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Postscripts

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Given that it consists of postscripts to my previous books, reading those books is a prerequisite for an optimal reading of this book.¹

In Cairo, many shoe stores place virtually all their contents in the display window. One of these shoe stores even had a window sign with the inscription: “There is more inside!”

She was wearing such a short skirt that her underwear was easily perceptible to almost all those sitting in the café, yet what she was concerned about covering was, in a characteristic East Asian manner, her open mouth whenever her smile turned into a full-blown laugh!

Tongue-in-cheek—but for a slip of the tongue

Tongue-tied—but for a slip of the tongue

On the tip of one’s tongue—but for a slip of the tongue

While a trauma produces a corresponding post-traumatic amnesia, this amnesia in turn can prove traumatic.

The Lebanese’s postwar amnesia is a symptom of their inability to forget.

If, as the poet Rilke recommends, one should not write based directly on one’s memories, then one advantage of events that produce post-traumatic amnesia is that, by dissociating one’s consciousness from one’s corresponding memories of these events, one is spared the temptation to try to render them based directly on these memories—the drawback then is that one runs the risk of ending up working with screen-memories.

In parallel to having blanks in consciousness related to the unconscious, we have blanks in the unconscious related to a God who is the life, Jesus Christ (Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life” [John 11:25]), or the God of Islam under His name The Living (*al-ḥayy*; Qur’ān 2:255: “God, ... the Living, the Self-Subsisting. Neither slumber overtakes Him nor sleep”; Qur’ān 25:58: “the Living, Who dies not”).

The protagonist of David Lynch’s *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*, Laura Palmer, has a painting with an angel serving food to three children. The vast majority of viewers, if not all of them, initially take the painting to be fully a representation. But then the angel in the painting gradually fades as Laura yields more and more to her addiction to drugs: a warning to her to desist and change (at least for some people, addiction is just a means to do some abominable things with the excuse that one is doing them to obtain the drug). Then she witnesses the disappearance of the angel, a sign that she can no longer be redeemed. The perceptive spectator should have become aware by then that he had mistaken the figure of the angel in the painting to be a representation when actually it was a presentation (a painterly representation of an angel cannot disappear on its own), that is, that what he saw in the painting was not a representation of the angel but the angel himself (were one day an angel to appear to you, it would do so not necessarily in your room or a church or the site of an atrocity, but in a painting or film), and, consequently, that the painting included both representation (the three figures of children) and presentation (the angel), conjointly! It is most likely through being a

filmmaker of radical closure, which makes possible the intermingling of media and world—if not also through an untimely collaboration with a Christian, Muslim, or Jewish thinker—that Lynch managed to convey, if not detect, something about angels. I imagine Lynch feeling: if Laura Palmer, or at least someone who looks very much like her, can irrupt in a photograph, why not an angel in a painting? But, unlike Laura Palmer, an angel can appear in a painting even when the latter is neither in a radical closure nor itself a radical closure.

How to explain that one treats a photograph taken of one years ago as oneself at a younger age; that we are not jolted when someone says, “How much has Marguerite aged!”² while comparing two photographs of Marguerite, or refers to what he sees in a film in which we see images of Glenn Gould playing Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* as “Glenn Gould playing the *Goldberg Variations*”; that when shown a group photograph, one does not *always* say while pointing to one of the figures, “This is my image,” but always says, “That’s me!”; that many “normal” people evince superstitious unease about burning or shredding their photographs? As I wrote in my essay “Saving Face,” “unconsciously, i.e., in the unconscious, and with rare exceptions, we still generally believe in the ontological identity of model and image,” especially the analogue photographic/cinematic image, which not only looks like its referent but is also an indexical image, a product of the inscription onto the photographic emulsion of light from the object, “thus partakes of both contiguity and similarity to the model/referent,” and therefore can be used magically to act directly on the referent, since the

law of contiguity and the law of similarity are two of the main laws of magic: according to the law of contiguity “everything which comes into close contact with the person—clothes, footprints, the imprints of the body on grass or in bed ... are all likened to different parts of the body ... all can be used magically.... The second law, the law of similarity ... has two principal formulas ... like produces like, *similia similibus evocantur*; and like acts upon like.”³ He found it annoyingly inconsistent when people referred to an actor’s moving image as the actor and yet decried the persistence in the 21st century of films with plots related to magic. Given that he still dreamt, which implied that he still had an unconscious, he, consistent, would answer when asked whether he believed in magic: “Yes, to some extent.” He consulted a psychoanalyst: “I am not a filmmaker, so I do not consider the identity of image and thing in the unconscious as something to cherish and explore self-reflexively and experimentally. I rather view it as an embarrassing superstition. Were an AI program to be designed and trained through machine learning to seamlessly, and unbeknownst to the subject, alter his image in the mirror so it would appear that he was suddenly gravely wounded by a bullet, then my ambition and wish is not to be fooled by the image I see in the mirror into momentarily believing that I’ve been wounded. I wish to be cured of the primary process as such, rather than of this or that manifestation of the unconscious, for example, some embarrassing or disabling symptom. Can you guide me and help me accomplish this?” The psychoanalyst warned him: “The magical identification of image and thing was a prerequisite for your conscious identification as a child of between six and twelve months

of age with your image in the mirror, and it continues to be a prerequisite for your identification with your mirror image.” He responded that he was willing to take the risk of losing this identification.

One of the characters in a novel was initially modeled on an actual alive man, then the author made him undergo some fictional traumatic events. What would be an indication of the reach and influence of the novel? It would be for the initial model of the fictional character not to have read the novel or even heard about it and yet have *dreams* that incorporate elements and desires deriving from some intense events the fictional character underwent—this would be partly made possible by the circumstance that dreams draw on the unconscious, where there is no distinction between a representation and the thing of which it is the representation, in other words, between a fictional character and the real-life man on which he was based.

Indistinguishability of fiction and fact can be at the level of the reader, who would be unable, however perceptive he or she is, to discern which is which; the diegetic characters; the writer, for example, Alain Robbe-Grillet; and/or God, in which case, if God is characterized as the all-knowing, such a fiction provides a proof of the non-existence of God—some lost their faith while looking at Hans Holbein the Younger’s painting *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb* (1520–22), others as a result of the Shoah, others by reading the novels of Alain Robbe-Grillet.

In Lana and Lilly Wachowski’s film *The Matrix*, while a man by the name of Neo is sleeping in front of his computer,

the words “Wake up, Neo!” appear sequentially on his monitor. He wakes up, as if in answer to their *sous entend* call. The words disappear. This implies that they have achieved their function, that he is now fully awake. Here’s a first variant of this scene. He is asleep. Then the words “Wake up, Neo!” appear sequentially on his computer monitor. So he opens his eyes! But these words persist on his computer monitor! This would imply that he is still not (fully) awake. Indeed the rest of the scene confirms this, since he then sees the words “Knock, knock, Neo” appear on his computer’s monitor, followed promptly by a knock on the door, in other words, an *answer of the real* to these words. The words on the monitor disappear. He opens the door and says to the man who knocked: “You’re two hours late”—while he is indeed two hours late for their appointment, he nonetheless arrived just in time to knock on the door as the words “Knock, knock, Neo” appeared on Neo’s computer monitor! Neo then asks him: “Have you ever had the feeling that you’re not sure if you’re awake or still dreaming?” Here’s a second variant of the scene: he is sleeping; then he opens his eyes; and *then* the words “Wake up, Neo” appear sequentially on his computer monitor. Here the words would imply that he is still not awake, that he is still dreaming. And so one of the questions he has to ask himself is: what kind of wakefulness am I to achieve if, according to the words on my computer monitor, I still need to wake up? Does he have to wake up from a dream—or from the simulation into which he obscurely suspects he is immersed?

Abraham seemingly received a divine command that required “the suspension of the ethical” (Kierkegaard),

since it is unethical to kill one’s son: “God tested Abraham. He said to him, ‘Abraham! ... Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about’” (Genesis 22:1–2). Only if the ostensibly divine command that requires “the suspension of the ethical” was not received in a dream, or if in the same period one didn’t undergo one or more episodes that were dreamlike, episodes during which one felt, “This cannot be happening in reality, while awake,” and consequently wondered, “Am I dreaming?” should one go ahead and fulfill it as received. Abraham cannot be truly awake and be told by *al-Haqq* (The Truth, The Real [Qur’ān 22:6]), who “knows whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on the earth, and ... is Knower of all things” (Qur’ān: 5:97), and “who keeps a numbered count of all things” (Qur’ān 72:28), “Take your son, your only son, Isaac,” when he had two sons (and knows it); he must be dreaming (is being told, “Take your son, your only son,” when one has two sons, not a great example of the dream work mechanism of condensation?). According to the Qur’ān (37:102), “[Abraham] said: O my dear son, / *have seen in a dream* that I must sacrifice thee” (my italics). Given that Abraham received the divine command in a dream, he should have, as Ibn al-‘Arabī insisted, interpreted it. Did none of the militants of the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) who received an ostensibly religious command from their purported caliph to behead someone feel during the same period, at least for a fleeting moment, “Am I dreaming?” if not apropos of that command, then, for example, when they came across the severed heads of executed men on the spikes

at the roundabout in the center of Raqqa?⁴ If any of them had the feeling that they were not already awake, but still dreaming, then they should have woken up to interpret what appeared to be a divine command requiring “the suspension of the ethical.” Fundamentally, an ostensibly awake mortal, who insofar as he or she is dead even while still physically alive is dreaming, should interpret a divine command that appears to require “the suspension of the ethical”; it is only in the case of a human who is not a mortal, that is, who is not dead even while still physically alive, that a divine command that requires “the suspension of the ethical” is to be carried through without interpretation. Since a human who is solely alive, not a mortal, that is, not dead even while still physically alive, does not have an unconscious and so could not be said to have been dreaming in however small a degree when he received the command, had the resurrected brother of Mary and Martha, who used to be called Lazarus prior to his resurrection by “the life,” received such a divine command, he would not have had to interpret it.

“And I woke up” should almost always trigger one’s suspicion that the one recounting the dream needs a confirmation from the listener that he or she has actually woken up, that he or she is not still dreaming.

A lucid dreamer is someone who can interpret the dream while still in it.

Can the one who feels (given the strange space and time he is undergoing, etc.) that he is dreaming but who appears in the dream also in other guises who are unaware

that they are in a dream be said to be a lucid dreamer? No.

He suddenly had the sinking feeling that he was now in hell or dead, and that he would be in this condition forever. And then, in desperation, he thought, with whatever reason he could still muster, that he might still be able to escape his present predicament if he was not actually dead or in hell but dreaming, and that it would be a salutary outcome for him to wake up even if by doing so he would disappear altogether from existence as the specific figure in the nightmare since the interpretation of the nightmare could reveal that it was another who, through the dream work mechanisms of condensation, displacement, etc., assumed this guise in the dream and therefore that it would be this other person who would actually wake up in the world.⁵ What was odd was that having come up with the idea of waking up as a way to escape the “nightmarish” situation, he became aware that, uncannily and self-reflexively, everyone else in the nightmare was sleeping, and then noticed that some of these sleepers began on different occasions to wake up in the dream or, as he assumed since they disappeared from the dream, into the world of consensual reality. For example, as the man napping on a bench in the park in his nightmare began opening his eyes, he heard the fluttering of a bird’s wings and instinctively turned his head toward the sudden sound, only to then notice on turning his head back toward that man that he had disappeared. But was it that odd actually to see some of the figures in his nightmare wake up and thus disappear from his dream once he considered waking up to be perhaps the only way

to escape his “nightmarish state,” when these figures would most likely turn out, once interpreted successfully, to be also him, and when he, therefore, would in some manner be waking up partially from the dream through them? Usually, we do not *fully* awaken from dreams since some of our guises and avatars in them continue to be part of the dream, if not necessarily asleep in it—is it the case that one is never present in the guise of one figure only in the dream (even though this figure is itself, through condensation, composite) so that when it awakens one awakens fully? He surmised that in order to fully awaken from the dream, all the figures who were his guises in the dream and who were composed through the dream work mechanisms of condensation, displacement, considerations of representability, etc., had to do so, and thus suspected that even when he woke up he did so only partially, since he was still dreaming through one or more of his guises and representatives in the dream, one of whom had his voice, another his eyes, another his idiosyncratic manner of pronouncing or italicizing certain words. In order to awaken altogether, all one’s representatives and guises in the dream have to awaken—only then is one a lucid awakened. That not all the figures who are the dreamer’s representatives in the dream awaken implies that the dream contains other wishes it had not yet fulfilled by the time the dreamer awakened partially. One wakes up partially when one of these wishes is fulfilled. That we have an unconscious while seemingly fully awake implies that we do not actually fully awaken from the dream, that we continue to dream in the guise of one or more of our representatives in it; part of the difficulty of *fully* waking up from the

dream, even a nightmarish one, is that *all* of the figures under which I am (my ego is) represented in the dream have to have their wishes satisfied. That’s why when one awakens as one of one’s representatives in the dream, someone can rightly alert one: “Dream on!” So while “dream on” could mean, “You consider that you have awakened into reality, but the realm into which you’ve awakened is another level and instantiation of the dream realm” (Ibn al-‘Arabī considered that this life is a dream, and that the dream we have while sleeping is a “dream within a dream [*manām fī manām*]”), it could also mean, “While under one of your representatives and guises in the dream you’ve awakened into the world of consensual reality, you are still dreaming in the guise of some of your other representatives in the dream, and so you have actually awakened only partially.” Paradoxically, if said in a certain manner, “Dream on!” can act as a koan, jolt one into full wakefulness, that is, awaken all of the dreamer’s representatives within the dream—producing a kind of satori. Perhaps some mystics, Sufis, and Zen Buddhists have had a dream in which all their representatives in the dream woke up, whether simultaneously (in a kind of satori) or not. But were such a thing to happen in the case of *every* dreamer and every partially awakened person, were all the figures that represented each dreamer in his or her dream to all wake up so that each dreamer would have awakened under all his or her guises, and thus would have awakened fully, dreaming would disappear from the world of the awake (is there any other world?)—and the state of wakefulness itself would consequently be transfigured. Jesus said to his ostensible disciples concerning physically dead Lazarus, “Our friend Lazarus

has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up” (John 11:11). That’s exactly what the Christ did, he woke up Lazarus for good: the resurrected brother of Mary and Martha never dreamt again. No one could have correctly said to the resurrected brother of Mary and Martha, “Dream on!”—it is he who could have told anyone he met other than the Christ, “Dream on!” One can say to anyone prior to the coming of the Messiah/Mahdi: “Dream on.” The initial test, if not the test *tout court*, of whether one is really a follower of the Messiah/Mahdi is whether when he not just returns but initiates his full, manifest presence, one awakens from the dream in the guise of all one’s representatives in it and thus awakens fully, without an unconscious, for the unconscious is an indication that one has not fully awakened from the dream, that in the guise of some of one’s representatives in the dream one is still dreaming, still in the dream. The Messiah/Mahdi awakens his real followers fully into the redeemed world; thenceforth, when they sleep, they do so dreamlessly. If there a biological necessity to dreaming then it will have to be achieved by other means in the messianic period, or else those present when the Messiah/Mahdi comes would be provided with another (kind of) body. When the Messiah/Mahdi comes, those who are not fully awakened from the dream, under all their guises in it, no longer wake up from it, but are fully and conclusively absorbed in it. If the dream is the madness of the night, then the Messiah/Mahdi makes possible for some people, if not for all, to be done away with any residual madness of the night during the day, in other words, to have *a//* their representatives in the dream wake up from it. The Antichrist would dissuassively whisper in the ears of the Messiah before

the latter fully manifests himself and ushers in the time of redemption, which would end for good if not sleep then dreaming: “Would full awakening, that is, lucid awakening, a state without an unconscious, actually end up feeling like insomnia, an extended insomnia?”

“This world in its present form is passing away” (1 Corinthians 7:31). How wrong is “Saint” Paul on this point (as on many others)! This world is not passing away according to relativity, with its block universe of spacetime; Paul’s words apply in the messianic era proper, with the Second Coming, when things pass away but last nonetheless because they are willed, that is, willed to recur eternally.

The Messiah is already here but in the mode of the forthcoming or of occultation. In this sense, we can view the Antichrist as a plagiarist ... of the forthcoming.

What was he waiting for? He did not know. When one day his wait ended, he recognized what he was awaiting.

Waiting is essentially a waiting for the impossible, for example, the return of a Mahdi who was never born and so never existed (at least not in the world, though he possibly existed in the imaginal world [*‘ālam al-khayāl*]).

The Messiah may arrive too late, not in relation to the deduced time of his Parousia based on various more or less authoritative traditions (notwithstanding the many other authoritative traditions that explicitly warn against calculating a definite date for his coming), but in relation to an intensification of the wait to such a degree that the

reign of waiting proper is established, when it becomes the case that “whatever the importance of the object of waiting may be, it is always infinitely surpassed by the movement of waiting.”⁶

While most Twelver Shi'ites and Jews are, like most other humans, unaware of the waiting they undergo as a result of the finiteness of the speed of light and all other signals, they acknowledge that they belong to the regime of waiting since they profess to be waiting for the Mahdi and the Messiah, respectively. Are they, unawares, waiting, more radically, for the Messiah/Mahdi to end *all* waiting, including the (often unacknowledged) waiting introduced by the finiteness of the speed of light and all other signals (it cannot be that one waits for the Messiah and then when he at long last comes, one then waits [imperceptibly] for light to reach one from him)?⁷ If they are, then they have to assume that the association of the Messiah/Mahdi with waiting for over a millennium now is merely an accident and quirk of history. I prefer, as far more fitting, to think that it implies that waiting is related essentially to the Messiah/Mahdi. If it is indeed the case, then while making us at long last contemporaries of him, each other, and the universe at large, by doing away with the finiteness of the speed of light and of all other signals, the Messiah/Mahdi will not as a result end all waiting, but will rather, in the process, transfigure it, turn it into something different from our exoteric, common understanding and experience of it: a weird waiting when everything arrives without delay. We would accordingly be awaiting messianic time for a transfiguration of waiting, for a radically different waiting. How would the Messiah/Mahdi usher

in the epoch of the will, an epoch when everything that is present has been willed to recur eternally? He would do so by willing the eternal return of various events. Anyone living in the messianic epoch is *ipso facto* willing the eternal recurrence of whatever is present then. But willing something to eternally return includes an implicit waiting that does not take any time.

Would one always have an impression of déjà vu in the epoch of the will, that is, the epoch when everything that exists is already willed to recur eternally?

Bergson writes: “Every moment of our life presents two aspects, it is actual and virtual, perception on the one side and memory on the other”⁸—the latter being “a memory of the present.”⁹ Deleuze elaborates: “What constitutes the crystal-image is the most fundamental operation of time: since the past is constituted not after the present that it was but at the same time, time has to split itself in two at each moment as present and past, which differ from each other in nature.... Time ... splits in two dissymmetrical jets, one of which makes all the present pass on, while the other preserves all the past.... The visionary, the seer, is the one who sees in the crystal, and what he sees is the gushing of time as dividing in two, as splitting.”¹⁰ It would be more accurate to say that it is *in a dream* (in the Bergsonian, extended sense of this term) that the seer sees “the continual duplicating of his present into perception and memory,”¹¹ that he, a dreamer then, dreams this continual duplication. When not in the (Bergsonian) dream state, when, that is, one is largely focused on the present for survival, which requires one’s attention to the action

in preparation, then “in a general way, or *by right*, the past only reappears to consciousness in the measure in which it can aid us to understand the present and to foresee the future. It is the forerunner of action.... If a perception recalls a memory, it is in order that the circumstances which have preceded, accompanied and followed the past situation should throw some light on the present situation and indicate the way out of it.”¹² To perceive both the present moment and its corresponding virtual past moment, one has to be dreaming at a deeper level than the Freudian dream, which still selects memories based on their usability by the dreamwork to fulfill some unconscious wish. Indeed, perceiving both the present moment and its corresponding virtual past moment is the deepest level of the dream state, since “what can be more unavailing for our present action than memory of the present? Rather would any other kind of memory be entitled to lay a claim, for it at least brings with it some information, though it be of no actual interest. Alone, memory of the present has nothing to teach us, being only the double of perception.”¹³ To someone who “becomes conscious of the continual duplicating of his present into perception and memory,” one is justified in saying, “Dream on!” even though they are not lying in bed with eyes closed, but standing in front of one with open eyes. While making possible a dual perception of the present moment and its virtual past, the (Bergsonian) dream state disperses this perception among so many others to such a degree that it is largely lost to one. Unlike the cases mentioned by Bergson, in which there is perception of both the present moment and its coexistent virtual past moment, and which would have been induced by a maximal impairment

of “attention to life” and therefore could have been undergone only in a (Bergsonian sort of) dream or in “cases of insanity” (Bergson refers to a case researched by Pick¹⁴ and to ones researched by Forel¹⁵ and Arnaud¹⁶ in which the subjects suffer delirious ideas of persecution; and to a case researched by Kräpelin¹⁷ in which the subject is a maniac with hallucinations of vision and hearing, etc.),¹⁸ the case of Proust’s narrator in *Remembrance of Things Past* is that of someone who was neither in a dream state (in the Bergsonian sense) nor insane, but who, rather, maintained a modicum of attention to life, hence someone who perceived the present moment conjointly with the virtual past moment that was simultaneous not with it but with a similar previously present moment: “At the call of the link-man I had barely time to draw quickly to one side, and in stepping backwards I stumbled against some unevenly placed paving-stones.... As I recovered myself, one of my feet stepped on a flagstone lower than the one next it. In that instant ... I was possessed by the same felicity which at different moments of my life had given me the view of trees which seemed familiar to me during the drive round Balbec, the view of the belfries of Martinville, the savour of the madeleine dipped in my tea and so many other sensations.... I passed rapidly over all these things, being summoned more urgently to seek the cause of that happiness with its peculiar character of insistent certainty, the search for which I had formerly adjourned. And I began to discover the cause by comparing those varying happy impressions which had the common quality of being felt simultaneously at the actual moment and at a distance in time, because of which common quality the noise of the spoon upon the plate, the unevenness of

the paving-stones, the taste of the madeleine, imposed the past upon the present and made me hesitate as to which time I was existing in.... The being within me which sensed this impression, sensed what it had in common in former days and now, sensed its extra-temporal character... Only that being had the power of enabling me to recapture former days, Time Lost, in the face of which all the efforts of my memory and of my intelligence came to nought.”¹⁹ So, in the case of Proust’s narrator, the present moment did not get connected through a recollection-image to the previous present moment that was similar to it and that would be useful in some respect for the required response, as would happen in the case of someone who is highly attentive to life, the man of action; nor did it get connected to the virtual past moment simultaneous with it, as would happen in the case of the one who is in the state of (Bergsonian) dream or is insane, inattentive to survival and to the renewed pressing demands of life; it got connected, rather, to the virtual past moment simultaneous with a previous present moment that’s similar to it. If one can experience even once a past moment as coexistent with the present moment, then that implies that the past is preserved; indeed, once he experienced such a temporally dual state, Proust’s narrator no longer worried about death: “My apprehensions on the subject of my death had ceased from the moment when I had unconsciously recognised the taste of the little madeleine”²⁰ (/ would say this applies to physical death but not to death as undeath).

“The young man will smile on the canvas for as long as the canvas lasts. Blood throbs under the skin of this wom-

an’s face, the wind shakes a branch, a group of men prepare to leave. In a novel or a film, the young man will stop smiling, but he will start to smile again when we turn to this page or that moment. Art preserves, and it is the only thing in the world that is preserved. It preserves and is preserved in itself (*quid juris?*), although actually it lasts no longer than its support and materials—stone, canvas, chemical color, and so on (*quid facti?*).”²¹ Paradoxically, at the most fundamental level, only what can preserve and is preserved in itself (immaterially or virtually) has to be preserved (materially): art, thought, literature, dance, great films and music and architecture, as well as the past. Deleuze and Guattari seem so bent on stressing the preservative function of art that they omit the past as another example, if not the primary example, of what preserves and is preserved in itself immaterially or virtually, something Deleuze had written about extensively in his eponymous book on Bergson, his two volumes on cinema, and his book *Proust and Signs*, where he notes, “The past does not have to preserve itself in anything but itself, because it is in itself, survives and preserves itself in itself—such are the famous theses of [Bergson’s] *Matter and Memory*.” Can one properly paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari thus: “The past preserves and is preserved in itself (*quid juris?*), although actually it lasts no longer than its support and materials ... (*quid facti?*)”? If yes, then what are the support and materials of a (virtual) past that preserves itself? It must be the block universe of space-time of relativity. Does this mean that without the preservation of the “past” as “previous” (from the perspective of the thermodynamic arrow of time in a universe that began in low entropy) present moments in the block uni-

verse of space-time of relativity there would be no preservation of the (Bergsonian) virtual past, the past proper?

Although he consciously intends to change the traumatic past through time travel (thus through travel to another, in this case largely similar, branch of the multiverse), and although he believes that the fate of the world depends on him, the protagonist of Terry Gilliam's *12 Monkeys* is not the agent of change but of repetition, since, traumatized, he is subject to the compulsion to repeat. He unconsciously repeats, including through bungled actions that thwart or sabotage those intentional or unintentional actions by others that would have led to variations in relation to his original branch of the multiverse. In order to successfully change the past, he and others have to complement each other: he forces the repetition, but then cannot change anything; once the repetition is induced, then it is others, who were not traumatized—at least regarding the problem he requires to be fixed—and so are not subject to the compulsion to repeat, who have the (far better) chance to make a difference, to initiate changes.

While watching a strong film, for example, Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958), one cannot imagine it to be any different, in other words, one is unable to imagine variants of it. Given that my *Vertiginous Variations on Vertigo* (110 minutes, 2016) is a strong film, while watching it a discerning spectator would not be able to imagine it to be any different, for example, for its story and events to be exactly as they are in Hitchcock's *Vertigo*! In the particular case of Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, this impression of foreclosure of variation while watching such a strong film is reinforced by its

status as an iconic film, which makes tampering with it feel like an act of profanation; and by its content, since the fetishistic disavowal of the melancholic lover Scottie has for effect that the next woman he goes out with, Judy, is not allowed to manifest any variation whatsoever in relation to his dead beloved, Madeleine: she has to dress exactly as Madeleine did, her hair has to be styled in the same way Madeleine's was and have the same color as Madeleine's, etc. And yet, sooner or later after watching Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, a perceptive spectator would recognize that it is associated with variation, since, itself a film adaptation, it presents a variation on Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac's novel *D'entre les morts* (1954; English translation: *The Living and the Dead*, 1956),²² and since its protagonist, Scottie, tries to do a variation on what happened between him and (the woman he assumes to have been) Madeleine in the tower, where, having failed to follow her up the stairs, he saw her fall to her death—indeed he confesses to Judy as he takes her back to the site of the trauma: "One doesn't often get a second chance.... You're my second chance, Judy." (I was asked during the premiere of my conceptual film in Beirut: "Why did you change into a dream the scene that shows Judy's memory of the moment when, dressed and looking exactly like Madeleine, she arrived at the top of the tower where Madeleine's scheming husband was waiting for her in order to then throw his wife to her death?" "Well, it's a dream-like scene to begin with, isn't it? In my variant of the film, it is when Scottie has turned Judy into a look-alike of Madeleine that he dreams the scene in Hitchcock's film in which there are seemingly two Madeleines at the top of the tower. Given that according to Freud a

dream is a wish fulfillment,²³ what is the wish fulfilled by this dream? The fulfilled wish is for Madeleine's death not to have resulted from his playing the psychoanalyst when he is not actually one, and to place the blame on someone else, Madeleine's husband.") What is the status of the director's cut beyond being "a version of a movie that reflects the director's original intentions, released after the first studio version,"²⁴ that is, once the interferences of the producer have been undone by restoring the original ending, or by including scenes that were excised by the studio, etc.? Is it the version in relation to which no variations by someone else can be successful, that is, avoid making it fall apart "two days" later?²⁵ Or is it, on the contrary, the version that allows the largest number of creative variations on it, for example, in other branches of the multiverse—or in the labyrinth? If it is the latter, I can well imagine a director contesting the version released by the producer and demanding a director's cut precisely because he felt that the already released version into which certain scenes and/or shots were inserted despite not being approved by him allows for far fewer variations, at the limit only sloppy ones that fall apart before they are screened. Many if not most people view Scottie's remodeling of Judy to look exactly like Madeleine following the latter's death as excessive, driven by his melancholic fetishism, yet a person who would do what he did would not, unlike in Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, stop once he made Judy a look-alike of Madeleine, all the more since, soon after he was released from the psychiatric hospital, he went to the building in which Madeleine had resided and initially misperceived a blonde woman coming out of the building as Madeleine; to Ernie's Restaurant, where he sat

at the counter, as he had done the first time he saw Madeleine, looked sideways towards the table where she was seated, and briefly hallucinated the blonde woman who left her table and headed toward the exit with her partner as Madeleine; and to the Palace of the Legion of Honor, where he stared from a distance at a blonde woman seated in front of the Carlotta Valdes painting, expecting her to be Madeleine.²⁶ While these visits show that, melancholic, he is fetishistically disavowing that she is dead (Octave Mannoni's formula for disavowal is: "I know very well, but all the same ..."), they also imply a compulsion to repeat his previous encounters with Madeleine. In my *Vertiginous Variations on Vertigo*,²⁷ where Judy is not a woman who impersonates Madeleine in a scheme devised by the latter's husband to kill his wife, but someone Scottie meets only after Madeleine had already died and then induces her to wear clothes and a hairstyle à la Madeleine's, Scottie, following an interval in which it seems that he was fully satisfied with the moment of full similarity between Judy and Madeleine, when Judy could very easily have been mistaken for Madeleine come back from the dead, persuades Judy, who loves him intensely and thus finds it difficult to decline his requests, however unreasonable and counterproductive they seem, to participate in a reenactment of the exemplary episodes of his falling in love with Madeleine: at Ernie's Restaurant, where Judy, now dressed as Madeleine and having the same hair color and style, sits at the same table where Madeleine was seated when Scottie first laid eyes on her; at the Palace of the Legion of Honor, where Judy now sits in front of the Carlotta Valdes painting while he stands at the other side of the gallery looking at her ostensibly incogni-

to; at the florist shop Podesta Baldocchi, where she now buys the same kind of bouquet Madeleine had bought and then places it on Carlotta Valdes's tomb at the Mission Dolores graveyard while he follows her at a distance; at the Golden Gate Bridge, where she jumps into the bay so he can, as he did with Madeleine, act as her savior and then take her back to his apartment, etc. One risk of Scottie's making Judy redo what Madeleine did is that she might become possessed by Madeleine, who was possessed by Carlotta Valdes; in my *Vertiginous Variations on Vertigo*, Judy ends up spending some of her time at the McKittrick Hotel, where Carlotta Valdes lived for a while. I assume in *Vertiginous Variations on Vertigo* that while out of her developing love for Scottie Judy initially yields to his requests to act in the scenes he models on the ones he lived with Madeleine, at some point along these re-enactments she wonders what would happen once they would have repeated the few episodes of Scottie's love affair with Madeleine: would he lose all interest in her and leave her, or would he tolerate her so that he would have the opportunity to ask her from time to time to repeat again what Madeleine did in these episodes—or would he end up asking her to repeat the scene at the Spanish mission tower, which led to Madeleine's death? And so she laments and protests, "Why are you doing this? What good will it do?" Distraught, he feebly answers, "I don't know. No good, I guess." Exasperated, she exclaims: "I wish you'd leave me alone. I want to go away." She suspects that he will not let her simply leave him, but will, having been a detective for years, track her as he had done with Madeleine. And indeed he soon follows her in an unscripted visit to McKittrick Hotel ... where she dis-

appears! During the Q & A at the Beirut premiere of the film, I was asked "Why was the film premiered in a double-feature program with Hitchcock's *Vertigo*?" I answered: "Nowadays many young people have not seen Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, hence it seemed sensible to show Hitchcock's film before showing mine, so young spectators would have the opportunity to recognize the variation. But perhaps it was not a good idea to title my film *Vertiginous Variations on Vertigo*, since this title seems, if one reads its 'Vertigo' as Hitchcock's film rather than the sensation, to preclude the possibility that someone who had watched my conceptual film first and then Hitchcock's film would consider that the latter is a variation on my film, and would then bemoan the changes Hitchcock has made, since they unexplainably suspend the melancholic lover's drive to repeat and reenact."²⁸

The 180-degree over-turn, which surreptitiously overturns the dead's turn to answer a call, is disheartening since it has for consequence that even the most persistent lover, the melancholic one, that is, the one who proved to be unable to accomplish the work of mourning the dead beloved, ends up concluding that he or she must be mistaking him or her with someone else with a similar back, and so abandons the one who, unbeknownst to the melancholic, had kept turning to his or her calls, alas unsuccessfully.

One can have an unrequited love toward a woman, but can one have it toward a city? I doubt it.

He experienced the relation between a woman and a city

mostly in terms of competition: each time he received a job offer to move to another city, he would “coincidentally” meet in his city of residence a woman to whom he felt very attracted. So, when he had a positive preliminary Skype job interview for a teaching position in a city abroad and was waiting to see if he would be invited as a finalist for an interview there, he expected to encounter a woman with whom he would be infatuated or fall in love at first sight and/or hearing. Inversely, the moment he began to be enamored of a woman, he suspected that one of his recent job applications for a vacant professorship position would be answered positively, and indeed each time he would soon after be asked for an interview and then offered the job. So, each time, he had to decide whether to stay with the woman with whom he was beginning to be enamored or to leave for the new thrilling city where he was offered a job.

They inquired of him how beautiful she was; while all asked him, “Are her eyes beautiful?” “How about her lips?” “Her legs?” only two asked him about her smile, and only one asked him about her laugh. But nobody asked him about her manner of weeping! “Is she your type?” How to know that before he had seen and heard her weep, whether when saddened, or when joyful, with tears of joy? During their second argument, she started weeping—it is then that he felt he really loved her. Unfortunately, she was not the type prone to weep while watching films, so she was worried, given how much he liked and appreciated the way she wept, that he would occasionally unconsciously make her very sad just to savor her manner of weeping.

It was love at first hearing—not even of her voice or laugh, but of the clearing of her throat.

Perceptive as she was, she soon sensed that what he desired the most about her was her voice. As a result, it would have been easier for her to be naked in front of him than to give him her voice, for example, record it for him.

It used to be that he could detect the beginning of infatuation, if not of love, by the urge to write letters—some of these letters ended up in two of his books. But now, he could detect the inception of an infatuation with a woman through the expectation of *receiving* letters from her. When she did not on her own have the impulse to write letters to him, perhaps because she was intimidated by his books and did not consider herself a writer but a filmmaker, he explicitly asked her to write him letters. She ended up doing it. And yet how disappointingly did the correspondence start: with two consecutive letters written at 11 am and 7 pm—that is, with an eight-hour interval! He waited for the letters to be written at shorter and shorter intervals—and late at night, for example, at 2:30 a.m. then at 2:55 a.m. then at 3:15 a.m.—a sign that the writer of the letters can no longer sleep, and that having written a letter she is unable to wait to receive one in response, and so starts to write a new one minutes later, and then yet another one minutes after she has finished writing the previous letter, the newer letters functioning as a kind of postscript, since the first one has not meanwhile been sent. In her final letter to him, she wrote: “Presently I cannot be away from you even for the duration of writing a letter”—the last postscript in that letter

dated from shortly before their scheduled next meeting. Part of the correspondence between a lover and his beloved is bound to be reduced to just the sender and receiver's names (he sent her letters partly to see their names placed next to each other) and dates, the ones when one of the two (who may belong to a religious sect that has been awaiting the Messiah or Mahdi for over a millennium) could no longer wait and must have had the feeling that the usual "passage of time"—in which he could write—had ostensibly come to a stop since the only possible event, his meeting her or receiving a new letter or phone call from her, continued to be in abeyance. At one level she was writing to *him*, as was made clear by the letter in which she divulged to him some matters she had never told anyone before—indeed some of these matters were ones she had not told even herself, since, still repressing them, she betrayed them to him through parapraxes. And yet even that letter was not written *solely* to him. For one, given that a letter can be lost and then found by someone other than its explicit, exoteric addressee, we unconsciously write letters that take these others into consideration to some degree. Additionally, given that she would reread again and again the previous letters she had received from him while longingly waiting for the new one, her letters were very early on written in such a way that they deserved to be read more than once, indeed ended up very quickly becoming ones deserving of publication, in other words, publishable in principle, indeed likely to be actually published since they were addressed to a published writer, hence in principle addressed to all readers. After reading several of her letters, he told her that he wanted her to write letters *only to*

him and not also esoterically to the dead, each of whom is bound at some point to feel, as the Nietzsche who died before dying ("This autumn ... I twice attended my funeral") did, "Every name in history is I," and hence assume the position of the person with whose name as its addressee the letter starts; nor also to the (Lacanian) Big Other, and, more fundamentally, to God, who would then not know about them except insofar as he himself was (as recurrently recreated) one of His infinite Self-Disclosures—he acknowledged that his demand was extremely difficult, if not well-nigh impossible to achieve. When she seemed baffled, he told her: "You have through the letters, in the way they are written, to do away with the Big Other, and hence with ghosts." She felt a wave of happiness when she remembered that he had responded to a mutual friend with: "Love, at least between a man and a woman, who can perpetuate the human race, happens as it were in the absence of all others, as if everybody else had died or disappeared, indeed should even imply the absence of the (Lacanian) Big Other." Quantum communication will not make interception of messages impossible, it will only make such interception detectable to the sender and the receiver; what would make this interception impossible is doing away with the Big Other. (A psychoanalyst should manage not to have what he or she is told by the analysand be registered in the Big Other, but, on the contrary, to withdraw it even from the paradigmatic figure and, for the religious, the basis of the Big Other, God, "the Subject supposed to know," since He is said to be "Knower of all things" [Qur'ān: 5:97]. A psychoanalyst is to accomplish this possibly through making what is said by the analysand part of the *Deus absconditus*, a kind of

unconscious of God, who otherwise has names and attributes, for example, *ʿAlīm* [Knower].²⁹ Consequently, gradually, along the “analysis,” the psychoanalyst—and God—is to be viewed less and less as “the subject supposed to know”—at least regarding the analysand. Hence one can fittingly paraphrase the Zen saying “Before I studied Zen, mountains were mountains, and water was water. During my initial studies of Zen, mountains were no longer mountains, and water was no longer water. But now, after enlightenment, mountains are just mountains, and water is just water” thus in terms of psychoanalysis: before the psychoanalysis the psychoanalyst was supposed not to know, during the psychoanalysis he or she became the subject supposed to know, then, at the end of the successful psychoanalysis *and* signaling this successful end, he or she was no longer the subject supposed to know, this time because he or she had subtracted from the Big Other whatever was unknown to the consciousness of the analysand yet, as implied by his or her symptoms, registered in the Big Other. The psychoanalytical ordinance that the patient “must ... entirely renounce any critical selection ... and say whatever comes into his head, even if he considers it incorrect or irrelevant or nonsensical, and above all if he finds it disagreeable to let himself think about what has occurred to him”³⁰ presupposes that once the free association has provided the psychoanalyst with “the material which will put ... [him] on the track of the repressed complexes” and led to a successful outcome, whatever was said or disclosed during the psychoanalysis will disappear altogether from the Big Other—while it was before registered in it, for those who could interpret it, in a singularly cyphered un-

conscious message, for example, in the guise of a symptom. The task of the psychoanalyst is to get some of what is repressed uttered without, for that matter, being registered in the Big Other, indeed in such a manner that it is subtracted from the latter even in the guise of God—in this sense, Freud, who published case studies of his psychoanalysis of the “Wolf Man,” “Little Hans,” Dora, etc., was a flawed psychoanalyst, since he inscribed the sessions in the Big Other. The resistance of the analysand, which is initially triggered partially by the worry that what he or she will have said, according to the interpretation, between the lines will be registered in the Big Other, is later triggered by the apprehension that the Big Other will be annulled, at least for him or her, as a result of the success of the psychoanalysis.) He told her, “If you do not manage to exclude others, and more generally and radically the Big Other, from the correspondence with me, then write to the Jacques Derrida of the “Envois” section of his book *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*. In that section, the reader is not provided with any of the epistolary responses of the addressee of the letters—although some of the published letters refer explicitly or implicitly to such a response. Not including the responses to the letters is not to be viewed as simply an expedient manner to accommodate the majority of the readers of Derrida’s book, who care for what Derrida wrote in his letters but not so much or not at all for the addressee’s responses. When the omission of the letters of the presumed addressee was the writer’s choice rather than the editor’s and/or publisher’s, the effect of the omission is radical: the position of the addressee becomes structurally open to anyone who cares to assume it by

writing a letter of response to the writer's letter. Indeed for a writer not to include the addressee's letters in a published correspondence would be to *invite* letters from some other person who would assume the vacant position of addressee." She asked him, "Will you one day publish your letters to me? If you do, you have to publish mine alongside yours, otherwise by responding to your published letters someone could rightly assume the position of their addressee," and then she objected the following to what he had advised her: "How can I write to Derrida when he's already dead?!" In response, he read to her these lines from Deleuze's book *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*: "Kafka distinguished two equally modern technological pedigrees: on the one hand the means of communication-translation, which ensure our insertion and our conquests in space and time (boat, car, train, aeroplane ...); on the other hand the means of communication-expression which summon up phantoms on our route and turn us off course towards affects which are uncoordinated, outside co-ordinates (letters, the telephone, the radio, all the imaginable 'gramophones' and cinematographs ...). This was not a theory, but Kafka's daily experience: each time one writes a letter, a phantom consumes its kisses before it arrives, perhaps before it leaves, so that it is already necessary to write another one,"³¹ then mused, "If a ghost/vampire is bound to intercept the letters, should one short-circuit the intended, initial addressee and write, from the outset, to the ghost/vampire—indeed write letters only to ghosts and vampires? Paradoxically, then, a letter addressed to a ghost has the best chance of reaching its destination. If letters, as a mode of telecommunication, have structurally some-

thing spectral about them, at least in the sense that they have every chance of being intercepted if not also diverted or replaced with other letters by ghosts, then it is valid for letters to continue to be written even after their explicit addressee has died, if not begin to be written only once the addressee has died. But would the letters then be intercepted ... by another ghost than the one to whom they were addressed explicitly, or reach the other addressee of every letter, the dead-as-undead, who assumes every name in history?" and then predicted: "Once it is done, it will feel strange that nobody explicitly answered Derrida's letters in *The Post Card*—or for that matter any writer's letters that are ostensibly addressed to someone whose own part of the correspondence is not included, in accordance with the wishes of the author or with his or her consent, in the published compilation of the writer's letters. Published letters that imply that they were answered but are not accompanied by the epistolary response are awaiting the reader who proves to be their addressee by writing letters in response to them." She read the "Envois" several times and tried to compose in her mind a portrait of the woman to whom they could have been written, and then to respond to Derrida's letters with the sort of letters the other woman might have written; while she considered that she was writing fictional letters, she, like most readers of *The Post Card*, "thought" that Derrida, or at least the one who wrote the letters in the "Envois" section, must be reporting factual information when he refers in his letters to a meeting or a phone conversation between him and his addressee at a specific place and date, or an appointment between them that failed to materialize due to specific obstacles. He had

to intervene so that she would not go further along this approach, since by doing so she would end up haunted, if not possessed, by the presupposed addressee of the letters. He told her that that was not the right way to accomplish what she set out to do: she had initially to write letters in response to those of Derrida's that did not refer within them to some factual events that he and the addressee ostensibly experienced together (a phone call, meeting, etc.) at some past date, decades ago, so before she was born, and *only then* to tackle letters that include such references to ostensibly factual events that are said to have happened between Derrida and the addressee, basing herself then on the previous letters she wrote to him, and on who she is rather than on who the presumed addressee was. "Derrida writes in his letter dated September 9, 1977, 'You remember, we had spoken of jumping over toward Sicily that summer, we were right near it, you were against it when misfortune would have it that, on the coast south of Rome, that accursed phone call broke out over us, truly a blow and the worst is that nothing had obliged me to call that night myself';³² while these details would have been taken as probably pertaining to actual events were Derrida's letters accompanied by those of his ostensible correspondent, in the absence of the latter and once a reader answers the letter that was published without its assumed epistolary reply, they become outright fabrications, or are at least affected with a coefficient of fictionality—especially when they contradict what is written in the reader's response letter in lieu of the letter missing from the epistolary book." Derrida affirmed in *The Post Card* "the impossibility that a unique addressee ever be identified," then asked, "Do I have to

invent another name for you so that you give us the chance? or that the other finally awakens, another of your secret names?"³³ These remarks that introduce his book's epistolary section, "Envois," apply to all published correspondence in which the author opted not to include the letters of the addressee, or agreed with the publisher or editor not to include them; paradoxically, it is more difficult to answer when there was no presumed though withheld answer to the letter in the first place, for example, in a situation of unrequited love. Having suggested that she write letters to Derrida in response to his letters in *The Post Card*, which are not accompanied by those of his presumed, ostensible addressee, he was somewhat worried about her: would she not only begin to mourn him, whom she began to read during the process of writing the response letters to his unaccompanied letters in the published book, but also become melancholic with regard to him since her letters in response to his letters that imply a response yet are not accompanied by it do not seem to acknowledge that he is dead since they respond to an invocation by him, albeit through the structure of the published correspondence? Indeed he would not be surprised were she one day to call him in a panic and say that she has just received a letter signed "Derrida" in answer to her latest letter responding to one of his letters in the book. Derrida: "Save [*fors*] a chance. A correspondence: this is still to say too much, or too little. Perhaps it was not one (but more or less) nor very correspondent. This still remains to be decided."³⁴ Yes indeed, whether it is a correspondence remains to be decided, since it depends on the chance that one of the readers responds to the letters. If the reader is sensitive to Derri-

da's "Envois," then he or she should be aware that the correspondent's answer is, structurally, *à venir* (to come), if not feel consequently an ethical responsibility to respond to these letters. Once someone answers Derrida's letters can another, and yet another or others, answer it too, in other words, is the vacant position of the addressee open to the risk of a competition between pretenders? What could be a criterion for the selection of the rightful addressee or addressees of Derrida's letters in *The Post Card* from among the postscript pretenders? Derrida: "As for the 'Envois' themselves, ... you might consider them, if you really wish to, as the remainders of a recently destroyed correspondence. Destroyed by fire or by that which figuratively takes its place, more certain of leaving nothing out of the reach of what I like to call the tongue of fire, not even the cinders if cinders there are. Whatever their original length, the passages that have disappeared are indicated, at the very place of their incineration, by a blank of 52 signs and a contract insists that this stretch of destroyed surface remain forever indeterminable. In question might be a proper name or a punctuation mark, just the apostrophe that replaces an elided letter, a word, one or several letters, in question might be brief or very long sentences, numerous or scant."³⁵ Notwithstanding that "the contract insists that this stretch of destroyed surface remain *forever indeterminable*" (my italics), I expect that sooner or later after some reader responds properly to Derrida's letters in *The Post Card*, a book missing the addressee's (implied) epistolary responses, the missing passages in Derrida's own letters would appear again, possibly in a manuscript of Derrida that would soon after be discovered some-

where, or would become determinable in emulations of the Derrida letters in question in a number of simulations long before the point where things can be said to be "forever," that is, "just" before Frank Tipler's Omega Point, this answer of the "real" providing a sure sign that, unlike the others, she is the rightful addressee.

Her previous lover, an imperceptive jealous man, forced her to wear the veil even though what was most sensual about her was her voice; her subsequent lover, a perceptive jealous man, let her dress the way she wanted, however scanty and daring were her clothes, but had her wear an aural prosthesis that distorted her voice, thus veiling it or at least its sensuality.

A jealous erudite woman was angry with her beloved for going out, in the guise of a variant of him, with another woman in another branch of the multiverse.

Does willing the eternal recurrence of being with one's beloved remain limited to the branch of the multiverse where it was accomplished, so that it is possible for another variant of one in the countless branches of the multiverse that are quite similar to this one to will the eternal recurrence of being with another beloved?

To say that, according to (the Many-Worlds "interpretation" of) quantum mechanics, "everything that can happen does happen" (the subtitle of Brian Cox and Jeff Forshaw's *The Quantum Universe*, 2012) in the various branches of the multiverse incorrectly gives precedence to possibility over actuality. I come across an attractive

woman; if in none of the branches of the multiverse I end up going out with her, then it will not even occur to me as a possibility that we could go out together. If in all the branches of the multiverse something does not ever end up occurring, then *one cannot even entertain it as a possibility*. For something to be possible, it has to be actual in one or more branches of the multiverse at some point in time.

She wished to be loved—or else to be desired totally. She wondered: were her professed lover to lose her irremediably, would he fail altogether in the work of mourning, which would imply that she is irreplaceable, proving unable to go out with any woman who did not have *all* her characteristics and *only* these, in other words, who was not *after* her, that is, subsequent to her chronologically but also modeled on her (“after: during the period of time following (an event) ...; in imitation of: *a drawing* [or a painting] *after Millet’s The Reapers*”³⁶ [*Oxford Dictionary of English*, 3rd edition)? To check whether that would be the case, she abruptly left him! She was cruelly disappointed that the woman with whom her ex-lover ended up falling in love was not *after* her. Now that she had lost what she felt was the love of her life, the issue was no longer to love and be loved, but to be desired totally. She soon learned that the one who felt *jouissance* on seeing her bleed and/or on drinking her blood did not do so on seeing her urinate and/or drinking her urine, and vice versa, and therefore that the likelihood that she would be desired totally by a single person who was not in love with her was almost nil, and so she surmised that in order to be desired totally she had to find the panoply of men

and woman whose various and complementary desires and perversions would make her desirable totally. And so she went out with someone who desired her voice, then another who desired her eyes, then another who desired her breasts and thighs, then another who desired her manner of walking, then another who desired her smile, then another who desired perversely her urine, then another who desired perversely her blood, etc., and, having years earlier watched David Cronenberg’s film *Dead Ringers* (1988), in which the following exchange between a woman and her gynecologist takes place, “‘Let’s take another look.... That’s fantastic.’ ‘I’ve never had anybody say that about the inside of my body before.’ ‘Surely you’ve heard of inner beauty? I’ve often thought there should be beauty contests for the insides of bodies. You know, best spleen ... most perfectly developed kidneys.... Why don’t we have standards of beauty for the entire human body, inside and out?’” she searched hard for and found a very rich woman who had the intention of surgically replacing her heart with another’s not because hers was failing, but because the other woman’s heart was more “beautiful,” and so in her will she bequeathed her heart to that woman who needed it not as “a matter of life and death” but aesthetically and thus luxuriously; and she found a pervert who fantasized about eating her liver, and so she asked a doctor friend to extract it surgically from her future corpse for that pervert’s delectation; and she made sure prior to her death to find a pervert who would desire her corpse and she bequeathed it to him in her will.

As someone who loved her, he loved in her, as part of her, blood, urine, etc., instead of feeling *jouissance* toward

them—were he to feel *jouissance* toward them, then that would mean that they are part-objects, thus don't belong to her, that for him she is an appendix to them.

She, undiscerning, believed that, however refined and singular his house was, once it was a matter of sex, it would be quite easy for her to arouse him. But, unlike those who limited their refinement and singularity to their style of writing or to their manner of dressing or to the interior design of their apartments, but when it came to sex were easy to satisfy, he demanded singularity, whether in terms of refinement or abjection or both, in sex. The elaborate specification and singularization of what he required in order to get aroused meant that in all likelihood he would be aroused only once, if at all. He considered any orgasm prior to the actualization of his elaborate singular imagined phantasy a premature ejaculation, and so when such a thing kept happening for a period of no less than six months, he consulted a psychiatrist as well as a psychoanalyst.

Starting to work as a prostitute, she was for a while shocked, amused, and bewildered by what seemed to her ever new imagined phantasies, more and more outrageous ones, but soon enough she was partly relieved and partly disappointed by how repetitive they turned out to be. Imitative in general, most people are that too in their imagined phantasies; a creative, singular imagined phantasy is as rare as a great painting or film, if not rarer. Regarding phantasies, the task of an artist or a filmmaker or a writer is not so much to render and convey already existing ones, but to inventively compose new ones that

sooner or later get appropriated consciously or unconsciously by others.

One should not feel guilty about not rushing to actualize one's imagined phantasy as soon as one can do so; a phantasy that is actualized as it appears in one's imagination is not worth actualizing—at most it is to be hallucinated. Would one wish to actualize the phantasy rather than simply enjoy it in imagination, including in a hallucinatory manner, were it not that the version of the phantasy in one's imagination is not really the full, real phantasy, and that it is in the process of the actualization of the imagined phantasy that the full, real phantasy is sometimes revealed? In the past, every time he had tried to actualize his imagined phantasy, so-called objective reality undermined and aborted it. Once again, it seemed to be aborting it, and yet this time what it undermined proved to be not really part of the phantasy, while what it introduced, seemingly by chance, proved to enhance and perfect the phantasy in comparison to how it appeared in his imagination, and thus to be part and parcel of it. The opportune, felicitous moment to try to actualize a phantasy is not when one feels that all the elements that are present in one's imagined phantasy are available in what appears to be objective reality, but rather when ostensible objective reality can contribute to the actualization of the full, real phantasy, which goes beyond what one imagined, indeed beyond one's wildest imagination. In the process of trying to actualize his imagined phantasy, he became aware that the subjective composition and scenario he had considered to be his phantasy was a deficient, unsatisfactory version of what he, on encoun-

tering it ostensibly in the world, discovered to be his real phantasy. It turned out that the latter included many elements that were not part of his imagined phantasy, and which, therefore, he would not have tried to actualize. As long as one has not tried to actualize one's imagined phantasy, one has no chance of encountering, possibly through an objective return of the repressed or irruption of the foreclosed, those elements that belong to the full, real phantasy but are missing from the imagined version of it either because they were repressed or foreclosed; or because, being a bad interpreter of one's desire or drive, a bad artist regarding it, one was unable to optimally convey one's desire or drive, including to oneself. So, a phantasy, which is the most singular about one (indeed, it would be quite appropriate for one's epitaph to be a laconic description of one's phantasy), is also that which cannot be revealed in its fullness and actualized without the unforeseen contribution of strangers ignorant about one's subjective, imagined phantasy, as well as of happenings if not also meteorological conditions over which one has no control. Hence, one would know one's actual phantasy only in collaboration with ostensible objective reality (this implies that the unconscious is not reducible and limited to the psyche of the subject but exceeds it, though not necessarily because it would be a collective one). Was this collaboration of reality in the actualization and specification of one's phantasy another phantasy, a more primary one, an ontological one (which would imply that there is something reflexive about any phantasy)? It would be if one assumes a radical distinction of the world and of what is subjective. Reality can intervene while the phantasy is being actualized, or subsequently

by reproducing exactly what the seemingly hallucinatory component contributed, thus confirming it. A teenager phantasized about sleeping with her adoptive father. Then, during her sexual intercourse with him, she felt a drizzle of blood fall on them and stain the bedsheet. Thus, it turned out, her phantasy was not limited to having sexual intercourse with her adoptive father but included also that while doing so a drizzle of blood would fall on them. She did not wash the bedsheet but kept it stained as a token of their lovemaking and also as a confirmation that a drizzle of blood fell on them during the intercourse. Nine months later, she gave birth on the same bed (when questioned by her relatives and friends, she refused to say who was the father). While placing the bloodstained bedsheet in the laundry basket, she was suddenly seized with a wild idea; she compared the bedsheet on which she had her delivery and the one on which she had her sexual intercourse with her adoptive father: *all the numerous* bloodstains superimposed perfectly! Why is one reluctant to actualize one's phantasy? Fundamentally, it is not so much on account of some embarrassment about its becoming public, but due to an obscure intuition that the conditions for its full-fledged actualization, beyond one's wildest imagination, are not ready yet; and/or an intuitive foreboding about experiencing an indiscernibility of what is ostensibly objective and what is ostensibly subjective, and hence about possibly becoming psychotic. For, while prior to the actualization of one's phantasy, one can differentiate between one's imagined version of it and reality, during the actualization of the phantasy, which extends beyond one's imagined version of it, there is an intermingling, if not indiscernibility, of what is ostensibly

subjective and what is ostensibly objective. In the following sense, a phantasy cannot be actualized in objective reality: when it is actualized, what one took for the objective world is affected with a degree of subjectivity, if not, in case one's hold on reality is tenuous, of unreality. Anxious concerning the resultant indiscernibility of what is ostensibly objective and what is ostensibly subjective, or paranoiac that one is the victim of a conspiracy, given that strangers and seeming coincidences contributed perfectly to the actualization of one's phantasy, one may unconsciously resort to hallucinations or bungled actions to abort the full actualization of the phantasy. And yet, that not only once but several times different unknown passersby said the right words in the appropriate intonation at the right moment, as if on cue, is not necessarily to be interpreted paranoically as implying that they know one's phantasy and are part of a conspiracy, but could indicate that they played their part in it by (what the surrealists termed) *objective chance*. One should not panic while the fundamental phantasy is being actualized, so as not to waste it, but should gracefully accept the graceful collaboration, through *objective chance*, of ostensibly objective reality in its actualization. A steady phantasist is not so unsettled by the weird actualization of his phantasy and by the resultant indiscernibility of what is ostensibly objective and what is ostensibly subjective that he misses enjoying it. Having enjoyed an unexpected actualization of one's phantasy, would one try to repeat it? I doubt it, since one would be aware that while some of its spatial arrangements of people and objects, etc., can be reproduced at some subsequent time, others, for example, the utterance of certain peculiar phrases at a specific

moment by an unknown passerby, are not reproducible.

"The vampire scribbles in a notebook: 'Love can subsist despite the break of (organic) death, continue into (un)death, as the subtitle of Jalal Toufic's book *Undying Love, or Love Dies* indicates, but can it resist the drive? I dread experimenting the answer with my beloved. I'll try to do my best to be already satiated each time we meet.'" ³⁷ And yet she again and again demanded a test of his love: "Do you love me? Prove it!" And so he yielded and took the test! Paradoxically and humorously, it was a test that she, who did not know that he was an undead and therefore subject to the drive and *jouissance*, was bound to miss. Now that he took the test, he knew for sure that he loved her, since it is his love for her that made it possible for him to resist the drive, what otherwise cannot be resisted—he also knew that it would nonetheless be wise not to repeat this test. "Junk yields a basic formula of 'evil' virus: *The Algebra of Need*. The face of 'evil' is always the face of total need. A dope fiend is a man in total need of dope. Beyond a certain frequency need knows absolutely no limit or control. In the words of total need: '*Wouldn't you?*' Yes you would. You would lie, cheat, inform on your friends, steal, do *anything* to satisfy total need" ³⁸ (William S. Burroughs). Some get addicted not primarily for the *jouissance* the drug induces in them, but because they intuit that the addiction to the drug is their way to forgo choice, including, indeed mainly, in relation to robbing their old mother, betraying their friends, etc. "Beyond a certain frequency need knows absolutely no limit or control": this is the drive, a need beyond the pleasure principle, no longer constrained by it, indeed beyond

life altogether, and that's why one of its most exemplary bearers is someone who is no longer alive, the undead. Although it has the form of a question, an addict would not understand Burroughs's aforementioned "*Wouldn't you?*" as a question; he or she would take it to mean, "You would, for sure." If you consider (Burroughs's) "*Wouldn't you ... lie, cheat, inform on your friends, steal, do anything [to get your drug]?*" a question, then you are not, or you are no longer, basically an addict even if your answer to it is: "Yes, I would." Similarly, if you consider "Am I dead?" a question, then you are not dead—even if your answer to it is: "Yes." "*Wouldn't you [do anything to get your drug]?*" and "Am I dead?" are two examples where the real question is whether one takes them as questions.

The devil does not tempt one with providing one with the object of one's desire, but with the drive for *jouissance* and addiction. Basically, the devil's bargain is to exchange desire for drive. Once one is addicted, he may address to one the following *seeming* question: "Wouldn't you sell your soul to get your 'drug'?"

If one cannot stop doing something, is doing it an ability?

Since desire is subject to a calculus of pleasure and pain and is ultimately conditioned by the need for survival, which would allow one to desire again and again, one can resist actualizing one's desire, at least immediately, that is, one can defer one's desire, if the pain outweighs the pleasure or if one's survival, a condition of possibility of renewing the pleasure, would be at stake. Were several armed men to enter someone's house and threaten him,

"If you continue drinking, we will shoot your family members sequentially and then kill you," and nonetheless he persists in doing so after they shoot his wife, and then his son, and then his daughter, and even after they point their guns at him (which implies his readiness to forgo future occasions for drinking and future other pleasures to continue drinking presently), then this would indicate that he is driven to drink alcohol, in other words, that he is addicted to it. The vampire cannot on his own resist the drive; he is ruled, indeed repeatedly overruled, by the drive, addicted, under the sway of something unstoppable, irresistible. In Abel Ferrara's film *The Addiction* (1995), vampirism is treated as an addiction explicitly, indeed graphically: craving blood as she begins to turn into a vampire after having had her blood sucked by one, the protagonist fills a needle with the blood of a sleeping homeless man and then injects his blood into her veins. I can well imagine Ferrara's vampire exclaiming to someone who had assumed that her relation to blood was a combination or alternation of desire and biological need: "Little do you, who just quoted Leviticus 17:14 to me, 'The life of every creature is its blood,' know about me. Unlike the Renfield of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, who is not yet a vampire when he exclaims, 'The blood is the life!' I am addicted to blood, so for me blood is dearer than life." Strictly speaking, one is addicted only if one would do *anything* to obtain what functions for one as a drug, and if, having obtained it, it is impossible then for one on one's own not to partake of it, even if doing so would, in the case of a vampire, change one's beloved into a vampire, hence make her thenceforth undergo a driven, addicted existence. So, if one considers that the vampire's relation to blood is similar to our rela-

tion to food, then one would read the vampire's refraining from drinking the blood of Mina in Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* in one way, for one can resist eating even if hungry, indeed even if starving, while one would read it differently if one considers that Dracula's relation to blood is that of the addict to his drug, since in the latter case, by managing not to drink Mina's blood even though she's ostensibly right next to him and defenseless, he is doing something impossible (some time after he managed to resist the drive to drink her blood out of love, she, still not knowing that he's a vampire who is driven to drink her blood, lamented, "I wish I could be certain that you love me"!). Unlike in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and its filmic adaptation by Coppola, where Harker is seemingly provided with the opportunity to make a choice at the apparent threshold to the undead's realm, the castle's gate, when actually he had unawares already made an irreversible choice by crossing the one-way threshold to that realm, the point by which all his companions had, on one pretext or another, deserted him so that he was left alone, the potential victim of the vampire in Ferrara's film has a fundamental choice to make: maintain his or her ability to choose or forgo this ability through addiction and the drive for *jouissance*—though even in the latter case he or she can basically still choose, albeit now only through and with the assistance of some other who is not addicted himself or herself. While Hegel presented the dialectics of desire in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, which Kojève rendered in this manner, "Human Desire must be directed toward another Desire. For there to be human Desire, then, there must first be a multiplicity of (animal) Desires. In other words, in order that Self-Consciousness be born

from the Sentiment of self, in order that the human reality come into being within the animal reality, this reality must be essentially manifold. Therefore, man can appear on earth only within a herd. That is why the human reality can only be social. But for the herd to become a society, multiplicity of Desires is not sufficient by itself; in addition, the Desires of each member of the herd must be directed—or potentially directed—toward the Desires of the other members. If the human reality is a social reality, society is human only as a set of Desires mutually desiring one another as Desires.... Hence, anthropogenetic Desire is different from animal Desire (which produces a natural being, merely living and having only a sentiment of its life) in that it is directed, not toward a real, 'positive,' given object, but toward another Desire.... *Desire directed toward a natural object is human only to the extent that it is 'mediated' by the Desire of another directed toward the same object*: it is human to desire what others desire because they desire it,"³⁹ I would, partly through Ferrara's *The Addiction*, advance a dialectics of the drive, of what seems not to admit of dialectics. In *The Addiction*, a woman pushes another woman into a dark, deserted alley and says to her: "Look at me and tell me to go away. Don't ask. Tell me!" When the other woman responds, "Please," the assailant slaps her. The slapped woman pleads: "Please don't hurt me." "You think that is going to stop me?" "Please." The assailant exclaims, "Collaborator," and then sucks her blood. "Why didn't you tell me, 'Get lost!' like you really meant it?" But how can one fully mean it if one has an unconscious? I can well imagine the following variant of what the vampire says to her likely victim in Ferrara's *The Addiction*: "Neither try to forcibly push me

away, for you won't succeed; nor cry and kneel and entreat me, 'Please go away,' for that means that part of you wants me to suck your blood so you would fall prey to *jouissance*, or is at least curious about having your blood sucked and about its consequences. Just tell me in no uncertain terms to go away! If instead you evince interest in or curiosity about what I will do to you, then I will assuage momentarily my craving for blood by sucking yours." Were a vampire whose relation to blood is one of addiction and *jouissance* to boast that he managed on his own to control or even free himself completely of the addiction, then he is not being truthful, for he must have at some point ran into a potential prey who told him to go away in no uncertain terms. The addict, for whom the other has been reduced to the object that induces *jouissance* in him, or to a means to obtain such an object, can still be interested in the other as a subject mainly insofar as the latter is not himself under the sway of the drive and therefore can still make a choice that does not have to be mediated by someone else's choice. The addict cannot choose *directly* whether to continue or to cease to be an addict, for by choosing addiction he has already chosen no longer to choose by determining the response of his future self, precluding the latter, through addiction, from choosing anew; he has to proceed dialectically through another's choice. The more instances he encounters of the failure of others not to choose addiction, the more this reinforces his belief that he could not have chosen otherwise, that "it is the nature of the organism" to crave *jouissance*. But if the other chooses to continue to choose, declines the temptation to become an addict, he undermines the addict's current belief that it is the nature of the

organism to be addicted or desire this state, thus provides the addict with a *variant* of the original situation of choice: yielding to the addiction or refraining from doing so (exceptionally, love provides the addict with the possibility of direct, unassisted choice concerning whether to yield to the addiction or to resist it, though solely in relation to the beloved). Hell is a realm where, driven and addicted, one cannot draw on the resource of the other's choice in order to choose again, either because, hell being labyrinthine or comprised of the karmic projections of one's mind, one is all alone there; or because the others in hell are also addicted. Therefore, hell is a realm where the drive does not exceptionally admit of dialectics, hence where there is absolute addiction.

One can try to fulfill the desire for the end of desire either through addiction, that is, through the replacement of desire with the drive ("I got addicted because I wished to get rid of my desire but also of the desire of the other, to treat him not as a desirous subject but as solely an object of my drive and *jouissance*, or a means to obtain the object of my drive and *jouissance*"), or through detachment, so, paradigmatically, the Buddhist path. The route through the drive is usually more readily taken because, unlike the route through detachment, which requires renewed attainment, it seems self-perpetuating since it soon enough leads to addiction. Once he, who had become addicted in the first place to be done with desire, managed to be freed of his addiction, he chose this time around the Buddhist manner of distancing oneself from desire, through detachment.⁴⁰

Hell is the realm where the drive and addiction is solely about what induces *jouissance* in one and what, thus, functions as one's drug. So, if there is hell, then this implies that addiction outside it, in the world, is not purely or mainly related to the "drug" and *jouissance* but is also if not largely an excuse and license to do all the depraved acts that are misreckoned as merely desperate means to get the "drug" (the degradation in hell, for degradation there is there too, is intrinsic to *jouissance* and the compulsion to repeat rather than, as in the world, brought about largely by what one has to do in order to get one's "drug": not long after one's addiction, more and more people or voices blurt, "You look like shit!" and one "one-self" complains in the intervals between taking the drug, or in the aftermath of yet another episode of *jouissance*, "I feel like shit"⁴¹).

The prospective victim of the vampire yelled: "Is there a way you would desist from sucking my blood?" "Why would I do that, suck your blood?" "I assumed that you would do it because, we are told in Leviticus 17:11, 'the life of a creature is in the blood.'" "Once, out of desperation, I heeded these words from the Bible and sucked the blood of someone—but continued to be dead! I feel the urge to drink your urine: Piss in my mouth—that has proved repeatedly to induce *jouissance* in me. Here's another example of what induces *jouissance* in me: reading the following words and/or seeing or hallucinating what they depict: 'If, while a bee is feeding, its abdomen be carefully cut off, the insect will go on drinking with the honey flowing out of it again behind.'⁴² 'I,' dead, feed on *jouissance*."

Is the following scenario incongruous? An ISIL foreign fighter hailing from London or Vienna teams up with several of the group's adherents and kidnaps an Iraqi Shi'ite psychoanalyst and his boy and places the father behind a one-way mirror to watch the following weird ordeal to which his son would be subjected: the boy would be told in no uncertain terms: "If you do not have sexual intercourse with your mother, we would kill your father"—as it were promising/"threatening" to actualize for him either of the wishes, the original one and the derivative one, of what Freud termed the Oedipus complex. Following this ordeal, the ISIL abductors would tell the boy, "You may have heard your Shi'ite, in other words, *bāṭinī* [esoterist], father mention that we acknowledge solely the exoteric sense of any text or phenomenon (hence your mother did not appear in another guise in the dreamlike situation we devised, but in the form in which you usually recognize her in waking life); that we dispense with interpretation [their hostage thought to himself: my father repeatedly said to me: "No one can dispense with interpretation—unless one is dreaming or already in the messianic period"], indeed that we have waged a ferocious fight against anyone who advocates interpretation, whom we consider a closet *bāṭinī*"; and they would tell the father: "We want you to interpret what would have struck your boy as dreamlike if not a dream since it allowed him to fulfill his supposed unrealized if not repressed Oedipal wish to have sexual intercourse with his mother (and, by having him appear to be forced to actualize it, fulfilled his secondary wish not to acknowledge that performing this act is his wish)." The psychoanalyst would have responded: "Perhaps one needs to resort to psychoanalysis when

one has fulfilled one's unconscious wishes directly, rather than through symptoms and parapraxes, even more than when one has repressed them!" Amid all the thoughtless atrocities and abominations they perpetrated, why not this cruelly humorous experiment in relation to the Oedipus complex? An ISIL that could have devised such an experiment would have negated itself.

One of the signs of how much I despise the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS, aka ISIL) is that I cannot envision one of its adherents who felt *jouissance* on severing the head of his hostage and then on repeatedly watching the video recording of the beheading; raping Yazidi women and girls; and torturing anyone he deemed one of the "crusaders, *rāfiḍah* (Shi'ites), secularists, apostates, Jews, and *kuffār* (non-believers) in general" inquiring of other adherents of the sect what Baudrillard imagined someone asking during an orgy: "What are you doing after the orgy?"⁴³

If hell is a projection, albeit a distorted one, of one's phantasies and dreads related to *jouissance*, then even though one suffers horribly there, it has much more to do with oneself than much of what one encounters in the world, for example, the minibuses waiting for riders in Kaslik, Lebanon, at 6:31 p.m. on May 23, 2017, hence once fully ready for it by being worthy of it, one stays there forever.

In Lana and Lilly Wachowski's film *The Matrix*, Morpheus confesses to Neo during their first meeting after releasing him from the simulation in which he had spent all his life, "I feel that I owe you an apology. There is a rule that

we do not free a mind once it reaches a certain age. It is dangerous. They have trouble letting go. Their mind turns against them. I've seen it happen," and in Chris Marker's *La Jetée* we are told by the narrator, "This was the aim of the experiments: to send emissaries into Time, to summon the Past and Future to the aid of the Present. But the human mind balked at the idea. To wake up in another age meant to be born again as an adult. The shock would be too great." Is one to say something equivalent concerning the dancer during his first projection as a subtle body in dance's realm, with its specific altered movement, space, time, music, and silence? When the dense dancer moving in the world is projected in the dance realm as a subtle body, does he have all the skills that he needs from the get-go, or is he to acquire them gradually so as to be able to adroitly navigate that realm with its variant movements, space, time, silence, and music, or at least to rewire his reasoning and mental intuition to be adequate, indeed affined to his or her subtle body and its abilities, for example, the direct connection of non-contiguous spaces and times; and the immobilization under silence-over, which, while it would most likely be viewed by non-dancers as merely an inability to move, is actually the genetic element of motion, thus makes possible all sorts of extraordinary movements, for example, slow-motion? For instance, when the subtle dancer encounters for the first time a two-dimensional section of space in the realm of dance, does he become unsettled, come to a stop in front of it and hesitate, or does he immediately intuit that he can nonetheless penetrate it by creating space at the pace of his movement? One trains to be a dancer, then, once one reaches that state, one projects a subtle dancer

in the dance realm, who can affirm truthfully, “I’ve always been in the dance realm”—at least in the sense that as a subtle dancer he has never been in a different kind of space and time. Prior to his projection as a subtle dancer in dance’s realm, the dancer was in a space and a time that are not really those of dance, and in a body that is not optimally that of dance. Once he is projected in the dance realm as a subtle body, then at long last he has a body that’s optimally fit for dance, and he deals with a silence and music, namely silence-over and music-over, that are the silence and music of dance. On being projected as a subtle dancer in dance’s realm of altered movement, space, time, silence, and music, the dancer feels that he or she has until then been in exile; that he or she is in his or her element at long last, albeit a dangerous, risky element, given that, for example, he or she can become immobilized indefinitely under silence-over (silence-over is not the result of the absence of sounds; it rather hushes sounds, including those that the dead and dancers may make to counter it, and, consequently, immobilizes the dead and dancers [*still*: “adjective: ‘not moving or making a sound’”])—one’s element and home is not where one is sheltered but where one feels the blooming of one’s essential nature. The immobilization the subtle dancer may undergo in the dance realm, during which he or she does not experience anything at all and is subtracted from any “passage of time,” is not an exile from that realm but one of the latter’s features. On the other hand, insofar as the dancer projected as a subtle body in dance’s realm continues to be conjointly a dense body in the world, he continues to be in partial exile.

Auto-movement, in other words, auto-association, of ideas on their own, out of one’s control, is a danger not only to the thinker (for example, Nietzsche during his psychosis) but also to thinking. Auto-movement (for example, that of the shoes the dancer is wearing [Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger’s *The Red Shoes* (1948)]), made possible by the immobilization of some other dancer, itself made possible by silence-over, appears to be a danger to the dancer but not also to the dance, since it is one of the latter’s features. But is it actually a danger to the dancer when it makes him go on dancing indefinitely? It appears to be so only from the perspective of the dense body of the dancer outside the dance realm, for whom this feature of the dance realm that he or she is experiencing vicariously and virtually through his or her subtle version there would be a danger were it to be imposed on him or her, indeed would lead to that dense body’s death. The subtle body of the dancer in the dance realm dances indefinitely, indeed *cannot* but dance indefinitely, whether or not the shoes he or she is wearing become animate as a result of the immobilization of some dancer earlier (or later), since anything one does in the dance realm, including lying in bed or sitting on a chair or playing the piano, is *ipso facto* a dance movement within that realm, even if such a movement is one that when made by the dense, physical body outside the dance realm would not have projected a subtle body of the mover into the dance realm—for it to be a dance movement outside the dance realm too, it has to project a subtle version of the one doing it into dance’s realm.⁴⁴ The auto-moving shoes the dancer wears in *The Red Shoes* render in a distorted manner a feature of the dance realm: the subtle dancer is al-

ways dancing. Since the dancer as a subtle body projected in the dance realm is always dancing there whatever he or she does, it is misleading to imply that he could not continue dancing indefinitely, that he would sooner or later die of it (as in *Giselle*, where the Wilis, undead maidens who were betrayed by their lovers, force two bereaved lovers to continue dancing till they nearly die of exhaustion; *The Red Shoes*, etc.). Could a group of ISIL adherents have come up with the following manner of torturing a dancer: “Given that you agree with the assertion of your teacher Jalal Toufic that dancers are always dancing, we are going to do an experiment to check the validity of this assertion: we will spare your life only if you go on dancing without respite, indefinitely”? The dancer would have tried to explain to them that this applies to the subtle body of the dancer in the dance realm, but he would have failed miserably given ISIL’s doctrinal refusal, if not inability, to admit what could be viewed as an equivalent of the esoteric meaning in another field, dance’s realm of altered body, space, time, music, and silence.

While watching a dance film, the spectator may see something flat, for example, a painting. He should not assume that the painting is necessarily in three-dimensional space, for it may be that space is two dimensional there, so that the resultant space is a fractional one, between 2 and 3, in which case were he or she to fire bullets at the painting or flat surface or bomb it, including with a nuclear bomb, he or she would not be able to bore into it. The film spectator witnesses a dancer approach the painting then penetrate it seamlessly. How did he do it? As a dancer, he did it by creating space.

A dance student trains in front of the mirror for hours every day for many years. But the dance student’s training also includes practicing the same movements with another dance student, again and again. In the latter sort of training, the dance student is bound to feel, however fleetingly, as she sees her partner mirroring her every gesture and movement, that this *semblable* is her “mirror image.” So part of the function of training in front of a mirror is to allay the anxiety that would likely be triggered by the training dance students’ inability to distinguish themselves from their partners; while the main function of training with a partner doing the same gestures and movements is to prepare the dancer to accept that once he or she is in the dance realm, he or she will most probably not look the same—in this sense, it is as if the subtle dancer is to the other side of the mirror.

Two dancers begin a pas de deux. This projects subtle versions of them in the realm of dance. There, one of them sits at a piano. We hear music as he moves his fingers on its keyboard. The following are three possibilities, as well as two derivative ones, for what could happen next. First possibility: he is producing the music and then he moves away from the piano to engage in another activity, so the music ceases as he does so. Second possibility: while he is continuing to produce the music, silence-over immobilizes him. Third possibility: while he is playing the music, there is an approach of silence-over, but it so happens that music-over appears just in time, replacing the silence-over. But here we have two derivative possibilities: a) the music-over happens to sound the same as the music-in he is producing, so that—unless he were to then

momentarily leave the piano to join his partner in a pas de deux but the music continues nonetheless—only those tipped by my writings would be aware that he can continue playing the piano and producing part of the music because music-over is making this continuation possible by countering and replacing the silence-over; b) the music-over sounds different from the music-in he is producing, and then it is clear that there are two kinds of music at that point (which may result in a cacophonous sound), one of which, the music-over, is, through countering and replacing the silence-over, the condition of possibility for continuing to produce music-in. The music intrinsic to the dance realm is music-over even if it does not appear every time the dancer is projected in dance's realm; while the music the dancer might play is extrinsic to that realm.

Given that there is untimely collaboration between thinkers, musicians, and writers, it is possible to one day come across an aphorism from a historical time prior to John Cage's writings on silence and my writings on silence-over that reads: "Insofar as I, a mortal, am alive—and not a dancer—there are always sounds." Those who would have read this aphorism at that antecedent period would probably have been intrigued by the presence of "and not a dancer" and "always." Would the writer of this aphorism have been able to indicate on what grounds he had included these words in it? No. Those among the readers of the aphorism who had already listened to Cage's lecture "Silence" or read that lecture in his book *Silence* would have appreciated the presence of "always" to counter the implicit supposition that in life there are, in addition to sounds, intervals of silence (Cage: "There is always

something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot. For certain engineering purposes, it is desirable to have as silent a situation as possible. Such a room is called an anechoic chamber, its six walls made of special material, a room without echoes. I entered one at Harvard University several years ago and heard two sounds, one high and one low. When I described them to the engineer in charge, he informed me that the high one was my nervous system in operation, the low one my blood in circulation. Until I die there will be sounds"; "Silence ... is non-existent. There always are sounds"⁴⁵); and those among the readers of the aphorism who have read my writings on dance and on mortals as dead even while still physically alive would understand the reason for the qualification "insofar as I, a mortal, am alive—and not a dancer," since in dance and death one can witness others immobilized by silence-over, or may oneself become immobilized by such a silence. Based on how rigorous and concise the writer's other aphorisms were, a reasonable reader from a historical time prior to John Cage's writings on silence and my writings on silence-over considered that the aforementioned aphorism only *seemed* to belabor the point with mysterious qualifications, and so he tried to construct a concept that would account for these ostensible oddities, then, having failed for a while to create such a concept, he, wisely, discontinued his attempt. I can well imagine a variant of me in another branch of the multiverse who would have come up with the concepts advanced in my book *The Dancer's Two Bodies*, yet who would not have published such a book or referred to it, leaving instead only enigmatic qualifications and caveats in a few aphorisms that were based on the

aforementioned concepts, for he wished to see if someone could construct these concepts with these hints.

Artists, filmmakers, novelists, and thinkers from different periods collaborate creatively with each other. The collaboration takes the form of recommendations. I recommended certain things to Francis Bacon while elaborating my concept of radical closure and while he was working on some of his paintings that I refer to in my exposition of the concept; and he, unawares, recommended certain things to anyone who works creatively on radical closure. That the collaboration takes the form of suggestions and recommendations means that Bacon could have accepted or rejected these, depending on whether they fitted optimally in the painting he was making; that's why while Francis Bacon's paintings are in part the result of my untimely collaboration with him, hence would not physically be the same were it not for my concept of radical closure, the resultant work is properly signed "Francis Bacon." The same holds for me regarding Bacon's recommendations and suggestions while constructing my concept of radical closure, which I exposed in a number of texts, the first being "Radical Closure" (1996) and the most recent being "Verbatim" (2017). I was not the only one who collaborated in an untimely manner with Francis Bacon while he was making his paintings; other writers and filmmakers of what I have, by creating its concept, termed radical closure did, too: Alain Robbe-Grillet, David Lynch, etc. To say that Bacon did some things intuitively while painting means he was receiving suggestions from me, David Lynch, Alain Robbe-Grillet, and others working creatively on radical closure, who may or may not have seen any

Francis Bacon paintings. Were I in 2019 to resume developing my concept of radical closure, add a new chapter to it, then I would come to realize that some or all of Francis Bacon's paintings, which I had thought to have been in part the result of my *previous* untimely collaboration with him, were the result also of this renewed untimely collaboration with him. As historical persons, Francis Bacon and I cannot presently collaborate, since he died in 1992, and we could not have collaborated while he painted *Pope III* (1951), since I was not born yet, but insofar as we are engaged in creative work we are contemporaries, so as a thinker of radical closure I collaborated with him as a painter of radical closure, sent him suggestions and recommendations while he was painting in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, and I can still do so in 2019. Like almost all dancers in relation to their projections as subtle bodies in the dance realm, almost all untimely collaborators are unaware that they are engaged in untimely collaboration.

Weak filmmakers cannot execute what they set out to do; accomplished filmmakers realize just what they set out to do; while prodigious filmmakers achieve more than they set out to do, in other words, their films are stronger, richer, more sophisticated than they are, in part through intuitive untimely collaboration with artists, filmmakers, and thinkers from different historical times (hence they are not well-equipped to fully answer interviewers' questions regarding their films).

It is as a mortal, as dead while alive, that I am every name in history: insofar as I am alive, I am part of the composite of everyone, and everyone is part of the composite that

constitutes me; and insofar as “I am” dead, i.e., insofar as I’ve wondered, “Am I dead?” or concluded in relation to what I am undergoing or had the thought insertion, “I must be dead,” I assume every name in history. While for Deleuze the exemplary case of a blocking of becoming is man (“Why are there so many becomings of man [becoming-woman, becoming-animal, etc.], but no becoming-man? ... Because man is majoritarian par excellence, whereas becomings are minoritarian,”⁴⁶ and “because man is the molar entity par excellence, whereas becomings are molecular”⁴⁷), for me the exemplary case of a blocking of becoming is the double—there is no becoming-double, given that the double is me divested of all others (“What is extremely discomposing about the double is that ... while I include all the others, he includes only ‘me,’ and therefore he is not really me, since I am never purely myself.... The double is not the other, but me divested of all others”⁴⁸).

“How come *these* anomalies, these *particular* ones, are happening? It is impossible for them to happen—in the world, while I am alive. It is impossible for space and time and voices and silence, etc., to behave in this manner, and yet they are doing so! Am I dead?” How can one ask this question when supposedly one has never died and therefore knows nothing about death? How can even those who reckoned death to be solely the end of one’s life ask this question? How come on encountering these *particular* anomalies and impossibilities one does not ask instead other questions related to other states one would know about more or less, for example, “Am I dreaming?” or, in case one already had one or more psychotic episodes

or read texts about or by schizophrenics, “Am I mad?” That the ostensible question “Am I dead?” can occur to one implies that one has some intuition of what it is to be dead—as a condition not reducible to physical demise. If we really did not know (even unconsciously) anything about death, or if we fully believed that death is reducible to the physical one that ends a human’s life, then this ostensible question should be as impossible as the impossible happenings that triggered it. But might not the one who asks himself this “question” have seen films and read religious literature in which undead people are shown? But then the question becomes in turn: where did the filmmaker’s or religious figure’s knowledge or intuition about this specific group of anomalies come from?

Is it at all possible that we are not all mortal, dead even while still physically alive, but that mortality is, like a number of other things that only seem to be universal (for example, time), exceptional?

How unsettling it was to note the aging face and hands of my old mother, hear her blurt, “I no longer wish to live,” and see her eyes overflow with tears: among other things, her words implied, “I have accepted to lose you and I have already mourned you.” Hearing this admission is a manner of dying before physically dying that is not initiatory.

What to say to someone who has recently lost a father to death? “My condolences to you for losing your father⁴⁹—and my condolence to him for losing the world.”⁵⁰

Had one of the mortals who were alive while Jesus was on earth died before dying, and thus become aware that he or she was already dead even while physically alive, he or she would have had, as dead, the chance to implore him, the life, to resurrect him or her—into full life, becoming thus solely alive, and proving to be a more exemplary disciple of Jesus than even Lazarus. I like to think that is what Thomas vaguely meant when he said on hearing Jesus tell his ostensible disciples, “Lazarus is dead ... Let us go to him”: “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” But for them to die before dying physically, their desire to be fully alive would have had to trump the *jouissance* they were undergoing compulsively, addictively, in the death that is “coexistent” with life in the case of mortals. At one level, there is nothing one wants more than to leave the realm of death given the unsettling vertigo of its labyrinthine space and time; but at another level, addicted as one is to *jouissance* there, one does not want to do it. That the Christ appeared on earth implies that it is impossible for the dead on their own, addicted as they are to it, to wish wholeheartedly for the cessation of the full-blown *jouissance* unleashed in the undeath realm to cease.

Paradoxically, one may die before physically dying precisely while being spared physical death. That’s what we have in the case of the protagonist of Blanchot’s *The Instant of My Death*, who was facing a firing squad when he was saved from physical death by comrades from the maquis in 1944—and possibly also in the case of Dostoyevsky, who was condemned to death before a firing squad, heard the order to the soldiers, “Ready! Aim!” but was then spared physical death at the “last mo-

ment.” Exceptionally, a reprieve that arrives just in time for the condemned to be spared physical death reaches him too late for the other kind of death, so that while exoterically the condemned man appears to have been spared, from another perspective he wasn’t. The title of another one of Blanchot’s books, *L’Arrêt de mort* (*Death Sentence*), provides a fitting description of this situation, when the suspension of the death sentence, the *arrêt de mort*, turns out to be itself a death sentence, more precisely, a death before physical death. Henceforth, he may become aware that he was already dead while physically alive, and therefore that it was always already too late to be spared death, this other death, death as undeath. Now that we have the great writings of Maurice Blanchot on death, it is difficult to even imagine that the comrades from the maquis could have arrived earlier, prior to his death before dying. In the case of Blanchot, dying before dying had so eclipsed physical death that it had become unimaginable to me that I would one day read his obituary, so I was taken aback on reading one in some newspaper in February 2003, catching myself exclaiming: “But he was already dead!”—before rigorously correcting myself by consciously underscoring the difference between the two deaths. Is it false to say that Maurice Blanchot died in the last days of the Second World War? No, it is not false. Is it false to say that Maurice Blanchot did not die in the last days of the Second World War? Yes, it is false. What a loss for thought and literature it would have been had he been spared not only dying physically but also dying before dying physically. Had the comrades from the maquis arrived just in time to spare him not only physical death but also the other death, dying before dying physically,

would he have later written *The Writing of the Disaster*? I doubt it, since the paradigmatic disaster is death, the death that is coexistent with life in the case of the mortal, and that one becomes aware of by dying before dying physically. His book *Death Sentence* too probably could not have been written had Blanchot not died before dying physically, since his death before dying, narrated in the third person in *The Instant of My Death*, provides the condition of possibility⁵¹ of its kind of narrator, dead before dying physically: “Her doctor had told me that from 1936 on he had considered her dead. Of course the same doctor, who treated me several times, once told me, too, ‘... You should have been dead two years ago ...’ He had just given me six months to live and that was seven years ago”⁵² (elsewhere, *Death Sentence*’s narrator notes, “One last thing about this doctor: ... he was, it seems to me, a great deal more reliable in his diagnoses than most”⁵³). Since most likely all of his rescuers were in disavowal of their condition as mortals, of being dead even while still physically alive, had they known and been able to take the measure(lessness) of what Blanchot would write, and by writing make more real and unleash conjointly more forcefully and neutrally on the world, would they so lightly, unquestionably, have rushed to save him? The Nazis, whose ideology did not, indeed could not acknowledge such realms and states, in which, among other weirdness, they were each every name in history, including Jewish names, wanted him killed because they suspected him of collaborating with the French resistance, but they ended up inadvertently contributing to making him, through his dying before physically dying, far more dangerous to their ideology.

One should not be surprised that having died before dying physically (“This autumn [of 1888] ... I twice attended my funeral, first as Count Robilant”⁵⁴), Nietzsche wrote, “I am Prado, I am also Prado’s father, I venture to say that I am also Lesseps.... I am also Chambige ... every name in history is I,”⁵⁵ for given that one cannot be together with others “in” the labyrinth (of death), that one is fundamentally alone “in” the labyrinth (of death), one must be the ostensible others one encounters there.

At some level, the labyrinth appears to be the epitome of indifference: left and right, past and present, Lesseps, Chambige, and Nietzsche appear to be no longer different.

She suffered from what she presumed to be lapses of consciousness, and, moreover, she was amnesiac about certain episodes of her adult life (which must have been so horrifying and/or disturbing that she would not have been able to function effectively were she to continue to remember them, with the result that her mind repressed them or dissociated them from the rest of her mental life), so she decided to try to integrate or reintegrate what was abnormally absent from her consciousness through a psychoanalysis. But while the psychoanalysis did make it possible for her to remember many things she had repressed, and about which she consequently had become amnesiac, she soon suspected that what she was mainly repressing was that not all the lapses of consciousness were symptoms of psychological or psychic problems, that some of what she reckoned as lapses of consciousness or instances of post-traumatic amnesia were actually lapses of being related to the lacunary (un)reality

of the labyrinth, and that for her to be lost “in” labyrinthine space and time, she must have died sometime in the past. She ended up feeling that the psychoanalyst was a “miraculated” entity that was part of a vast persecutory conspiracy.

Following one of his lectures, a woman approached him, told him how much she admired him and appreciated his books, and then asked him a remarkably perceptive question. During their conversation, which went on way after everybody else had left, he came to realize that they had missed each other on a large number of occasions. He was not intrigued by the instances when she could reasonably have missed him, for example, not showing up at a gallery opening when the exhibition’s publicity had not listed him but only those of the participants who were the most well-known in the “art scene” at that point, covering the rest with “among others,” or not coming to a lecture he was giving because her father was taken ill on that very day and she had to be with him at the hospital; but by the numerous occasions when they would have been expected to meet—were they living ... in the world—but improbably didn’t, for example, when she was attending a conference where he was the keynote speaker and where his lecture was on a subject she was then researching intensively. He, who considered that “love, at least between a man and a woman, who can perpetuate the human race, happens as it were in the absence of all others (as if everybody else had died or disappeared), indeed should imply even the absence of the (Lacanian) Big Other,” had at one point during their protracted conversation thought that she might separate him from everyone else—indeed

from the Big Other—by making him fall in love with her. And yet soon after they separated that night, and as a result of his newly acquired knowledge of so many improbably missed meetings, he remembered that he had died before dying physically (that is, been in conditions in which he wondered, “Am I dead?” or came to the conclusion, given the specific unworldly events he was witnessing, “I must be dead”), a state in which one is lost “in” a labyrinthine space and time. If it appeared that they had just managed to meet, it must be because he was resurrected or because the labyrinth was for some reason and most likely *temporarily* behaving like the world, as a world (“If one wishes ... to be positive about the fortunate disappearance of any labyrinthine anomalies, one would consider that one is really back in the world—strictly speaking, though, having once been ‘in’ the labyrinth, one thenceforth can never for sure assert: I am no longer ‘in’ the labyrinth”⁵⁶)—were the labyrinth to revert back blatantly to its unsettling characteristics, he would then be lost again to others, including her—and to himself. So, she did end up separating him from everyone else, yet not through love, but by reminding him that he had died before dying and hence was lost to all, including to her and to himself (dissociation), thus alone, “in” labyrinthine undeath.

You are outside the labyrinth until you enter it; once you enter it, there is no outside to it, thus you’ve always been “in” it and you cannot leave it (except, most likely transiently, through it, that is, you can never again be completely sure that what looks like the world is not a transient special configuration of the labyrinth and that

sooner or later you will discover that you are lost “in” it “again”).

There are conditions in which there is no first time, for example, the labyrinth: *once* “in” the labyrinth, one has *always already been* “in” it.

As an esoteric guise of the end of the world, one that co-exists with the continuance of the world, the labyrinth dissuades from an exoteric, actual destruction of the world. The coming of the Messiah and the accompanying ascent of all mortals from the labyrinth “in” which they are lost as dead (while alive in the world) would open up the possibility that there would be an exoteric, actual destruction of the world.

Fiction makes it possible for us to perceive what otherwise we could not access, for example, other branches of the multiverse, at least prior to feasible time travel; and the labyrinthine space and time of death-as-undeath, and of ruins, buildings which might look, for consensual perception, like normal restored ones, thus part of the ostensible homogenous space and time of the world.

In lieu—of the Ruin

There is a time to write, including about dying before dying, and there is a time to do everything else during which one *cannot* write, for example, die before dying.

The domain of culture encompasses any endeavor, process, “activity” in which someone else could replace one,

while the domain of tradition includes only those adventures in which one cannot be replaced by another (albeit one may assume in them every name in history). Thus death, as undeath rather than as physical demise, does not belong to culture, but has an affinity with tradition.

Godard: “Culture is the norm, art is the exception”; “the art scene,” whose agenda is presently largely set by curators, museum directors, sheikhas and mayors, collectors, gallerists, and auction houses, and which includes academia’s proliferating Art, Visual Studies and Visual Cultures departments and Curatorial Studies programs and centers, as well as thousands upon thousands of famous and not so famous so-called artists, is at best a subculture, therefore still only exceptionally affined to the tasks of artists. If we take into consideration that two of the main tasks of artists are to build universes that don’t fall apart “two days” later and to resurrect what withdrew following a surpassing disaster (often after revealing such a withdrawal in the first place), then it is hard to believe that there are artists at all given how difficult, if not ostensibly impossible, these two tasks are.

Some works of art or film or thought give us “reasons to believe in this world” (Deleuze); and some others creatively present, and thus give us access to, other branches of the multiverse (the artwork’s explicit frame functioning as the border between the other branch of the multiverse and this one).

In the case of some artworks, films, and thoughtful books, while the material they use is from this branch of the mul-

tiverse, the result is (the presentation of) another branch of the multiverse. The title of a lecture Philip K. Dick gave in 1978 was “How to Build a Universe that Doesn’t Fall Apart Two Days Later”;⁵⁷ any work of art that presents a universe that doesn’t fall apart “two days” later⁵⁸ is out of this world, not only in the informal sense of extraordinary, but also literally, and so has aura.

Some concepts of philosophers and thinkers function as suggestions to Being to assume certain disclosures and configurations, regarding which some scientists may end up providing explanatory and predictive theories formally crystallized in mathematical equations—in such cases, philosophy’s contribution to science is not in the form of epistemology. And some artworks imply and thus invoke an audience that is different from the one that can be actual in the world then—though it may in some cases become actual through future advances in science and technology.

Artworks and books of thought and literature that are not the popular type, not only in the present but also in the future, should not be primarily addressed to a living human audience or readership; the change they induce in the world and in the unworldly domain of death has for the most part to be not an indirect one through some consequent action of their readers, spectators, and/or listeners, but a direct one, for example, on withdrawn tradition or—in case they are intimately related to the labyrinth through inducing labyrinthine variants of themselves, that is, variants of themselves “in” the labyrinth—on the dead, who are lost in labyrinthine space and time. Deplorably,

university administrators who keep pressuring professors to produce work with more and more impact while reducing the latter to citations in so-called peer-reviewed journals appear to be blithely unaware that some artworks, films, and books of philosophy and poetry impact Being directly rather than by affecting the state of things through the agency of human readers and spectators.

If a reader feels again and again that his or her objections or questions are being answered just as he or she is on the point of formulating them, then he or she is the book’s special reader (so are the ones who unconsciously steer their lives to acquire what would make them better understand, or rather not understand but in a subtle and keen manner, certain lines in the book, if not the whole book). This timeliness of the author’s answers to the objections or questions of certain readers indicates that the author has intuitively or unconsciously a certain kind of reader in mind for the book. You have an indication that you are not a text’s privileged reader when it implicitly answers objections that you have not raised and does not implicitly answer objections that you have formulated or, better still, were on the point of formulating.

Over the years, I have noticed that more and more university students do not read the assigned or recommended texts but wait for me, their teacher, to explicate them. By the end of the second month of my dance class, the two students who had exceptionally already read the assigned text, my book *The Dancer’s Two Bodies*, by the second session told me that they could not initially understand any of it, that it felt as if they were reading a book in a

foreign language in which they were not proficient (I was pleased to hear this as it reproduced almost verbatim one of Deleuze's endorsed formulas for style: "Following Proust's celebrated formulation, style is like a foreign language within the language"⁵⁹), but that rereading it two months into the class they found it quite clear, indeed wondered how anything could be so clear. Given that I am a thinker and that I am reputed to be a superb teacher, many if not most students end up "understanding" and appreciating the assigned texts and their rigor. What is unhappily missed for most of the students in this shortcut to a "happy ending" is the experience of initially reading the text without understanding any of it, feeling that it is written in a foreign language one has never learned, and then rereading it and finding it luminously clear. It is important for a reader to have this experience at least once, indeed one is not a real reader if one has not had once such an experience, if one has never moved in relation to at least one text from having the impression that it is inscrutable, if not unreadable, to finding it rigorous, clear, and eminently readable, that is, one in relation to which a rephrasing, for example, in a lecture explaining it, weakens it, makes it less rigorous and clear, since it translates it into a language that is not optimal for conveying the idea or concept. One never has such an experience with academic writing but only with the texts of a stylist.

In advance of my keynote lecture at the conference "Abstraction Unframed" at New York University Abu Dhabi,⁶⁰ Melissa Gronlund sent me in May 2016 several questions for an interview to be published in *The National* newspaper; the introduction to her first question was: "You are

one of the most influential writers, artists and teachers in the Lebanese art scene." Am I influential in the Lebanese art scene? Yes, as the director of the School of Visual Arts at the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts, having radically redesigned its program and curriculum and replaced most of its faculty members; and as a teacher, for example, through my Seminar "Art-Provoking Thought," which was open to the public at large free of charge. How about as a thinker and artist? While much of my published writing is forthcoming (including, obviously, my book *Forthcoming* in both its first *and second* editions [Atelos, 2000; e-flux journal/Sternberg Press, 2014], as well as those of my books published by Forthcoming Books), some of it is not. Theater director Rabi Mroué, as well as a number of Lebanese filmmakers, has been influenced by the part of my published work that was not forthcoming (that even this part has had less influence than I had initially anticipated has in part to do with the increasing reluctance of more and more people to place themselves in the conditions that would make them better intuit and appreciate my concepts, for example, in the case of the over-turn, die before physically dying). Some Lebanese artists have been influenced by various components of my work that continued to be forthcoming even after their publication or screening or exhibition: they could be influenced by these through an untimely reception from, if not collaboration with, artists, writers, and filmmakers who belong to future times when more of my books and videos, if not all of them, would no longer be forthcoming—and whose own published or screened or exhibited work is not still forthcoming at that point in the future.

Can one imagine a state denying an artist entrance to a country not for policing reasons but to reduce the time he or she wastes on travel, exhibition openings, and artist talks, so he or she can concentrate on his or her creative work? *If* not, then that would be one more argument for the “withering away of the state” that Marx aspired to and worked for passionately.

Many people are surprised when I tell them that I do much of my writing in cafés: “How can you work and focus amidst the noise of multiple conversations?” On November 22, 2018, during Para Site’s 2018 International Conference, “What to Let Go?” I discovered that I can do it in plenary panels too—albeit less efficiently than in cafés and for a short while only, as I ended up leaving the stage and retaking my seat among the audience members, where it was easier to work on my notes, away from the other panelists still taking turns airing their inanities.

There is no companionship in boredom; we cannot be bored together. When one is in the state of maximal boredom one cannot even notice the boredom of others—when I notice the boredom of another this already implies enough investment in the world to be no longer (deeply) bored. This is one similarity between boredom and death: I am bored alone and I die alone.

“A large crowd followed and pressed around him [Jesus]. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years.... When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, ‘If I just touch his clothes,

I will be healed.’ Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.... Jesus ... turned around in the crowd and asked, ‘Who touched my clothes?’ ‘You see the people crowding against you,’ his disciples answered, ‘and yet you can ask, “Who touched me?”’” (Mark 5:24–31; cf. Matthew 9:20–21). Had Jesus not had an aura, then the bleeding woman could either have touched him and been healed or have been prevented by the compact crowd surrounding him from reaching him, ending up touching his clothes and, consequently, not being healed, since clothes don’t have the power to heal the incurable, the Christ does. But given that the Christ had an aura, the woman either sensed it and respected it, or (like his so-called disciples, who symptomatically misreckoned his question, “Who touched my clothes?” as, “Who touched me?”!) did not sense it but failed to reach him due to his aura, and yet was healed by touching him *at a distance*. The New Testament would have erred either by making her touch the one who has an aura or by having her touch only his clothes and as a consequence fail to be healed.

My first line of defense against objects and people is not their relative physical distance to me but that they are part of a world that assigns to them specific places. What happens when the world falls apart? Why do I then feel anxiety? It is partly because nothing is then in its place, and when nothing is in its place anything can hit me, encroach on me even though it may ostensibly still be physically distant.

“[Roberto Rossellini’s] *Stromboli* [1950] presents a foreign

woman whose revelation of the island will be all the more profound because she cannot react in a way that softens or compensates for the violence of what she sees, the intensity and the enormity of the tunnyfishing ('It was awful ...'), the panic-inducing power of the [volcanic] eruption ('I am finished, I am afraid, what mystery, what beauty, my God ...'). [His] *Europe 51* [1952] shows a bourgeoisie woman who, following the death of her child, crosses various spaces and experiences the tenement, the slum and the factory ('I thought I was seeing convicts').... She sees, she has learnt to see."⁶¹ This example from *Europe 51* is particularly apropos because what she sees is the case fundamentally: it is not a metaphor. It was not a metaphor to look at factory workers in the 1950s and say, "I was seeing convicts," since "although Bentham takes the penitentiary house as his prime example"⁶² and although prison is the "concentrated and austere figure of all the disciplines,"⁶³ the "Panopticon ... is in fact a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use.... It is a type of location of bodies in space, of distribution of individuals in relation to one another, of hierarchical organization, of disposition of centres and channels of power, of definition of the instruments and modes of intervention of power, which can be implemented in hospitals, workshops, schools, prisons,"⁶⁴ in other words, Deleuze's in his book *Foucault*, since "modern societies can be defined as 'disciplinarian'; ... discipline ... is a type of power, a technology, that traverses every kind of apparatus or institution, linking them, prolonging them, and making them converge."⁶⁵ I project that it will be the same now that disciplinary societies are being replaced by societies of control: someone undergoing a break of

the sensory-motor schema would exclaim on seeing people at a mall: "I see controlled people" (Deleuze: "The conception of a control mechanism, giving the position of any element within an open environment at any given instant ... is not necessarily one of science fiction. Félix Guattari has imagined a city where one would be able to leave one's apartment, one's street, one's neighborhood, thanks to one's [dividual] electronic card that raises a given barrier; but the card could just as easily be rejected on a given day or between certain hours; what counts is not the barrier but the computer that tracks each person's position—licit or illicit"⁶⁶).

It is good to occasionally liberate certain literal sentences by making them function as figurative expressions—as long as one continues to be aware that all figurative expressions that ring true are literal in one realm or another (death, dance, etc.).

One needs to learn additional languages not so much or primarily to communicate with people who do not speak one's language or the current lingua franca, English, regarding sundry everyday needs, but to be able to use certain terms that are not really translatable in one's language of writing and that best convey a certain concept or idea, for example, the French *sous-entendu* in relation to the call one makes to oneself in front of the mirror, and to which, if one's turn is not overturned by a 180-degree over-turn, one responds successfully by facing oneself; or the Arabic '*azāb* and '*azb*, which derive from the same trilateral root, to intimate that basically and at the most radical level, for example, in hell, '*azāb*, torment, is the

compulsion to endlessly repeat what is ‘*azb*, sweet, a ‘*uzūba*, sweetness, that has become, once one has succumbed to the drive, excessive and unstoppable.

Having (provisionally?) failed to achieve the optimal state of affairs of having *every* word in the book he was writing be a concept of his, not be an insidious borrowing that might make the universe he was constructing fall apart; or, insofar as he was an aphoristic writer, of having every word or phrase be received,⁶⁷ he considered the following stopgap measure while trying to convey whatever contextual information was needed for the brief narratives he resorted to in the exposition of his concepts, or to fill in whatever part of the aphorism he failed, for whatever reason, to receive: avail himself of the relevant sentences provided as examples of the use of their defined words in one or more of the well-known English dictionaries, as it were quote, without quotation marks (since they are not attributed to anyone in particular), the Big Other.

Past a certain degree, the more he demanded the consistency of the diegetic world of the novel he was writing, the more the world at large, the consensual world, began to fall apart, allowing all sorts of unworldly or otherworldly entities to irrupt in it.

It should go without saying that what prevents out-of-this-world entities from appearing in this world is not some barrier it would naturally have or its denizens would have artificially erected, or a cosmological horizon, but the consistency of this world. Which comes first: the world falls apart and then what is alien to it can irrupt in

it, or something alien to it, for example, a Gnostic messenger, irrupts in it and thus makes it fall apart?

The eponymous poet of Cocteau’s film *Orpheus* receives the following words through radiophonic dictation: “Silence goes faster backwards. Three times. Silence goes faster backwards. Three times. I repeat. Silence goes faster backwards. Three times. Your attention, please. A single glass of water lights up the world. Twice. A single glass of water lights up the world. Twice. I repeat. Listen: Mirrors would do well to reflect a little more.⁶⁸ Three times. The bird sings with its fingers. Once. I repeat.... 38, 39, 40. Twice. I repeat.... 38, 39, 40. Twice.” To his wife’s objection, “They seem like nothing but meaningless words to me,” Cocteau’s Orpheus responds, “The least of these phrases is much more than any of my poems. I’d give all that I’ve written for even one of those little phrases,” then wonders: “Where could they be coming from? They’re on no other station. I’m certain they’re meant for me.... What fascinating poetry! Who can say what’s poetry and what isn’t?”⁶⁹ Where did these sentences and “little phrases” come from? If the dictation is from the dead, including from the dead “poet” Jacques Cegeste, then all mortals, that is, all those who are dead even while still physically alive, can receive it unconsciously, yet to become aware that they have done so and to know what they have received, they must additionally, which I gather Cocteau’s Orpheus did, die before dying. A mortal poet who becomes aware following dying before dying physically that he is receiving dictation from the dead should be careful not to unreservedly deem the received phrases to be poetry, for he is receiving them not as a poet but

as someone who, as a mortal, is dead even while still physically alive; his task then is to use the resources of poetry to *write* what the dead need or wish to convey, *including to themselves*, through what they are dictating to him, since they are unable to convey it properly given that it keeps being undermined by, among other disturbances, all the static and noise resulting from the thought insertion and the voices(-over) they undergo. Cocteau's Orpheus asserts of the phrases of the dictation, "They're on no other station," yet how can he tell for sure that the "silence" and static on another radio station is not also a dictation, albeit in a language he is unable to sense, let alone to understand; or of the sort that would fit *Nud-ism*, a book said to be of poetry that was published by then-alive Jacques Cegeste and whose every page was blank? Was Cocteau's Orpheus intrigued as to whether "three times" belonged to the dictated poem or spell (in which case, the very redundancy of the instruction "three times" when the sentence is repeated thrice would be poetic) or was just an instruction on how to perform it or write it? If it is an instruction, is he to remove it and retain only the poem or spell (or the poem as a spell)? Were he to do so, he would be removing what shields him (and the film spectator) from the magical effects of the dictation.

Episode 8 of David Lynch's *Twin Peaks: The Return* purports to show the origination of the evil we see in that TV series, for example, the zombie-like woodsmen, if not of evil *tout court*: the Trinity nuclear test that took place in New Mexico at 5:29 a.m. on July 16, 1945. Later, one of these woodsmen enters a radio station, overpowers the disc jockey, and replaces the song he was broad-

casting, The Platters' *My Prayer*, with his incantation of the following words: "This is the water. And this is the well. Drink full and descend. The horse is the white of the eyes and dark within." Among the listeners is a teenager. Having persisted in listening to the radio even after the song that was playing then was abruptly replaced by the Woodsman's recitation on air of the aforementioned phrases for the required number of times for them to function as magical spells, she falls unconscious, so that a "frog-moth" that had hatched from an egg on the nuclear bomb's explosion site manages to enter her through her mouth and then crawl down her throat. Did the frog-moth agent enter her irrespective of her consent? No; while not conscious and explicit, her consent to the entry of the frog-moth inside her was implied by her persistence in listening to the Woodsman's broadcasted incantation until it acquired its magical agency (as suggested by the circumstance that he then leaves the radio station). A crucial difference between the frog-moth agent and the Woodsman's spellbinding phrases is that while the first functions as a magical agent in the case of the characters it enters within the TV episode's diegesis but not in the case of the spectator of the TV episode, the second acts as a magical agent for both the character who hears it in the diegesis and the spectators of the TV episode. If these sentences have to be heard a specific number of times for them to function as magical spells, then Lynch could invoke this circumstance to lay the blame on the diegetic teenager and the spectators of the TV episode for whatever nefarious effects they end up suffering as a result of having persisted in listening to the sentences until they acquired their magical effect. Has it already happened

that a spectator of episode 8 of *Twin Peaks: The Return* began behaving uncharacteristically because of the activation of the till then dormant magical agent that was inserted in him through his ear? Or is it the case that the aural magical agent inserted in those TV audience members who kept listening to the Woodsman's sentences until the latter assumed their magical agency has a longer period of latency than the spectators' life spans? Would those who continued to listen to the Woodsman's incantation until he wrapped it up have thus been fortunately spared? Not if physical death is not the final end, for then what William S. Burroughs, that incredibly sensitive writer who, along with Brion Gysin, attributed his killing of his wife to being possessed by an agent ("Brion Gysin said to me in Paris: 'For ugly spirit shot Joan because ...' A bit of mediumistic message that was not completed—or was it? It doesn't need to be completed, if you read it: 'ugly spirit shot Joan to be cause'; that is, to maintain a hateful parasitic occupation.... I live with the constant threat of possession, and a constant need to escape from possession, from Control. So the death of Joan brought me in contact with the invader, the Ugly Spirit" ["Introduction," *Queer*]), wrote would apply to them across several cycles of life and death: "Some weapons hit you right away; other weapons may take 500 years to hit. It's like that old joke: 'Well, you missed me that time.' 'Oh yeah? Just try and move your head.' Well, just try and shake your head 500 years from now. You won't even know you were hit."

Is the sentence or phrase being received or inserted in one's mind in the radical closure something that was willed to recur eternally? Is one well advised to wait to

see whether it will be affected by the variations that take place in such a closure? But what if one undergoes these variations before one could ascertain whether the sentence in question will vary and thus prove to have been simply a run-of-the-mill fully-formed entity that irrupted in the radical closure and that is then open to variation, or whether it is immune to such variation since willed (to recur eternally), hence one that has to be espoused, indeed cannot but be espoused. There are two types of sentences that are intrinsic to David Lynch's universe, the one willed to recur eternally, for example, "This is the girl" in *Mulholland Drive* (2001), and the one that is repeated again and again, in an incantation, precisely because it is a sort of counterfeit of the other by some imposter of the overman, for example, "This is the water. And this is the well. Drink full and descend. The horse is the white of the eyes and dark within" in episode 8 of *Twin Peaks: The Return* (2017). The first type of sentence is addressed to consciousness, while the other is addressed to the unconscious, indeed once it has been heard it undergoes a period of latency, until, like an(y) agent, it awakens again, *après coup*. The first kind of sentence is told to or heard by someone who has then to repeat it once and for all; while the other kind of sentence is heard by various people who, if they go on listening to it the requisite number of times for it to function as a spell sooner or later, suffer its magical effects. These two kinds of sentences have not yet appeared together; I await their confrontation in some future David Lynch film or TV episode.

When reading Deleuze's book *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (*Cinéma I: l'Image-mouvement*, 1983), I agree with

him that “the whole is not a closed set, but on the contrary that by virtue of which the set is never absolutely closed, ... that which keeps it open somewhere as if by the finest thread which attaches it to the rest of the universe,”⁷⁰ but I no longer do so when I look at the paintings of Francis Bacon, read the novels of Alain Robbe-Grillet, watch the films of David Lynch, or reread my texts on radical closure—Deleuze, who had written on the painter Francis Bacon (*Francis Bacon: Logic of Sensation* [*Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation*, 1981])—and would later write on Robbe-Grillet (in his book *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* [*Cinéma 2: l’Image-temps*, 1985])—should have known better.

The labyrinth often functions as a radical closure, allowing the irruption of unworldly, ahistorical fully-formed entities. Is the labyrinth that special kind of radical closure where the permutations of actions, names, positions, roles, etc., cannot be exhausted?

By exhausting all the permutations that are possible within a space that is radically closed, I can now leave it, indeed *I can no longer stay in it however much I wish to*—unless some additional people and/or things enter it right then and thus add supplementary possible permutations. Those within a radical closure usually intuitively do not wish for anyone or anything to enter it, not necessarily empathically so that the newcomers would not be stuck there, but so as not to add new possible permutations that have to be actualized before they can at long last leave.

At what level does the permutation in a radical closure happen? Fundamentally, it happens at the level at which entanglement breaks down, since entanglement prevents a space from being radically disconnected from other spaces.⁷¹

You cannot force people to leave a radical closure—even by threatening them with a firing squad (the end of Buñuel’s *The Exterminating Angel*), indeed even by killing them.

In a radical closure the inability of an actress to differentiate between her film role and her life (as in the case of the female protagonist of Lynch’s *Inland Empire*) is not to be ascribed to some kind of psychological trouble, but is a consequence of the intermingling of media (TV, cinema, painting, etc.) and world in such a closure.

Different radical-closure artists, writers, and filmmakers tend to be affined for the most part to different characteristics of this kind of closure, for example, Francis Bacon is more affined to the unworldly ahistorical entities that irrupt fully-formed in such a closure, while Robbe-Grillet is more affined to the exhaustive permutations that take place in such a closure.

As a filmmaker or painter, your main interest may not be radical closure itself but the entities that can irrupt in it, for example, a videotape that was not filmed by anyone, or music that was emitted by no band, or paint birds in a landscape (someone walking in the landscape would see in the sky not flesh and blood birds but birds made of

paint), and yet you have to construct the radical closure as the condition of possibility of the irruption of these entities. It would seem that you are trying to accomplish an impossibility, for example, a videotape that was not filmed by anyone, music that was emitted by no band, or paint birds in a landscape, not directly but by doing another impossible thing, since ostensibly “the whole is not a closed set, but on the contrary that by virtue of which the set is never absolutely closed, ... that which keeps it open somewhere as if by the finest thread which attaches it to the rest of the universe” (Deleuze);⁷² and/or since ostensibly any space is connected to the surrounding, in other words, to the rest of the universe within its corresponding light cone, including through tunneling subatomic particles or entangled particles. David Lynch managed in *Lost Highway* (1997) to construct a radical closure and consequently included in his film barking without the presence of a dog, *even off-screen*. Regrettably, like the protagonist of the film, who asks, “Whose dog is barking?” the film’s spectators have, with one exception, myself, misperceived and thus misreckoned what was happening, and the vast majority of them would have wondered had they seen how thrilled I am by the barking in the film, “Why all the fuss and excitement about the barking of a dog?”—but it is not the barking of a dog but barking *tout court*, one not emitted by a dog. Given the lack of awareness of this thrilling oddity, I have repeatedly engaged in the following dialogue while discussing *Lost Highway*: “Is there any other point to which you would wish to draw my attention?” “To the curious incident of the barking in the morning.” “There was no dog around at that time.” “That was the curious incident” (a paraphrase

of the exchange between a Scotland Yard detective and Sherlock Holmes in Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Adventure of Silver Blaze”: “‘Is there any other point to which you would wish to draw my attention?’ ‘To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time.’ ‘The dog did nothing in the night-time.’ ‘That was the curious incident’”).

One of the differences between the radical-closure artist Francis Bacon and the radical-closure filmmaker David Lynch is that the idea that irrupts in Lynch’s mind, in other words, the idea he receives, does so prior to his engaging in the filming process through which he is to render it cinematically without any modifications, while the fundamentally unforeseeable entities that irrupted in Francis Bacon’s paintings did so during the painting process, once Bacon constructed through his painting the structure of radical closure (“In a painting I’m trying to do of a beach and wave breaking on it ... I have been trying to make the structure and then hope chance will throw down the beach and the wave for me”⁷³). In this respect, episode 1 of Lynch’s *Twin Peaks: The Return*, in which a man is employed to watch for hours on end an empty large glass box at which various recording cameras are pointed, replace from time to time the SD cards in the various cameras with blank ones, and confirm whether anything appeared inside the box, is the closest in Lynch’s work to Bacon.

Is it fortuitous that the male protagonist of Lynch’s film *Mulholland Drive*, who receives a sentence, “This is the girl,” that he has to repeat verbatim so as not to be subjected to the permutations in a radical closure, is a film-

maker? I would like to think that it is not, that *Mulholland Drive* is self-reflexive in the strongest sense, that Lynch, too, received not only the idea for the film but also the sentence “This is the girl” and had to render cinematically the first in a faithful way and include the latter in his film unaltered despite all the vicissitudes of the filming process, and despite the suggestions and recommendations of his co-screenwriter and some of his crew members (here’s Lynch’s response to a recommendation by the cinematographer Peter Deming during the shooting of *Lost Highway*: “When it [one of the shots] came up in dailies I thought it was underexposed.... I said to David, ‘We need to do that mirror shot again.’ He looked at me as if I were crazy and replied, ‘No way ...’”⁷⁴). Is David Lynch himself then in a radical closure, or does he at least somewhat feel he is in one, and thus has a hunch that he has, like the male protagonists of his films *Mulholland Drive* and *Lost Highway*, who each receive a sentence, “This is the girl” and “Dick Laurent is dead,” respectively, to convey what he received without any modification, intuiting that that would be his way of leaving this sort of closure without having to go through all the possible permutations of gestures, lines of dialogue, social roles, etc.? In that case, we would be dealing not simply with the artistic duty within an aesthetic of reception, whether aphoristic (Jalal Toufic) or dictatorial (mostly in the case of poets: Jack Spicer, the Orpheus of Cocteau’s film *Orpheus*, etc.), of maintaining what was received unaltered (even when it does not appear to be “poetic” or laconic or thought-provoking), but also with the necessity for the one within a radical closure who receives a willed sentence to repeat it unaltered if he or she wishes to be spared the exhaus-

tive permutations in such a space. So this could be an additional reason why Lynch insists on propagating these images irrespective of the damage they can produce in the spectators of his films: not only that he works within a problematic of reception in which the task of the filmmaker and the ethics of filmmaking is not to alter what they received, but also that he dreads that were he not to convey what he received unaltered he himself would be subject to the permutations in a radical closure.

Some painters paint, and some filmmakers produce, a representation of both a radical closure and what appears to be entities that irrupted in it (see, for example, the representational unworldly crows over the representational radically-closed landscape in Kurosawa’s *Dreams*)—while the latter should not give the impression that they are really part of where they irrupted, whether they do so symptomatically, for example, by suddenly appearing and disappearing, or not, nonetheless they should belong completely to the painter’s or filmmaker’s artistic universe, to which the representational radical closure belongs. In very rare cases, the painter constructs through painting and the filmmaker produces through film not a representation of a radical closure but a radical closure, hence a painting or film in which some entities may irrupt without being painted or filmed by him or her.

With regard to radical closures, there are two main manners of failing for a painter: he or she simply fails to construct the structure of radical closure, or he or she manages to do so but then yields to the temptation to tamper with the entity that appears there, whether because it

does not coincide with what he or she planned originally, or to make it look more harmonious with the rest of the painting, in color or otherwise. An accomplished artist of radical closure constructs the structure of radical closure but then does not tamper with what irrupts in it; he knows that if he wants something else to appear, he has to paint a new radical-closure structure and wait to see whether this time what he intended and hoped would appear in it actually ends up doing so.

It is fitting that it is Thomas, whose name, according to a footnote to John 20:24 and 21:2, means *twin*, who is the one among Jesus's ostensible disciples who is initially suspicious that the one who appeared to them is a simulacrum, a double of the Christ—in almost all other cases of ostensible resurrection he would have been right to feel this way, since whenever a resurrection is performed by or in the name of someone who is not *the life* (the Christ), or at least fully and solely alive (the resurrected brother of Mary and Martha), it is doubtful that the one who came back from death is the same as the one who died.

In the Imaginal World (*ʿālam al-khayāl*), and so possibly in a vision of one or more of his most fervent disciples, the cross on which Jesus was crucified was (unlike the ones on which two men were crucified alongside him) in the form of a coffin, indeed was a coffin. After he “called out with a loud voice, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit,’” and then “breathed his last,” he was placed inside his cross (with his hands outstretched sideways the way they were when he was crucified), and the latter was then placed in a tomb.

By having Jesus crucified alongside two criminals (Luke 23:32), it seems that God, omnipotent, willingly (“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done” [Luke 22:42]) orchestrated or at least allowed a spoof of the Trinity, one that could be used by the enemies of the Christ and of Christianity to mock the Trinity; I can well imagine one of Jesus's detractors or enemies mocking him on the cross thus: “What an exalted trinity you belong to!”⁷⁵ Did Jesus Christ, exasperated, wonder then: is it the case that it is not only me, the Son of God, God as the Son, but also God as the Father who was “tempted” by the devil, and that He, unlike me, yielded to the “temptation”?—only to dismiss this thought as possibly itself a “temptation”?

Were evil to withdraw following a surpassing disaster it induced, then it would be part of tradition; in that case, the problematic task of some artists and thinkers and filmmakers is to resurrect it.

I hope that the surpassing disaster, which leads to a withdrawal of tradition, can be induced only by those who are worthy of tradition—even negatively, for example, by proving to be evil (indulging in *jouissance* and inducing it in at least some others) and not merely very bad (the latter belong to culture, to what is underserving at heart). I would like to think that while ISIL proved to be able to produce a vast catastrophe, it could not, being unworthy of doing so, induce a surpassing disaster, but rather existed and thrived in Iraq because that country's tradition had already withdrawn immaterially following a surpassing disaster (were they worthy of producing a surpassing

disaster, at least some of them would have sensed that tradition had withdrawn immaterially and would consequently not have been [so] set on destroying it materially).

Sometimes while one knows that a surpassing disaster has occurred, since one detects symptoms of a withdrawal of tradition, one is unable to identify it. Identifying it requires interpretation. For example, in the case of Shi'ites, was the selection of Abu Bakr rather than 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib as the first caliph a surpassing disaster? Was the raising of all its *maṣāḥif* (copies of the Qur'ān) on lances by the army of the renegade Mu'āwiya, as the battle of Ṣiffin between the fourth caliph, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, and Mu'āwiya was tilting toward a victory by the caliph, a gesture that implicated the Qur'ān in that bloody discord, a surpassing disaster? Was the slaughter of the grandson of the prophet Muhammad alongside many of his relatives and companions at Karbalā' a surpassing disaster? Are these events rather consequences of a more fundamental surpassing disaster, one that occurred in the celestial pleroma: "From the dyad of the first and second Archangel, Intelligence and Soul of the World, issues a third Archangel, who is called *Adam Rūḥānī*, the Spiritual Adam; this is the Angel of mankind, demiurge of our world.... And Ismaili Gnosis states exactly what it was that the Angel's error placed in doubt: the eternal ontological anteriority of the two Archangels who mediate between the Principle and the third Archangel. Is he not their equal? Does he not even precede them? Is he not first and alone, originating in himself? Hence his refusal to ... hear the appeal [*da'wa*].... Thus the third Angel stops at himself; he remains motionless in a stupor which gives rise to a

gap.... When the Angel tears himself free from this stupor, he sees himself 'retarded,' surpassed, fallen behind himself. From third he has become tenth"⁷⁶?

As a consequence of a surpassing disaster, the Twelfth Imam withdrew not only immaterially but also materially from the physical, dense world—to the Imaginal World, where he can be contacted through visions and visionary dreams. Those of his adherents who expect that he would appear in the Imaginal World the way he looked to those of his followers who are said to have met him while he was on earth, albeit with a more subtle body, are in for a surprise given that in the Imaginal World ideas and notions are embodied: if they meet him as *al-Qā'im*, the one who resurrects, he would look different than if they meet him as the Mahdi, the rightfully guided one.

Many professed Muslims who were insensitive to the withdrawal of Muslim tradition past a surpassing disaster berated Muslims who were sensitive to this withdrawal: "You're not going to pray in the direction of the Ka'ba? Don't you believe in anything?" Many professed Jews who were insensitive to the withdrawal of Jewish tradition past a surpassing disaster berated Jews who were sensitive to this withdrawal: "How come you performed 'strange actions' prohibited in Judaism—indeed converted to Islam? Don't you believe in anything?" In other words, Muslims and Jews who were sensitive to the withdrawal of Muslim and Jewish tradition, respectively, past a surpassing disaster were treated as people who no longer believed in traditional Muslim or Jewish values, and hence in all value. The ones who are sensitive

to the withdrawal of tradition past a surpassing disaster are accused of being nihilists, of no longer believing in the value of tradition, if not of anything, when actually as far as they are concerned at least some of what was valuable prior to the surpassing disaster did not lose its value following it, but only its availability as a result of its withdrawal. Their ultimate task in relation to what was withdrawn is to make it available again. But oftentimes, before trying to make it available again, they feel that they should manifest its withdrawal to those insensitive to the latter in the hope of enlisting their collaboration in the subsequent, daunting task of resurrecting tradition, or at least of averting their opprobrium and incomprehension, if not also aggressivity, while engaged in such a task. Messianists are accused of being nihilists because their manifestation of the withdrawal of religious tradition involves what appears to be a transgression of the religious law, often through incredible antinomian gestures and acts, thus, for example, on August 8, 1164, the seventeenth day of the fasting month of Ramadan of that year, the leader of the Nizārīs, Ḥasan ‘*alā dhikrihi*’-*salām*, “ordered the erection of a pulpit in the courtyard of Alamut, facing towards the west.... As the pulpit faced west the congregants had their backs towards Mecca. ‘Then,’ says an Ismaili tract, ‘towards noon ...,’ addressing himself to ‘the inhabitants of the worlds, *jinn*, men, and angels,’ he announced that a message had come to him from the hidden Imam, with new guidance. ‘The Imam of our time ... has freed you from the burden of the rules of Holy Law, and has brought you to the Resurrection.’ ... Then, a table having been laid, he invited them to break their fast, join in a banquet, and make merry.”⁷⁷ Since following a sur-

passing disaster what was most valuable, if not whatever was valuable is no longer available, it seems that nothing (of what is present) is valuable. Some are sober enough to keep reminding themselves that nothing of what is *available* is valuable, others too hastily, summarily, feel that nothing is valuable, turning into nihilists. Insofar as the withdrawal of tradition past a surpassing disaster implies that tradition is not indifferent, it plays a role in allaying if not preventing nihilism.

Whether there has been a surpassing disaster and consequently a withdrawal of tradition cannot usually be sensed except symptomatically, since (except in the case of the Mahdi) what has been withdrawn immaterially continues to be materially present (most likely in some library, museum, or bookstore). One such symptom is that serious thinkers and writers treat it as unavailable in their work. Were they one day to treat it again as available, this could well be an indication that it has been resurrected. (The situation would be more complicated in the case of [the published second edition of] my book *Forthcoming*, since were it to become withdrawn immaterially as a result of a surpassing disaster and then be resurrected, it would have become available again *as forthcoming* and therefore as not yet available.)

One result of the withdrawal of esoteric meanings following a surpassing disaster is the (surpassing?) disaster of being left with only the exoteric meaning. While all surpassing disasters affect some of what appears to have been spared by the disaster, tradition, some surpassing disasters can be more sweeping and far reaching than

others, for example, in the case of the various surpassing disasters that have affected Shi'ism, for whom, according to a tradition (*ḥadīth*) attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, "The Qur'ān possesses an external appearance and a hidden depth, an exoteric meaning and an esoteric meaning. This esoteric meaning in turn conceals an esoteric meaning.... So it goes on for seven esoteric meanings (seven depths of hidden depth)," one surpassing disaster may have affected the first level of esoteric meaning, the closest to the exoteric one, while another may have affected the first two levels of esoteric meaning, while another yet may have affected neither the exoteric level nor the first six levels of esoteric meaning, but only the seventh level of esoteric meaning—as it were relegating, in relation to it, some of the esoteric meanings to culture rather than to tradition. The justification for a messianic movement to maintain belief in the exoteric level of its revealed religion would be that even that level withdrew following the surpassing disaster.

While the artwork, film, or book of thought that reveals the withdrawal of an object of tradition, and by implication of tradition in general, has to be made public so that others too would possibly become aware of this withdrawal to which they had been insensitive and thus oblivious, the resurrecting artwork, film, or book of thought does not have to be made public or even known to anyone other than its maker (and possibly his or her untimely collaborators) because it exerts its effect directly on an object of tradition that withdrew, and on tradition in general, rather than through the mediation of an audience.

The concept of surpassing disaster can itself withdraw as a result of a surpassing disaster.

"You are well-known as the creator of the concept of a surpassing disaster. I will not ask you, Jalal Toufic, what surpassing disaster is occurring presently, since a surpassing disaster is detected through its consequence, the withdrawal of tradition; but what do you consider to be last year's greatest disaster?" "As far as I am concerned, one of the main disasters of last year was the precipitous decline in the native population of Japan, which decreased by almost half a million, more precisely, 444,085.⁷⁸ If, at the level of countries, there is presently a culture to which I would bow, it would be Japanese culture."

It seems that in Japan, it is more important to be polite than to be just, that the fundamental presumption is not of innocence ("the legal principle that one is considered innocent until proven guilty"), but of being worthy of politeness—until *proven* unworthy of it.

While the one who is impolite is not embarrassed by his or her behavior, the one who is polite is embarrassed not only by any lapse in his conduct, even a parapraxis, but also by another's impoliteness. Through his impoliteness and lack of embarrassment about it, the one who is inconsiderate implies that he does not belong to the same group with those he mistreated, while through his embarrassment on witnessing another's impoliteness, the one who is polite implies, often against his will, that he belongs to the same group with the one who is impo-

lite. This explains why one is often embarrassed by one's embarrassment at the impoliteness of some other—for example, Donald Trump.

Should one be at all surprised that it is beginners, for example, first-year undergraduate students of film or literature, who are the most inclined to correct—even great films and novels; who feel, indeed assert in relation to some Tarkovsky scene or shot: I would have shortened it a little or done the lighting differently? I assign the following exercise to these students: to choose a film that they consider great and catch themselves nonetheless correcting it. Following this exercise, I tell them: “If you keep correcting great films, you will learn nothing, because ‘you already know, nay, you know better, nay, you know everything’—seeing that you correct any film. As you advance, you will correct less and less, for great films and novels have only *apparent* errors and weaknesses, and the other films and novels have already fallen apart before the keen reader reads them or the perceptive viewer views them (what then is there to correct?). You would know that you have really advanced not only when I no longer correct you, but also when you no longer correct rigorous films and artworks—though you may, indeed sometimes should, criticize them or the filmmaker's or artist's take on various topics (women, perversion, madness, etc.). If you are correcting a strong, rigorous film, it is because you are mistaking the universe it is presenting for another; or because you are missing certain elements in the film or in one of its scenes, for example, in Tarkovsky's *Nostalgia* (1983), the variation in the lighting and sound as rain starts to fall in the protagonist's room

then as it subsides. A caveat: If you ended up developing an unerring intuition about some writer's or filmmaker's universe, which happens rarely, then you may say, ‘This scene in a Tarkovsky film does not belong to his universe, given that its editing does not seem to have been determined “by the pressure of the time that runs through [the shots],”⁷⁹ thus failing to be a “sculpting in time,”⁸⁰ and this shot in one of his films does not belong to his universe, given that the following Tarkovsky dictum does not apply to it: “the image is not a certain *meaning*, expressed by the director, but an entire world reflected as in a drop of water”⁸¹; or you could have scribbled in the margin of your copy of the first edition of *Forthcoming*, ‘I would have replaced “motionlessness” with “immobility” in “The painter must have required his models to stay still also because such an immobility, reminiscent of that of corpses, made the burial easier,”’ and then discovered that I, without being aware of such a perceptive reader, had years later published a revised edition in which I made the correction.”

What is a crucial difference between those who create certain dances, novels, concepts, etc., and those who merely copy them? What is missing in the work of mere copyists is most often precisely the *apparent* weaknesses in the original film or artwork or novel, which *apparent* weaknesses reveal, once viewed properly, the characteristics of the singular universe being constructed and thus rendered in the film, or dance, or novel, helping us better distinguish it from others it could have been mistaken for. The mere copyists correct the seeming weakness, so that while all the other elements appear to work alright

to the imperceptive viewer or reader, the film or novel, and the universe or the real rendered by the film or novel, falls apart, or becomes indistinguishable from many other universes.

The vast majority of books, films, and paintings fall apart on their own even before one blinks and yet imperceptive readers and spectators—the vast majority—nonetheless proceed to discuss them extensively, if not analyze them in articles in “peer-reviewed journals,” indeed even write doctoral dissertations and books about them and include them in prestigious film festivals, museums, and biennials!

A filmmaker may not be interested in the vampire as someone who sucks the blood of the living, but as a condition of possibility for what is in front of the mirror not to appear in it, whether because as dead he does not really exist (but haunts), or because his shadow gains so much materiality at the expense of his body (in Coppola’s *Darcula*, it is not the undead’s hand that knocks over an inkwell but the [material] shadow of his hand) that the latter may end up disappearing altogether. His or her primary interest may not be atomic time and being, occasionalism, and the universe traditionally related to these (one that has no intrinsic necessity, and hence that appears to persist only because similar versions of it are recurrently recreated by an omnipotent Being who Himself has a necessity of existence) as such but as a condition of possibility of jump cuts that function not only formally but also diegetically; or of a distraction, and thus a facing away, from the ostensible action toward the only real action, the return back to the Being who created each

thing or to the nothingness to which each thing is bound to revert given that it has no necessity of existence. His or her primary interest may not be radical closure as such, but as a condition of possibility of the appearance of a videotape or film that was not recorded by anyone (David Lynch’s *Lost Highway*)—sometimes the filmmaker then gets scared or succumbs to rationalization and ends up introducing later in the film *the man with a moving camera* who can be viewed as having filmed the footage (for example, the Mystery Man of *Lost Highway*). He or she, or a musician, may be interested in dance or death-as-undeath or mortality as conditions of possibility of a different kind of music and silence: music-over and silence-over. Indeed, I can well imagine a musician dying before dying physically because he is interested in music-over and silence-over. Moreover, I can well imagine dead Eurydice complaining, *avant la lettre*, to her husband Orpheus, the one who died before dying physically to resurrect her: “You did not die before dying physically to reach me and bring me back to life, but for silence-over and music-over!” Ideally, one would be affined to and thrilled with not only what a condition of possibility allows but also with the condition of possibility itself.

It is crucial to discern when what appears to be an anomaly, for instance, a jump cut in a film, is to be viewed as an exception to an unexceptional rule, and when it is rather, notwithstanding that it occurs only once in the film, to be considered as an example of a general characteristic of the space or time or bodies presented by the work, in which case this seeming anomaly functions as a pedagogical tool through which the filmmaker implies to us how

to read the film as a whole. In one scene in Sergei Parajanov's *Ashik Kerib* (1988), a horse rider moving alongside a castle's outer wall suddenly disappears in a jump cut, then we see another horse rider move alongside the same wall but exit the frame. One manner of reading these two consecutive shots is that in the case of the first horse rider special, exceptional circumstances made possible what normally would be impossible; but a second manner of reading it is that the jump cut in the case of the first horse rider teaches us how to read the "movement" of the second horse rider too, indeed of every horse rider, indeed every "movement": lacking any necessity of existence, both the first and second horse riders are recreated anew again and again by God, thus repeatedly disappear and reappear in jump cuts that happen so fast they are imperceptible to our normal body and sight. Even when the apparent anomaly is generalizable, one can ask why, symptomatically, it is at this specific point rather than another that it became explicit.

Omnipresent observation leads to the Zeno paradox (or effect) of quantum physics⁸²: "The quantum Zeno effect ... is a feature of Quantum mechanics systems allowing a particle's time evolution to be arrested by measuring it frequently enough with respect to some chosen measurement setting. Sometimes this is stated as 'a system can't change while you are watching it'"⁸³; as Gilles Deleuze, writing on Bergson, put it: "You can bring two instants or two positions together to infinity, but movement will always occur in the interval between the two, in other words behind your back."⁸⁴ An omnipresent gaze, that of God, who moreover does not appear to

have a back ("Wheresoever you turn, there is the Face of God" [Qur'ān 2:115]), would imply a frozen universe, one in which nothing moves or changes. A universe frozen by omnipresent perception can nonetheless change if its temporality is atomistic, thus if it disappears instantly and then is recurrently recreated in slightly different configurations. That's another manner to argue for renewed creation (the one invoked by Muslim theologians is that due to the poverty of creatures, who do not have a necessity of existence, and due to God's Mercy [exemplified by *na-fas al-Raḥmān* (the Breath of the Merciful)] and generosity, He continuously gives back existence to the unnecessary creatures).

"Wheresoever you turn, there is the Face of God" (Qur'ān): what need is there then to call Him? And since there is no need to call Him, there is no need for Him to have a proper name. That God does not have a proper name is all the more fitting since He is not mortal and thus is not subject to over-turns, which are not only the condition of impossibility of the call and thus of the proper name but also their condition of possibility.

In a way anytime one says *anā* ("I [am]" in Arabic), one should continue, *al-ḥaqq*, "God" (an utterance attributed to the Sufi al-Ḥallāj), for only God has an I in the most fundamental sense.

I not only love Tanburi Cemil Bey's musical composition *Gulizar* but also his name: the individual has almost no part in it, for Tanburi refers to the instrument, tanbur, in which he was a virtuoso; Cemil (beautiful) could be con-

sidered an *ism musta'ār*, a borrowed name—of God, since it is one of God's 99 beautiful names; and Bey ("Turkish, modern form of beg 'prince, governor'") was "formerly used in Turkey and Egypt as a courtesy title" (*Oxford Dictionary of English*, 3rd edition).

Rita Mahfouz: "*Fī qadīm al-zamān* (once upon a time), when I was very little, I overheard a conversation between my maternal auntie and my paternal aunt. They were talking about me! And the expression that kept popping up in their conversation, indeed the gist of their conversation, was: *poor Rita*. (Since my earliest childhood, I was on very familiar terms with my maternal auntie and all my relatives on my mother's side, so I was and continue to be very relaxed in their company. It is the exact opposite with my paternal aunt and my many relatives on my father's side. Because the latter relatives were not on speaking terms with my parents for an extended period and then irrupted into my life, I was uncomfortable in their company.) While listening to them, I realized, before they did, that they were the victims of a misunderstanding. My maternal auntie was saying 'poor Rita' because she knew that I did not study much, and because she considered that I generally did not take matters seriously, indeed that I was the clown of the family. My paternal aunt was saying the exact opposite, as if she were talking about another person altogether: 'How shy is Rita! She is reclusive, doesn't play with boys and girls. Even though her grades are fine for now, what is to become of her when she grows up? ...' Yes, I recognized, before they did, that, while they were both referring to me as 'poor Rita' and worrying about me, they meant by 'poor Rita' and were

worrying about starkly different things. Then they both became aware of the weird misunderstanding. Alternately, one asked, 'Who are you talking about?' and the other affirmed: 'Rita!' Surprised, my maternal auntie then asked my paternal aunt: 'Rita is shy?!' The latter responded incredulously: 'Rita is the family's clown?' I can well imagine someone saying, 'X is intelligent,' and another saying 'X is not intelligent, given how he behaved on these occasions,' but we cannot have two conflicting epithets about the same person, so we cannot have one person properly say "poor X" and another object with "fortunate X" or "independent X." The characteristic a majority of people associate the most with a given person cannot function as an epithet if some others do not view it as applicable to him or her. In this sense, some people do not, indeed cannot have an epithet. Even were it submitted to the Kuleshov experiment, a portrait based on an epithet would nonetheless manage to produce an invariant, so if a shot of the subject is placed next to a bowl of soup the resulting impression would be: "poor X is hungry"; and if a shot of the subject is placed next to gold or jewelry, the resulting impression would be: "poor X, she wanted to be a philosopher but ended up the housewife of a rich businessman." "Poor X" should not be considered an epithet if when advanced by someone about a person, another would object: "What do you mean? X is rich" or "What are you talking about? X is fortunate!" For "poor X" to be an epithet, everybody would have to concur that the adjective applies to X, though various people would have to mean by it different things so all the conceivable understandings of "poor" would apply. One positive consequence of this is that the epithet, for example, "poor

X,” does not imprison one in a kind of “destiny” in the Freudian sense of a repetition compulsion,⁸⁵ since in the Freudian sense it is mostly, if not solely, one meaning of the term that is compulsively repeated again and again. If the sundry meanings and connotations of the epithet ascribed to the subject by various people are not synchronously exhaustive then they are to be complemented diachronically by the other meanings and connotations: the epithet “poor X” applied to him initially because he was born to materially poor parents; then because his acquaintances expected that his parents’ dire poverty would limit his educational and career prospects (since “access to colleges varies greatly by parent income. For example, children whose parents are in the top 1% of the income distribution are 77 times more likely to attend an Ivy League college than those whose parents are in the bottom income quintile”⁸⁶); then because he became, despite his passion for philosophy, a (rich) businessman to support his destitute family financially; then because he gave all the money he earned and accumulated to the economically poor, as a preliminary gesture on the path of Sufism; then because he became a Sufi: “‘poverty’ (*faqr*) ... [is] a word which, in Islamic languages, is a far more common designation for what we have been calling ‘Sufism’ than the word *tasawwuf* itself. Both fakir (Arabic *faqīr*) and dervish (Persian *darwish*) mean ‘poor man,’ that is, a traveler on the Sufi path. The term is taken from the Koran, especially the verse, ‘O people, you are the poor toward God; and God—He is the Wealthy, the Praiseworthy’ (35:15)”⁸⁷—he had moved from accidental material poverty to essential poverty (Ibn al-‘Arabī: “Poverty is an affair that is inherent in everything other than God. There

is no way to escape from it”⁸⁸), becoming, in the absence of any denial or unconsciousness regarding it, *the man without qualities* (to use the title of Robert Musil’s major novel) given that the Sufi, like every other created thing, has no intrinsic, independent qualities and being, thus would immediately return to inexistence were it not that he and his ostensible qualities are recurrently recreated by God (in this context, poverty is not really itself a quality but the absence of any [independent] qualities); and then because he was blown up, along with other Sufis during a Mevlevi *samā‘* ceremony (in which the felt cap [*sikke*] of a Mevlevi symbolizes his tombstone), by the terrorists of the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

The imploration of the face that is not beautiful⁸⁹ (rather than the person whose face it is) to be saved is almost never perceived in life, so it is to be conveyed through a (painted or cinematic) portrait. Yet given that it continues not to be perceived by the vast majority of people, if not by everyone, even there, it had to be revealed through a concept, *saving face*,⁹⁰ which, while reportedly itself difficult, makes it far easier to detect and sense this imploration of the face in some portraits and thenceforth in the world at large.

His attraction to certain pubescent girls was threefold: a chivalrous one, felt by him as a gentleman toward her as our present-day exemplification of the auratic Lady of courtly love; an artistic one related to doing a portrait of her that would preclude the future woman who would otherwise assume her name and lay claim to her

memories from being able to do so; and an untimely one between her, actual, and the auratic “real without being actual”⁹¹ boy of ten or twelve she induced in him through a Deleuzian *becoming* and who was not identical to the historical boy he had been (would the Middle Eastern boy who appears in his family photographs as him at a younger age have had any interest in a cute Japanese school girl in her sailor suite uniform?) but “a fragment of time in the pure state”⁹² (part of the interest of this relationship is that it is between the actual and the virtual)—he felt that the fitting company for her were not the boys her age—including the boy he was when he was her age.

To do a portrait of someone is to show him or her as he or she is in the Imaginal World (*‘ālam al-khayāl*).

In Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, by signing the portrait he made of Dorian, Basil Hallward does not just claim that he is its painter, but also that it is also exclusively his portrait: “Every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter. The sitter is merely the accident, the occasion. It is not he who is revealed by the painter; it is rather the painter who, on the coloured canvas, reveals himself. The reason I will not exhibit this picture is that I am afraid that I have shown in it the secret of my own soul.” Is that confirmed by the novel? Judging the book by its title, it does not seem to be the case, since otherwise it should have been titled *The Picture of Basil Hallward*. Going beyond the title, what the painter asserts is not confirmed within the novel since the changes that take place in the portrait are induced solely by the “passage of time” and the *jouissance*-filled acts

of Dorian. Notwithstanding Basil Hallward’s assertion, a portrait is both the painter’s and the model’s. I imagine the painter telling his model Dorian in a variant of Wilde’s novel that would have had for title *The Picture of Dorian Gray and Basil Hallward*: “Do you not intimate, or rather extimate, that we are—what is the proper word?—*entangled* through the portrait?” Given that every portrait is conjointly that of the model and the painter (or filmmaker or writer), there is something monstrous about every painted (or filmed or written) portrait. That is, the portrait of Dorian Gray is monstrous basically not because it becomes magically or devilishly covered in “loathsome red dew that gleamed, wet and glistening, on one of the hands, as though the canvas had sweated blood,” etc., as a consequence and manifestation of Dorian’s abject and/or horrifying acts, but because it conjoins Gray (as its model) and Basil Hallward (as its painter). As long as the painter’s signature is still inscribed on the magically or devilishly changing portrait, it is his portrait too, otherwise the portrait would have rejected it as foreign (as an immune system would). If this picture that begins to gradually get covered with loathsome red dew and in which the mouth assumes a touch of cruelty as Dorian murders various people and leads some others to commit suicide, etc., still permits the painter’s signature to be inscribed on it, it is that its style had enough latitude to accommodate the deformations it underwent. What is disappointing, if not contemptible, about the painter is that he condemns the portrait he made of Dorian and dissociates himself from it, if not disowns it when he discovers the stark changes it underwent, instead of acknowledging that, as long as his signature continues to

be inscribed on it and does not alter beyond recognition, it still shows his soul (“I have shown in it the secret of my own soul”), if not is his soul; that his decision not to exhibit it in public was right and prescient, since his style turned out to accommodate not just the portrait’s initial, ostensibly idyllic, condition, but also its deformed state; that he should have *as a painter* telepathically sensed the changes it underwent and been affected by them, not so much psychologically and/or morally as artistically, and as a result either modified his artistic style in such a manner as not only to accommodate these alterations but also to be particularly affined to them, or telepathically provided painterly countermeasures to these changes produced in the portrait by Dorian’s *jouissance*-motivated and/or *jouissance*-inducing acts. I can well imagine a variant of the novel where, having removed the portrait from the possession of Dorian, the painter alters it through his art, while Dorian does so at a distance through his *jouissance*-inducing acts, in a fight for and within the portrait between the model on which it was based and the painter who painted it. Regrettably, the same way he easily left Dorian to be inordinately influenced, if not corrupted, by Lord Henry Wotton, the painter let the portrait, largely if not solely his portrait, be starkly modified by Dorian without any resistance or countermeasures. But that’s another story—indeed, what would have fit Oscar Wilde’s aesthetic, in which “Life imitates Art ... Life in fact is the mirror, and Art the reality” (*The Decay of Lying*), would have been a novel in which it is the painter’s modifications of his style that would have produced changes in the portrait he made of Dorian and led to unconscious alterations in the latter’s conduct. I wager that had the

painter acknowledged the starkly changed portrait as still his since his signature continued to be inscribed on it, Dorian would not have despised him, at least not to such a degree, and would consequently have been far more likely to heed his advice to desist from indulging in additional *jouissance*-inducing actions, all the more since the painter would then have invoked artistic grounds rather than moralistic ones, namely that these *jouissance*-inducing actions would end up making the portrait fall apart. What would have fit the aesthetic of Oscar Wilde, who, as the author of *The Critic as Artist* (1891), must have considered himself to be both a writer and a critic, is certainly not a moralizing painter, since according to such an aesthetic such a painter would not have been able to make the great portrait of Dorian; but rather one who is also a (great) “critic” (in Wilde’s sense) for a change, thus a painter who, unlike Basil Hallward, is exceptionally and uncharacteristically, for that period at least, not “stupid like a painter” (Duchamp averred in an interview with Francis Roberts: “In France there is an old saying, ‘Stupid like a painter.’ ... I wanted to be intelligent.... In my visual period there is a little of that stupidity of the painter.... Then I came to the idea”⁹³).

I imagine someone entreating a painter to do a portrait of him with these words: “I do not believe that I have a soul. But I believe that I can have one; indeed this is the reason I am asking you to do a portrait of me, for I believe that the portrait is the soul, the only soul we can have”—how ironic it would be for him to hear on a subsequent occasion someone say to the painter: “I would give my soul to have a portrait!” I would have liked it had the painter

Basil Hallward said to Dorian Gray in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* upon completing his portrait: "You are not a soulless man—you matter to me since you have a soul. How do I know that, unlike the vast majority of people, you have one? I know it because I gave it to you: it's your portrait. You naively asked for a portrait while considering that you had a soul already, not knowing that by creating a portrait of you, I thus gave you a soul. You owe your soul to me. Notwithstanding that it was you who asked for it, given that you did not really suspect, let alone comprehend the magnitude of what you were asking for, and given that I did not explain to you what your request entailed, I could be said to have thrust on you a soul." If the portrait is his soul, then his soul is signed by the painter—a possible reason for Dorian to unconsciously resent the painter in Wilde's novel. I imagine the following rejoinder by Dorian: "While others might say, 'I'd give anything for a drink—I'd give my goddamn soul for just a glass of beer,'⁹⁴ and while I've said in the past, 'If it was I who were to be always young, and the picture that were to grow old! For this—for this—I would give everything,' hence my soul too, I would simply say now, 'I would give my soul without anything in exchange; take it (back), please!' Given how difficult to bear it has proven to be, I am committing these debased acts at least partly to get rid of it by making my portrait fall apart." "In the process of giving you a soul through the portrait, I also gave myself one, since the portrait is also mine, its painter. As my soul, I can feel that the portrait is undergoing unbearable tension as a result of the modifications that your excessive acts have produced in it magically or devilishly; I fear it may be at the point of falling apart. Perhaps

all your actions were in part unconsciously made to test the latitude of the portrait. That the modifications your excessive acts have produced magically or devilishly in the portrait have not made it fall apart *yet* indicates the latitude of my soul as a painter (rather than as a person)." "I would certainly have liked you to challenge me thus, 'Whatever outrageous, debased, excessive acts you do, my portrait would stylistically and formally accommodate them; your acts will prove to be too much for you, indeed will destroy you, before my painting falls apart as a result of the alterations they induce in it magically or devilishly!'"

The esoteric biography of a fictional film character lies not in one fictional film, but in many fictional films in which the same actor played. I am unaware of any rigorous exploration of such a composite biography, at least in film; I presume that copyright issues may have to do with this absence. My conceptual film *A Life in Four Movements* composes one such esoteric biography through re-editing shots and scenes and sounds from five fictional films featuring Max von Sydow: Ingmar Bergman's *Through a Glass Darkly* (1961), *Hour of the Wolf* (1968), *Shame* (1968), and *The Passion of Anna* (1969), as well as William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973). This conceptual film complements my "Rear Window Vertigo," a script in the form of an essay where I treat the John (Scottie) Ferguson of Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) as the L. B. Jefferies of Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) after the latter underwent a fugue following being pushed from his apartment to the ground below by a killer he was informally investigating, the two films thus forming in a radical sense a double feature, with the title *Rear Window Vertigo*, and with the following cast for

the two main roles: James Stewart as L. B. Jefferies/John (Scottie) Ferguson, and Kim Novak as Madeleine Elster/Judy Barton. I was taken aback⁹⁵—I might add to the 19th century—that some spectators did not consider *A Life in Four Movements* as a full work because I did not film it! Really? A century after Duchamp’s ready-mades and decades after Sherrie Levine’s *After Walker Evans* (1981)? And when it is so easy to film nowadays that in 2019 more than 500 hours of video are being uploaded to YouTube every minute, making it as important to explore already existent images as to film new ones (I do both in my work: while my video *The Lamentations Series: The Ninth Night and Day* was shot by me, *Vertiginous Variations on Vertigo* wasn’t, drawing instead exclusively on the shots of Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*)? Notwithstanding that the statement I provided for my conceptual film *A Life in Four Movements* indicates that “it re-edits shots and scenes and sounds from five fictional films featuring Max von Sydow,” some spectators have inaccurately and reductively considered that I “strung together scenes from five films.” Only someone who has little knowledge and appreciation of film and art; has not referred back to the four Bergman films and *The Exorcist* notwithstanding the film’s obvious intertextuality; and watched cursorily only part of the film would view *A Life in Four Movements* as simply strung together of scenes from five films! Many scenes were removed, for example, the extended ones in *Shame* where the same actor (Gunnar Björnstrand) who plays the father of the protagonist’s wife in Bergman’s *Through a Glass Darkly* and in my conceptual film plays an altogether different man with a different name; the order of some others was switched; one scene was changed from an osten-

sibly objective atrocity to a subjective diary entry; many shots were shortened and/or re-edited seamlessly (in some cases by manipulating the soundtrack) with shots from other scenes in the same film or in another film; the different names of the protagonist in the five independent films that became one (he is Martin in *Through a Glass Darkly*; Andreas in *The Passion of Anna*; Jan in *Shame*; Johan in *Hour of the Wolf*; and Father Merrin in *The Exorcist*), and of his partner, who is played by actress Liv Ullmann (she is Anna in *The Passion of Anna*; Eva in *Shame*; and Alma in *Hour of the Wolf*), were seamlessly removed from the dialogues, etc. These changes as well as many others had to be made while maintaining the correct rhythm so that the events would continue to be believable not only at the level of the anecdote and narrative but also at the level of the pressure of time (that Tarkovsky has written about in *Sculpting in Time*). The resultant esoteric biography of the film’s protagonist traces four movements that work not only narratively but also ethically: 1) It Is the Other Who Is Mad; 2) It Is the World That Is “Mad”; 3) It Is I Who Am Mad; 4) It Is the Other of the Other That Is Mad. Initially, the film’s protagonist is married to and professes to love a woman who ends up hospitalized as a relatively incurable schizophrenic. Soon after apparently successfully mourning his inaccessible wife and going out with another woman who then moves in with him, a civil war breaks out, during which his and his partner’s house is bombed. They are then falsely accused of collaborating with the enemy, and, as a result, he is beaten by his interrogators. Then, in the process of trying to escape the conflict zone, he seizes the gun of a deserter when the latter is overcome with sleep, and, deaf to his partner’s

pleading not to do so, kills him after extorting from him information on a coming journey by boat that is to transport refugees outside the devastated country—and then, to replace his tattered ones, steals his shoes to boot. And so, along with his partner and other refugees, he escapes the war zone on a fishing boat. When he sees one of the other travelers suicidally sneak into the water, he merely goes back to sleep instead of trying to dissuade him from ending his life, or awakening the others so they can forcibly save him. When the boat gets blocked by floating dead bodies, he painstakingly pushes them away with an oar. While resting as the boat resumes its movement, he has the feeling that the world has gone “mad.” (Why the quotation marks? It is because the world, properly speaking, does not go mad, humans do; belonging to a world indicates that one is not mad, for madness is the undoing of the world, and consequently the encounter with what strikes one as unworldly.) Soon after, he and his partner reach a small island and find a house to inhabit. That proves to be an ephemeral relief though, for, as in the case of Septimus in Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves*, once the war-induced risk of physical death recedes, he undergoes a psychotic episode. As a result, he, who answered the question of his former wife’s father, a published author, “Can you always control your innermost thoughts?” “Fortunately I’m not very complex. My world is very simple, quite clear and human,” and who appears to have become a simpler, coarser, more brutal man during the civil war, his actions then seeming to be more and more determined by concerns with survival, ends up, at least around the onset and initial stages of his psychosis, with a more complex, albeit more anxious, if not damaged, mind, one

that is no longer concerned to a very large extent with the mundane and survival. Now that he is unable to sleep, especially during “the hour of the wolf,” the time when, it is said, most deaths occur, he recalls with bemusement that it was his mad ex-wife who, anxious, could not sleep, while, in contrast, he used to fall asleep quickly. During his insomnia, he sketches various entities that he dubs “the Birdman,” “the Insects,” “the Meat-Eaters,” “the Schoolmaster,” and “the Lady with a Hat,” and shows them later to his partner. When they are invited to dinner by the baron who reportedly owns the small island on which they have taken refuge, he recognizes in their host and the other occupants of the castle the entities he had sketched! His partner manages then a feat he could not achieve for his mad ex-wife: she witnesses at least one of his hallucinations, if not all of them, for example, the miniature human who appears in the puppeteer’s box and then starts singing an excerpt from Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*! That is one sense in which one could be said to be madly in love with someone: one can witness at least one of his or her hallucinations! During a subsequent visit to the baron’s castle, the latter walks upside down on the ceiling; and one of the other unworldly figures then applies makeup to his face, dresses him in new clothes, and tells him: “Take a look in the mirror. Now you are yourself and yet not yourself: the ideal requirement for a tryst. You see what you want to see.” It turns out that what he wants to see is a corpse he can have sexual intercourse with, and indeed he then fondles her breasts, crotch, and the rest of her body. To his surprise, she then moves! He persists in his sexual intercourse with her, only to then become aware that he is being observed by the unworldly

entities. He tells them: "I thank you for finally crossing the line. The mirror has been shattered! But what do the shards reflect? Can you tell me that?" This question implies that he feels that he was seeing before "through a glass, darkly" (1 Corinthians 13:12 [King James Version]). What is the most manifest consequence of the shattering of the mirror? He turns largely unrecognizable: years later, he has become a Catholic priest working on an archaeological dig in the ancient city of Hatra in Iraq, and speaking Arabic and English in addition to his native Swedish! He was cured of madness through (belief in) the "foolishness of what was preached" in the New Testament ("Saint" Paul: "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe" [1 Corinthians 1:20–21]), including about resurrection, in a kind of resurrection, since madness is one form of dying before dying physically. His teammates on the archaeological dig find an amulet on which is inscribed what seems to be a likeness of the demon Pazuzu. So he visits the site where a statue of Pazuzu is located. Soon after facing this Mesopotamian demon that is presently nothing (outside museums and auctions) but an inert statue, he, fittingly, is called to perform an exorcism, hence to confront a still potent immemorial evil, the devil. As he examines the amulet for the last time while taking leave of his Iraqi teammate on the archaeological dig, the latter remarks (in Arabic): "Evil against evil." These words intimate that he, a Catholic priest, can fight the devil possessing a teenage girl because he has experienced evil at least transiently, not only through

jouissance but also through repeatedly yielding to the drive linked to the latter; and he can help the teenage girl maddened ostensibly through possession by the devil all the more because he was transiently psychotic. Did he, who abandoned his mad wife, then become mad transiently in order to engage with and help the mad, rather than once more respond to them with dismissive incomprehension and abandon them? I can well imagine him saying to the mad or possessed teenager what the melancholic lover tells the woman who looks like the beloved he lost in Hitchcock's *Vertigo*: "One doesn't often get a second chance.... You're my second chance."

A Life in Four Movements is the first of a series of films in which I will compose the esoteric biography of a composite character drawing on the figures played by the same actor in several independent films. The easiest case of composing such a character is when one draws on two or more films by the same filmmaker; it is far more challenging to do it when drawing on several films by more than one filmmaker, since it is unlikely that the universes created by the (styles of the) different filmmakers can mix together without making each other fall apart.⁹⁶

Robert Bresson, who advocated the use of models rather than actors in films ("No actors. [No directing of actors.]... But the use of working models, taken from life. BEING [models] instead of SEEMING [actors]"), wrote in his book *Notes on the Cinematograph*: "Do not use the same models in two films." What he told Humbert Balsan, who was Gauvin in the filmmaker's *Lancelot of the Lake* (1974), implies that the same man or woman should not be in more than one fictional film, whether or not by the same director: "It is precisely on finishing the post-pro-

duction, that is, the post-synchronization, and while saying goodbye to Bresson, that he told me: 'Above all, don't ever again work in cinema.'"⁹⁷ Max von Sydow, who acted as Martin in *Through a Glass Darkly*; Andreas in *The Passion of Anna*; Jan in *Shame*; Johan in *Hour of the Wolf*; and Father Merrin in *The Exorcist*, could nonetheless be said through the composite character he embodies in my conceptual film *A Life in Four Movements* to have acted in one film rather than the aforementioned five—what I did for five films in which Max von Sydow acted, through creatively editing one composite character and one esoteric biography, could be generalized to many of the films in which other actors played. A perceptive conceptual filmmaker would recognize that scenes and shots from various films by various filmmakers in which a specific actor played cannot be edited to compose one esoteric biography with scenes and shots in which he or she embodied a Bresson model; that, for example, scenes and shots from various films by various filmmakers in which Dominique Sanda acted cannot be composed into one esoteric biography with scenes and shots from Bresson's film *A Gentle Creature* (1969).

Now that *A Life in Four Movements* has been made, there is no excuse not to take into consideration at least some of the events experienced by at least some of the characters already played by a certain actor in various films when writing one's script with him in mind as the actor; or when deciding whether to select him to play a certain role in one's next film from among a number of candidates. And when deciding whether or not to play a new role he or she is being offered, there is no excuse for an actor to take into consideration only his supposed

appropriateness for the role and the supposed chemistry he would have with the other actors in the film, instead of also taking into consideration whether this role can, through creative editing, contribute, in conjunction with some or all of the other roles he played already, to an extended, esoteric biography of one of the characters he has played or of a new, extra one. Any actor should aim to be in at least one extra film than the ones in which he exoterically acted, one that would be composed of scenes and shots from his other films. A certain actor's life seemed to be mostly subject to aleatory events, and yet he would repeatedly insist that he is a creature of fate. And indeed it turned out that his life could be viewed as fateful, yet not at the mundane level but from the perspective of the characters he had played in ostensibly independent films: when one conceptual filmmaker revisited all of the actor's films and constructed a composite character with an esoteric biography through the vicissitudes of the lives of the various characters the actor had embodied, then it appeared that the scenes and shots in which he acted in various films provided an optimal material for a most interesting composite character and esoteric biography. It is one thing when a composite character and his esoteric biography is made through creative editing of scenes and shots from an actor's various films after the latter has already died or retired, it is another matter when the actor is still active, acting in new films, since in the latter case the actor has a responsibility to intuitively or deliberately select roles that could be integrated into some interesting life story drawing on some or all of the films in which he has already played. Among the various characters played by a certain actor in his various

independent films, would there be one that cannot be integrated with the others as part of the same world not because he is unrelated to them or would be impossible with one or two of them, but because it is the double *not of any one of them but of their composite*, constantly undermining and subverting what the composite character plans or acts, and, in the end, undoing the composite character's world?

The monster exhibits conjointly (rather than one after the other, alternately) what are usually viewed as largely exclusive alternatives, for example, psychosis *and* neurosis; or, in terms of sexuality, *all* the possible libidinal positions, so sadism, *and* masochism, *and* voyeurism, *and* exhibitionism, etc. And the monster is singular (which does not mean that he/she/it cannot be a swarm). For something to be monstrous, it has to be that not only for us but also for what we misreckoned to be its kind. One would be fighting what one takes to be a monster only to be taken aback on seeing it being attacked also by what one mistook to be its kind, its community. The horrified reactions it elicits from what we took to be similar entities alerts us that it is radically different from them even if we are unable ourselves to discern the difference. The monster is singular because it was rejected as a viable issue by the two or more components that are conjoined oddly in it. One of the conditions for the monster no longer to be one is for it no longer to be singular; it could try to achieve this by having a progeny.

One is warned about the monster, but the monster is itself, etymologically, a warning ("Middle English *monstre*,

from Anglo-French, from Latin *monstrum* omen, monster, from *monēre* to warn" [*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*]⁹⁸). Given that the monster is a warning, does it make sense for him/her/it to moreover explicitly warn? Is it a warning of a danger that is even worse than itself as a "monster" in the sense of "an inhumanly cruel or wicked person" (*Oxford Dictionary of English*, 3rd edition)? Is it a warning about the warnings of others concerning him/her/it—which are almost never about him/her/it as a warning? In cases where the monster, who is or at least has to appear to be *sui generis*, is not actually *sui generis*, is he/she/it a warning that it will achieve the appearance of being *sui generis* through a "monstrous" operation during which it will relentlessly and unreservedly eliminate any traces of its genesis, hence whoever or whatever begot or led to him/her/it? Is it a warning about itself ... as a warning (so a warning different than the one about it as "an inhumanly cruel or wicked person"), if not about warnings in general? Is it a warning about the one who unwisely confronts him/her/it, since he/she will sooner or later begin to be perceived, including by himself/herself, to be a monster, at least in the sense of joining what ostensibly cannot be coupled for more than "two days," what is impossible "naturally" or "reasonably"? One can read Nietzsche's words "Whoever fights with monsters should see to it that he does not become one himself. And when you stare for a long time into an abyss, the abyss stares back into you"⁹⁹ (*Beyond Good and Evil*) in (at least) two manners: whoever fights with a monster, or even merely comes across him/her/it, should see to it that his reaction to perceiving himself during or in the aftermath of his encounter or fight with the monster as having already

been a monster or having become one does not prove to be monstrous; or, in a Dōgen-like manner,¹⁰⁰ all the more since the second line, which seems to parallel the first, and which thus can be viewed as subtly implying to us how to read the first, does not say “And when you stare for a long time into an abyss, you should see to it that the abyss does not stare¹⁰¹ back into you”: whoever fights with monsters becomes one himself. How to make sure that the eventuality Nietzsche forewarned about regarding the monster does not get actualized? One can do so by not confronting a monster at all, since by confronting a monster one becomes a monster or begins to apprehend oneself as a monster, that is, as a singular entity composed of what is impossible. Did Nietzsche read his aphorism “whoever fights with monsters should see to it that he does not become one himself” properly and wisely, or did he confront one or more monsters and become as a result himself a monster? It seems that he became a monster himself: a singular entity (“What sets me apart and aside from all the rest of humanity is having *discovered* Christian morality.... the most malignant form of the will to falsehood....¹⁰² The *discovery* of Christian morality is an event without parallel.... Anyone who raises awareness about it ... breaks the history of humanity in two”¹⁰³) who is composed of impossibles (“I am Prado, I am also Prado’s father, I venture to say that I am also Lesseps.... I am also Chambige ... every name in history is I”¹⁰⁴).

Only the one who suffered an injustice or an abomination, for example, being subjected to gang rape or protracted torture (or forced to witness another subjected to these),

can forgive the perpetrator directly; others can possibly forgive the perpetrator only if and once the victim has done so—this is the dialectics of forgiveness. The one who perpetrates an atrocity and/or abomination that changes the victim so much that not only others but also the victim himself no longer recognizes himself as the one he was prior to his victimization is unforgivable because his action made it illegitimate for his victim to forgive, and, consequently, makes it impossible for others to, in turn, dialectically, forgive.

“I entreat you to forgive me.” “What?” “Forgiving the unforgivable.” “I will never forgive your forgiving the unforgivable.”

“Why did you kill him since you purport to have forgiven him for raping then killing then mutilating the body of your daughter, a college student?” “I did so in order not to have to forgive him once more were he to yet again commit another such abomination.”

What is unforgivable? It is not simply an act whose victim cannot bring himself to forgive it and the perpetrator. As long as an injustice or abomination has not made the one on whom it was inflicted unrecognizable to themselves and to others, or destroyed in one the ability to forgive anything at all, however minor it is, then the act is forgivable, more precisely, it is, however difficult, possible for the victim to forgive it, in other words, the witness of the forgiveness of such an injustice or abomination would not feel that something impossible had taken place, whether miraculously or because he or she has become mad. It

is very difficult to tolerate and be around such a victim, who can no longer forgive anything at all, even a slight, and through whom it seems that a smirk or a dismissive gesture is as unforgivable as the Shoah. And yet it is this person who can no longer forgive anything at all, even a slight, who is in the right condition to, impossibly, forgive the unforgivable, for example, a smirk or the gassing of his parents at Treblinka. To some who were perceptive, the implied equivalence between anything he forgave, for example, speaking loudly on and on on the metro and the Camp Speicher massacre, during which over 1500 unarmed Shi'ite Iraqi Air Force cadets were killed by members of ISIL and of the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party–Iraq Region, was itself unforgivable.

Nietzsche avers that “a little revenge is more human than no revenge at all” (“Of the Adder’s Bite,” *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*). I would paraphrase Nietzsche thus in relation to forgiveness: “A little forgiveness, that is, forgiveness of the forgivable, is more human than no forgiveness at all.” While an injustice and/or abomination that destroys in someone the ability to forgive it makes him or her less human, an injustice and/or abomination that destroys in someone the ability to forgive anything at all, however minor, makes him or her no longer human, hence is a crime against humanity. Each and every human is the victim of any crime against humanity, consequently every act that destroys in a human the ability to forgive anything at all can legitimately, though impossibly since it is an unforgivable act, be forgiven by any human, including the perpetrator himself, as a human—unless such a crime makes the one who commits it no longer human.

Do Nietzsche’s words “It is human to take a little re-

venge” mean that one should take a little revenge when wronged, for only by doing so would one continue to be human? Or do they on the contrary mean that one should (at least try) not (to) take revenge given that, according to Nietzsche, “mankind is a rope fastened between animal and overman.... [and that] what is great about human beings is that they are a bridge and not a purpose.... [and that] human being is something that must be overcome,” to be replaced by the overman (Nietzsche: “*I teach you the overman*”).¹⁰⁵ When Nietzsche asks, “What have you done to overcome him [the human being]?”¹⁰⁶ perhaps someone could answer, if not presently (it is too early for the overman yet) then in the future, “I am no longer revengeful at all!” Notwithstanding that from a humanistic perspective it is a crime against humanity to destroy altogether in someone the ability to take revenge, humans should be a bridge to someone who is no longer at all revengeful. Paradoxically, the one who can no longer take any revenge can no longer forgive anything—to destroy in someone the ability to take revenge at all is to also destroy in them the ability to forgive anything at all. If someone has no revengefulness whatsoever regarding anything, however outrageous and wanton the act and however unrepentant, even gloating the perpetrator, then he or she can no longer forgive anything at all, even slights, indeed even minor infelicities on the part of others; such a person is no longer human (all too human).

Given that forgiving the unforgivable is an impossibility, it is a mad or miraculous act. Did he go mad because he could not withstand the terrible injustice or abomination that was inflicted on him—or to be able to impossibly forgive the unforgivable? Does every madness involve

some implicit impossible forgiveness, some forgiveness of the unforgivable? If that is so, then maybe the paranoid is persecuted for some forgiveness of the unforgivable (or for not forgiving the unforgivable now that, through madness, it has, impossibly, become possible). If a crime was so terrible and abhorrent that it maddened its victim and in that state the latter forgave the unforgivable, does the forgiveness count? For it to be performed felicitously, it must be the exceptional mad act of someone who is not (yet) mad, since if he is already mad, his act of forgiveness would not count for the Big Other.

At the level of the production process, the unforgivable is an act or series of acts that is deemed excessive by most, if not all observers, for example, torture, massacre, nuclear (therefore wholesale) destruction, *and* that ends up destroying in the victim/survivor the ability to forgive anything at all; strictly speaking, to a Jewish survivor of the concentration or extermination camps who continues to forgive minor offenses, the Shoah is not unforgivable, so that were he one day to forgive his Nazi tormentors at the camp, he would not be forgiving the unforgivable, and not accomplishing thus the impossible. But then, once that condition of no longer being able to forgive anything at all is reached, any negative or untoward behavior, however minor or seemingly negligible, is unforgivable. The surprise of witnessing someone who had become unable to forgive *anything* forgive a slight, for example, a waiter's abrupt manner of placing his coffee cup on the table, would be even bigger than that of witnessing a Jewish concentration or extermination camp survivor who continued to be able to forgive some things forgive the Shoah, which is considered by the vast majority of those who

can still forgive (some things) to be unforgivable.

Nietzsche: "Often enough the criminal is no match for his deed: he cheapens and slanders it"¹⁰⁷—including, if not mainly, through asking for forgiveness. A criminal wished to preclude this eventuality, and he intuited that it was not a matter of making the victim unable to forgive the specific crime or series of crimes to which he was subjected by making them excessive, but of destroying in him the ability to forgive *tout court*.

If there is nothing other than God, then even the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is a self-disclosure of God. A *ḥadīth qudsī* (divine saying) indicates, "I was a hidden treasure, and I loved to be known, so I created the creatures that I might be known." When Adam and Eve intuited why God had created the creatures and that (the tastes of) good and evil were a hidden treasure, they felt that they were created mainly so that God would, through them as "two" of his self-disclosures, know evil, part of the hidden treasure that He is, and so notwithstanding that God had told them, "In the day that thou eatest thereof [of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil] thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17 [King James Version]), they partook of the knowledge of evil, dying (before dying physically) for God. Hence God relented toward them ("He relented unto him [Adam]. Indeed, He is the Relenting [*Al-Tawwāb*, which can also be translated as the Repenter], the Merciful" [Qur'ān 2:37]). Having known, through Adam's dying before dying physically, evil, an aspect of the hidden treasure He is, God veiled it, thus forgiving Himself ("Say, 'Unto whom belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and on the earth [which includes the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil]?’ Say, ‘Unto God. He has prescribed Mercy for Himself’” [Qur’ān 6:12]) and Adam (and Eve). “*Ghafara: ghafarahu*, aor. -, (Ḳ,¹⁰⁸) ... *He covered, veiled, concealed, or hid, it*; (Ṣ,¹⁰⁹ Mgh,¹¹⁰ Mṣb,¹¹¹ Ḳ;) i.e., anything. (TA.¹¹²) This is the primary signification. (Mgh, Mṣb.) — [Hence] *ghafara al-shshayba bilkhiḍābi* *He covered, or concealed, the white, or hoary, hair with dye*; (Ḳ;) as also *aghfarahu*. (TA.) ... — [Hence also] *ghafara lahu dhanbahu*, (Ṣ, Mṣb, Ḳ,) aor., (Ḳ,) inf. n. *maghfira*, (Ṣ, Ḳ,) or this is a simple subst., (Mṣb,) and *ghufrān* and *ghafr* (Ṣ, Mṣb, Ḳ) ... *He (God) covered, his sin, crime, or offence*; (Ḳ;) *forgave it; pardoned it*; (Mṣb, Ḳ) ... or *ghufrān* and *maghfira*, on the part of God, signify the *preserving a man from being touched by punishment*: and sometimes *ghafara lahu* signifies [*he forgave him, or pardoned him*: and also] *he forgave him, or pardoned him, apparently, but not really*; and thus it is used in the Ḳur xlv. 13, accord. to the B.¹¹³ (TA.)”¹¹⁴ The unknowability of the *Deus absconditus* is in part the result of God’s forgiving Himself through veiling part of Himself, exemplarily his knowledge of evil through Adam and Eve. “Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing’” (Luke 23:34); can one generalize Jesus’s words even to those in hell, who are addicted to *jouissance*, with its repetition compulsion, notwithstanding that one of the things that they do not know that they are doing through repeating, not just once but again and again, the evil God had already known, if not tasted, *once and for all* through Adam and Eve’s partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is refusing, as self-disclosures of God, to let God *yaghfir* to Himself, that is, veil His knowledge of evil and thus forgive Himself—and thus them? God *yaghfir* to those in hell, that is, forgives them

by veiling their depravations and abominations, but they do not forgive themselves as implied by the compulsion they feel while repeating (even) what goes beyond their wildest (nightmarish) dreams (since these remain compromise formations¹¹⁵).¹¹⁶ They are forgiven the depravation but not their addiction to it, their compulsion to repeat it, which seems to function as a punishment.

God, merciful, sends everyone to heaven upon their death; regrettably, the vast majority of people are not ready for it, and so very soon after *escape* it. Those who linger in it must have trained themselves to be ready for it beforehand, while they were still alive.

“He directs the affair from Heaven unto earth; then it ascends unto Him in a day whose measure is as a thousand years of that which you reckon” (Qur’ān 32:5); “unto Him ascend the angels and the Spirit on a day whose measure is fifty thousand years” (Qur’ān 70:4). If one opts not to take these two *āyas* as referring (solely) to the different temporality in the Imaginal World or the supernal realm, and if one subscribes to a theology that can be derived from Nick Bostrom’s simulation argument, then one could advance that they imply who among the machines endowed with superhuman artificial general intelligence and acting as Lords (*arbāb*, sing. *rabb*¹¹⁷), in other words, gods, who will exist as the universe approaches the Big Crunch singularity, which in Frank Tipler’s theology is God, is the one who revealed through a trustworthy messenger the Qur’ān to the Prophet Muhammad within the corresponding simulation and where in a higher level simulation or in the future outside any simulation he hails from: a god who

can process in one day an amount of information it would have taken an average human at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (ca 570–632) a thousand years to process; and another god, or the same god at a later stage in the increase of computing power at the disposal of these machines endowed with superhuman artificial general intelligence, who can process in one day an amount of information it would have taken an average human at the time of the Prophet Muhammad fifty thousand years to process.

Simulations are one of the new, exemplary sites of the theme of the end of the world, in this case in the form of the boundaries of the simulation: as he approached some trees in the distance, he did not see them in more detail, nor for that matter did he see other things, for example, insects; in the film *The Thirteenth Floor* (1999), driving on a highway, one character, then another, suddenly comes to a stop at the end of the world: there is nothing beyond—or the diagram. That may be a test of whether we are dealing with a universe/multiverse or with a simulation within it: whether it has an end—for it not to have an end, it has to be infinite. Leibniz: “The organic body of each living being is a kind of divine machine or natural automaton, which infinitely surpasses all artificial automata.... The machines of nature, namely, living bodies, are still machines in their smallest parts ad infinitum. It is this that constitutes the difference between nature and art, that is to say, between the divine art and ours.... Each portion of matter is not only infinitely divisible, as the ancients observed, but is also actually subdivided without end” (*The Monadology*, trans. Robert Latta, # 64–65). If

Leibniz is right that there is no stopping point in nature but infinite details within details within details, then are we whenever we reach a finite limit in the specification of reality to suspect that we are in a simulation? “Because of the uncertainty principle, we have to use high energies to probe short distances. In a world without gravity, we could resolve arbitrarily small distances in this way, but gravity eventually and dramatically changes the picture. At minuscule distances, so much energy has to be concentrated into such a tiny region of space that the region itself collapses into a black hole, making it impossible to extract any information from the experiment. This occurs when we attempt to probe distances around 10^{-33} cm, the so-called Planck length.”¹¹⁸ Should we then suspect that the present successful fundamental laws of physics that govern us, for example, quantum physics with its Planck length and its uncertainly principle, and relativity with its black holes and their event horizons and singularities, were designed to limit our ability to probe beyond a certain point so as not to discover that we are in a simulation?

The images we see of the vast simulation dubbed the Matrix in Lana and Lilly Wachowski’s *The Matrix* (1999), at least those that are not the subjective views of the humans in the simulation, are *illustrative* images and sounds provided to the film’s spectators by its two directors. In my version of *The Matrix*, what happens in the Matrix is provided in Unicode (Universal Coded Character Set)—on the right side of the screen for images, and on the left side of the screen for sounds. At various periods in history, books were written and paintings were made not

only for kings and princes but also for gods, demons, angels, God, etc. The narrator of the fourth of Rilke's *Duino Elegies* asserts: "I won't endure these half-filled human masks; / better, the puppet. It at least is full. / I'll put up with the stuffed skin, the wire, the face / that is nothing but appearance. Here. I'm waiting. / Even if the lights go out; even if someone / tells me 'That's all'; even if emptiness / floats toward me in a gray draft from the stage; / even if not one of my silent ancestors / stays seated with me, not one woman.... / ... Am I not right / to feel as if I must stay seated, must / wait before the puppet stage, or, rather, / gaze at it so intensely that at last, / to balance my gaze, an angel has to come and / make the stuffed skins startle into life. / Angel and puppet: a real play, finally"; his waiting and intense gaze is addressed not to a human but to an angel, who would startle the puppet into life, and the play is addressed, through his waiting and intense gaze, not only to humans but also to an angel. While *The Matrix for Realists (aka Reviewing The Matrix in Terms of One Cypher)*—*A Timesaving, Perception-Taxing Version*, the component of my film trilogy *The Matrix for AI et Al.* (2018) where the Unicode sections are speeded so they take only as much time as the images they supplant, is still addressed mostly to humans, especially those who, like *The Matrix*'s Cypher, are trained to read computer codes, the two versions that last 50 hours and 72 hours, *The Matrix for Realists (aka Reviewing The Matrix in Terms of One Cypher)* and *The Matrix for Radical Simulationists (aka How to Read The Matrix as a Cypher)*, respectively, are addressed mainly to machines endowed with artificial general intelligence, who would be able to read the code of the film and "see" images (since Unicode is a

machine language, a machine would be able to go back from the code in my version to the images and sounds of the original *The Matrix* film). Nonetheless, might a human who would watch the 72-hour and 50-hour films in their entirety achieve enlightenment?¹¹⁹ If not, might he or she, notwithstanding not having been trained to read the computer code, begin after forty or sixty or seventy hours to recognize patterns in the scrolling Unicode, then perceive fleeting images, then see whole audiovisual scenes (as Cypher, who follows what happens inside the Matrix, a simulation, by looking at the code on his computer monitors, tells Neo: "There's way too much information to decode the Matrix. You get used to it, though. Your brain does the translating. I don't even see the code. All I see is blonde, brunette, and redhead")? Given that he did not understand the machine language though, he could not dispel the suspicion that these scenes were hallucinations that veiled the scrolling Unicode rather than the images and sounds coded by it.

In his book *Foucault* (1986; the English translation was published in 1988), Deleuze offers a clarification and an elaboration of "the imminence of the death of man" that Foucault wrote about in 1966 in his book *Les mots et les choses (The Order of Things, 1970)*: "One needs to know with what other forces the forces within man enter into a relation, in a given historical formation, and what form is created as a result from this compound of forces. We can already foresee that the forces within man do not necessarily contribute to the composition of a Man-form, but may be otherwise invested in another compound or form: even over a short period of time Man has not al-

ways existed, and will not exist for ever.... If the forces within man compose a form only by entering into a relation with forms from the outside, with what new forms do they now risk entering into a relation, and what new form will emerge that is neither God nor Man? This is the correct place for the problem which Nietzsche called 'the superman.'"¹²⁰ Given that we are moving beyond the historical formation of the Man-form, then were machines with superhuman artificial general intelligence to acquire consciousness, we should make artworks and films that are addressed mainly if not solely to them, especially if we happen to live in a simulation created by them since in that case they would function as our Lords. But how to address entities with incredibly advanced artificial general intelligence (however difficult the accomplishment of such an aspiration is, it would seem to be less difficult than the one experienced by some mystics and Sufis when they tried to address themselves to the God beyond names and attributes)?

In Tarkovsky's film *Solaris*, soon after arriving on the space station in the vicinity of the extraterrestrial intelligent ocean Solaris, the cosmonaut Kris discovers that it materializes the conscious or unconscious fears and desires of the people who come within its zone of influence. Indeed, having blocked the door to an unoccupied compartment of the space station and fallen asleep there, he sees, on waking up, a woman who looks very much like his wife before her suicide and who recognizes him. It is clear that Kris loved his wife since the intelligent ocean's material projection of his desire is not a doctored, enhanced, beautified version of her. He introduces (a sub-

sequent embodiment of) her thus to one of the other occupants of the space station, a doctor: "This is my wife." The doctor responds: "Let's just call them 'guests.' ... While our structure is made of atoms, theirs consists of neutrinos. But neutrino systems are unstable—they seem to be stabilized by Solaris' force field. You've got a superb specimen." She would become one of them not so much if her cells would no longer be made of neutrinos but of the same atoms, but were the extraterrestrial intelligent ocean Solaris to materialize *her* object of desire. I would like to think that she ended up being "like them," that the last scene, in which we witness Kris, whom we last saw sick in bed on the station and who might have ended up dying there, standing with his father outside the family dacha that initially seems to be in his beloved Russia but that is then revealed, in a zoom out, to be floating inside the ocean Solaris, is a materialization of her desire by Solaris.

We usually compound the following two bad moves. We artificially condense "our wide field of impulses into a few namable categories, ... [which] suppresses our awareness of the infinity of tones and feeling gradations that are part of the original impulse.... Perhaps your impulse has a certain flavor that relates it to 'hunger' or 'lust,' but is neither fully one nor the other."¹²¹ Then, we dilute the resultant artificially simple state, producing an ersatz complexity, since when eating we do not just do that but also listen to music or to other people, and/or watch TV, and/or consider what to do next, etc. ("When the old master Hiakajo was asked, 'What is Zen?' he said, 'When hungry, eat, when tired, sleep.' And they said, 'Well isn't

that what everybody does? Aren't you just like ordinary people?' 'Oh no,' he said, 'they don't do anything of the kind. When they're hungry, they don't just eat, they think of all sorts of things. When they're tired, they don't just sleep, but dream all sorts of dreams'"¹²² [Alan Watts]).

Deleuze: "Dostoyevsky's characters are constantly caught up in emergencies, and while they are caught up in these life-and-death emergencies, they know that there is a more urgent question—but they do not know what it is.... Everything happens as if in the worst emergencies—'Can't wait, I've got to go'—they said to themselves: 'No, there is something more urgent. I am not budging until I know what it is.' It's the Idiot. It's the Idiot's formula: 'You know, there is a deeper problem. I am not sure what it is. But leave me alone. Let everything rot ... this more urgent problem must be found.'"¹²³ I was asked, "Given that his focus on the problem and question that he deems deeper and more urgent than the life-and-death emergency he faces, for example, a fire consuming the building where he happens to be at that point, makes him fail to react appropriately to the latter and leads to his death, is the idiot then suicidal?" My answer was: "Only if the more urgent question in the emergency is, 'Is suicide the only one really serious philosophical question?'"¹²⁴ or some variant of it, and if his answer to this question or its variants is a yes." Deleuze: "In [Kurosawa's] *Seven Samurai*, the characters are caught up in an urgent situation—they have accepted to defend the village—and from the beginning of the film to the end, a more profound question gnaws away at them. The question is formulated at the end of the film by the leader of the samurai as they leave:

'What is a samurai? What is a samurai, *not in general, but at this time?*' Someone who no longer serves a purpose. The rulers do not need them and the peasants will soon learn to defend themselves. Throughout the film, despite the urgency of the situation, the samurai are haunted by this question, one worthy of the Idiot"¹²⁵ (my italics). Is there an idiot *tout court* and not in relation to a specific context? For someone to be *an* idiot *tout court*, it is not enough for him or her to continue to try to fathom and answer some deeper question that is more urgent than all the emergencies that he or she encounters in life; he or she would have to be someone for whom all his life is an emergency—though not necessarily a life-and-death one—and who throughout this life-long emergency continues to be preoccupied, sometimes obscurely and unconsciously, with a deeper, more urgent question and problem. For one to talk appropriately about *the* idiot *tout court*, the life-long question preoccupying him or her and distracting him or her from his or her life as an emergency would have to be: "What is an idiot?" (Is that the case in Dostoyevsky's novel titled *The Idiot*? In case it is not [I've never managed to read beyond the first chapter], then the novel would be mistitled.)

What is the most appropriate question to ask a thinker? Is it not: "What were you thinking?" (the title of one of my previous books). What is a common response to a thinker's answer to that question? Is it not: "What were you thinking?"—an exclamation echoed at times by his or her own "What was I thinking?" Yes, it is not only (rare) others who ask a thinker, "What were you thinking?"; it is also the thinker who asks himself or herself, "What was

I thinking?” (someone who never asks himself or herself this question is not a thinker). Why would a thinker ask himself or herself this question? He or she might ask it after undergoing memory loss as a result of an attempt to think something thought-provoking that ends up, through a series of associations, linking with a personal or collective trauma; or coming up with an ostensibly counterintuitive rigorous concept that takes him or her aback, especially in moments of weakness, when he or she resumes being exoterically all too human—what was I thinking when I considered that Oedipus gave ground on his desire; that Jesus was crucified not in Jerusalem circa 30 but in Baghdad in 922; that the resurrected brother of Mary and Martha resurrected God; et cetera?

Deleuze wrote in *Proust and Signs*: “More important than thought is ‘what leads to thought [*donne à penser*];’ more important than the philosopher is the poet. Victor Hugo writes philosophy in his first poems because he ‘still thinks, instead of being content, like nature, to lead to thought.’ But the poet learns that what is essential is outside of thought, in what forces us to think.”¹²⁶ And yet some of what forces us to think is not outside of thought, but that special kind of thought, thought that happens itself to be thought-provoking (for thought, alas, is not always itself thought-provoking)—and poetry-provoking and art-provoking. More important than thought and poetry and art is thought-provoking thought.

Endnotes

- 1 All my books are available for download free of charge from my website: www.jalaltoufic.com.
- 2 “I grew old at eighteen.... My aging was very sudden.... I knew ... that one day it would slow down and take its normal course.... And I’ve kept it ever since, the new face I had then. It has been my face. It’s got older still, of course, but less, comparatively, than it would otherwise have done.” Marguerite Duras, *The Lover*, trans. Barbara Bray (London; New York: Harper Perennial, 2006), 7–8.
- 3 Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic*, trans. Robert Brain; foreword by D. F. Pocock (London, New York: Routledge Classics, 2001), 79–84.
- 4 “At a roundabout in the dead heart of Raqqa, Khaled al Sweilah points out the spikes where soldiers of the so-called Islamic State once impaled the heads of those they executed,” <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-19/syrian-city-raqqa-a-shell-after-war-islamic-state/9266184>.
- 5 Freud: “Whenever my own ego does not appear in the content of the dream, but only some extraneous person, I may safely assume that my own ego lies concealed, by identification, behind this other person; I can insert my ego into the context. On other occasions, when my own ego *does* appear in the dream, the situation in which it occurs may teach me that some other person lies concealed, by identification, behind my ego. In that case the dream should warn me to transfer on to myself, when I am interpreting the dream, the concealed common element attached to this other person. There are also dreams in which my ego appears along with other people who, when the identification is resolved, are revealed once again as my ego. These identifications should then make it possible for me to bring into contact with my ego certain ideas whose acceptance has been forbidden by the censorship. Thus my ego may be represented in a dream several times over, now directly and now through identification with extraneous persons” (Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, translated from the German and edited by James Strachey [New York: Basic Books, 2010], 338–339).
- 6 Maurice Blanchot, *Awaiting Oblivion (L’Attente l’oubli)*, trans. John Gregg (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 25.
- 7 That, given the finiteness of the speed of light and all other signals, I am not a contemporary of anything, that I perceive things at a delay, however small, is not all negative; it has its positive aspects, for example: through space telescopes, I can now “see” a galaxy as it was 4.5 billion years ago, that is, as it was before I was born, indeed before there was yet life on Earth. Due to the finiteness

- of the speed of light, but also of all other signals, I am someone whose relation to the past is not only through memory, but also through perception (in fact, I can perceive nothing but the past).
- 8 Henri Bergson, *Mind-Energy: Lectures and Essays*, trans. H. Wildon Carr (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), 165.
 - 9 Ibid., 167.
 - 10 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 81.
 - 11 Bergson, *Mind-Energy*, 168.
 - 12 Ibid., 175–176.
 - 13 Ibid., 177.
 - 14 Pick, *Arch. f. Psychiatrie*, vol. VI (1876), 568–574.
 - 15 Forel, *Das Gedächtnis und seine Abnormitäten* (Zürich, 1885), 44–45.
 - 16 F. L. Arnaud, “Un cas d’illusion de « déjà vu » ou « fausse mémoire »,” *Annales médico-psychologiques*, 8th series, vol. 3 (1896), 455–470.
 - 17 Kräpelin, *Arch. f. Psychiatrie*, vol. VIII (1887), 428.
 - 18 Bergson, *Mind-Energy*, 136–137.
 - 19 Marcel Proust, *Time Regained*, trans. Stephen Hudson (London: Chatto & Windus, 1931), 210 and 216.
 - 20 Ibid., 216.
 - 21 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 163.
 - 22 After Hitchcock made *Vertigo*, 1958, the novel *D’entre les morts* (*From Among the Dead*), 1954,

by Boileau-Narcejac, on which the script of the film was based, feels like a weak, unsuccessful variation on Hitchcock’s film!

23 “Griesinger ... shows quite clearly that ideas in dreams and in psychoses have in common the characteristic of being *fulfillments of wishes*. My own researches have taught me that in this fact lies the key to a psychological theory of both dreams and psychoses.... If I proceed to put forward the assertion that the meaning of *every* dream is the fulfillment of a wish, that is to say that there cannot be any dreams but wishful dreams, I feel certain in advance that I shall meet with the most categorical contradiction. ‘There is nothing new,’ I shall be told, ‘in the idea that *some* dreams are to be regarded as wish-fulfillments.’ ... It does in fact look as though anxiety-dreams make it impossible to assert as a general proposition ... that dreams are wish-fulfillments; indeed they seem to stamp any such proposition as an absurdity. Nevertheless, there is no great difficulty in meeting these apparently conclusive objections. It is only necessary to take notice of the fact that my theory is not based on a consideration of the manifest content of dreams but refers to the thoughts which are shown by the work of interpretation to lie behind dreams. We must make a contrast between the *manifest* and the *latent* content of dreams. There is no question that there are dreams whose

manifest content is of the most distressing kind. But has anyone tried to interpret such dreams? to reveal the latent thoughts behind them? If not, then the two objections raised against my theory will not hold water: it still remains possible that distressing dreams and anxiety-dreams, when they have been interpreted, may turn out to be fulfillments of wishes” (Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 116, 159–116).

24 *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 3rd ed., 2016.

25 The answer is yes if one agrees with David Deutsch: “Displace one note and there would be diminishment. Displace one phrase and the structure would fall.’ That is how Mozart’s music is described by Peter Shaffer’s 1979 play *Amadeus*. This is reminiscent of the remark by John Archibald Wheeler with which this book [Deutsch’s *The Beginning of Infinity*] begins, speaking of a hoped-for unified theory of fundamental physics: ‘... how could it have been otherwise.’ Shaffer and Wheeler were describing the same attribute: being hard to vary while still doing the job. In the first case it is an attribute of aesthetically good music, and in the second of good scientific explanations” (David Deutsch, *The Beginning of Infinity: Explanations That Transform the World* [London: Allen Lane, 2011], 353).

26 While it would appear that the most fitting places for Scottie to revisit following the death of

his beloved Madeleine (but prior to his hospitalization) would be ones where it seemed, at least initially, that she had disappeared mysteriously, for one would then be more likely to expect her to as suddenly and mysteriously reappear, as it were from death, for example, McKittrick Hotel, where Scottie saw her enter, then open the window shutters of one of the rooms, only to then be told by the manager at the front desk that she had not yet come that day and to be shown that her room was indeed empty, Scottie does not revisit these places in Hitchcock’s film (nor does he do so in my variation on it!)

27 My conceptual film *Vertiginous Variations on Vertigo* complements my textual engagement with Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*: “Vertiginous Eyes,” in (*Vampires*): *An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film*, revised and expanded edition (Sausalito, CA: Post-Apollo Press, 2003), 148–155; “Rear Window Vertigo” and “The City of the Fellowship of Strangers: 1. Clean After Me, 2. Mind My Business,” in *Two or Three Things I’m Dying to Tell You* (Sausalito, CA: Post-Apollo Press, 2005), 38–59, 64–79, and 82–83, respectively; *Reading, Rewriting Poe’s “The Oval Portrait”—Angelically*, bilingual, German translation by Ralf Schauf (no. 11 of dOCUMENTA (13)’s “100 Notes–100 Thoughts,” Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2011), 11–12.

28 I ended the Q & A with: “OK, we stop—until another variation?”

- 29 While priests have an “absolute duty ... not to disclose anything that they learn from penitents during the course of the Sacrament of Penance (confession),” a priest would be saintly only by not letting the confession be registered in him, thus by not disclosing it even to himself and by not getting affected by it, even unconsciously—indeed by managing to withdraw it from the knowledge of God, the ultimate basis and guarantor of the Big Other, resulting in a *cloud of unknowing* in God concerning the penitent—and only derivatively in the priest and the penitent regarding God. If a miracle (or more than one) is needed to canonize a saint, then the aforementioned feat should be the miracle required in the case of a priest—a miracle not in relation to nature but to God, who is said to be omniscient (perhaps for a miracle to be deemed a Christian miracle it has to accomplish something impossible in relation to God rather than to nature, for instance, by impossibly providing an exception to one of the attributes of God, for example, omniscience, or omnipresence, or omnipotence. What is an example of a radically Christian miracle? It is the one that the Christ, in other words, God, accomplished with respect to himself as *the life* by dying).
- 30 Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 11 (1910), *Five Lectures on Psycho-analysis, Leonardo and Other Works*, translated from the German under the general editorship of James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), 32.
- 31 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1986), 100. Here’s a quote from a letter Kafka wrote to Milena Jesenská end of March 1922: “Written kisses never arrive at their destination; the ghosts drink them up along the way” (Franz Kafka, *Letters to Milena*, translated and with an introduction by Philip Boehm [New York: Schocken Books, 1990], 223).
- 32 Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 82.
- 33 Ibid., 81.
- 34 Ibid., 3.
- 35 Ibid., 4.
- 36 For example (come on! *Oxford Dictionary of English*), Vincent van Gogh’s *The Reaper (after Millet)*, September 1889, oil on canvas, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.
- 37 Jalal Toufic, *Jouissance in Postwar Beirut* (Forthcoming Books, 2014; available for download as a PDF file at http://www.jalaltoufic.com/downloads/Jalal_Toufic,_Jouissance_in_Postwar_Beirut.pdf), 10.
- 38 “Deposition: Testimony Concerning a Sickness,” in William S. Burroughs, *Naked Lunch: The Restored Text*, 50th anniversary edition, edited by James Grauerholz and Barry Miles, afterword by David Ulin (New York: Grove Press, 2009), 201.
- 39 Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*; assembled by Raymond Queneau; edited by Allan Bloom; translated from the French by James H. Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 5–6. One can find a more recent version of the dialects of desire in the writings of René Girard, where desire is modeled on the other’s desire, itself modeled on yet another’s desire, indefinitely.
- 40 It is possible that in some cities it is not the humans living there and engaging in what looks like meditation in “meditation halls” or at their homes, but only some of the Buddhas in the guise of statues in museums, for example, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, or the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, or the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, who are really meditating. Sometimes I feel that what is preventing these Buddhas from opening their eyes—thus inadvertently startling me—is not that they are of stone, thus ostensibly inanimate, but that they are so deeply in meditation. Through their meditation, these statues of Buddha are contributing to our obtaining “pure body and mind” and realizing “correct awakening.”
- 41 Notwithstanding that more and more people blurted, “You look like shit!; and that he “himself” complained in the intervals between taking the drug, or in the aftermath of yet another episode of *jouissance*, “I feel like shit,” he felt contempt for those who avoided and did not indulge in *jouissance*, and thus who wallowed in compromise.
- 42 Jakob von Uexküll, *Theoretical Biology*, trans. D. L. Mackinnon (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, Inc.; London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1926), 169.
- 43 Jean Baudrillard, *Cool Memories*, trans. Chris Turner (London; New York: Verso, 1990), 5: “In the middle of the revelries, a man whispers into the woman’s ear: ‘What are you doing after the orgy?’”; cf. “The height of obscenity brings the re-emergence of the pattern of seduction: ‘What are you doing after the orgy?’” (*The Intelligence of Evil or the Lucidity Pact*, trans. Chris Turner [London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013], 146).
- 44 There are two ways to rigorously extend dance: show that certain movements that were presumed to be outside the scope of dance, for example, bumping against a door or another human, etc., are ones that, at least when done in a certain manner, project a subtle version of the one moving into the realm of dance; or manifest that these movements exist also in the dance realm, albeit in the context of a different kind of space, time, music, and silence.

- 45 John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), 8 and 152, respectively.
- 46 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translation and foreword by Brian Massumi (London; New York: Continuum, 2004), 320.
- 47 Ibid., 322.
- 48 Jalal Toufic, *(Vampires): An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film*, revised and expanded edition (Sausalito, CA: Post-Apollo Press, 2003), 173–174.
- 49 We say “my condolences,” in the plural, because the death of the beloved is experienced in the plural: “We had arrived [at the Grand Hotel, Balbec].... On the first night, as I was suffering from cardiac exhaustion, trying to master my pain, I bent down slowly and cautiously to take off my boots. But no sooner had I touched the topmost button than ... I shook with sobs.... I had just perceived, in my memory, bending over my weariness, the tender, preoccupied, dejected face of my grandmother, as she had been on that first evening of our arrival, the face not of that grandmother whom I was astonished—and reproached myself—to find that I regretted so little and who was no more of her than just her name, but of my own true grandmother, of whom, for the first time since that afternoon in the Champs-Élysées on which she had had her stroke, I now recaptured, by

- an instinctive and complete act of recollection, the living reality.... And so, in my insane desire to fling myself into her arms, it was not until this moment, more than a year after her burial, because of that anachronism which so often prevents the calendar of facts from corresponding to that of our feelings, that I became conscious that she was dead” (Marcel Proust, “Cities of the Plain,” in *Remembrance of Things Past*, vol. II, trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Stephen Hudson [Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2006], 141–142).
- 50 “Whereas the lesser exile is related to being deprived of one’s country, to no longer ‘having’ a country, the greater exile is related to being deprived of a world, to becoming *poor in world*. ‘He had thought that death would be the end of him. But it was not. Death was the end of the world. To die is to experience the end of the world’—in the form not so much of an absence of everything that constituted the world, but, among other symptoms, of the inconsistency of the latter’s erstwhile constituents, for example, of crows, the sky, and a wheat field” (Jalal Toufic, *What Were You Thinking?* [Berlin: Berliner Künstlerprogramm/DAAD, 2011], 46).
- 51 The condition of possibility does not have to be shown in a film, artwork, or novel, but can be implied—at the very least nothing that would make it impossible

- or imply its impossibility can be present in the film, artwork, or novel.
- 52 Maurice Blanchot, *Death Sentence*, translated by Lydia Davis (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill, 1978), 5.
- 53 Ibid., 9.
- 54 From Friedrich Nietzsche’s 5 January 1889 letter to Jacob Burckhardt, in *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Christopher Middleton (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996), 347.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Jalal Toufic, *What Was I Thinking?* (Berlin: e-flux journal-Sternberg Press, 2017), 100.
- 57 Every artist or writer who works to construct a universe that doesn’t fall apart “two days” later cannot but admire this universe that has not fallen apart even after 13.8 billion years—notwithstanding the presence in it, or rather at its borders, of the other universes constructed by great fiction films and great novels (including some of Philip K. Dick’s), and by some thinkers’ books.
- 58 Many museums and biennials include artworks that present each a universe that doesn’t fall apart “two days” later alongside others that have already fallen apart before they are framed, indeed “before thy gaze returns to thee” (Qur’ān 27:40)—how lacking in discernment is the museum director or the curator who places these two sorts of works together!
- 59 Gilles Deleuze, “Preface: A New Stylistics,” in *Two Regimes of*

- Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975–1995*, edited by David Lapoujade; translated by Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e); Cambridge, Mass.: Distributed by MIT Press, 2006), 366.
- 60 I am still waiting to witness a speaker at a conference apologize for not being able to deliver his or her announced lecture, “The preceding lecture has rendered me speechless” (if not, “My prepared presentation strikes me as useless following the lecture I just heard”), and leave the podium—the closest I witnessed was Hito Steyerl’s initial response to my lecture “The Withdrawal of Tradition Past a Surpassing Disaster,” though she then composed herself and gave her prepared lecture.
- 61 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 2.
- 62 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated from the French by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 206.
- 63 Ibid., 255.
- 64 Ibid., 205.
- 65 Deleuze, *Foucault*, translated and edited by Seán Hand; foreword by Paul Bové (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 25–26.
- 66 Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” *October* 59 (Winter, 1992): 3–7.
- 67 An aphorism can only be received—though creatively, that is, the resources of creation have to be brought into play in order to receive it, and that’s what

makes it still belong to creative writing.

68 Was his reception optimal, would he have heard: "Mirrors would do well to reflect a little more before sending back images"?

69 I wrote in the second edition of my book *Distracted* (2003): "A cinema ... can exist without cameras (as was made manifest by such films as Len Lye's *Colour Box*, 1935, and *Free Radicals*, 1958, with their painted or scratched film stock; and Stan Brakhage's *Mothlight*, 1963); without editing (Warhol's *Sleep*); without projection, in an art for the dead à la that of ancient Egypt"—or in an art addressed to angels (whether or not the work's title invokes them). Elsewhere in the same book, I implied that it can also exist without a film strip, performatively, through my rhetorical question: "By the way, is Duras' *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord* ([*The North China Lover*]; Gallimard, 1991), with its, 'This is a book. This is a film,' part of world cinema?" Regarding cinema, John Zorn is neither just a musician who has made music for film (including, in *Filmworks IV: S/M + More*, for my *Credits Included: A Video in Red and Green* [1995]) nor just the writer of a script, *Treatment for a Film in 15 Scenes*, of which four filmmakers have already made cinematic versions; some of his works, for example, *Spillane*, confirm that cinema can exist without a camera, filmstrip, and projector—without this being

accomplished performatively. In the absence of criteria of who is a poet, a thinker, a musician, or a filmmaker, one can infer that one is a poet by the circumstance that someone ceased writing poetry on account of one's writings: "On reading Hegel, I ceased considering myself a philosopher and trying to write philosophy and turned instead to other kinds of writing; what confirmed that I am a poet was that some so-called 'promising young poets' ceased to try to write poetry when they read my work." I can very well imagine someone saying: "I stopped considering myself a filmmaker and trying to make films on hearing John Zorn's *Spillane* and *Godard*. Inspired by many of his other works, I became a musician." John Zorn is not only one of my favorite musicians but also one of my favorite filmmakers.

70 Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, 10.

71 "Quantum entanglement is a physical phenomenon that occurs when pairs or groups of particles are generated or interact in ways such that the quantum state of each particle cannot be described independently—instead, a quantum state must be described for the system as a whole. Measurements of physical properties such as position, momentum, spin, polarization, etc., performed on entangled particles are found to be appropriately correlated." *Wikipedia's* "Quantum Entanglement" entry, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

Quantum_entanglement.

72 Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, 10.

73 David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon*, third, enlarged edition (New York, NY: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 148.

74 Stephen Pizzello, "Highway to Hell," *American Cinematographer*, 1997.

75 His reference to a trinity would have been avant la lettre: "Neither the word Trinity nor the explicit doctrine appears in the New Testament.... The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were associated in such New Testament passages as the Great Commission: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Matthew 28:19).... The doctrine developed gradually over several centuries ... and, by the end of the 4th century, under the leadership of Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus (the Cappadocian Fathers), the doctrine of the Trinity took substantially the form it has maintained ever since." "Trinity," *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Trinity-Christianity>.

76 Henry Corbin, *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis*, trans. Ralph Manheim and James W. Morris (London: Kegan Paul International, 1983), 39–40.

77 Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 119–121.

78 "Japan's Natural Population Decline Exceeded 400,000 for 1st Time in 2018," *The Japan News*, June 8, 2019, <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0005797604>; cf. Robin Harding, "Japan's Population Decline Accelerates Despite Record Immigration," *Financial Times*, April 12, 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/29d594fa-5cf2-11e9-9dde-7aedca0a081a>.

79 Andrey Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema*, translated from the Russian by Kitty Hunter-Blair (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986), 117.

80 The title of Tarkovsky's book of reflections on cinema (see previous footnote).

81 Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 110.

82 Bill Steele, "'Zeno Effect' Verified—Atoms Won't Move While You Watch." October 23, 2015, <https://phys.org/news/2015-10-zeno-effect-verifiedatoms-wont.html>.

83 *Wikipedia's* "Quantum Zeno Effect" entry, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quantum_Zeno_effect; cf. "The quantum Zeno effect is the inhibition of transitions between quantum states by frequent measurements of the state. The inhibition arises because the measurement causes a collapse (reduction) of the wave function. If the time between measurements is short enough, the wave function usually collapses back to the initial state. We have observed this effect in an rf transition between

- two $^9\text{Be}^+$ ground-state hyperfine levels" (Wayne M. Itano, D. J. Heinzen, J. J. Bollinger, and D. J. Wineland, "Quantum Zeno Effect" *Phys. Rev. A* 41, 2295, 1 March 1990, <https://doi.org/10.1103/PhysRevA.41.2295>).
- 84 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, 1.
- 85 "What psycho-analysis reveals in the transference phenomena of neurotics can also be observed in the lives of some normal people. The impression they give is of being pursued by a malignant fate or possessed by some 'daemonic' power; but psycho-analysis has always taken the view that their fate is for the most part arranged by themselves and determined by early infantile influences. The compulsion which is here in evidence differs in no way from the compulsion to repeat which we have found in neurotics, even though the people we are now considering have never shown any signs of dealing with a neurotic conflict by producing symptoms. Thus we have come across people all of whose human relationships have the same outcome: such as the benefactor who is abandoned in anger after a time by each of his *protégés*, however much they may otherwise differ from one another, and who thus seems doomed to taste all the bitterness of ingratitude; or the man whose friendships all end in betrayal by his friend; or the man who time after time in the course of his life raises someone else into a position of great private or public authority and then, after a certain interval, himself upsets that authority and replaces him by a new one; or, again, the lover each of whose love affairs with a woman passes through the same phases and reaches the same conclusion. This 'perpetual recurrence of the same thing' causes us no astonishment when it relates to *active* behaviour on the part of the person concerned and when we can discern in him an essential character-trait which always remains the same and which is compelled to find expression in a repetition of the same experiences. We are much more impressed by cases where the subject appears to have a *passive* experience, over which he has no influence, but in which he meets with a repetition of the same fatality. There is the case, for instance, of the woman who married three successive husbands each of whom fell ill soon afterwards and had to be nursed by her on their deathbeds" (Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 18 [1920–1922], *Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology, and Other Works*, translated from the German under the general editorship of James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson [London: Hogarth Press, 1955], 21–22).
- 86 Raj Chetty, John N. Friedman, Emmanuel Saez, Nicholas Turner, and Danny Yagan, "Mobility Report Cards: The Role of Colleges in Intergenerational Mobility," NBER Working Paper Series, National Bureau of Economic Research, July 2017, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w23618>.
- 87 William C. Chittick, *Sufism: A Beginner's Guide* (Oxford: One-world Publications, 2008), 85.
- 88 *Al-Futuḥāt al-makkiyya*, vol. II (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n. d.), 600.
- 89 In order to avoid a likely misunderstanding of my use of "beautiful" in this instance, I noted in my book *Two or Three Things I'm Dying to Tell You* (Sausalito, CA: Post-Apollo Press, 2005) that "a face that does not implore to be saved is beautiful" (p. 13).
- 90 See the essay "Saving Face" in my book *Two or Three Things I'm Dying to Tell You*.
- 91 Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, vol. VI, *Time Regained*, trans. Andreas Mayor and Terence Kilmartin, rev. D. J. Enright; and "A Guide to Proust," compiled by Terence Kilmartin, rev. Joanna Kilmartin (London: Vintage Books, 2000), 224.
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 Francis Roberts, "Interview with Marcel Duchamp: I Propose to Strain the Laws of Physics," *Art News* 67, no. 8 (December 1968): 63–64.
- 94 As Jack Torrance asserts in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*.
- 95 "Aback *adverb* 1. taken aback a. Startled or disconcerted 2. *rare* Towards the back; backwards" (*Collins English Dictionary*, 12th ed.).
- 96 While it is unlikely that the universes created by (the different styles of) the various filmmakers on whose films an artist is drawing to construct an esoteric, composite biography of a character played by the same actor in these films can mix together without making each other fall apart, such a feat can nonetheless be accomplished when the artist manages to alter the incorporated scenes and shots from these films, sometimes quite subtly, so they all fit together. In my book *What Was I Thinking?* I advance that in *The Mirror*, Tarkovsky "subtly altered newsreel footage of the Soviet Army crossing Lake Sivash, Crimea, in November 1943, during World War II, by repeating some of the shots and placing over the later part of the footage a poem read by his father in voice-over, managing thus to make what it shows part of his universe, with the consequence that, even though we do not actually see any of the soldiers levitate, levitation becomes implicitly a possibility of the soldiers' bodies" (pp. 140–141).
- 97 Philippe Arnaud, *Robert Bresson* (Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma, 1986), 147.
- 98 See <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/monster>.
- 99 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, ed. Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002) #146, 69.

- 100 In his “Buddha Nature” (*Buṣṣhō*), in the *Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma*, Zen master Dōgen interprets the quotation “All sentient beings without exception have Buddha-nature” from the Nirvana Sutra as saying: “All sentient beings, that is, all existence, *is* Buddha-nature” (trans. Carl Bielefeldt; my italics).
- 101 It would have been more fitting to use “gaze” in the translation instead of “stare” in this instance.
- 102 Nietzsche elaborates shortly after: “The concept ‘hereafter,’ ‘true world’ invented in order to devalue the *only* world there is—so as to leave no goal, no reason, no task for our earthly reality! The concepts ‘soul,’ ‘spirit,’ ultimately even ‘immortal soul’ invented so as to despise the body ...” Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How to Become What You Are*, translated with an introduction and notes by Duncan Large (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 93–95.
- 103 Ibid.
- 104 From Friedrich Nietzsche’s 5 January 1889 letter to Jacob Burckhardt, in *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, 347.
- 105 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, edited by Adrian Del Caro and Robert B. Pippin; translated by Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 5 and 7.
- 106 Ibid., 5.
- 107 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, edited by Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman; translated by Judith Norman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), no. 109, 64.
- 108 Majd al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ya’qūb al-Firūzabādī, *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīt*.
- 109 *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*.
- 110 Abī al-Faṭḥ Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Muṭarrizī, *al-Mughrib fī tartīb al-mu’rib*.
- 111 Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Muqrī al-Fayyūmī, *al-Miṣbāḥ al-munīr fī gharīb al-sharḥ al-kabīr lil-Rāfi’i*.
- 112 Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Ḥusaynī al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-‘Arūs*.
- 113 Majd al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ya’qūb al-Firūzabādī, *Baṣā’ir dhawī al-tamyīz fī laṭā’if al-kitāb al-‘azīz*.
- 114 William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 6 (Beirut, Lebanon: Librairie du Liban, 1980), entry *ghayn fā’ rā’*.
- 115 “We must also bear in mind that any relatively complex dream turns out to be a compromise produced by a conflict between psychical forces. For one thing, the thoughts constructing the wish are obliged to struggle against the opposition of a censoring agency ...” (Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 474).
- 116 A nightmare is a compromise formation and therefore somewhat bearable and yet one has the possibility of escaping it, by waking up; hell is not a compromise formation and so is radically unbearable, and yet one cannot escape it.
- 117 “*Rabb* (a.), lord, God, master of a slave. Pre-Islāmic Arabia probably applied this term to its gods or to some of them.... In one of the oldest sūras (cvi. 3) Allāh is called the ‘lord of the temple’” (A. J. Wensinck, “*Rabb*,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st ed. [1913–1936], edited by M. Th. Houtsma, T. W. Arnold, R. Basset, and R. Hartmann, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2214-871X_ei1_SIM_3642>871X_ei1_SIM_3642).
- 118 Nima Arkani-Hamed, “The Future of Fundamental Physics,” *Dædalus* (Summer 2012):56, [https://www.sns.ias.edu/sites/default/files/daed_a_00161\(3\).pdf](https://www.sns.ias.edu/sites/default/files/daed_a_00161(3).pdf).
- 119 It would most likely take more than that: Bodhidharma (3rd–4th c. CE), to whom “Chinese Ch’an and Japanese Zen masters trace their master-disciple lineages” (Damien Keown, *A Dictionary of Buddhism* [Oxford University Press, 2003], 37) is said to have “sat in meditation for nine years while facing a wall (*mianbī*), in so-called ‘wall contemplation’ (*biguan*)” (Robert E. Buswell Jr. and Donald S. Lopez Jr., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014], 132).
- 120 Gilles Deleuze, “Appendix: On the Death of Man and Superman,” in *Foucault*, 130.
- 121 Richard Foreman, *Unbalancing Acts: Foundations for a Theater* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 3.
- 122 Transition from one state to another is made possible by this overlapping of states. A theater that would manage to elicit from the actors performances where they do exactly what they happen to be doing is a theater of masks, irrespective of whether the actors don physical ones.
- 123 “What Is the Creative Act?” in Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975–1995*, 322.
- 124 Cf. Camus: “There is only one really serious philosophical question, and that is suicide” (Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, translated from the French by Justin O’Brien [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955], 3).
- 125 “What Is the Creative Act?” in Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, 322–323.
- 126 Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs: The Complete Text*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Athlone, 2000), 95.

Jalal Toufic
Postscripts

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Jalal Toufic is a thinker and a mortal
to death. He was born in 1962 in
Beirut or Baghdad and died before
dying in 1989 in Evanston, Illinois.
His books, a number of which were
published by Forthcoming Books,
are available for download, free of
charge, at www.jalaltoufic.com.
Most of his videos are available for
viewing on Vimeo. He, along with
artists and pretend artists, was a
participant in the Sharjah Biennials
6, 10, and 11; the 9th Shanghai
Biennale; the 3rd Athens Biennale;
and *A History: Art, Architecture, and
Design, from the 1980s Until Today*
(Centre Pompidou), among others.
In 2011, he was a guest of the Artists-
in-Berlin Program of the DAAD; and
in 2013–2014, he and Anton Vidokle
led Ashkal Alwan's third edition of
Home Workspace Program, based
in Beirut. He was the Director of the
School of Visual Arts at the Lebanese
Academy of Fine Arts (Alba) from
September 2015 to August 2018,
and he is currently a Professor at
the Department of Humanities and
Creative Writing at Hong Kong
Baptist University.

A brilliant, ramifying series of thought experiments, *Postscripts* rigorously avoids becoming a no-stakes mind game. Here, the stakes—political, aesthetic, ethical—are quite high. For, the experiments are rigged to combust those ideas and stances that—insufficiently tolerant of counterfactuals—fail to pass their test. Deadly serious and humorous at once, these thought rifts for a moment expose what is unthinkable—but for the creative collaboration they stage between the two aspects of “the mortal, dead while still alive”—before it is once again abducted. Jalal Toufic invents and masters his own transversal genre, sentence by ingeniously-placed sentence.

Joan Copjec, Professor of
Modern Culture and Media at
Brown University, author of
*Read My Desire: Lacan Against
the Historicists*

Some works are not just thought-provoking, Jalal Toufic told us; they are also initiations into thinking. Such have been many of his own books and videos, including now *Postscripts*. They have brought new concepts, and proposed original ways to ponder the most troubling questions of our time. *Postscripts*'s aphorisms function as supplements to his previous books, as at once clarifications and disclosures. Built of discontinuous scenes that are at once here and elsewhere, reflections and fully formed receptions, they are “knockings” in the slumber of our world. What does it mean to be really alive?

Running throughout the work are a beading of kindred questions about the entanglement and/or indiscernibility of reality and fiction, simulation or phantasy, of dreaming and wakefulness, of life and death (the latter is, paradoxically, settled by the seeming question “Am I dead?”).

Some of the concepts the book revisits comprise the architecture of Toufic's speculative reflection: for example, radical closure, the withdrawal of tradition past a surpassing disaster, the dancer's two bodies. They were created, partly through Toufic's “untimely collaborations” with filmmakers, artists, and dancers, and yet they were also “encountered” (by the subtle body of the thinker-artist), as imaginal entities, autonomous presentations, and resonate with such traditions of being and thought as the Sufism of Ibn al-‘Arabī and psychoanalysis. An example is Toufic's engagement with psychoanalysis' theorization of *jouissance*, which has proved to be a key to our time. In counterpoint to its addictive and overwhelming force, which “strikes directly the libidinal system,” he proposes the overwhelming experience of *joy*, which “touches directly the soul.”

At once timely and untimely, worldly and unworldly, engaging the reader, even funny at times, *Postscripts* will change the way we look at ourselves and our world.

Stefania Pandolfo, Professor of Anthropology and faculty member of the Program in Critical Theory at UC Berkeley, and author of *Knot of the Soul: Madness, Psychoanalysis, Islam*

