

BLACK METAL AND THE MOUTH: *ALWAYS
SERVING YOU AS A MEAL*, OR, INFECTED ORALITY,
PESTILENTIAL WOUNDS AND SCARS

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There are many other things that a mouth can do besides act as an outlet for what the brain thinks. As we viewers of horror films know very well, it can project vomit or spew bile, it can contaminate with a kiss, and it can issue screams. It is not a matter of speaking the unspeakable, but of vocalising the extra-linguistic or the non-verbal, and thereby letting the Outside in. (Fisher, "Gothic Materialism" 242)

The mouth gurgles forth a black matter thick and putrid. (Leviathan, "Mouth Orifice Bizarre")

[T]he apocalypse depicted by spittle, blood and dried sperm, the sweat of clenched fists and smashed teeth spat onto the sun to humiliate the day. (Massemord, "The Madness Tongue Devouring Juices of Livid Hope")

The mouth is a chamber of thousands of larvae, each germinating an acephalous mouth, cannibal to the other, serving the other as a meal. (Negarestani, "Acephalous Mouth")

Black Metal is a chamber of thousands of larvae, each germinating an acephalous mouth,ⁱ cannibal to the other, serving the other as a meal. Black Metal is a sonorous, pulsing womb birthing thousands of screaming mouths, mouths spewing bile, blood, and phlegm. Black Metal is "A face without eyes, without lips . . . / Gaping sinister holes . . . / A mouth opened like a grave" (Deathmoor, "Charon"). Amidst the rotten and decaying matter, in the presence

of meat, where flesh and bones exist independently and for each other (Deleuze, *Francis Bacon* 16), the boundaries between animal and man break down (17). In this zone of indiscernibility animal-human mouths butcher, chew, and spew out living flesh. The nihilistic carnage of mouth consumes and discards meat, and both human and animal become potential carcasses, consumed in their mutual consummation, open to horror and the abyssal pit/mouth/womb of the earth.

“[H]ell hath enlarged herself / And opened her mouth / Without measure” (Antaeus “Sanctus”). This blackened devouring mouth conjures up the Mouth of Hell—the entrance to hell through the jaws of a monster—that devours the sinners, and was a popular medieval convention which had its origin in Anglo-Saxon art. A gigantic monster, sometimes imagined as a whale, a lion, a dragon, or a Thing, the mouth of hell, “yawning for its prey, breathing fire and smoke, and roaring with a noise like the grunting of millions of hogs, tapped a deep spring of terror” (Cavendish 156). “Fanged jaws” (Cavendish 156) becomes a synecdoche of the Hellmouth and emphasises the devouring quality of the mouth, the horrifying opening of a mouth that can not be tamed by the head: “The mouth is irreducibly cold and demonic to the head and its sphere” (Negarestani “Acephalous Mouth”). Instead, the acephalous mouth devours its own head in an eternal cycle where all abject material is never abjected: “The human waste pooling in the bowels of the earth cannot be evacuated *literaliter*, of course, since what goes into Hellmouth almost never comes out the other end” (Miller 235). “See the suffering damned ones / Arms legs, mutilated. Flesh wounds/Eyes, ears, ripped and mangled / mouth full of the taste of human refuse (Golgothian Denial “Delight in the Pain of the Damned”).

Against Black Metal’s consuming mouth, there is the tamed mouth of capitalist production and consumption. For Reza Negarestani,

All we can understand is meal not the mouth . . . our economies are architected through the recognition, production, marketing, formatting and trade of meal; Meal (being as a meal) calibrates productions and exchanges, becomes the ground of subjectivity and its dissembling lines: ‘I’ and ‘We’ as the cartographies of (being) meal (I am a meal, therefore I exist.) . . . The

taste of subjectivity and the subjectivity of taste unfold beneath the economy of meal fastened to that which we politically obscure as consuming culture. Shackling the mouth to the so-called restricted economy, Hegelism and taste is a stupid effort to hide the nihilistic carnage of mouth, a parsimonious philosophy originating from our ‘being as mere meal’ . . . it is whitewashing our domesticating hunger, jealousy and racial segregation that we undertake against the mouth, bashing our heads to the worst aspects of subjectivity—is it just for celebrating the glory of being meal or covering our hunger for domestication? (“Acephalous Mouth”)

Negarestani attacks meal and its economies, subjectivity, aesthetic taste, and a privileged appetite that negates difference. He liberates the mouth from its associations with metaphorical eating and (the active subject’s) assimilation (of the passive object) in order to stress the pestilential butchery of mouth. For Negarestani, societies centre on meal, products and their accumulation within a bounded restricted economy where growth, production, possession, exchange and the limit are the rule. We fail to recognise the excess, loss and limitlessness of the mouth and its nihilistic consumption. All we understand is measurable commodities. As Stephen David Ross writes, the history of the West creates “a restricted economy, turning around the number two, made visible in mirrors, substitutions, exchanges, I for you, he for she . . . an exchange economy, with its transformation of women, children, and animals, perhaps including men, into commodities, transforming subjects into objects with prices and values, exchangeable for each other” (*Plenishment in the Earth* 94). The system of “anti-production” (Deleuze and Guattari) is based upon the serviceable and logical production of meal which defines the heart of capitalism.ⁱⁱ Nature and man become mere tools for producing things to be sold for profit. Against this gustatory capitalist economy, Black Metal’s mouth infects through its opening into a world of spiced corpses: “The spiced corpse remains a potent image, hovering outside the bounds of food-as-nutrition” (Morton 31). While spice¹ as a marked

¹ See Nicola Masciandaro’s “Becoming Spice: Commentary as Geophilosophy”, in *Collapse, Vol. VI: Geo/Philosophy*, (2010): 20-56, and “Getting Anagogic,” *Rhizomes* 21 (2010).

commodity is imagined as a “coat, coating, surface or appearance” bestowing “fleeting flavour” (Morton 30, 31), Black Metal’s blackened spice infects life with death, inviting one to participate in an enduring taste of undeath where “boundaries between subject and object evaporate, as they are not predicated on a dialectic of consumer and consumed” (Morton 229): “Slowly blood-flies eat me up” (Nocturnal Breed “Fields of Rot”); “living through the worms, eating the corpses”; “youth exists in our morbid kiss/ knowing the grave flesh, cold grip of life” (Black Funeral “Infernal Majesty”, “Varcolaci”); “Ravenous lust for infected flesh” (Infernaeon “Annihilating the Inner Decay of Species”).

Herbert Marcuse has expressed the integration of the individual into the capitalist system through the creation of false needs. “False needs”, he writes, “are superimposed upon the individual by particular social interests in his repression: the needs which perpetuate toil, aggressiveness, misery, and injustice” (7). Such false needs, produced and packaged, are translated and categorised according to language, swallowed as terminology (Serres 221). The whole enterprise of consumerism is built upon language, labels, and brands: “drinking is as much analysis as reading is; the label and the container carry the same series of words or substances: a formula for refreshment, abstraction in a bottle, pharmacy. The law decrees it. Imposes the fidelity of advertising. The law, written, forces the written label on us, and we are made to drink writing” (Serres 222). Similarly, the mode of subjectivity under capitalism feeds on the illusion of a self-transparent individual who has turned him/herself into a delectable dish to be served as a sanitised product of a society obsessed with surfaces and organised around the flows of currency.ⁱⁱⁱ Black Metal situates the origins of capitalism and consumption in language:

The ability to speak brings value to a life. The ability to beg, plead, rationalize. Jaws that embrace the horror of this silent holocaust. Desecrate the earth with consumption and loss.

Disrupted natural order. Ecological blasphemy. An insult to our integrity, ingest the horror, the devastation and death . . . Caged in factories and commercial shelves, the new definition of hell,

The suffering and loss. (Panopticon “Speaking”)

Subjectivity is built upon the narcosis of a closed system that produces and categorises meal, transforming the “I” into a calculable by-product of language and exchange, a thing to be badly consumed for and by the other. Subjectivity is bound and subjected to what Serres calls the golden mouth: “Speech reigns there, a queen in palatine splendour; the reign of language over lips and tongue is absolute. Imperious, exclusive” (Serres 153). Speech and language “anaesthetize the mouth, which finds the zestiest conversation tasteless” (153). Black Metal is a pestilential machine seeking to infect organisation and despotic language with excremental screams. It despises those whose language is “a barrage of lies” (Fukpig “When Will We Hear Their Cries”), “Spewing artificial dogma from their mouth” (Feral Horde “Tool of Damnation”).

The subjectivity of taste remains bound to this golden mouth. The mouth that has not tasted or smelled. The mouth that talks but does not taste: “Socrates, Agathon and Alcibiades speak of love without ever making love, or sit down to eat without actually eating or drink without tasting; likewise they enter directly from the porch, over the threshold, into the dining area, without ever visiting the kitchens. Like the Gods, slaves and women stand near the stoves, where transformations occur, while the barbarians talk” (Serres 165). For Hegel, the mouth and taste are material and thus not spiritual. Idealism cannot be associated with materiality and corporeality, the wasting away and rotting of objects, smell, and taste which destroy spiritual consciousness.² The work of art, for example, is “related only to the two theoretical senses of sight and hearing, while smell, taste, and touch have to do with matter as such” and “cannot have to do with artistic objects, which are meant to maintain themselves in their real independence and allow of no *purely* sensuous relationship. What is agreeable for these senses is not the beauty of art” (Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* 38-9). Hegel relates the enjoyment of art only to the two theoretical senses of sight and hearing, which, nonetheless, remain ineffectual

² See also Edgar Allan Poe’s *Berenice* (1835), where Egaeus is paralysed by the materiality of Berenice’s disintegrating physiognomy and the death of his former idealism. In the end he extracts her teeth, transforming them into ideas without the materiality of the body, knowledge without the corrupted body. Berenice’s corrupted beauty and flesh are rejected for the idea: the possession of the teeth. They are finally kept in a box in the library, contained and bound like the ideas in his books.

in fully apprehending art. Imagination is then considered as a third mode for a more spiritual understanding of the fine arts. For Hegel and the philosophers of Taste, aesthetic taste remains separated from gustatory taste (Korsmeyer 63). The mouth of the carnivorous philosopher negates the difference of the other and persists in a universal understanding of Taste free from desire and consumed by a privileged elite whose mode of eating is characterised by what Derrida has called carno-phallogocentrism (“Eating Well” 280). This is why, for Hegel, “one cannot think for someone else, any more than one can eat or drink for him” (*The Encyclopaedia Logic* 55). Thinking, like eating, is a self-contained act, negating the other and denying ethical reciprocity toward the other.

While the mouth is the organ of taste, it is also responsible for digestion. If Black Metal paints a blackened universe of undigested and inassimilable remains of unrecognisable substances in a constant tension that unsettles any hierarchical boundaries, then, on the other hand, for Hegel, “Eating is the assimilation of food showing the self’s power over externality and the acknowledgement that externality has no for-itself, no independent subsistence. As such it is the self’s negation of immediacy and of givenness. In this respect, Hegel speaks of the self’s sovereign ingratitude towards what gives it sustenance” (Ferrarin 82). Hegel’s desire for appropriation is evident in his example of the apple as something that can be digested and assimilated:

If the individual human being does something, achieves something, attains a goal, this fact must be grounded in the way the thing itself, in its concept, acts and behaves. If I eat an apple, I destroy its organic self-identity and assimilate it to myself. That I can do this entails that the apple in itself, already, in advance, before I take hold of it, has in its nature the character (*Bestimmung*) of being subject to destruction, having in itself a homogeneity with my digestive organs such that I can make it homogeneous with myself. (qtd. in Malabou, *The Future of Hegel* 97)

Here the Hegelian subject retains within itself the entirety of the consumed content: a violent assimilation of Otherness.³

This is what Derrida stresses when he writes in “‘Eating Well,’ or the Calculation of the Subject” that

Discourses as original as those of Heidegger and Levinas disrupt, of course, a certain traditional humanism. In spite of the differences separating them, they nonetheless remain profound humanisms *to the extent that they do not sacrifice sacrifice*. (279)

Eating, consuming, devouring, and destroying is sacrifice, always at the expense of humanity’s victims: animals, women and children. This sacrifice is the sacrifice that Bataille celebrates and what Derrida wants to sacrifice:

The abject subordination of those who sacrifice to the authority of the institutions they have themselves constructed, or have found themselves within as subjects bearing the marks of that construction, the weight of the edifices of expenditure and sacrifice that fall down upon the subject-agents through lateral effects, all demand deconstruction and more deconstruction, sacrificing sacrifice. (Ross, *The Gift of Kinds* 119)

For Derrida in the symbolic or real experience of eating-speaking-interiorising, where the limits between living and non-living, animal and man become unsure, the question of eating is always a question of

determining the best, most respectful, most grateful, and also most giving way of relating to the other and of relating the other to the self. For everything that happens at the edge of the orifices (of orality, but also of the ear,

³ Slavoj Žižek disagrees with such a reading that emphasises orality and, instead, turns towards Hegelian excrementation. In *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*, he writes that “for Hegel, the philosophy of nature is not a violent re-appropriation of its externality; it rather involves the passive attitude of an observer: ‘philosophy has, as it were, simply to watch how nature itself sublates its externality’” (London and Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2012), 400.

the eye—and all the ‘senses’ in general) the metonymy of ‘eating well’ [*bien manger*] would always be the rule. The question is no longer one of knowing if it is ‘good’ to eat the other or if the other is ‘good’ to eat, nor of knowing which other. One eats him regardless and lets oneself be eaten by him. (“Eating Well” 281-22)

For Derrida the “moral question is thus not, nor has it ever been: should one eat or not eat, eat this and not that, the living or the living, man or animal, but since *one must* eat in any case and since it is and tastes good to eat, and since there’s no other definition of the good [*du bien*], how for goodness’ sake should one *eat well* [*bien manger*]?” (282). Eating well then implies “*learning* and *giving* to eat, learning-to-give-the-other-to-eat” (282). Eating well should be done with respect for the other: “one must begin to identify with the other, who is to be assimilated, interiorized, understood ideally” (283). Derrida here takes into account the other, animals, different races, women and other minorities which need to eat and be eaten well and with respect by the other. For Derrida, the law, after it has been incorporated by the subject can become a good or bad object depending on the individual’s ethics and his/her respect for the other (Schwab 5).^{iv}

Thus, the law of eating well is alien to Deleuze and Guattari’s uncoded flows of desire, outside of the symbolic order. Even, however, when Deleuze’s earlier account in *The Logic of Sense* centres on Artaud’s nonsense and schizophrenic-paranoid performances as examples of a literature of the mouth and of depth, his analysis remains linked to ethics and to the question of whether it is good to eat or whether one can eat the good (Guyer 82). The good object, the voice, is a lost object that is already there, but also absent: “It is no longer a noise, but is not yet a language” (*The Logic of Sense* 194). It is the voice of the superego, of God. Artaud’s voracious orality, the “clappings, crackings, gnashing, cracklings, explosions, the shattered sounds of internal objects and also the inarticulate howls-breaths (*cris-souffles*) of the body without organs” (193), is the schizophrenic’s response to the threat of the voice which has stolen “the entire sonorous, *prevocal* system” (195). As Deleuze writes,

The moment that the maternal language is stripped of its sense, its *phonetic elements* become singularly wounding. The word no longer expresses an attribute of the state of

affairs; its fragments merge with unbearable sonorous qualities, invade the body where they form a mixture and a new state of affairs, as if they themselves were a noisy, poisonous food and canned excrement . . . “All writing is PIG SHIT” (that is to say, every fixed or written word is decomposed into noisy, alimentary, and excremental bits). (*The Logic of Sense* 88)

For Deleuze, and against Derrida’s introjection, there is no introjection of good objects, but only bad ones. In particular, the schizoid position denies any introjection or projection, eating or being eaten, and leads to a body without organs, complete–without orifices, without entries (188). Through suffering Artaud discovers the glorious body, an organism without parts and its “prodigious language” (Deleuze, *Logic* 93): “Sense reaches absolute zero” (Land, “Meat” 191).

Negating Derrida and Deleuze’s ethics, Negarestani attacks subjectivity at its roots, transforming the incorporation of the law into a mouthing, an openness that does not obey any rules, but inhabits an anonymous neutral space of thousands of mouths biting, infecting and annihilating selfhood. For Negarestani, Artaud’s schizophrenic attack on language does not only signify the “collapse of the surface” and the experience of emptiness and loss of sense (Deleuze, *Logic* 87), but opens up to a “terra incognita” of “delirious distributions of voids (oral cavity, etc.) and solids, ravening each other, mutating to things never complete” (“Acephalous Mouth”). In Black Metal the body is always at the point of decomposition, “Just the smell of rotting flesh” and the loss of all senses (Unpure “All Dead”). Mouths vomit (Cursed 666 “Torn Asunder”), scream and chew at flesh, and human flesh is “Just a meal for hungry crows” (Black Flame “The Curse of the Flesh”), worms and maggots.

Negarestani’s mouth cannot be domesticated or tamed. His attack pulverises Derrida’s deconstruction of ethics. If, as Deleuze points out, for Artaud “being, which is nonsense, has teeth” (*Logic of Sense* 91) and, as Sara Guyer writes, “Derrida demonstrates that ethics has teeth” (88), then it can be said that, for Negarestani, the mouth has fangs. It does not only disrupt ontology but infects: “one can find anything beside her/himself in a contaminative proximity” (“Acephalous Mouth”). In this respect, Derrida’s invitation to eat the good is cancelled by a mouth that is always

alien to the head, subjective agency and accountability. “The only production of mouth is infestation,” Negarestani writes, “a defiled space” and “a compositional mess of mouths half-chewing each other, mutating to things never complete, wandering in the route of becoming minor, of things proliferating themselves in failure of scales, dimensions and metrons” (“Acephalous Mouth”). This defilement and mess is significantly “anonymous to Man and Nature” (“Acephalous Mouth”). Unlike Hegel’s mouth that devours and digests/homogenises the heterogeneity of the Other, re-establishing thus the subject’s unity and integrity, for Negarestani and Sándor Ferenczi, eating and internalising a foreign object does not result in its assimilation, but its resistance to digestion and its persistence as an “alien transplant” and a trace that remains within (Mackay and Negarestani, Introduction 27, 28). In this respect, Black Metal serves subjecthood as a blackened meal in which one is both an object and anonymous material (25). “Wounded cadavers succumb/Motionless . . . They are dying/Worms retreating from putrid entrails/Tasting flesh, brains and skin/Feasting frenzied ravens and cockroaches/eating flesh, brains and skin” (UHL “Morbid Curiosity”). In such blackened landscapes animals devour human flesh and the human body is radically laid open: “Skin is torn apart,/flesh is torn to pieces/Lips are vomiting curses/My eyes are bleeding/Body is reeking – the price of human’s life./ Worms are eating me” (Odem “Tortured by Razors”).

The mouth is also a wound,⁴ a bleeding contaminating space that has been despotically assigned meaning, a penetrating, cold and logical language by “the priests and officials of the kingdom of lies and self-delusion that is the human social field” (Fisher 240). As Foucault writes, “If the disease is to be analysed, it is because it is itself analysis; and ideological decomposition can only be the

⁴ For Jean-Luc Nancy, “The open mouth is not a laceration...It exposes to the ‘outside’ an ‘inside’ that, without this exposition, would not exist....The speaking mouth does not transmit, does not inform, does not effect any bond; it is—perhaps, though taken *at its limit*, as with the kiss—the beating of a singular site against other singular sites: ‘I speak, and from then on I am—the being in me is—outside myself and in myself’” (*The Inoperative Community* 30-1). Here the open mouth signifies a limit where the I is exposed to the other and to the exposure of the other.

repetition in the doctor's consciousness of the decomposition raging in the patient's body . . . Disease is an autopsy in the darkness of the body, dissection alive" (*Birth of the Clinic* 160-1). The wounds on the surfaces and in the depths of the body are opened up to the sun of language, analysed, categorised by the measuring medical gaze. Black Metal envisions a different relation between the lacerated body and the master's gaze. In "The Coroner and the Death," Dark Faith confuse the boundaries between dead and living, the dominant gaze and the dead body: "I die day by day dissecting bodies/I get sick looking into the face of death." In the contaminative proximity of open bodies, the self is infected, gets closer to death.

Stigmata are equally imagined to be the insignia of God. Hélène Cixous's "Stigmata, or Job the Dog" (1998) explores writing through the body, the wound, psychological or physical stigmata. The death of Job the Dog, who is transformed to a God, bears the signs of violence and a history of racial hatred. But the dog's wounds talk also about the death of the father, a loss always remembered through the narrator's stigmata, the dog's bite marks on her foot. Her open mouth/wound always reminds the narrator of the past. This is a psychic wound that speaks, and writing is always the opening of a real wound in the past in order to talk about psychic wounds. "Traumatism," she writes, "as an opening to the future of the wound is the promise of a text" (*Stigmata* xiv). Texts are "the transfiguration of a spilling of blood, be it real or translated into a haemorrhage of the soul" (xi). The stigma resists healing, the "hole enters into my skin. The scar adds, the stigma digs, excavates" (xvi). Following Genet, Cixous finds in the wound "the founding secret of all major creation" ("Stigmata" 243). Wounds become fertile and writing is possible from this place where the subject of writing is scarred.

While, for Cixous, writing is a corporeal experience, for Negarestani, "the wound only diagrams radical butchery of radical openness: being lacerated and laid open" ("Acephalous Mouth"). For Cixous, it is a painful experience, the wound cannot be tamed or cured. However, for Negarestani, language is impossible: "A wound in its vicious irony is not a channel regime of hemodynamic traumas" ("Acephalous Mouth"). The wound, no matter how filthy and painful it is cannot be appropriated, diagrammed through language (however, in the case of Kenji Siratori's linguistic experiments, English language is attacked and opens up the space

for a different communication through the proliferation of pestilential assemblages).

The appropriation of the wound as a projection of a self being open to the outside is nothing but an artificial suffering. Baudrillard understands this well:

In a world of spectral identity, anything will do to restore a sense of incarnation—body-piercing and branding, brutishness and bestiality, stress and pressure, stigmata and excrement. Flow of blood, flow of meaning. Alas, this is all mere cruci-fiction. It is a suffering as artificial as the intelligence of the same name. All these bodies sacrificed, tormented and martyred in the name of a desire without organs are merely the rewriting of a lost identity: this is my body, this is my blood. But who is speaking? And this is exchanged for what? For nothing. They are bodies sacrificed to the idea of sacrifice. Orlan. Stelarc and all the rest—sacrificial mannequins. (*Cool Memories IV* 61-2)

Beyond the artificiality of such performances where the postmodern body is opened strategically to reveal nothing and becomes a fashionable way to play with identities,⁵ Baudrillard, in his discussion of *Crash*, considers the scar as an “artificial invagination,” a sign of exchange also witnessed in the primitive rituals of scarification:

Only the wounded body exists symbolically—for itself and for others—‘sexual desire’ is never anything but the possibility bodies have of combining and exchanging their signs. Now, the few natural orifices to which one usually attaches sex and sexual activities are nothing next to all the possible wounds, all the artificial orifices (but why ‘artificial?’), all the breaches through which the body is reversibilized and, like certain topological spaces, no longer knows either interior nor exterior. Sex . . . is largely overtaken by the fan of symbolic wounds, which

⁵ See also Renata Salecl’s “Cut in the Body: From Clitoridectomy to Body Art,” in *Thinking Through the Skin*, eds. Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 24-35.

is in some sense the ana-grammatization of sex on the whole length of the body—but now, precisely, it is no longer sex, it is something else, sex, itself, is nothing but the inscription of a privileged signifier and some secondary marks—nothing next to the exchange of all the signs and wounds of which the body is capable. The savages knew how to use the whole body to this end, in tattooing, torture, initiation—sexuality was only one of the possible metaphors of symbolic exchange, neither the most significant, nor the most prestigious, as it has become for us in its obsessional and realistic reference, thanks to its organic and functional character (including in orgasm). (*Simulacra and Simulation* 114-115)

Negarestani agrees to a certain degree. He argues that the wound is “a radical (and not grounded) invagination, or vagina as an excessively enriching (extravagant) experience of the wound (experience of Zero) that knows nothing of lack, loss or castration” (“Acephalous Mouth”). The wound, as in Baudrillard’s reading, becomes a sexual symbol, a vagina, but for Negarestani, it is not the Freudian vagina, but a mouth that knows nothing of loss and passive desire. It is imagined as excess and opposed to the penis as a scar, or “wasted accumulation of solid” from the healing process of the wound (“Acephalous Mouth”).

In such epidemic openness everything is filth. “[O]piness is not so clean,” Negarestani writes. Affirmation is being laid open “in blood, vomit, contagious fluids” (“Acephalous Mouth”). Black Metal is the unground of such an affirmation, “the unground of the defiled” and of a devouring openness (Negarestani “Acephalous Mouth”). In the “Mirror of Pain” the Horde of Worms imagine a scene where the body is opened, invaginated, and reflected through a mirror. While it is the “I,” mediated through its reflection in the mirror, that performs the cuts in its attempt to rid off the meat of the master, behind the veils of representation, however, the self is somewhere else, possessed by the butchery it cannot control:

Here I stand, before the mirror, shattered
Like what is left of me, so scattered
A shard for each sin hereafter
Bleed the skin, of the master

Mirror of pain
 Unleash the wrath
 Reflected dissection
 Inflicted bloodbath
 So many incisions, upon the flesh
 There's blood on the mirror
 Yet it's me who I slash
 Possessed mutilation, with me looking back
 Possessed mutilation, with me, looking back.

For Negarestani, communication of the mouth is only possible through exhumation: “The mouth takes the gluttonous and predatory lines of openness to exhume the head, ‘I’ and the rest of their productions” (“Acephalous Mouth”). Exhumation is a “brutal ungrounding process” (“Acephalous Mouth”). According to Negarestani, the mouth-vagina-anus-piss hole-dead pixel-slot, whether colonised by the language of corrupted colonisers or decolonized by the Saviours of philosophy, never revolts against its servitude but remains attached to the body as an infecting organ. Black Metal and its pest-warfare productions vomit, expel blood and bile, scream and reach beyond the limits, towards an openness where everything becomes anonymous. Subjectivity, the body and its organs become a meal, chewed, spewed, and defiled.^v Beyond the Judgement of God.

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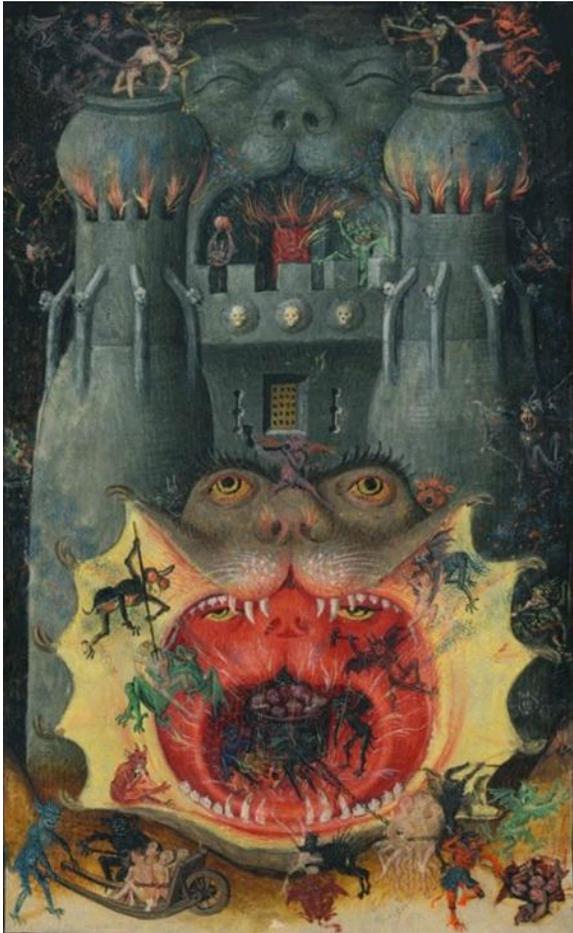
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ⁱ *acephalous mouth*: The headlessness of Black Metal as mouth is visible in the basement of Helvete, Euronymous's record shop in Oslo, which evokes the medieval representation of Hell as a mouth (Hellmouth). Opening the mouth beyond the capacity of the head to contain it, this iconographic tradition confirms the idea that the "the mouth is irreducibly cold and demonic to the head and its sphere" (Negarestani, "Acephalous Mouth").



[Hours of Catherine of Cleves, Morgan Library & Museum MS M.945, f. 168v.]

Hell is a mouth that eats its own head forever, a hole that seeks to contain the head within itself. Frozen in auto-consumption, submerged beyond alimentary relation, Hell is a body from which nothing comes out: “what goes into Hellmouth almost never comes out the other end. Shit happens a lot in Hell, but infernal shit never actually gets flushed away. It just collects” (James L. Miller, *Dante and the Unorthodox: The Aesthetics of Transgression* [Waterloo, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005], 235). Inside the bottom of Dante’s *Inferno* one sees scenes of head-eating as never-ending indigestible malnourishment: Ugolino eating, “as bread is devoured for hunger” (*Inferno* 32.127), the head of a body joined to his own, “frozen in one hole” (32.125); Satan, his lower body frozen into the eternal ice, chewing on the head of Judas Iscariot (34.61-3). Opening this space beyond openings, the iconography of Black Metal’s basement origins refuses all infernal *passage* (hell as alimentary canal or digestive path of transformative suffering through which one passes spiritually to the Godhead) in favour of hell as nest and original terminus, the occult locale from which Black Metal, eternally closed on itself, forever radiates outward upon acephalic, non-directional, and inordinate paths.



[Helvete basement with graffiti by Euronymous. Photo by Mararie.]

It is crucial, therefore, that the Helvete basement becomes Black Metal's early iconographic space in the sense of a pure interior, a domain without reference to entry or exit. Neither orifice to hell nor any kind of inversely capital infernal command central, the basement of Helvete is the place of Black Metal as pure or lipless mouth, the open domain of its terminal beginning wherein the head is always already dispensed with, where mouth leaves behind all capital mediation (blackening of orifice as such).



This is also why, in the picture of Dead's corpse used for the cover of the Mayhem's *Dawn of Black Hearts*, Dead seems close to eating his own brains and why rumors circulated that Euronymous actually did. NM

ⁱⁱ *production of meal which defines the heart of capitalism*: The complicity between meal and capitalism is scripted in the fact of *spice* as the first global commodity, a material flow or currency that exploits or unfolds to advantage the primordial unity of substance, appearance, and value (*species*), turns it into a particular 'kind' of thing. For the consuming body, spice is the object of the mouth as food is the object of the stomach, in the formal sense of that to which a power is related. Mouth is the alterative of spice. Where

the stomach is satisfied in being filled, the mouth delights in movement, its own movement around what moves within it. Stomach, throat, mouth correspond to Death, Doom, and Black Metal, respectively. Like the echoing cough that opens Black Sabbath's *Master of Reality* (1971), metal begins in the natural vibrational locus of the voice, the throat. From there it bifurcates, downward and inward into the corpus where it becomes Death, upward and outward towards spirit where it becomes Black—as indexed by the correlative differences in vocal location (guttural vs. raspy), aesthetic themes (viscera vs. landscape), etc. What then is spice to Black Metal? As sonic acapital blackening of the consuming mouth, a turning of mouth into what has eaten the head, Black Metal naturally has no place for the mercantile-orientalist love of spice, no relish of the 'spice of life'. "No spice shall ever silence my hunger / No wine shall ever silence my thirst / No delight shall ever satisfy my senses" (Avatar, "A Most Excellent Charm in Solemn Endurance," *Memoriam Draconis* [Shiver Records, 1996]). The adulterate and mutated forms of appearance-substance (flavourings) come to nil in the northern wastes wherein everything knows how to preserve itself, where life is its own spice. This means not that Black Metal has no relation to spice but exactly that Black Metal, corporeally sited in the mouth, is saturated with a kind of pure negative spice, that the cold breath of its voice amodernly inverts the ingestive flows of gustatory economy—capitalist modernity is precisely the age of flavouring—and spreads itself as blackened *species*, a cleansing pestilential *spice of death*. Black Metal spice is the flow of an inverted anagogy, a foretaste of apocalypse or acceleration of the imminent End, the sonic blasting open of the global tomb or cadaverous zone of human 'life'. Its mouth opens cosmos to the "eternal horror of its nether world of catacombs, where to the end of time millions of stiff, spiced corpses will stare up in the blackness with glassy eyes, awaiting some awesome and unrelatable summons" (H. P. Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature*). NM

ⁱⁱⁱ *the individual exists as long as s/he . . .* : Not how the diagnosis is no different from the disease—this being the same as the lie on which the capitalist subject feeds: I only exist insofar as . . . But why describe oneself at all? Better to refuse all solicitations of self-repetition. NM

^{iv} *the law*: This is how to eat well: “When Saint Francis sat down at table, he used to pour ashes or cold water or something else like that over his food, making it virtually tasteless. This used to upset this brother very much, so one day he said to the blessed Francis: ‘Look, father, I work hard to prepare a good meal so that you might find a little enjoyment, and you ruin it right away, which makes me feel very bad.’ The saint responded: ‘You do well, and you will have your reward with God. You do what you should with a good intention; but I too do with a good intention what I think I should do’” (*Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, eds. Armstrong, Hellman & Short, 3 vols. [New York: New City Press, 2001], 3.801). NM

^v What are the distinctive traits of an imagination that is as much haunted by the business of the eye and the ear as it is fed by the labour of the mouth? For Hegel, the mouth is characterized by its exterior and deep or internal functions. While on an apparent level, the mouth is the organ of taste, its internal task is that of supporting or leading to digestion. Understood dialectically, digestion is a process whereby the organism brings its relation with regard to the already internalized food/external object to a resolution. The subject cannot reclaim the totality of its identity unless it fully overcomes its food, or more accurately, the external object that now resides within the subject. The presence of a modally and structurally unalterable external entity within the horizon of the subject is deemed as a source of corrosion against the overall integrity of the subject. Although the totality of the subject/organism is effectively preserved by a uniform outer protective layer, it lacks an internal shield or a uniform means of protection in the circuitous horizon of the inside. Therefore, the defensive solution of the subject against an invasion is digestion. Since the organism lacks a uniform protection on the inside, it digests that which has already found a way into its internal domain. Food signifies the epitome of such an invasion in the wake of no inner protection. If food is never interpreted in terms of invasion, it is because the moment of eating is a subterfuge through which the organism claims its mastery over an external force that cannot be repelled: It wasn't X that invaded me, it was me who ate X. Digestion is but the traumatic materialization of this moment of

self-preserving subterfuge. Through digestion, the organism converts and incorporates the food into its own biological sequestration cycle. The subject assimilates the external entity within its horizon and thus renders the object qua food synchronous to the temporal sphere and laws of itself. Part of the external entity that is not fully assimilated is expelled from the horizon of the subject. Digestion, accordingly, exercises assimilation and ejection at the same time. It is crucial to ensure the internal integrity of the subject and the complete obliteration of the internalized object as something independent. From a Hegelian perspective, to eat food is to decimate its anonymous history in its entirety: Once the food enters my body, it should no longer matter where it has come from. That which enters the mouth must abandon its history in favour of the history of the organism into which it is assimilated. It is through digestion (i.e. assimilation and ejection) that the subject concludes its dialectic with the food qua object and reclaims its integral identity. The mouth is a singularity toward such conclusive dialectic, simultaneously a gate and a processing stage in the direction of an integral horizon (built upon sublation of all tensions) and a concluded relationship with the food (free from lingering traces of something exterior and diachronic to the subject).

In this regard, the Bataillean war against Hegel is a testament to its utter fatuity, insofar as its vector of transgression is set to cross a false and imagery boundary. Bataille's mouth as the vehicle of animality only goes so far as questioning the affinity between the mouth and the fragile subjectivity implicit to taste. Mouth is the organ through which the animal masticates the gustato-transcendental sphere of taste into shreds . . . and animality usurps humanity in the last instance. Whilst for Hegel, the mouth is the portal to the subject and its history, for Bataille the mouth is the vestibule of animality or what leads to the unmanned organism. It is precisely in leaving the conclusive dialectic of digestion implicit to the mouth unchallenged that Bataille remains true to Hegel in the last instance. Without interrogating the digestive dimension, an imagination fed as much by mouth as by eyes, ears, etc. is still an imagination restricted to the private ownership of an antiquated conception of subjectivity that has not synchronised itself with the inassimilable residues of the object. A creativity driven by such imagination is too sterile to be fertile in any direction whatsoever.

In contrast to both Hegel and Bataille, the delicate organ of human aestheticism and the vehicle of animality, it is Hungarian psychoanalyst Sandor Ferenczi—himself an inassimilable insider within the edifice of psychoanalysis—who discovers an undercurrent dynamic within the dialectic of digestion. The truth of the food qua internalized object, Ferenczi suggests, is not to be found in its capacity for assimilation or ejection but in its natural propensity toward ‘existence and persistence in residues.’ The cosmological trajectory of evolution delineates a trajectory of eating and being eaten wherein digestion is always incomplete: the human subject is defined not by its putative internal integrity but by the internal tensions enforced from within by ancestral foods (inorganic, vegetable and animal) which were never fully assimilated or ejected in the first place. These inassimilable traces or persistent and active residues are “alien transplants” (Ferenczi) whose insurmountable tensions within the subject spark eccentric synthetic solutions along which thought and imagination asymptotically synchronize themselves with residues of an outside from which the subject could never, in the first or the last instance, separate itself.

In line with amplifying the internal tensions and problematicity of Black Metal toward a senseless and meaningless but much needed implosion (on the levels of lyrics, sound, imagery and sensorial excitation), the desire for a refined as well as a transgressive (animal) Black Metal must be discarded. A Black Metal that has conceived itself by devouring and assimilating its enemies (auditory-musical or otherwise) so as to secure a zone of refinement for itself or attain a certain level of transgression against what has already been done is an impotent delusion rightfully entitled to endless contempt and derision. Just as the antiquated conception of subjectivity built on the dialectic of assimilation and ejection should be garbaged without hesitation, a Black Metal whose formalism is conceived upon the elimination of extraneous elements should also be remorselessly trashed. From a certain formalist perspective, the reality of Black Metal is that of a vast liquid surface with no canonical depth. Neither turbulent nor stagnant, the bizarrely shallow surface is made of a non-uniformly coagulated serum which is under omnipresent tensions between forces of homogeneity and heterogeneity, absolute liquefaction and cold calcification. On local levels, however, this surface is endowed

with sharp regional tensions engendered by irregular and asymmetrical systolic and diastolic parametrization of forms and sound structures which allow for the well-known ‘textural thickness’ of Black Metal that resembles a rotten metaphor for ‘musical richness’. Devoid of a canonical depth and teeming with residues of forms which have hardly anything to do with their proper former selves (i.e. ideal impositions), the thick and fattened structure of Black Metal is a bad abstraction of complexity. It is a product of tensions between at once incommensurable and emptied forms incorporated—or less formally, snatched and eaten—but never assimilated, infinitesimal residues of innumerable forms whose influence over the surface does not remind us anything like a well-curated collection of cultural heritage but a gastrointestinal system terminally upset by countless residues of undigested forms . . . or junk foods: the operatic, the tonal, the folk, the harmonic, the atonal . . . It is this space of tension that distinguishes the thick but empty integrity of Black Metal from noise, its tension-spaces and residual formalism from the schizduction of atomized randomness of noise. RN