

## The Oral Stage

Jools Gilson-Ellis

“animals can be tamed, but not mouths”  
(Winnicott 1958: 41)

The mouth is a frightening place at the best of times. We take kisses and dinners through it. My anus is taboo to you, and sticking things in my ears and up your nose is not a thing one should do,<sup>1</sup> but mouths; well mouths full of words and pasta invite me in and terrify me. And women's mouths are full of bigger dangers than I could tell you. She is voracious and terrified of eating. She feeds me. She makes milk for the tiniest of mouths: A remarkable thing. I want to mark it again. Her saliva wrapped around propriety as it is, flung violently in your face, stings like bitterness. But in my hand on your penis, my mouth-wet sends you breathing like an Olympic swimmer. She grabs my chin, spits onto a clean hanky and rubs my mouth with it. She produces food for you, but cannot eat it. I lick the thread, pass it through the eye, and pass it back to her. She keeps needles in her mouth (for safety). I have written all of this. She nags at him. He uses his mouth to tell her so, and she throws hot tea in his face. She gossips and chatters, scolds and goes on and on, chit chat chit chat chit chat. She takes her narrative between her teeth, even as some horrors are beyond mouths. Unspeakable. Hot tears, and fury and silence. My hysteria is particular - I have a mouth madness that locks me up or gushes forth like flooding streams. My mouth is bad. I am at the oral stage.<sup>2</sup> I use Listerine. Nightly. Curious dreams. I am eating the world up, or is it you I think of Jenny?

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<sup>1</sup> See Douglas 1966, and Kristeva 1982

<sup>2</sup> See Freud 1905