterability is iterability. I, my selftaste, can taste an othertaste. This calls into question Marion’s

claim that "I can only see another flesh." Selftaste overcomes the hurdle, insurmountable up to this point, in phenomenology from Descartes to Kant to Marion which is the impossibility of experiencing the other's *Leib*. Selftaste is the answer to Marion's question, "How will I ever be able to feel not just something rendered sensible through my flesh, but the feeling of this other flesh, which is in no way a thing but instead a self experiencing itself?" (2006, 115).

In radical distinction from *every other* worldly thing (and being) that is tastable—in that denotable, Deleuzian world of eatable things—in the kiss I taste (and feel), for the first time, a thing tasting (and feeling) itself. I taste no thing but rather a flesh that is not a thing at all; a *canny* sharing and *giving-up* its *un-* as it simultaneously tastes another *un-*. Kissing encounters the *unheimleck* of the *unheimlich*. Not only do I taste my selftaste tasting another selftaste. In the vertigo of erotic phenomenality, *I taste the other-selftaste tasting itself tasting my selftaste as I taste my selftaste tasting the selftaste of the other tasting me tasting her or him.*

Shifting tones from inquisitive to declarative, Marion continues,

I will never be able to feel this feeling itself directly *in* my own flesh; for, if I felt it through a fusion of some sort, I would immediately reduce this feeling to the rank of a simple sense datum among others, and *thus of a thing* of the world, and I would miss the flesh as such (2006, 115; italics mine).

Only a Cartesian *cogito* or a Husserlian *Leib* could reduce the taste of the other to the rank of thinghood. In this capacity, selftaste—the *Mein Geschmack* of the *Mein fleisch*—is a new ontological category that exceeds even *Dasein*. The Selftaste of a *my flesh/Mein Geschmack* tastes the taste of the other for the inimitable yet shareable experience of self that it is. Luther's understanding of eating/tasting as faith, once one is on the level of *my flesh*, is the answer to Marion's concern against reducing the other to thinghood. The phenomenal orality of taste and tongues is what opens the world to the phenomena of the other, faith, love, and justice.

The task, now, with Zarathustra, Derrida, and Marion fresh on our palates, is to open the *Mein fleisch* of Luther with the selftaste that loves others. The others of which Luther speaks are the producers of food and drink. In Luther, these others are still forgotten and despite the radicality of the *Mein fleisch*, the experience of the others—that make food but aren't food—yet eludes us.

It is not enough to consider that the baker [*Becker*] baked bread and the brewer [*Brewer*] brewed beer. This does not bring bread and beer **into your home** [*im Hause*]. But when you **take** bread and beer **into your mouth**, then baker and brewer are forgotten [*aber wenn du das Brot und Bier ins maul kriegest, so denckest du nicht mehr an Becker oder Bierbrewer.*] Thus the Jews here were baker and brewer; they baked and brewed Christ when He was crucified. **Now it is up to you to get Him into your mouth, to eat Him, to lay hold of Him, to take Him into**

yourself, and adhere to Him. That is faith; that is what He means [sie haben jn bebacken und Du must do gedencken, wie die jn ins maul kriegest; essest, sassest, und dich nemesst, dich daran haltest, das ist der Glaube] (Luther 1959, 129; 1907, 200; emphasis added).

It is not so much that we forget the *Becker* and the *Brower* than that we *think them no more; denckest nicht mehr*.²⁹ In his zealous mission to forget the Jew Luther forsakes all others. His ruthless critique of Judaism (as he understands it) obstructs his very thinking of faith and the one who says *Mein fleisch*. He's so busy thinking a caricature of the Jews that it keeps him from thinking through his theory. It's uncanny; if not *unheimlich*, at least *unhauslich*. The passage is deliciously ambivalent: How Jewish be the messman! The *Mein fleisch* of Christ, which up to now Luther has gone to great pains to develop *beyond* dead flesh to be merely consumed, is yet described as *cooked*; baked and brewed. Luther's unquenchable thirst to think beyond Judaism results in his inability to carry out the rich experience of the other that should follow his understanding of *kosten* and *Mein fleisch*. So scared is he to taste the Jewish other that he must condemn the Jew to a level forever beyond taste, as a meta-cook. All other cooks—our neighbors—the *Becker* and the *Brower*—are lost by consequence.

Mais si je relis/relèche ma Luther après je lis/lèche le phénomène érotique: the call to take Christ "into your mouth"—*ins maul kriegest*—could never simply follow the call to take beer and bread "into your mouth" while forgetting the brewer and the baker. The contrary is all that is the case. If one has faith, one drinks the *Bierbrewer* as much as one drinks the *Bier*. To experience love you must take the *Brower* "into your mouth" and justice has no chance unless the *Becker* is tasted as much as the bread. "*Das ist der Glaube*. That is faith." That is what love, justice, and *Mein fleisch* mean.

The messianic is this experience. It rebels against the self-love of brewers and bakers ever quarantined to the kitchen. It was not long ago that a certain capitalist unconscious ordained its vile maxims by appealing *particularly* to the "self-love" of "the brewer, or the baker" (Smith 2003, 23-24). But even here the possibility of revaluation is rich; to rethink self-love as self-taste; to decolonize the capitalist appropriation of auto-affection as a kind of selfishness and discover, rather, the possibility of a faithful and loving "shareability" of self-taste. (In fact, this final section of Luther on the brewer and the baker, reread alongside Adam Smith, brings to mind how Freud at one time led us astray from the discovery of self-taste by explaining auto-affection with *the inability to kiss oneself*.)³⁰ The messianic

29. Recall that after the erotic phenomenon, the tongue would taste the other and feel itself tasting and feeling that other, "with a single movement of *thought*" (Marion 2006, 114).

30. "It's a pity that I can't kiss myself / *Schade, daß ich mich nicht küssen kann*" (Freud 1953, 182; 1991, 84). So it is that psychoanalysis reinforces a certain

is the call to taste the flesh—*kosten das fleisch*—and a messiah is *that one* who can say: *Kiss me as I kiss myself*; who proclaims: “I am *Speise*” and invites (any—τις—and all) others to lick rather than feed and to love rather than consume. Only the curious taste of messianism, as such, brings attention to the phenomenological and ontological differences between *essen* and *fressen*; *kosten* and *schmecken*; my flesh and mere flesh; love and self-love; selftaste and taste. Only *a* taste to come, worthy of the name “messianic,” may confess *my flesh* while calling others to taste my taste; willing to taste the other-as-other as it tastes-again its self-as-selftaste... even at the kost of despair.

Works Cited

- Adorno, Theodor. 2005. *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott. New York: Verso.
- Augustine. 1912. *Confessions*, vol. 2, trans. W. Watts, Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Benjamin, Walter. 1966. *Briefe*, Band 2, Herausgegeben und mit Anmerkungen versehen von Gershom Scholem und Theodor W. Adorno. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- . 2003. *Selected Writings*. Vol. 4. 1938–1940, trans. Edmund Jephcott et al. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Cixous, Hélène. 2005. *L'amour Même dans la Boîte aux Lettres*. Paris: Galilée.
- . 2006. *Hyperrêve*. Paris: Galilée.
- . 2007. *Insister of Jacques Derrida*, trans. Peggy Kamuf. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- . 2008. *Love Itself in the Letterbox*, trans. Peggy Kamuf. Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- . 2009. *Hyperdream*, trans. Beverley Bie Brahic. Malden, MA: Polity.
- Clarke, David L. 2004. “Hegel, Eating: Schelling and the Carnivorous Virility of Philosophy.” In *Cultures of Taste/Theories of Appetite: Eating Romanticism*, ed. Timothy Morton, 115–37. New York: Palgrave.
- Deleuze, Gilles. 1969. *Logique du Sens*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit.
- . 1990. *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale. New York: Columbia University Press.
- . 2003. *Desert Islands and Other Texts (1953–1974)*. Cambridge: Semiotext(e).
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. 1983. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1981. *Glas*, vol. 1. Paris: Éditions Denoël/Gonthier.
- . 1982. *L'oreille de l'autre*. Montreal: VLB Éditeur.
- . 1985. “Otobiographies: The Teaching of Nietzsche and the Politics of the Proper Name.” In *The Ear of the Other*, trans. Avital Ronell. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

concept of self-love or auto-affection devoid of “shareability” and otherness. Just another way by which “Freud is the Luther and the Adam Smith” of a contemporary state of affairs (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 217).

- . 1986. *Glas*, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. and Richard Rand. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- . 1993. *Spectres de Marx*. Paris: Éditions Galilée.
- . 1994. *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge Classics.
- . 1996a. *Marx' Gespenster*, trans. Susanne Lüdemann. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.
- . 1996b. *Résistances de la Psychanalyse*. Paris: Éditions Galilée.
- . 1998. *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Pascale-Anne Brault, and Michael Naas. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- . 2000. *Le Toucher, Jean-Luc Nancy*. Paris: Éditions Galilée.
- . 2004. *For What Tomorrow... A Dialogue*, trans. Jeff Fort. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- . 2005a. "Justices." *Critical Inquiry* 31/3 (Spring): 689-721. doi:10.1086/430991.
- . 2005b. *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizarry. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- . 2005c. *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- . 2009. *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 1, trans. Geoffrey Bennington. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1953. "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality." In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Vol. 8, 1901–1905. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis.
- . 1958. "Psycho-analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)." In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Vol. 12, 1911–1913. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis.
- . 1991. *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1963. *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
- . 1996. *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Hölderlin, Friedrich. 1969. *Hölderlin Werke und Briefe*. Erster Band. *Gedichte/Hyperion*. Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag.
- . 2008. *Hyperion*, trans. Ross Benjamin. Brooklyn: Archipelago.
- Husserl, Edmund. 1973. *Cartesiansche Meditationen*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag.
- . 1999. *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. Dorian Cairns. Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Joyce, James. 1940. *Ulysses*. New York: The Modern Library.
- Lucretius. 1924. *De Rerum Natura*, trans. W. H. D. Rouse, Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Luther, Martin. 1907. *Luthers Werke*. Band 33. *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Weimar: Herman Böhlaus.
- . 1959. *Luther's Works*. Vol. 23. *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, Chapters 6–8*, trans. Martin H. Bertram. St. Louis: Concordia.
- . 1974. *Die Gantze Heilige Schrifft*. Band 3. *Deutsch auff's New Zugericht*. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag.
- Marion, Jean-Luc. 2003. *Le Phénomène Érotique*. Paris: Éditions Grasset & Fasquelle.
- . 2006. *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Milbank, John. 1997. *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1999. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Thomas Common. New York: Dover.
- . 1987. *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. Leipzig: Goldmann Verlag.
- Pynchon, Thomas. 2009. *Inherent Vice*. New York: Penguin.
- Smith, Adam. 2003. *The Wealth of Nations*. New York: Bantam Classic.
- Taylor, Mark C. 2007. *After God*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Weber, Samuel. 2002. *The Legend of Freud*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
-

Virgil W. Brower is a Yarrington Fellow in the Paris Program in Critical Theory and the Full-Time Lecturer of Philosophy at Chicago State University. He is candidate for two PhDs in a dual program between the Theology, Ethics, and Human Sciences division of The Chicago Theological Seminary and the Program in Comparative Literary Studies at Northwestern University. Currently, he lives in Paris and attends seminars at the Sorbonne and the University of Paris-VIII.

Email: virgil@u.northwestern.edu

Mail: La Cité Internationale Universitaire, Fondation des États-Unis, 15 Boulevard Jourdan, 75014 Paris, France. Program in Comparative Literary Studies, Crowe Hall 1-117, 1860 Campus Drive, Evanston, IL 60208, USA. Chicago State University, History, Philosophy & Political Science, 9501 South King Drive, Chicago, IL 60628-1598, USA