

*Two or Three Things I'm Dying to Tell You*

. J A L A L T O U F I C .



**Also by Jalal Toufic**

*Undying Love, or Love Dies* (Post-Apollo, 2002)

*Forthcoming* (Atelos, 2000)

*Over-Sensitivity* (Sun & Moon, 1996)

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Two or Three Things I'm Dying to Tell You

Jalal Toufic



The Post-Apollo Press

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All the posters are from the forthcoming exhibit *Minor Art: Conceptual Film and Video Posters by Jalal Toufic, 2000–2005*, which is dedicated to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari for their book *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* and to Georgii and Vladimir Stenberg for their film posters.

The cover photograph is from the series *Over-turned Portraits* made by Paul Perry, Nicola Unger and Persijn Broersen to accompany my lecture “Backing Mortals’ Proper Names” at DasArts in Amsterdam, 2 November 2001, and it is itself based on Magritte’s *Reproduction Prohibited*, 1937.

The author thanks Gilbert Hage.

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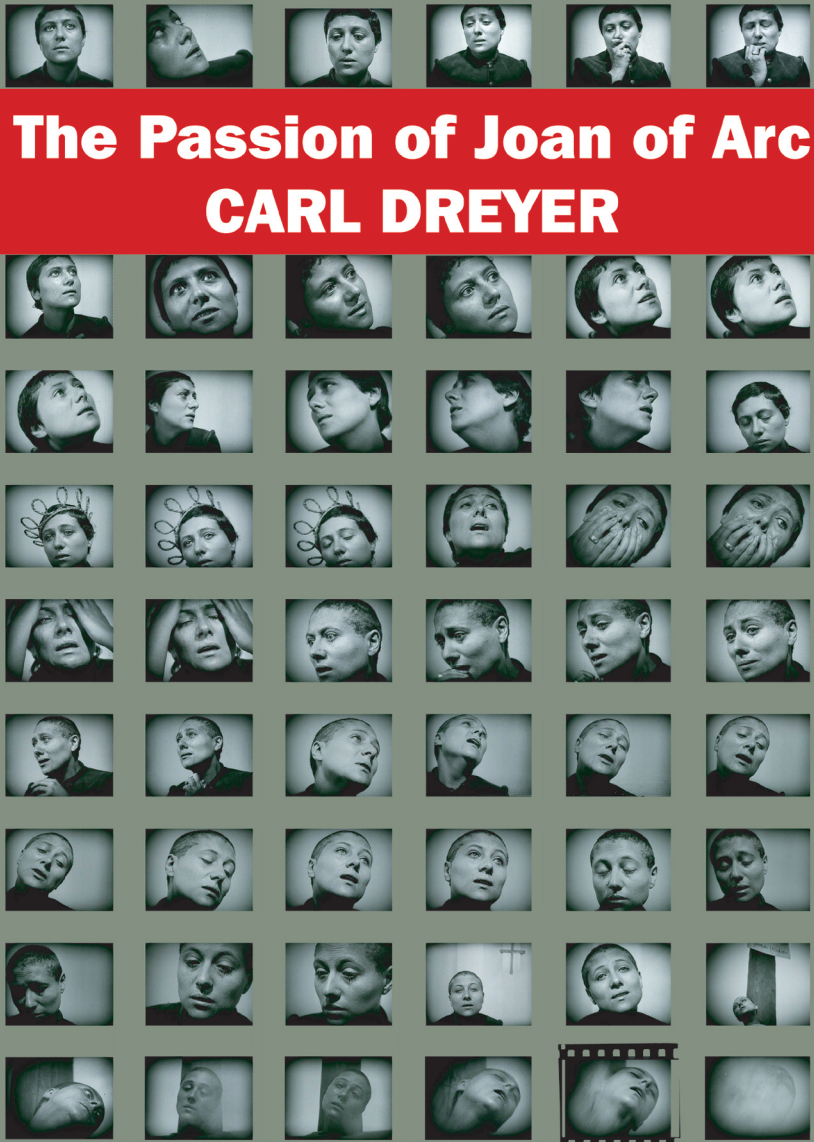
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## Saving Face

*Dedicated to my father, ‘Umrân Taxîfiq ‘Umrân, who fled the Iraq of the Ba‘th in 1968 in order to save face, and whose lesser exile<sup>1</sup> lasted till 1986, the year of his death, the greater exile<sup>2</sup>*

With the kick off of the parliamentary campaign of 2000 in Lebanon, and notwithstanding that for the most part one saw the same old faces, the face of Beirut changed. Each time I passed the rows after rows of faces of the candidates, which were now *face to face* on the walls of the city and off them, I soon became aware that I was *making a face* at them, that I had assumed a *long face*. Every time I read the slogan below the face, I could not but think: “*It’s written all over your face* that you’re lying and that once elected you will most probably do an *about-face*.” How could any candidate maintain a *straight face* while aware that his or her face was all over the city? *On the face of it*, they were undaunted *in the face of losing face*. If their gesture may be taken at *face value*, then the face is valuable as such, with the consequence that plastering it over all the walls of the city has a value (indeed in Arabic *wajâha*, which derives from *wajh*, face, means “high ranking,” and *wajîh* means “worthy of regard”). Were all these faces posted on the walls of Lebanon waiting for the results of the parliamentary elections? No. As faces, they were waiting to be saved. Perhaps it has always been a matter of *saving face*, given that there is a remarkable nakedness of the face, even of an *in your face* face. Far better than any surgical *face-lift* or digital retouching, it was the physical removal of part of the poster of the face of one candidate so that the face of another candidate would partially appear under it; as well as the accretions of posters and photographs over each other that produced the most effective face-lift, and that proved a successful *face-saver* for all concerned. All the kitsch of the rows after rows of candidates’ faces was somewhat absolved through the tearing and peeling of the wall posters and the accretions of faces over each other. In Lebanon, experimentation (albeit of an unintentional kind) happens less in art and literature—which continue in the majority of cases to be, notwithstanding the jolt of the war and the civil war, humanistic and organic—than in everyday life. We

have in the torn and peeled off wall posters and the accretions of faces over each other one of the sites where Lebanese culture in specific, and Arabic culture in general, mired in an organic view of the body, in an organic body, exposes inorganic bodies to itself and exposes itself to inorganic bodies. The face hides, more or less successfully, its nudity with expression. Chaplin invokes our pity, but through facial expressivity he hides his face's nudity and his face's imploration that we save it. Contrariwise, Buster Keaton never invokes our pity, but allows his deadpan face to implore us to save it. Samuel Beckett tried to answer this imploration in his *Film* (1966; directed by Alan Schneider), in which the protagonist, played by the then 71-year-old Buster Keaton, tries to avoid facing the camera. "E is the camera.... The protagonist is sundered into object (O) and eye (E), the former in flight, the latter in pursuit.... Until end of film O is perceived by E from behind and at angle not exceeding 45°." Unlike Chaplin in *City Lights*, 1931, who doubly loses face by losing the boxing match and by physically preserving his face intact (!), without any bruises, despite the other boxer's many jabs and punches, some boxers, for example the Jake La Motta of Martin Scorsese's *Raging Bull*,<sup>3</sup> seem to intuit that their faces have to be saved in two ways during the match: they have to win while not shielding their faces too well, so that through the bruises and cuts their otherwise embarrassing faces would be physically saved.<sup>4</sup> This is indeed what the European super-middleweight champion Danilo Haussler managed to do during his intense boxing rematch with former WBC super-middleweight champion Glenn Catley on 1 February 2003. Notwithstanding a cut to Haussler's head caused by an accidental head-butt in the first round, which kept blood falling profusely from his injured eye, he persevered until the referee stopped the fight at the end of the fourth round, Haussler winning the match by the scorecards, saving face in both senses. How relaxing for the sensitive it is not to see constantly the living human's face! Did Dreyer need respite from faces, from saving faces, especially that of Maria Falconetti as Joan of Arc, after *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, 1928? What subject could provide him with such a respite? A vampire film (*Vampyr*, 1932), with its faceless silhouettes and shadows that dissociate from the bodies. What does anyone who is not beautiful really request from a photographer, if not: save my face, or else, at least, make manifest that my face is imploring to be



**The Passion of Joan of Arc**  
**CARL DREYER**

كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ  
(سُورَةُ الْقَصَصِ ٢٨)

*Each thing is perishing except His face (Qur'ân 28:88)*

# SAVING FACE



saved (a face that does not implore to be saved is beautiful). The art of the portrait is to a large extent an art of either saving the face or revealing that the face, except the beautiful one, is always imploring to be saved. Even the smiling faces one sees in studio photographs, for example in the photographs of the Egyptian Muhammad 'Abdallâh, are imploring that they be either saved or revealed as imploring that they be saved. A human, whether man or woman, may opt to wear a veil to save face (of how many men haven't I asked myself and don't I ask myself: "Why doesn't he place a veil over his face?"). This is neither to be decried,<sup>5</sup> nor, certainly, to be imposed by rigid Islamic patriarchal societies such as the former Islamic State of Afghanistan under Taliban rule, Saudi Arabia, and the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is to be expected that a person, whether a man or a woman, who opts to wear a veil to save face will otherwise wear normal clothes, whether they be Jeans, suits, skirts, shorts, G-strings, or be altogether nude. One of the first things that strikes me in a photograph of a human and an animal both looking in the direction of the photographer is that the human face, except in the rare cases when it is beautiful, is imploring us to save it, while the "face" of the animal is not. While the animal is more often apt to induce pity in us (whether from a Buddhist perspective, since, like hungry ghosts and hell beings, it belongs to one of the three lower "modes of existence" [*gati*]; or from a Spinozist one—although Spinoza disapproves pity—since, unlike the highest essences which "already strive in their existence to make *their* own encounters correspond to relations that are compatible with *theirs*," reaching common notions, ideas "of a similarity of composition in existing modes," it lives, as is clearly the case with the donkey of Robert Bresson's *Au hasard Balthazar*, by chance encounters and is therefore condemned to have only inadequate ideas and to experience only passive affections, remaining cut off from its "power of action, kept in slavery or impotence"), its "face" is not the occasion of this emotion. We may try to save the animal, but not specifically its "face"; there is no imploration coming specifically from its "face." The absence of such imploration probably explains why it is that when we do not view the "faces" of animals as beautiful, we do not view them as faces at all but as heads.

Gilles Deleuze: "When a part of the body has had to sacrifice most of its motoricity in order to become the support for organs of reception, the principle

feature of these will now only be tendencies to movement or micro-movements which are capable of entering into intensive series ... The face is this organ-carrying plate of nerves which has sacrificed most of its global mobility and which gathers or expresses in a free way all kinds of tiny local movements which the rest of the body usually keeps hidden. Each time we discover these two poles in something—reflecting surface and intensive micro-movements—we can say that this thing has been treated as a face [visage]; it has been ‘envisaged’ or rather ‘faceified’ [visagéifié], and in turn it stares at us [dévisage], it looks at us ... even if it does not resemble a face.”<sup>6</sup> Such micro-movements can be reflections in eyeglasses, glares in oily sand, etc. After standing on the balcony, the French woman of Resnais/Duras’ *Hiroshima mon amour* heads back to the room where her Japanese lover is still sleeping. Like the rest of his body, his hand is in the flaccid state associated with sleep, sleep being a “state of decreased and less efficient responsiveness to external stimulation.... [It] usually requires the presence of flaccid or relaxed skeletal muscles ...” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*). There is a cut to a close shot of the man’s flaccid hand animated with micro-movements in two of his fingers. The hand here is functioning as a face. It is gazing at the French woman. In what state may I feel that an object is gazing at me? In trance. Vice versa, when an object gazes at me, either I enter into trance or this indicates that I am already entranced. In *Hiroshima mon amour* seeing is not where one would expect it to be: the woman we initially think has seen has, as a consequence of the withdrawal past a surpassing disaster, not actually done so, as is made explicit by the Japanese man’s words to her: “You have seen nothing in Hiroshima. Nothing”; while the sleeping hand with the twitching fingers has, as a face, gazed at her. Maybe our difficulty and reluctance to accept the sleeping, flaccid hand with the twitching fingers of the Japanese man as a face, and thus as something that looks at us, is that unlike the usual human face it does not invoke our help to save it.

God the Father has no face, since He is all action, not passive at all—the One Who is pure action expresses Himself other than through a face. On the other hand, even before Jesus Christ, the Son of God, turned the other cheek (“If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also” [Matthew 5:39; cf. Luke 6:29]), his absence of *ressentiment*, his magnanimity was clear from the

absence of any micro-movements and twitchings in his cheeks, eyes, and lips on being slapped.<sup>7</sup> Thus, he too in a way did not have a face even though he was incarnated. If one considers that Jesus Christ was ever so faintly resentful, and thus that he had a face, then we should see the one who turned the other cheek in profile prior to his resurrection (it is peculiar that this is rarely the case), but frontally once resurrected: indeed, exemplarily in the icons, Jesus Christ, the resurrection and the life, not subject or no longer subject to over-turns, and consequently not needing a name, virtually incarnates frontality as such, and is therefore nameless.<sup>8</sup>

February 2003, Lebanon: on hearing on the phone that my 63-year-old mother had severely injured her face on falling while taking a walk in Westwood, Los Angeles, I suddenly felt that this accident reached and damaged the immemorial face I must have first seen in the initial 8 months of infancy, before the constitution of chronological time<sup>9</sup>—for me the aging process, which has severely altered my mother’s face, had not affected her immemorial face of my infancy.

Steven Spielberg, a Jewish filmmaker who has made a film concerning the Shoah, *Schindler’s List*, 1993, was bound to confront ancient Egypt sooner or later; he did it prematurely in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), and he did it maturely in *AI* (2001; written by Kubrick and Spielberg). In the former film, whose events take place in 1936, two agents of the US Army intelligence inform an American professor of archeology that Nazi Germans have constructed a gigantic excavation site in Egypt in search of the Ark of the Covenant, which contains the Ten Commandments, and commission him to get it first; much of the film therefore takes place in “Egypt.” *AI* begins with a conference during which Professor Allen Hobby of Cybertronics Manufacturing demonstrates to the other employees the company’s latest robot. They are impressed with how human it appears, and with its ability to assuage the sexual urges and desires of humans. But then the professor confesses that he is unsatisfied with this prototype: he would like to program a robot that has emotions, indeed who can love. But why? There is then a fade to an intertitle indicating the passage of eighteen months. Why this ellipsis? Is the filmmaker being respectful of the inability of one of his main characters to integrate what happened to him during these eighteen months into the sort of

traditional, linear narrative that is a trademark of Spielberg's films? What might be the cause of this inability? The ellipsis is followed by a scene showing the melancholic Monica, the wife of one of the company's employees, visiting her son, who has been cryogenically frozen until a cure can be found for his terminal illness. Since we later learn that the professor's child had died by then, I would advance that the professor already knew by the time of the conference that his son had a terminal illness, but, unlike Monica, opted to preserve his son by letting him die the first, organic death, while working toward sparing him the second, final death—an ancient Egyptian problematic. How? By programming and modeling a robot that can experience emotions, specifically love, and naming it after his dead beloved child David (*David* is possibly derived from the Hebrew *dod*, meaning “beloved”). The robot he makes is equivalent to the statue that, once the proper ritual is performed, substitutes for the ancient Egyptian dead in case his or her body is damaged irreparably (with all its magical formulae, the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* provides statues and reliefs with artificial intelligence). The robot David is placed with Monica. She is given an imprinting protocol and told that once she reads it to David, he will consider her his mother and love her forever. Her reading the Imprinting Protocol to him is equivalent to the ancient Egyptian ritual of the Opening of the Mouth; by means of it David is given the power to say the word “mommy” and to love—Monica. He, who is a substitute for the dead child of professor Hobby, who designed and programmed him, has thus a melancholic mother, Monica, and a melancholic father, Allen Hobby. When Monica's biological son, Martin, recovers and returns home, no fraternity develops between David and him. This is not only because Martin is jealous of David. It is also because the robot David is purely and only a Son, a Platonic son. Deleuze and Guattari: “In the Platonic concept of the Idea, *first* ... is that which objectively possesses a pure quality, or which is not something other than what it is ... there is an Idea of mother if there is a mother who is not something other than a mother (who would not have been a daughter) ...”<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, a relationship between a son who is only a son and a mother who is not the Idea of a mother, since she is also a wife (and was also earlier a daughter), is not an ideal relationship, but an unhappy one. When Monica reads to David and Martin the story of Pinocchio and the Blue

# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: AI

## A FILM BY STEVEN SPIELBERG

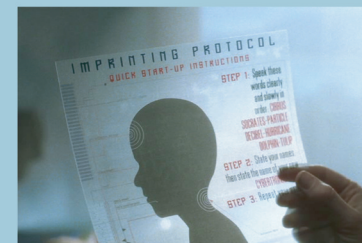
### In David's Burial Chamber



The Mummy



The substitutes for David's body



The Opening of the Mouth



The Ba

**REPRODUCTION  
PROHIBITED**  
MAGRITTE 1937  
*NOT*

For all of you fans of ancient Egypt, forget about Spielberg's **RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK** (1981); his real film about ancient Egypt is **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: AI** (2001).



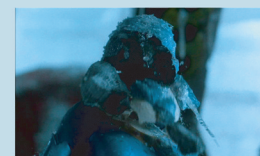
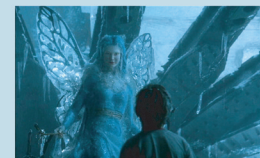
David as Sphinx

Fairy, David is convinced that he must become a “real” boy in order to keep her love. After an accident in which he nearly drowns Martin, Monica, fearing for her son’s life, abandons David on a distant wasteland where he is soon captured, along with other discarded robots, by a group of humans set on destroying robots—for a robot, the world of the humans is as strange as the *neter-khertet*, the underworld of the ancient Egyptians. David’s adventures lead him to an “omniscient” computer that tells him that the Blue Fairy is to be found at the end of the world, formerly Manhattan, which was submerged by water as a result of climate change. A robotic friend takes him by helicopter to the largely drowned city, where he ends up finding Professor Hobby. As he walks away from the professor’s office and passes by the latter’s desk on which various family photographs of the latter’s dead son David are placed, he is actually walking into his (futuristic equivalent of the ancient Egyptian) burial chamber. As with the ancient Egyptian, who had a replacement of his body in the form of statues and paintings on the walls of the tomb, which could be reanimated magically by the utterance of the magical formulae inscribed on papyrus and placed with the dead in his sarcophagus, David discovers numerous identical robotic specimens ready to replace him in case he is destroyed. In despair at this discovery, David throws himself into the ocean but comes there across a statue of the Blue Fairy. When his robotic friend pulls him outside the water, David insists on descending back into the ocean. He does so in the helicopter. But not knowing how to steer it deftly, he damages it irreparably. Trapped in the sunken helicopter, he remains facing the statue for 2,000 years. Is it accidental that it was a Jewish filmmaker who filmed one of the most beautiful scenes of waiting in recent years, given that Judaism is one of the two religions, along with Islam in its Twelver Shi’ite strain, of messianic waiting (I certainly would not be surprised to come across a great scene of waiting in an Iranian film)? Isn’t this gaze the most exemplary of gazes, the one described by Rilke in his *Duino Elegies*? “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

# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: AI

## DIRECTED BY STEVEN SPIELBERG

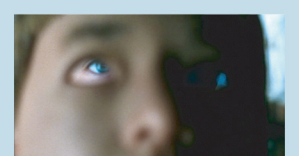
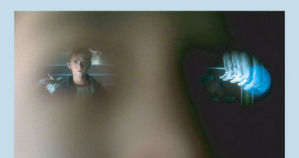
(2001)



“But the woman, the woman: she had completely fallen into herself, forward into her hands. It was on the corner of rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs. I began to walk quietly as soon as I saw her. When poor people are thinking, they shouldn’t be disturbed. Perhaps their idea will still occur to them.

“The street was too empty; its emptiness had gotten bored and pulled my steps out from under my feet and clattered around in them, all over the street, as if they were wooden clogs. The woman sat up, frightened, she pulled out of herself, too quickly, too violently, so that her face was left in her two hands. I could see it lying there: its hollow form. It cost me an indescribable effort to stay with those two hands, not to look at what had been torn out of them. I shuddered to see a face from the inside, but I was much more afraid of that bare flayed head waiting there, faceless.”

Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, trans. Stephen Mitchell.



me, not one woman, not / the boy with the immovable brown eye — / I'll sit here anyway. One can always watch. / ... 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.”<sup>11</sup> The protagonist of the fourth elegy of Rilke's *Duino Elegies* has a becoming Sphinx; so does David in front of the Blue Fairy statue. Will not an angel appear one day to counter the gaze of the Sphinx? And did not an angel appear to counter David's gaze? Yes—not one angel but several angels. Unlike in Rilke's poem, the angel in this case was not already present, but was yet to appear historically in the form of a member of an ultra-advanced future civilization. *AI* is a “real play,” one whose protagonists are a robot turned into a Sphinx; a puppet, in the guise of the sculpture of the Blue Fairy (who although having the figure of an angel is not one); and an angel, in the guise of futuristic advanced *unheimlich* visitors. After deciphering his memory, and in an atavistic magical gesture, using a lock of Monica's hair, the advanced *unheimlich* visitors are able to reconstruct her so David can meet her again for a day. That David has to do with death finds its confirmation in that the film ends with his interaction with the dead, for his mother had by then long been dead. During their meeting in what appears to be an equivalent of the ancient Egyptian Fields of Offerings, Monica's husband as well as her son Martin, who can function as David's brother, are absent, with the result that the meeting is an ideal one between a son who is only that and a mother who is only a mother. At the end of the day, they both fall asleep, David only then becoming “real,” a real human, since a human is mortal and David is now a mortal.

André — writes in “The Ontology of the Photographic Image”: “If the plastic arts were put under psychoanalysis, the practice of embalming the dead might turn out to be a fundamental factor in their creation. The process might reveal that at the origin of painting and sculpture there lies a mummy complex ...” Films on mummies revolve around the preservation of the face primarily. Should we for that matter expect them to be about one face? No: they are about the several faces of the mummified person. 1) The ideal, eternal face on the anthropoid coffin and in the Fields of Offerings (aka the Fields of Reeds). 2) The face beneath the

# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: AI

## A FILM BY STEVEN SPIELBERG



### RAINER MARIA RILKE “THE FOURTH ELEGY” DUINO ELEGIES

“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, not  
the boy with the immovable brown eye—  
I'll sit here anyway. One can always watch.  
(...)  
(...) 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.”



The Angel(s)



The Puppet



The Sphinx

white bandages, either extensively damaged, or else, a more interesting condition, preserved but for a grain of dissolution, the sort Roland Barthes writes about in relation to the saint's nose in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*: "Ruysbroeck has been buried for five years; he is exhumed; his body is intact and pure (of course—otherwise, there would be no story); *but* 'there was only the tip of the nose which bore a faint but certain trace of corruption.' In the other's perfect and embalmed figure (for that is the degree to which it fascinates me) I perceive suddenly a speck of corruption.... I am *flabbergasted*: I hear a counter-rhythm ... the noise of a rip in the smooth envelope of the Image."<sup>12</sup> This grain of decomposition is the present's entry point into the corpse. It is the corpse's (Ariadne's) thread through the "labyrinth" of time to the present, where it becomes localized. It therefore makes possible the corpse's reanimation. 3) The reanimated face of the mummy, usually incarnated by the face of a film star. 4) And then the swiftly disintegrating, decomposing body of the mummy once it is no longer protected by magic. Bazin continues: "Near the sarcophagus ... the Egyptians placed terra cotta statuettes, as substitute mummies which might replace the bodies if these were destroyed ... Another manifestation of the same kind of thing is the arrow-pierced clay bear to be found in prehistoric caves, a magic identity-substitute for the living animal, that will ensure a successful hunt.... No one believes any longer in the ontological identity of model and image, but all are agreed that the image helps us to remember the subject and to preserve him from a second spiritual death."<sup>13</sup> The last line is false: unconsciously, i.e., in the unconscious, and with rare exceptions, we still generally believe in the ontological identity of model and image, especially the photographic/cinematic/video image, since it is an indexical image, thus partakes of both contiguity and similarity to the model/referent. Now, the law of contiguity and the law of similarity are two of the main laws of magic: "The simplest expression of the notion of sympathetic contiguity is the identification of a part with the whole. The part stands for the complete object. Teeth, saliva, sweat, nails, hair represent a total person, in such a way that through these parts one can act directly on the individual concerned, either to bewitch or enchant him.... Everything which comes into close contact with the person—clothes, footprints, the imprints of the body on grass or in bed ...

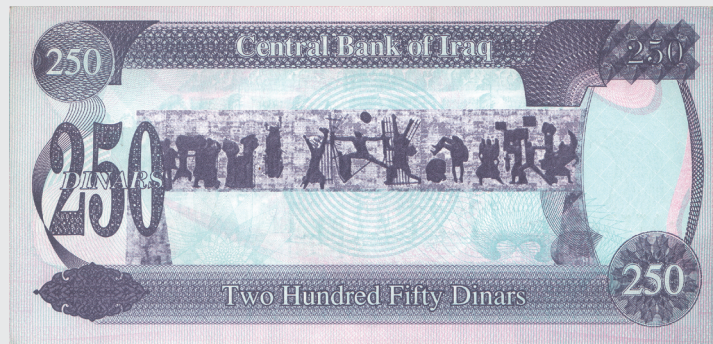
are all likened to different parts of the body ... all can be used magically.... The second law, the law of similarity ... has two principal formulas... like produces like, *similia similibus evocantur*; and like acts upon like.... The image is to the object as the part is to the whole."<sup>14</sup> Prior to Saddām Husayn's overthrow in April 2003 by the United States-led invasion, his images were ubiquitous in Iraq: on street panels, impressed on the country's currency, in offices in public buildings, as sculptures in public squares, inside the "Museum of the Victorious Leader," etc.; but, during the reign of terror that the dictator had established in Iraq, virtually nobody dared tear these images, disfigure them, step over them, spit on them.<sup>15</sup> On 7 July 2003, the Coalition Provisional Authority set by the occupying forces announced its intention to work with the Central Bank of Iraq to introduce a new Iraqi currency. Toward the end of the same month, the British firm De La Rue began printing the new, Saddām-free currency. The new notes were air freighted to Baghdad in 28 Boeing 747-loads of about 90 tonnes each. The exchange began on 15 October 2003 and ended on 15 January 2004. By the latter date, around one-third of the 10000 tonnes-plus of old currency (around 300,000 sacks) gathered in the course of the exchange had been incinerated. It is expected that the Central Bank will complete the destruction of old notes a few weeks after that. If there is equation, however tenuous, between a person and his/her images, then the defacing, through tearing and burning, of millions of Saddām Husayn's images was bound to affect their referent, and that is what we witnessed. On 13 December 2003, within three hours of obtaining "actionable intelligence," six hundred soldiers from the Raider Brigade of the 4th Infantry Division converged on a mud hut at a farm belonging to one of Saddām's cooks in the village of Ad-Dawr. At about 8:30 pm Saddām was found hiding inside an 8 foot-deep hole covered by a rug and a piece of polystyrene. Major General Raymond Odierno, the commander of the 4th Infantry Division in Tikrit, said that Saddām had been armed with a pistol, but had showed no signs of using it on the soldiers who found him or on himself. "He was in the bottom of a hole with no way to fight back. He was caught like a rat." The



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# Realistic Magic (Or, I Never Cared about Magical Realism)

. Act 1 .



. Act 2 .

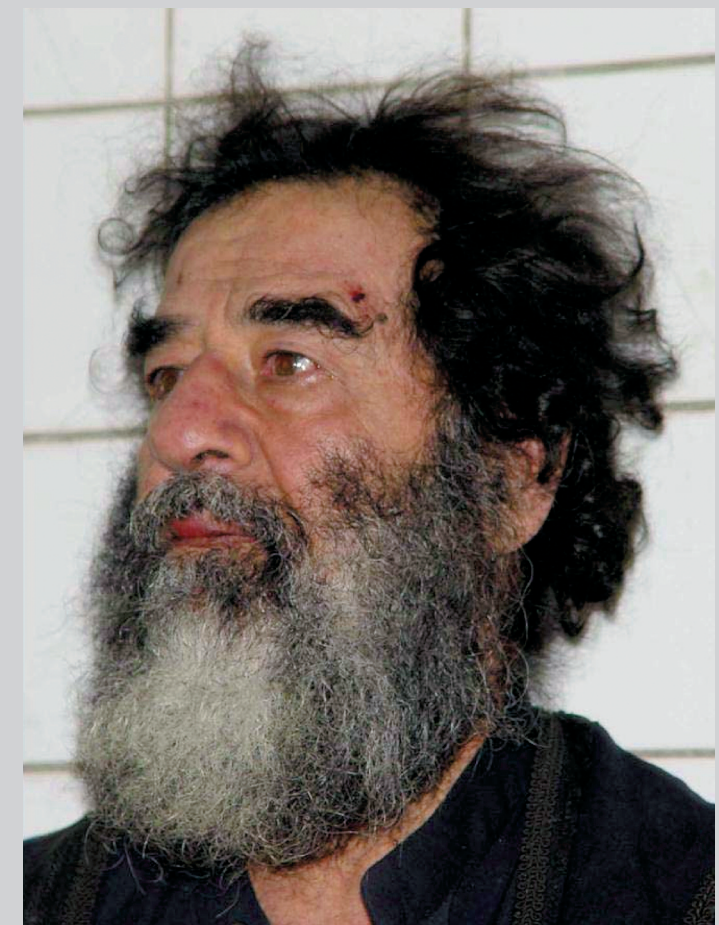


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. Act 3 .



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images of Saddam Husayn shown the next day at the Baghdad press conference where his capture was announced by the US civil administrator in Iraq, Paul Bremer, showed him submissively following instructions as he underwent medical examinations at the hands of an anonymous medic wearing plastic gloves, who inspected his unkempt hair, apparently for lice, and held his mouth open with a tongue depressor while shining a flashlight inside it, presumably to take a sample for DNA testing. Many in Iraq and the Arab world were confounded by the cowardly manner in which the ruthless dictator surrendered to the American forces and by his submissiveness during the subsequent medical examination. How little respect for the image Saddam Husayn would have shown had he resisted valiantly the attempt to arrest him. By losing face, he saved face for the image, maintained the magic of the image. Yes, Saddam Husayn turned out to respect the (*kitschy*) image—certainly far more so than any of the parliamentary members in Lebanon. During Lebanon’s parliamentary elections of 2000, the candidates could not prevent their myriad images, plastered all over the city walls, from being torn and/or covered by the images of other candidates. If the election candidates could without apprehension have their images open to being defaced, this could be either because they had such strong mana as to overcome and ward off any adverse magical effects that would result from the repeated damage to their images (is this partly the case in Haitian elections?), or else that they were and inhabited a world devoid of magic. Clearly, it was the latter. Returning to Lebanon in October 1999 after residing in the USA for fifteen years, I was disheartened to witness how far Beirut, inopportunately designated by the UNESCO the “Cultural Capital of the Arab World for 1999,” had waned culturally. Soon enough, in the summer of 2000, my disheartenment was complemented, notwithstanding the city’s ruins, by disenchantment on witnessing ad nauseam the images of the parliamentary candidates lining the walls of the city in preparation of the elections, which finally took place on 27 August and 3 September. To think that these walls used to be lined not long before with pictures of “martyrs,” i.e., the kind of photographs affined to the cultic function: “Artistic production begins with ceremonial objects destined to serve in a cult.... In photography, exhibition value begins to displace cult value all along the line. But cult value does not give way without resistance....



The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers a last refuge for the cult value of the picture”<sup>16</sup>! The kitschy parliamentary elections in many developing countries provide exceptions to the ontological identity of model and image in our unconscious, inducing us to no longer feel *even unconsciously* that there is identity of the candidate and any of his myriad images plastered all over the city walls. Notwithstanding ‘Umar Amîralây’s smug expectation, the confrontation between him and Rafîq al-Harîrî in his film *The Man with the Golden Soles*,<sup>17</sup> 2000, was not between the self-professed “leftist filmmaker”<sup>18</sup> and power, one that’s economic (the net worth of Harîrî [and his family] in 2000, the year Amîralây made his film, was, according to *Forbes’* yearly list of the world’s richest people, \$3.5 billion), political (Harîrî was Lebanon’s prime minister from 1992 to 1998, and he has assumed the same public position since 2000; moreover, he has been a member of parliament since 1996), mediatic (Harîrî owns a television station, Future Television; a newspaper, *Al-Mustaqbal* [The Future]; and a radio station, Radio Orient), and social (the Harîrî Foundation has granted, through its University Loan Program, loans to tens of thousands of students; and it runs through its subsidiary The Directorate of Health and Social Services a network of primary health care centers across Lebanon); it was, unbeknownst to the filmmaker, a confrontation regarding the status of the image: the challenge Harîrî presents to any filmmaker, of any political orientation, is how to make images with someone who has so much divested image from model in the previous parliamentary election campaign and, as shown by a section of Amîralây’s film devoted to Harîrî’s preparations for the 2000 elections, was gearing up to do so again. While normally “chimpanzees, orangutans, and, of course, humans learn that the reflections are representations of themselves,”<sup>19</sup> in the specific case of the parliamentary candidates in many developing countries during their kitschy elections, who have undone the identity of model and image, humans unlearn, even at the level of the unconscious, that the reflections, including the variety called photographic images, are representations of themselves, treating them the same way most animals do: “Most animals react to their images as if confronted by another animal.”<sup>20</sup> While the divine power of the monotheistic God is the site of full identity—“God said to Moses, ‘I am who I am.’ This is what you are to say to

the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:14)—power in the Middle East is exemplarily the site of disparity: when I see on 18 April 2003 on Abu Dhabi TV footage that the network claims was taken on 9 April, the day US forces moved into Baghdad and assisted a crowd of Iraqis to topple a statue of Saddam Husayn in the main square, and that shows Saddam Husayn greeted enthusiastically by a crowd of debased and/or brutalized and/or ignorant and/or stupid and/or uncritical and/or fawning people in the streets of Baghdad, I am unsure that it is him rather than one of his reported doubles; and when I watch so-called Harîrî (or any of the other candidates whose purported images lined the walls of Lebanon during the parliamentary elections of 2000) on television or in Amîralây’s film, I feel that the television program or Amîralây’s film should have started with the waiver “Any resemblance to persons living or dead is purely accidental.” A short section in Amîralây’s film shows Harîrî’s own archive of media appearances; through Amîralây’s questions to the staff, we learn that the archive’s collection starts in 1991–1992 and that it includes thousands of news items, media appearances and reports. Notwithstanding this extensive archive, it does not presently seem that Harîrî’s preservation for the future will happen through archival images of his appearances on his Future TV, or other television channels, or through Amîralây’s film, but otherwise, probably through his pet project, the reconstructed and developed Beirut’s Central District by Solidere—this will no longer be the case only in a future where all reminders of the election campaigns (including my 8-minute video *Saving Face*, 2003), in which myriads of his images were torn, peeled, and/or partly covered by other people’s images, have disappeared. Strangely, it does not occur to Amîralây, who had earlier made a cinematic memorial to the Syrian playwright Sa’dallâh Wannûs, to wonder whether his film can function as a way of preservation of Harîrî when the ontological identity of model and image (especially an indexical image), which is a condition of possibility of photographic documents and cinematic and video documentaries, is no longer applicable to Harîrî. It also did not occur to Amîralây, who uses and abuses of the voice-over in his film, to ask this question either in voice-over or preferably to Harîrî in person: “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world of images, yet lose the ontological identity of model and image in the unconscious?”



## THE FACE OF THE SAVIOR



“(And remember) when the angels said: O Mary! Lo! Allāh giveth thee glad tidings of a word from him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, illustrious (*wajīhan*, derivative of *wajh*: face) in the world and the Hereafter, and one of those brought near (unto Allāh).”

Qur’ān 3:45

وُجُوهُ الْقَوْمِ : سَادَتُهُمْ ، وَاحِدُهُمْ  
وَجْهٌ ، وَكَذَلِكَ وَجْهَاتُهُمْ ، وَاحِدُهُمْ وَجِيهٌ .

(ابن منظور، لسان العرب)

\* The people’s *wujūh* (literally: faces; singular: *wajh*): its masters; and its *wujahā’* (singular: *wajīh*): illustrious personalities.

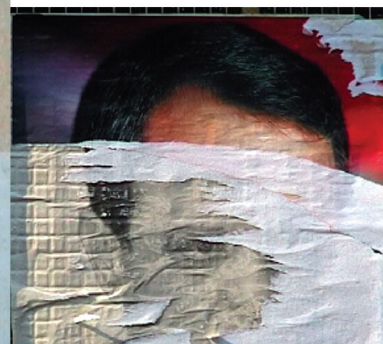


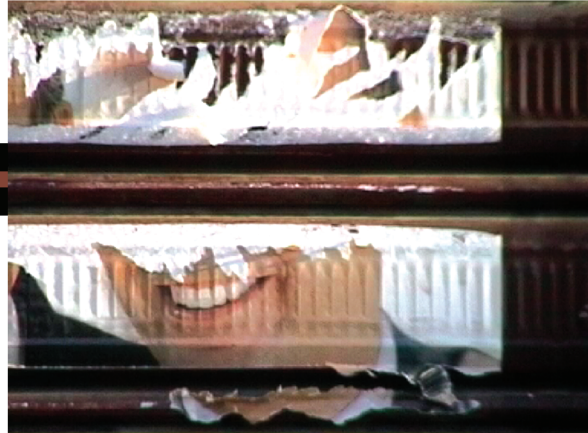
## S A V E M Y F A C E !

هم وجوه القوم اي سادتهم واعيانهم .

(ابن منظور، لسان العرب)

\* They are the people’s faces (*wujūh*), i.e. their masters and prominent personalities.





... and this time it vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin,

which remained some time after the rest of it had gone.

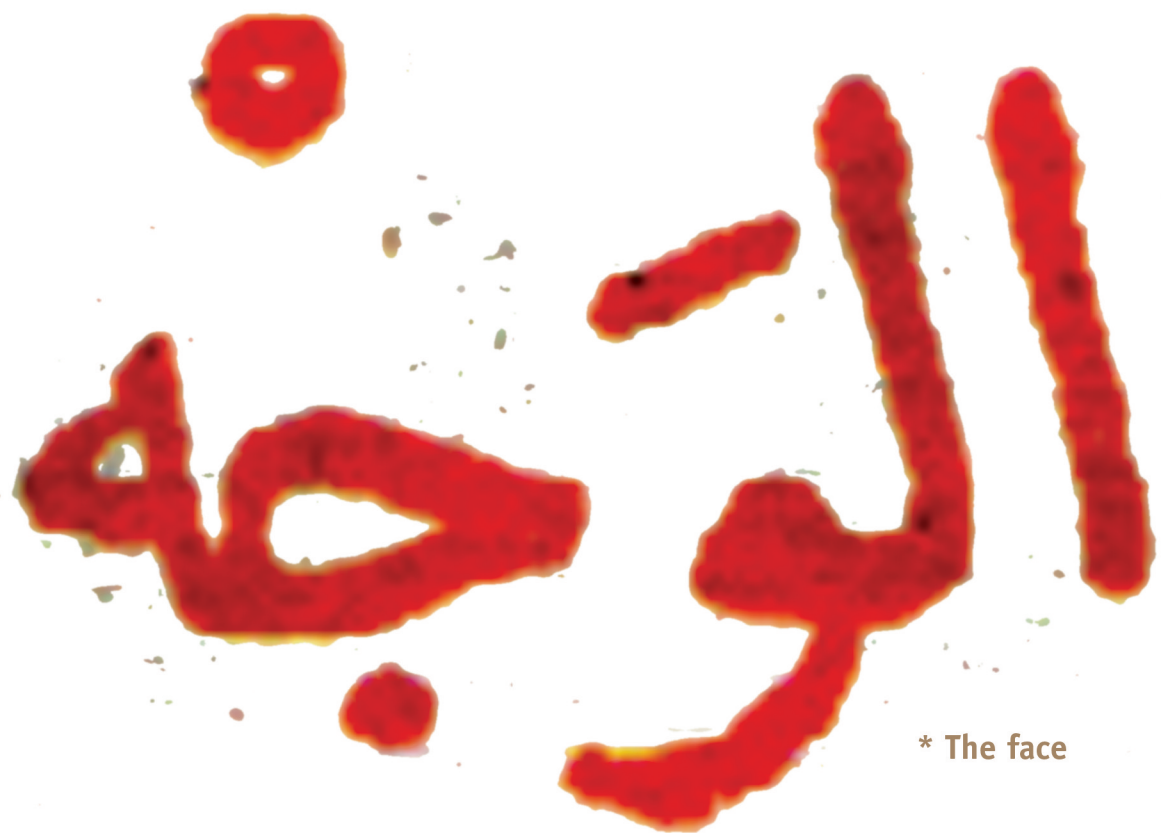
“Well! I’ve often seen a cat without a grin,” thought Alice; “but a grin without a cat! It’s the most curious thing I ever saw in all my life!”

She was looking about for some way of escape, and wondering whether she could get away without being seen, when she noticed a curious appearance in the air: it puzzled her very much at first, but after watching it a minute or two she made it out to be a grin, and she said to herself “It’s the Cheshire-Cat: now I shall have somebody to talk to.”

“How are you getting on?” said the Cat, as soon as there was mouth enough for it to speak with.

Alice waited till the eyes appeared, and then nodded. “It’s no use speaking to it,” she thought, “till its ears have come, or at least one of them.” In another minute the whole head appeared, and then Alice put down her flamingo, and began an account of the game, feeling very glad she had some one to listen to her. The Cat seemed to think that there was enough of it now in sight, and no more of it appeared.

Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*



\* The face



## Rear Window Vertigo

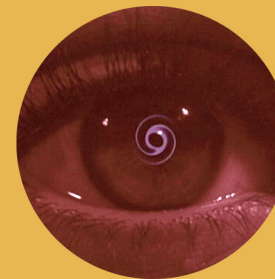
“Truth lies not in one dream, but in many dreams” (the epigraph of Pasolini’s *Arabian Nights*, 1974; fittingly, the vertiginous quote is attributed to *The Thousand and One Nights*, a work famous for its embedded stories).<sup>21</sup> Sometimes, when the protagonist in two films, preferably by the same director, is played by the same actor, we can say equivalently: “Truth lies not in one film, but in many films.” Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rear Window*, 1954, and *Vertigo*, 1958, compose an exquisite double feature, with the implicit title *Rear Window Vertigo*. The cast for the two main roles of this double feature would be: James Stewart as L.B. Jefferies/John (Scottie) Ferguson, and Kim Novak as Madeleine Elster/Judy Barton. The credits sequence of the first part of the double feature (script by John Michael Hayes; based on the short story “It Had to Be Murder,” by Cornell Woolrich) opens on an interior view of three shaded windows. While the credits appear, the three shades are drawn one by one, revealing the rear of a three-storied apartment building flanked by various other buildings in Greenwich Village, New York. Through the windows we can see much of what is going on in the facing apartments as well as in the hallways leading to them. The view is from the apartment of a middle-aged man who is sleeping in a wheelchair. The camera pans along his left leg: it is encased in a plaster. The following words are inscribed on the white cast: “Here lie the broken bones of L.B. Jefferies.” Who has inscribed these words on the cast? Will they prove fatidic, Jefferies’ legs failing him repeatedly and he himself revealed to be affined to death? The camera pans to a table on which rests a broken camera, and then moves up to a photograph on the wall showing a racing car skidding out of control, with one of its rear wheels, now loose, heading in the direction of the photographer, who must have been standing in the middle of the automobile racetrack! The camera continues its tilt up to another photograph, which shows the car blowing up. How come he took a second photograph? Did he fancy that by arresting the motion in the photograph, he would be arresting it also in reality? Soon after waking up, Jeff receives a phone call from the magazine where he works. While conversing, he gazes at the different apartments that face him. “Congratulations, Jeff.” “For what?” “Getting rid of that cast.” “Who said I

DOUBLE  
FEATURE

# Rear Window Vertigo

Directed by Alfred Hitchcock

(1954-1958)



was getting rid of it?" "This is *Wednesday*: seven weeks from the day you broke your leg. Yes or no?" ... "Gunnison, how did you get to be such a big editor—with such a small memory?" "Did I get the wrong day?" "No, the wrong week: Next Wednesday ..." After he hangs up, he feels an itch in his thigh, so he works a Chinese backscratcher under the cast and scratches the irritating area. Then he resumes looking at the apartments and their various residents: "Miss Torso," a young busty woman who is constantly practicing ballet; "Miss Lonelyheart"; the "Songwriter"; the "Salesman" and his wife ... Shortly, his insurance company nurse, Stella, enters and admonishes him: "The New York State sentence for a Peeping Tom is six months in the workhouse—they've got no windows in the workhouse. ... I can see you in court now surrounded by a bunch of lawyers in double-breasted suits." On this mention of trouble, the conversation segues to the fashion model Lisa Fremont, who expects him to marry her: "She's just not the girl for me." "She's only perfect!" "She's too perfect. She's too talented. She's too beautiful. She's too sophisticated. She's too everything—but what I want.... She belongs to that rarefied atmosphere of Park Avenue: expensive restaurants and literary cocktail parties.... If she were only ordinary ..." When Lisa visits him at night, he asks her: "Is this the Lisa Fremont who never wears the same dress twice?" "Only because it's expected of her.... You know, this cigarette box has seen better days." "Oh, I picked that up in Shanghai." What else did he pick up in Shanghai besides this cigarette box and the backscratcher? Some Chinese sayings and rules of conduct? She tries, unsuccessfully, to convince him, a photographer on assignments in frequently inhospitable zones abroad, to open a studio in the city and become a fashion photographer. Instead he tries to persuade her that their different lifestyles do not fit. "You don't think either one of us could ever change?" "Right now, it doesn't seem so." Having witnessed in a short span of time the spouses who live in the facing apartment quarrel; then the wife taunt her husband on overhearing him talking on the phone with another woman; then the husband, a wholesale jewelry salesman, go out at 1:55 at night under the rain with his sample case, come back forty minutes later, then go out again with his sample case under the heavy rain and the rumbling thunder, then come back, then fail the next day to go to work or to go to his wife's bedroom, and wrap a butcher knife and a small saw in a

newspaper, Jeff grows to suspect that the salesman has murdered his wife then hacked her to pieces to get rid of the body. The next day, still preoccupied with the salesman, he answers the nurse's "Good-bye, Mr. Jefferies" with "Uh-huh." "See you tomorrow, and don't sleep in that chair again." "Uh-huh." "Great conversationalist!" He relays his suspicions to Lisa, when she visits him again at night, then, briefly, the next morning, over the phone, to an old detective friend of his. When the detective drops by, Jeff enjoins him: "Go over and pick him up." "Jeff, you've got a lot to learn about homicide." Notwithstanding his reply, the detective agrees to investigate the matter unofficially. When he returns shortly after, Jeff again enjoins him: "Go over there and search Thorwald's apartment. It must be knee-deep in evidence." "I can't do that.... I'd like to remind you of the Constitution and the phrase 'search warrant issued by a judge' who knows his Bill of Rights verbatim. He must ask for evidence." "Give him evidence." "I can hear myself, 'Your Honor, I have a friend who's an amateur sleuth ...' Oh, he would throw the New York State penal code right in my face, and it's six volumes." Lisa visits him at night and tells him: "I'll trade you my feminine intuition for a bed for the night.... When they're in trouble, it's always their girl Friday who gets them out of it." "Is she the girl that saves them from the clutches of the seductive showgirls and the overpassionate daughters of the rich? ... It's funny. He never ends up marrying her, does he?" As they watch "Miss Lonelyheart" invite a man to her apartment then throw him out when he tries to forcibly kiss her, Jeff muses: "Do you suppose it's ethical to watch a man with binoculars and a long-focus lens ... ? Of course, they can do the same thing to me, watch me like a bug under a glass, if they want to." Of course, unbeknownst to Jeff and Lisa, someone must be spying on them with a binocular or a telephoto lens from one of the facing apartments. I advance that it is a man called Gavin Elster.<sup>22</sup> Lisa asserts theatrically, "The show's over for tonight," and lowers the shades. She then picks up her open overnight case, tells Jeff alluringly, "Preview of coming attractions," goes to the bathroom then comes out in a nightgown. His complements are cut short by the scream of a woman who has just found out that her dog was strangled. The next day, Jeff, Lisa and Stella keep watch over Thorwald's apartment till dusk, when Jeff notices an anomaly in the garden. He compares a picture of the backyard that he took two weeks before

to the present backyard, specifically to the two yellow zinnias in Thorwald's flowerbed, discovering that the latter aren't as tall as they were and concluding that the flowers must have been taken out and put back in. He suspects that there is something buried in there—the knife and saw with which Thorwald butchered his wife?—and that Thorwald must have killed the dog because it was sniffing around and digging the flowerbed. Seeing that Thorwald is packing, they decide to promptly discover what is buried in the garden. Jeff looks up Thorwald's number in the phone book, dials it, and tells him to meet him in a nearby bar to “settle the estate of your late wife.” After Thorwald leaves for the meeting, Stella and Lisa go down to the garden. When Stella's digging comes up empty, Lisa impulsively ascends the fire escape to Thorwald's apartment on the second floor to look for his wife's wedding ring. Finding that the kitchen window is locked, she decides to climb through the living room window. As she is doing so, Jeff mutters impotently and futilely: “What are you doing? Don't ...” She quickly heads to the bedroom but does not find the wedding ring in the handbag. Has Thorwald already given it to his mistress? She decides to search for it elsewhere in the apartment. Stella returns to Jeff's apartment and notices that “Miss Lonelyheart,” who lives on the first floor of the facing building, i.e., right below Thorwald's apartment, seems to be on the point of attempting suicide by swallowing some rhodium tri-ekonal capsules. Jeff dials the operator and asks her to connect him to the police. Fortunately, hearing some lively lovely music coming from the songwriter's apartment, “Miss Lonelyheart” wavers, then desists from swallowing the capsules. Seeing the sweeping salutary effect the music has had on her, Jeff briefly wonders what the outcome would have been had the songwriter been composing a dirge instead. Jeff and Stella now shift their attention again to Lisa. She shows them the jewels she found. Jeff and Stella's attentions again shift, now to the corridor, through which Thorwald is heading toward his apartment. Jeff quickly redirects the police to the second floor. Thorwald enters, discovers Lisa, throws her on the sofa, takes the jewelry from her, then turns off the light. Jeff averts his eyes and pleads powerlessly: “Stella, What do we do?” Fortunately, the police arrive at this critical point. Thorwald accuses Lisa of breaking into his apartment to steal jewelry. While the two policemen consider their next step, she places her two hands behind

her back and points stealthily to Thorwald's wife's wedding ring on one of her fingers. Thorwald notices her gesture and realizes that she is signaling to someone who is spying on him. He quickly looks ahead and locates Jeff. The policemen arrest Lisa and take her to the police station. Jeff promptly sends Stella to bail her out. Moments later, he hears approaching footsteps in the hallway. Suspecting that Thorwald has come for him, he improvises a photographer's weapon: a flash holder and a small packet of bulbs. He moves back his wheelchair to the rear window. When Thorwald swings the door open and advances threateningly towards him, Jeff lifts the flash holder, closes his eyes, and explodes the flash. Thorwald is momentarily blinded by the overexposure. When he opens his eyes again, he sees Jeff and the rest of the room tinted in intense orange. As he regains his orientation and resumes his now furious advance toward Jeff, the latter quickly inserts a second bulb, closes his eyes and explodes the new bulb. Again Thorwald's advance is arrested momentarily as he blinks and then sees Jeff and the rest of the room tinted in intense orange. This process is repeated one more time before Thorwald ends up reaching Jeff. The police arrive just as Thorwald is choking Jeff and trying to throw him out of the window. When Jeff looks down, “the brick floor of the patio seems a hundred feet below.”<sup>23</sup> Two detectives rush into the apartment. Unfortunately, by the time they grab Thorwald, Jeff's grip loosens and he plunges down. Fortunately, his fall is broken by two policemen who had hurriedly positioned themselves beneath his window. The next scene starts with a pan across the various apartments facing Jeff's: the songwriter and “Miss Lonelyheart” are listening together to a just released recording of his tonic song; two house painters are repainting the walls of Thorwald's presently unfurnished apartment; “Miss Torso,” hearing a knock on the door, interrupts her ballet practice and ardently welcomes her paramour, an army private carrying a barracks bag. The camera then pans past Jeff asleep in his wheelchair: both his legs are now in casts—but these are blank, no longer have his name on them. Is this an ominous sign? Has he lost his name? Lisa is sitting on the nearby sofa. She appears to be reading a travel book: *Beyond the High Himalayas*. When she is sure he is in deep sleep, she puts down the book and reaches for the last issue of Harper's *Bazaar*—Scottie was right: she didn't change. A song is playing; the lyrics say: “But dream forever in

your arms ...” At this point the credits of *Vertigo* (screenplay by Samuel A. Taylor and Alec Coppel; based on the novel *From Among the Dead* by Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac), the second part of the double feature, would start: we see the vertiginous unblinking open eyes of Judy/Madeleine in a red light that seems to be the aftereffect of one of the momentarily blinding flash bulbs that Jeff exploded in the face of Thorwald. Is this woman who can continue to stare into that intense light from a flash bulb dead (before dying)? Daniel Paul Schreber, who, paranoid, died before dying, wrote in his *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*: “I can look into the sun unperturbed and am dazzled only very little, whereas in days of health, I, like other people, would have found it impossible to look into the sun for minutes on end.”<sup>24</sup> Soon after Lisa leaves, Jeff’s dream turns into a nightmare. It begins with a close view of a roof parapet and the curved rail of a fire escape at dusk. Suddenly a man’s hand grips the top of the rail, and the man quickly climbs over the parapet and runs away over the rooftops against the background of the San Francisco skyline. Then a uniformed policeman with cap and badge climbs over the parapet, draws his gun and starts to shoot at the fugitive. He next sees himself, in the guise of a detective in civilian clothes, climb over the parapet and join in the pursuit. When the fugitive reaches a short gap between two rooftops, he leaps across it successfully. The policeman follows suit. But when Scottie too leaps across the gap, he lands awkwardly on the opposite roof. The impact causes the tiles to give way. While sliding, he dexterously manages to grip the edge of the gutter (is this the guise the dream is giving to the present uselessness of his broken legs cast in plaster?). As he looks down with horror, he has a strangely familiar sensation on seeing the ground recede: it is exactly as if a director of photography were tracking-out while zooming in. The ground now seems so far away that the following words pop up in his mind: *beyond the high Himalayas*. Arrested by the sounds of the impact and the sliding tiles, the policeman rushes back to the slope of the roof and stretches out his hand to reach down to Scottie. Unfortunately, the tiles beneath the policeman’s heel give, and he falls through space to his death. Sigmund Freud: “Dreams occurring in traumatic neuroses have the characteristic of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident, a situation from which he wakes up in another fright.”<sup>25</sup> When Lisa visits Jeff’s

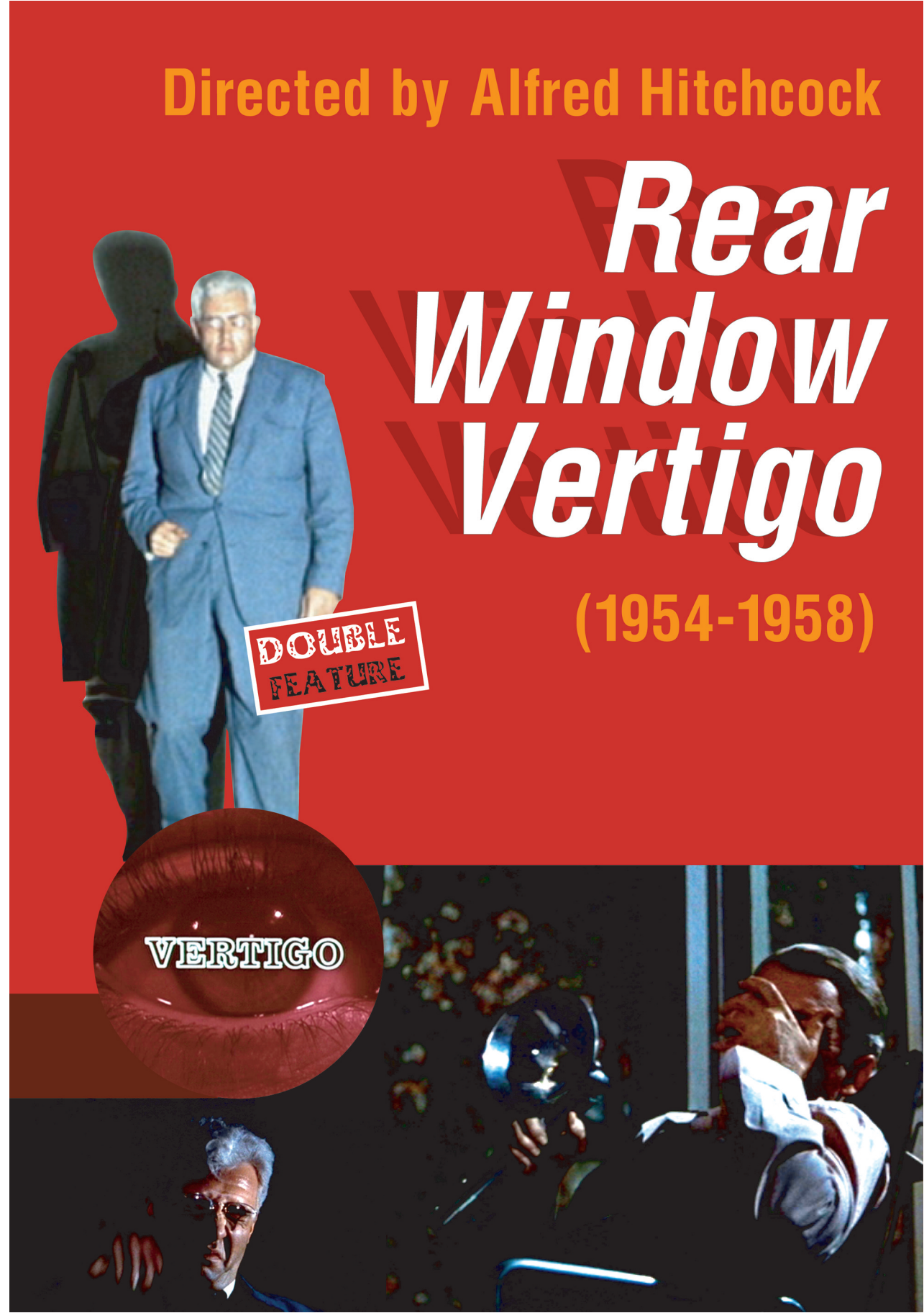
Directed by Alfred Hitchcock

# Rear Window Vertigo

(1954-1958)

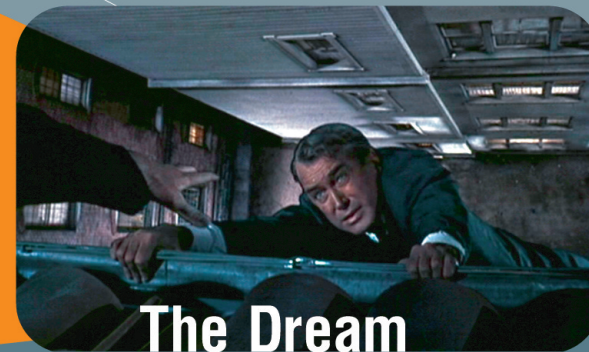
DOUBLE  
FEATURE

VERTIGO



"Dreams occurring in traumatic neuroses have the characteristic of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident, a situation from which he wakes up in another fright." Sigmund Freud,  
*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*

**DOUBLE  
FEATURE**



# Rear Window Vertigo

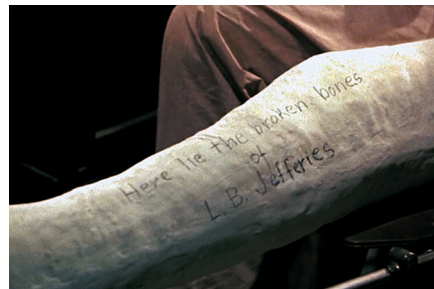
Directed by Alfred Hitchcock

(1954-1958)

apartment to check on him, she does not find him. She entreats his detective friend to search for him. Initially this rather ornery man thinks she's pulling his leg and snidely tells her: "First you and Jeff tell me that Thorwald's wife, more specifically her body, disappeared, and now you tell me that Jeff himself has disappeared!" "Do you think I'm making it up? I'm not making it up; I wouldn't know how." "Do you suspect that, as was the case with the body of Thorwald's wife, Jeff's body too has been cut up and that his severed limbs have been buried in various places? As far as I recall, his left leg was buried under a cast in this room. Where might his severed head be? For all I know, it might not be in New York at all. Might it be in some cemetery at the other side of this vast country, for example in San Francisco?" "You don't have to be deliberately repulsive just to impress me that I'm wrong." Regretting his inconsiderate remarks, the detective agrees to look for his friend. He searches for him "everywhere"—in New York—to no avail. What happened to L.B.



Still from Hitchcock's *Vertigo*



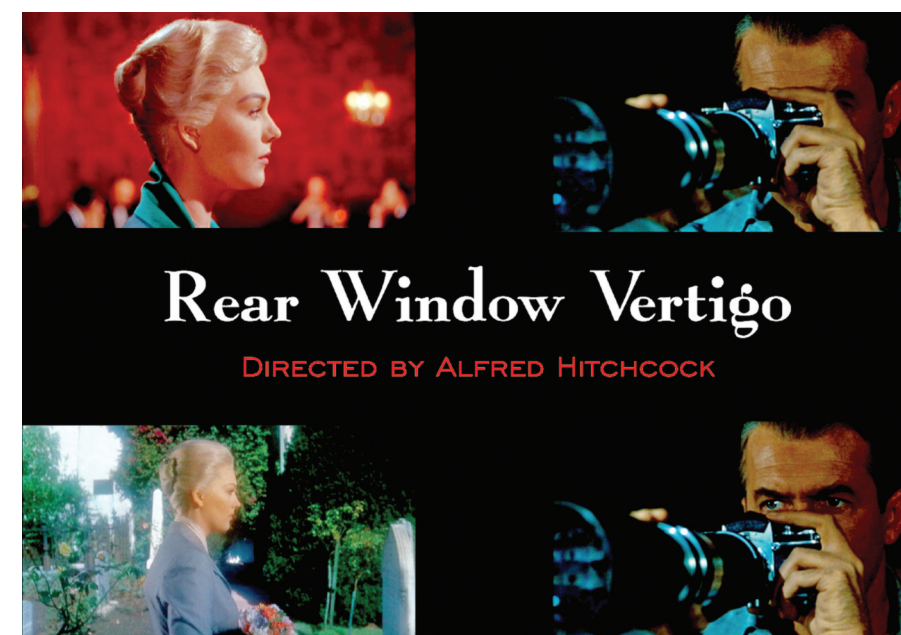
Still from Hitchcock's *Rear Window*

Jefferies? He had a psychogenic fugue: he unexpectedly went away West, to San Francisco; assumed a different name, John (Scottie) Ferguson; and, fresh from his successful amateur detective work that led to the apprehension of a man who had murdered his wife, but still smarting from his detective friend's remark about his flagrant unawareness of the law, he studied law, in particular the San Francisco State penal code, and, after a short stint as a lawyer, became a detective.<sup>26</sup> It seemed to many that he was on his way to become San Francisco's chief of police—until an untoward incident befell him while in pursuit, along with a policeman, of a saboteur. The latter ran up the fire staircase of a tall building. The policeman caught up with him just as he stretched his hand to grip the curved rail at the end

of the fire escape. They fought for a while. The policeman lost control but managed during his fall to hold onto the edge of the gutter and desperately invoked Scottie's help. Scottie started to hurriedly ascend the stairs but was unexpectedly seized with vertigo and stopped in his tracks. The saboteur kept stepping on the policeman's hand until, moments later, the latter fell to his death. Traumatized, guilt-ridden Scottie is hospitalized. After his discharge from the hospital, he visits his friend Majorie Wood, who was his fiancée for three weeks during their college days. While she draws a slim woman wearing a brassiere, he plays at balancing his cane in the air. It falls to the floor. While trying to pick it up, he yells in pain. "I thought you said no more aches or pains?" "It is this darned corset. It binds." "No three-way stretch? How very un-chic." "Well, you know those police department doctors: no sense of style. Anyway, tomorrow will be the day!" "What's tomorrow?" "The corset comes off tomorrow.... I will be able to scratch myself like anybody else [—rather than with a Chinese backscratcher?]." "What are you going to do once you have quit the police force? ..." "You sound so disapproving, Midge. I had to quit." "Why?" "I wake up at night seeing that man fall from the roof and try to reach out for him." "Johnny, the doctors explained to you." "I know, I know. I have acrophobia.... Boy, what a moment to find out I had it." "You've got it, and there is no losing it.... Why don't you go away for a while?" "You mean to forget?" For some reason, he momentarily feels paranoid, as if she is making some insinuation. His attention is then drawn to a prominent object on the table: "What is this doohickey?" "It is a brassiere." "I have never ran across one like that." "It is brand new. Revolutionary uplift: no shoulder straps, no back straps—but it does everything a brassiere should do.... An aircraft engineer down the peninsula designed it. He worked it out in his spare time." For some reason, the words "Miss Torso" pop up in his mind. "Midge, do you remember a fellow in college by the name of Gavin Elster?" "You'd think I would? No." "I got a call from Gavin today." On his way out, he halts and asks her: "What did you mean, 'There is no losing it'?" "I asked my doctor. He said that only another emotional shock could do it and probably wouldn't. You're not going to go diving off another rooftop to find out?" When he meets Elster in the afternoon, he confesses to him that for much of their phone conversation he did not recall having an acquaintance

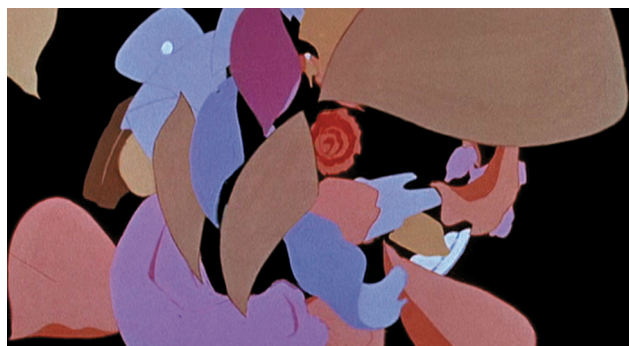
by that name. Elster responds humorously: “How did you get to be such a big detective—with such a short memory?” “How did you get into the shipbuilding business?” “I married into it.... Her father’s partner runs the company yard in the East, Baltimore....” “How long have you been back?” “Almost a year.... I read in the newspaper about your accident.” What was he referring to? The fall of Jefferies from his second-floor apartment? The mortal fall of the policeman whom Scottie failed to save during their chase of a saboteur? Both? “Scottie, do you believe that someone out of the past, someone dead, can enter and take possession of a living being?” “No.” “What would you say if I told you that I believe this has happened to my wife?” “Well, I would say, take her to the nearest psychiatrist or psychologist or neurologist or psychoanalyst—or maybe just plain family doctor. I would have him check on you too.” “Do you think that I am making it up? I am not making it up. I wouldn’t know how.” How did Elster, notwithstanding this inauspicious beginning, quickly manage to convince his interlocutor, a *retired* detective, to follow his wife, Madeleine? He succeeded in doing so by intimating an unconscious affinity between Scottie and Madeleine, that between two people suffering from a psychogenic fugue. “She’ll be talking to me about something. Suddenly the words fall into silence. A cloud comes into her eyes and they go blank. She’s somewhere else, away from me, someone I don’t know. I call her; she doesn’t even hear me. Then, with a long sigh, she’s back, looks at me brightly, doesn’t even know she’s been away, can’t tell me where or when.... And she wanders. God knows where she wanders. I followed her one day, watched her coming out of the apartment—someone I didn’t know. She even walked in a different way. She got into her car and drove out to Golden Gate Park—five miles—and sat by the lake, staring across the water at the pillars that stood on the far shore. You know, the portals of the past.... I had to leave, get back to the office. When I got home that evening, I asked her what she’d done all day. She said she’d driven out to Golden Gate Park and sat by the lake, that’s all.” “Well?” “The speedometer on her car showed that she’d driven 94 miles.” Elster tells Scottie to come to Ernie’s Restaurant, where he and his wife will be dining. What Scottie does not know is that Elster has lured a woman, Judy Barton, a look-alike of Madeleine, to impersonate her in a murderous scheme he devised to inherit his wife’s fortune:

Judy is to fool Scottie, a set-to-order witness, into believing that Madeleine committed suicide. How humorous of Elster, who intends to murder his wife, to ask this man who had been a peeping Tom and who led to the apprehension of a husband, Thorwald, who killed his wife to follow his wife as a private detective. Why does Scottie end up acquiescing? He does so out of fascination by Madeleine. What is the secret of his fascination by Madeleine, a woman he has not yet seen? She incarnates for him his condition. As planned, he goes to the restaurant, sits at the bar and spies the two spouses. On her way out, Madeleine stops just two feet away from Scottie, to wait for her husband while he finishes tipping the waiter. From Scottie’s point of view, she is in profile. He fleetingly has the impression that



she is posing, as if for a photograph. The next morning he follows her by car from her apartment building to a flower shop where she picks up a nosegay. For some reason, the flowers seem to him filled with morbid associations. This sensation is confirmed shortly, since Madeleine visits next the old Mission Dolores’ graveyard, where she pensively gazes down at a headstone on which the following name and

dates are inscribed: “Carlotta Valdes: Born 3 December 1831; Died 5 March 1857.” While heading toward the exit with the flowers still in her hand, she pauses by the grotto behind which Scottie is hiding and observing her. Again, he has the uncanny feeling that she is posing for a photograph. What a subtle and risky touch on the part of the husband: making Judy transiently assume the posture of someone posing for a photograph in the presence of a photographer suffering from a psychogenic fugue, thus evoking obscurely a repressed, dissociated memory! Scottie follows her now to the Palace of the Legion of Honor. When he arrives inside, he finds her seated alone at the far end of one of the galleries. She is gazing at the three-quarter portrait of a blond woman dressed in a 19<sup>th</sup> century costume and wearing a diamond pendant necklace. *For some reason*, the necklace has a morbid aura for Scottie. He asks an attendant about the woman in the portrait. The answer confirms the association of the painted woman in the portrait with death: she is Carlotta Valdes. The next day, he again follows Madeleine, this time through a poor section of San Francisco. She stops her car at an old residence turned into the McKittrick Hotel. She goes in and shortly appears at a second story window. Scottie enters and asks the manageress to give him information about the occupant of the room in question. When she refuses to divulge such private information, he shows her his badge. “Valdes. Miss Valdes ...” “Carlotta Valdes?” “Yes.” “How long has she had the room?” “It must be two weeks ...” Later that day, he learns from Elster that that hotel used to be the house of Carlotta Valdes prior to her suicide. The next day Scottie follows Madeleine by car first to the Palace of the Legion of Honor for her ritual sitting before the Carlotta Valdes portrait, then to the Golden Gate Bridge.



Still from Hitchcock's *Vertigo*

She parks her car and walks to the water's edge and begins to scatter the flowers in the water. After a while, she leaps into the Bay! Scottie dashinglly saves her from drowning. He

then takes her unconscious to his apartment. When she wakes up, she asks him: “Why am I here? What happened?” “You fell into the bay. You don't remember?” “No.” When he asks her where she was before going to the Golden Gate Bridge, she answers: “Downtown, shopping.... And where had *you* been just before?” “The Palace of the Legion of Honor—the Art Gallery.” “Oh, that's a lovely spot, isn't it? I've never been inside”! Has he ever been to Greenwich Village, New York? Coming to the embarrassed realization that they—actually Judy Barton and L.B. Jefferies—have not been properly introduced, she says: “My name is Madeleine Elster.” “My name is John Ferguson.”<sup>27</sup> ... Acquaintances call me Scottie.... Has this ever happened to you before?” “What?” “Falling into the San Francisco Bay?” “No, never before. I've fallen in lakes, out of rowboats, when I was a little girl. And I fell into a river, once, trying to leap from one stone to another.” Is Madeleine a neorealist character? André Bazin: “The technique of Rossellini undoubtedly maintains an intelligible succession of events, but these do not mesh like a chain with the sprockets of a wheel. The mind has to leap from one event to the other as one leaps from stone to stone in crossing a river. It may happen that one's foot hesitates between two rocks, or that one misses one's footing and slips. The mind does likewise. Actually it is not of the essence of a stone to allow people to cross rivers without wetting their feet ...”<sup>28</sup> To my knowledge, no viewer of Hitchcock's *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*, both of which are concerned with falling, and the second of which begins with a series of very risky leaps that lead in at least one case to a mortal fall, has previously managed to leap from one film to the other across the break between them, joining the two into a double feature. When Scottie follows her again the next day, she leads him back to his house: it turns out that she has come to leave him a formal thank-you letter. They then wander together to Big Basin Redwoods State Park. There they stand before the cross section of the cut down massive trunk of a Sequoia tree. Various rings on the tree trunk indicate each the date of a major historical event contemporaneous with them, starting in 909, near the center, and ending in 1930, the year the tree was cut down. In a trance she points to two spots beyond the white ring marked “1776—Declaration of Independence” and says: “Somewhere in here I was born ... and here I died.” Scottie tries to snap her out of her trance by calling her emphatically: “Madeleine!”

He then drives her to Point Lobos. When he sees her walking toward the rocks against which the waves are pounding, he rushes towards her. "Why did you run?" "The Chinese say that once you have saved someone's life, you are responsible for it forever." Did he learn this saying in Shanghai perchance? She confesses absentmindedly: "There is so little I know. It is as though I were walking down a long corridor that once was mirrored, and fragments of the mirror still hang there, dark and shadowy, reflecting a dark image of me ... and yet not me ... someone else, in other clothes of another time, doing things I have never done ... but still me ..." How could he not feel affined to this woman who was describing his own state? "But the small scenes, the fragments in the mirror: you remember them." "Vaguely ..." "What do you remember?" "There is a tower and a bell and ... a garden below ... but it seems to be in Spain, a village in Spain." "If I could find ... the beginning to put it together." At dawn she comes knocking at his door and tells him that she can now remember clearly the dream. To the full description she gives him, he responds: "It's all there. It's no dream.... Madeleine, a hundred miles south of San Francisco, there's an old Spanish mission—San Juan Batista it's called—and it's been preserved exactly as it was a hundred years ago—as a museum." He drives her to the mission. They go into the livery stable. Madeleine sits in a surrey and closes her eyes. Shortly, seeing her entranced, he asks her: "Madeleine, where are you now?" How can the woman impersonating Madeleine, as well as the film spectator, not be struck by this double entendre? At one level, the question can be understood as addressed to the entranced woman, who has been repeatedly possessed by Carlota Valdes, and as inquiring about the space-time into which her trance has transported her. But at another level, it is a structural parapraxis of the situation, and concerns the whereabouts of Elster's real wife Madeleine. Taken in the latter sense, this question reminds the impersonator where Madeleine is at that point in time and therefore where she needs to be in order for Elster's scheme not to misfire at the last moment. And indeed, she is quick to say: "There's something I must do." She walks swiftly toward the church, then runs up its stairs. He runs after her, starts to ascend the staircase, but is repeatedly incapacitated by vertigo, until he definitely can no longer continue his ascent. Seeing her open and go through the trapdoor at the top of the tower, the following

words pop up in his mind: "What are you doing? Don't ..." He then hears a scream and sees, through a small rear window that looks out on the back garden, a body fall. He looks down and sees Madeleine's body lying on the cloister's roof. During the case hearings at Plaza Hall, Scottie is *surrounded by a bunch of lawyers in double-breasted suits*. While addressing the jury, the judge berates him for his conduct: "... Nor does his strange behavior after he saw the body fall have any bearing on your verdict. He did not remain at the scene of the death; he ran away. He claims he suffered a mental blackout and knew nothing more until he found himself back in his apartment in San Francisco several hours later." Basing itself largely on Scottie's testimony, the jury comes to the conclusion that Madeleine Elster committed suicide. Shortly after, Scottie has a nightmare in which he sees, at times in negative footage, his head severed and falling into the open grave of Carlotta Valdes. With its associations to Thorwald's dismemberment of his wife, and to the flowerbed that Stella unearthed in her search for the traces of the murder, this nightmare implies that at some level Scottie is already intimating that he was fooled by Gavin Elster in his scheme to murder his wife. And with some of its images in negative, this nightmare is intimating a past he is repressing, one in which he was a photographer. Scottie suffers from melancholia and is hospitalized. Midge visits him and brings him a tape of music by Mozart.<sup>29</sup> "It's wonderful how they have it all taped now, John. They have music for dipsomaniacs, and music for melancholiacs, and music for hypochondriacs. I wonder what would happen if somebody got their files mixed up?" For some reason, the expression "Lonelyheart" pops up in his mind. Midge kneels besides him and entreats him: "Oh, Johnny, Johnny, please try. Try, Johnny." He does not respond. "You want me to shut that off?" He doesn't answer. "You don't even know I'm here, do you?" He doesn't reply. She kisses him and assures him: "I am here." Out of frustration and a lingering jealousy regarding Madeleine, whose loss has produced such a drastic effect on this man she loves, while leaving, and despite the great tenderness she feels for him, the following words pass through her mind: "Great conversionalist!" After his discharge from the hospital, he revisits the places associated with Madeleine: first Ernie's Restaurant; then her erstwhile apartment building, where he is startled to see a car of the same make, year and color as Madeleine's car parked in the

forecourt; then the Art Gallery at the Palace of the Legion of Honor, each time momentarily misrecognizing some woman as Madeleine. Shortly after, he notices a group of working women walking down the street. He is struck by the high degree to which one of them looks like Madeleine notwithstanding that her makeup is gaudy rather than subtle à la Madeleine's, and notwithstanding that her hair is dark rather than blond as Madeleine's was. He follows her to her hotel room. He seems unconvinced when she tells him that her name is Judy Barton. She shows him her Kansas driver's license. According to it, her name is indeed Judy Barton, and her address is 425 Maple Avenue, Salina, Kansas. She then pulls her current, California driver's license; according to it too her name is Judy Barton, and her address is the hotel where they are presently standing. His sight falls on some framed photographs showing a teenager. "That's me—with my mother." Does he, a man suffering from a psychogenic fugue, believe her? It does not seem so. Something in him is making him suspect that she is not really Judy Barton but Madeleine, for he himself, who can produce a driver's license, a social security card and even a badge that show that he is John (Scottie) Ferguson, is actually not John Ferguson but someone else. *Vertigo* can thus be viewed as one more Hitchcock film (*Spellbound*, 1945; *North by Northwest*, 1959; *Psycho*, 1960; *Marnie*, 1964) that instances the protagonist's change of name, here in the case not only of Madeleine/Judy but also of Scottie, whose real name is Jeff.<sup>30</sup> His repeated attempts in the first part of the film to make Madeleine assume fully and persistently her identity, to dissuade her from periodically assuming the identity of Carlotta Valdes (arranging her hair in like manner to her and living under her name in her old house turned into a hotel), are attempts to make her overcome what he views as a psychogenic fugue. These attempts are repeated in the second half of the film, since this melancholic fetishist suffering from a psychogenic fugue (a dissociative condition) disavows Madeleine's death, so that while consciously trying to turn the look-alike woman he came across on the street into a replica of Madeleine, he is unconsciously trying to make Madeleine *herself* overcome her new psychogenic fugue—in which she thinks she is someone called Judy Barton from Salina in Kansas—and remember her real identity by making her undo all the changes he fancies she introduced during her fugue. That's why he takes her to the

same places Madeleine used to visit, starting with Ernie's Restaurant. After dinner, he drives her back to her hotel room. "May I see you tomorrow?" "Tomorrow night? Well ..." "Tomorrow morning." "But I have to go to work! I've got a job." The next day, because she loves him, she calls work and reports that she's sick—is love a *sickness*, one *unto death* (Kierkegaard)? He takes her to buy clothes at Ransohoff's. A model comes in and parades before them in a gray tweed suit. While Judy admires the suit, Scottie dismisses it. The saleswoman is puzzled: "But you said gray, sir." "I just want an ordinary, simple gray suit." "The gentleman seems to know what he wants. All right, we'll find it." How pleasantly surprised his former girlfriend, the model Lisa Fremont, would have been had she seen how discerning he has become regarding clothes—she did after all teach him a few things about dressing. When they manage to find the suit in question, he tells the saleswoman: "Now, we'd like to look at a dinner dress, an evening dress: short, black, with long sleeves, and a kind of square neck." "My! You certainly do know what you want, sir." Yes, he wants and expects a woman who *always wears the same dress twice*. He then buys her the high-heeled shoes Madeleine used to wear, and takes her to the local Elizabeth Arden Salon to change her hair color to blond and place it in a bun as was Madeleine's custom. Felicitously, Judy ended up both "perfect" and "ordinary," belonging conjointly to the rarified atmosphere of Ernie's Restaurant and Ransohoff's, the San Francisco equivalent of Park Avenue, and I. Magnin department store. Now that she has the looks, the manner and the words of Madeleine, wouldn't it be time for him to look, act, and move like Jefferies? Indeed in the next scene of the film, while preparing herself to go to dinner, Judy asks him to help her fasten a necklace around her neck. As he finishes doing so, he looks in the mirror. He is taken aback by what he witnesses there: the same necklace he saw in Carlotta's portrait. He feels unsettled. He suggests that they go to the peninsula for dinner. He drives her to the old Spanish mission San Juan Batista. Full of misgivings, she asks him: "Why are we here?" "I have to go back into the past. Once more. For the last time. I need you to be Madeleine for a while. And when it's done, we'll both be free." What this melancholic fetishist suffering from a psychogenic fugue does next, recounting and reenacting the events of that fateful day at the church, has a double aim: to force Judy to acknowledge that she

was an accomplice of Gavin Elster in his successful scheme to kill his wife; and to make Madeleine remember her past and thus get over her psychogenic fugue. “Madeleine died here.... I have to tell you about Madeleine now.... We stood right there and I kissed her for the last time. And she said: ‘If you lose me, you’ll know that I love you and wanted to keep loving you.’ And I said, ‘I won’t lose you’—but I did. And then she turned and ran into the church. When I followed her, it was too late.” He impels her to go with him inside the church. “I couldn’t find her and then I heard footsteps ... She was running up the stairs and through the trapdoor at the top of the tower. I tried to follow her, but I couldn’t get to the top.... One doesn’t often get a second chance. I want to stop being haunted.” What is it he wants to stop being haunted by? By Madeleine and her traumatizing death? Or by his dissociated past? “You’re my second chance, Judy.... You look like Madeleine now. Go up the stairs.” “No!” “Go up the stairs, Judy, and I’ll follow.” While she ascends the stairs reluctantly and stiffly, he twice momentarily looks down apprehensively, each time feeling vertigo. But he perseveres until they reach a critical spot on the stairs: “This was as far as I could get, but you went on.” She is taken aback. “Remember? The necklace, Madeleine. That was the slip. I remembered the necklace.... We’re going up the tower, Madeleine.” “You can’t! You’re afraid.” He drags her up the stairs: “Who was at the top when you got there? Elster? With his wife?” “Yes.” “And she was the one who died—not you. The real wife. You were the copy, you were the counterfeit. You played the wife so well, Judy.... When you got up there, he pushed her off.... Why did you pick on me? Why me?” “The accident!” “... I was the set up, wasn’t I? I was a made-to-order witness.” Was he going to call Elster later and tell him to meet him in a bar to “settle the estate of your late wife”? During this engrossing dialogue, they had continued their climb up the spiraling staircase and had reached the door to the tower. Becoming aware of this, Scottie exclaims: “I made it!” On overcoming his acrophobia on the staircase, why does he insist on ascending to the top of the tower with Judy? Is it only to look at the scene of the crime? Is it due to the *repetition compulsion*?<sup>31</sup> Is it as a result of his lingering resentful exasperation with her for being the mistress and accomplice of the man who murdered Madeleine, his archetypical beloved, and for implicating him in the murder through his false

testimony? Is it because he can presently intimate that he is suffering from a second disability that is the effect of another shock and that this second disability too can possibly be healed by yet another shock? Is it out of his incredulous frustration that while he is calling her by her two names, she persists in calling him by only one name? Is it for all of the above reasons? On top of the tower, he again switches between her two names while admonishing her about keeping the necklace: “Did he give you anything?” “Some money.” “And the necklace, Carlotta’s necklace” (as he’s saying these words, Scottie has a déjà vu impression but cannot discover the reason for it: like Elster after him, Thorwald too killed his wife and gave one of her jewels to his mistress). “There was where you made your mistake, *Judy*. You shouldn’t keep souvenirs of a killing; you shouldn’t have been that sentimental.... I loved you so much, *Madeleine*.” What happens when Judy falls to her death from the tower? The shock he experiences ends his psychogenic fugue, which was triggered by his being pushed from his second-floor apartment by a murderer. While assuming the posture of Jesus Christ on the cross, in whom the human Jesus of Nazareth and the Son of God, Christ, coexisted, the following two names pass through his mind: L.B. Jefferies and John (Scottie) Ferguson.

### The City of the Fellowship of Strangers

Given that the city is a space for strangers, I envision in what follows three possibilities of passionate relationships between strangers as such. The interested readers are implicitly invited to come up with other possibilities of such relationships. It is the potentially numerous kinds of these relationships that would compose the City of the Fellowship of Strangers, and that would function partially as an initiation into the city of the dead, where one’s relationship with oneself is an *extimate* (Lacan) one, a relationship with a familiar stranger.

#### 1. Clean After Me

During his phone conversation with a friend late at night, he, sleepy, let slip in response to his friend’s comment “Given the string of remarkable days I’ve had

recently, I feel that tomorrow will be the beginning of a cycle of indifferent days”: “You don’t say! Tomorrow happens to be my birthday!” His friend insisted on organizing a birthday party for him the next night and volunteered to call round in the evening to pick him up since his car was damaged in an accident with the kind of driver endemic to postwar Lebanon—the reckless. He acquiesced while already abhorring the many presents he was bound to receive from friends and acquaintances, expecting to throw most of them in the garbage can once he returned to his apartment. The next day, while waiting with his friend at a red traffic light on their way to the party, he saw a young woman lingering at the crossroads. For some reason, he felt that she was waiting for him. He implored his friend: “If you really want to give me an appropriate birthday gift, follow this woman! And no questions asked!” “But you’ll be making your friends wait inordinately for you at your birthday party!” Was *she* waiting? Strangely but felicitously, yes. What was she waiting for? She was waiting to sense that someone is going to follow her. And now, having felt this, she walked to a parked car and sped away. They followed her. She drove soon into the parking lot of a hypermarket, went into one of its cafes and ordered an assortment of fruits. After sitting at the other end of the café, he told the waiter that he preferred the spot where she was seated. While peeling an orange, she cut herself. She raised her bleeding finger to her lips and licked it. Then she wrapped it in the napkin. As soon as she left, he swiftly moved to her table and placed in his bag the stained napkin she had left behind. On another, indifferent napkin, he scribbled: “While the majority of men and many women have forgotten that the bodily fluids they part with are gifts, a small percentage of men and a larger percentage of women haven’t forgotten this: ‘Its faeces are the infant’s first gift, a part of his body which he will give up only on persuasion by a loved person, to whom, indeed, he will make a spontaneous gift of it as a token of affection, since as a rule infants do not soil strangers. (There are similar if less intensive reactions with urine.)’<sup>32</sup>” He espied her entering a photo booth. Soon, she came out, picked the three strips of snapshots delivered by the machine, looked at them briefly then dropped them onto the floor. He took leave of his friend and quickly picked them. The first strip of photographs was of her bandaged finger, the second of her naked wounded finger,

and the third of the stained bandages. He rejoined his friend and they followed her car until she parked at and entered an apartment building. Fortunately he did not have to make an agonizing decision on whether to stay in front of the apartment building to make sure that she resides there; or to go with his friend to the party celebrating his birthday: soon the light in one of the dark apartments was turned on and moments later she appeared at one of the windows. At the party, he received numerous birthday gifts. Once in his apartment, he dutifully unwrapped them, decided to retain one and threw the rest away. Having discharged this charge, he stayed up late writing: “The indexical relation of the photograph of a bodily stain to its referent has to be really strong for the photograph to function as a trace that induces a perverse desire for its preservation: it is so in magical practices and a magical universe, where there’s identity of the object with its traces and its images; or if its human referent or the one following her has a conception of photography close to the one that Balzac had, itself close to that of primitive people: ‘According to Balzac, each body in nature is composed of series of specters, in superimposed layers, foliated in infinitesimal films.... And, certainly, each Daguerrian operation, each photograph, comes to catch in the act, detach and retain, by fitting over it, one of the layers of the objectified body. Hence, for the said body, and with each renewed operation, an obvious loss of one of the specters, that is, of one of its constitutive essences’;<sup>33</sup> or if the light, rather than externally hitting the photographed body and then imprinting the photographic film, originates in the photographed body, as would be the case with an angel, a being of light; or if the photograph itself is stained by another, tauter—for more intimately related to the body—indexical element, for example by being splattered during a car crash with the blood of the one who was photographed. The fetishist considers things the other discards as tokens of the generosity of the other, therefore when he picks them, he wraps them, as he would any other gift. If the woman who is followed is thrifty, she would minimize her bodily secretions by fasting and retain her reduced bodily fluids as long as possible, or else discard only what she guesses does not interest the other. If she is generous, then even after she ends up discovering that among the things she’s discarding the other cherishes the ones that are stained with her bodily fluids, she continues to discard such traces liberally. Whether the one followed is clean or

not is dependent in such cases on the desire of the follower: the latter will feel that the woman he is following is clean if all that she leaves behind is desired by him; but unclean if some or most of what she discards has nothing to do with his desire, with the consequence that he will leave it littering the ground. The loved body for the fetishist is a crass and abject body that frequently stains glasses and cups with lipstick mixed with saliva, underwear with urine and/or ejaculate, tampon with menstrual blood; but it is conjointly, for 'the third' (T.S. Eliot) who happens to pass at a short delay along the same trajectory of the follower, who has already removed the discards of the one he's following and placed them in his bag, on the contrary an elegant and sublime body, a pure body that does not leave traces, that does not shed tears, urinate, salivate, and menstruate. In a rigorous video or film, we can detect if the fetishistic follower is fully coincident with himself or also follows himself implicitly and thus witnesses the immaculate absence of stained traces of the one he is following from the manner in which the video maker or filmmaker shoots the one who is being followed: if the follower is fully coincident with himself then the one followed appears as only an abject body; if the follower follows himself implicitly, then the one he is following appears as conjointly abject and sublime." He was awakened by a phone call from his insurance company informing him that his car was ready to be picked up. For the next fortnight, he followed her at a distance collecting her traces. She was neat throughout, but in two different ways: when he was not following her, she did not throw anything except in garbage cans, sealed plastic bags, etc.; but when he was following her she littered *generously*, sensing that he will be all too happy to clean after her. When all is said and done, was it all great clean fun? No, since the limit toward which following the other for his or her bodily traces tends is not "a little blood" (the expression the Renfield of Murnau's *Nosferatu* uses while speaking to Harker concerning the latter's forthcoming trip to Transylvania: "And, young as you are, what matters if it costs you some pain—or even a little blood?") but the whole body as a trace of itself discarded for the follower. Why was she driving so speedily on this rainy day? Had she become tired of being followed? He was trying not to lose sight of her at a breakneck curve, when his car skidded and crashed into hers. Now the distance, which was initially the one that he maintained while following her, instead of being

canceled by the excessive proximity brought about by the car crash, was displaced, becoming one between herself and her body in some out of the body experience during which she, floating, witnessed from above her body lying on the ground,<sup>34</sup> and felt towards it, now unrecognizable as it was covered with bruises, blood, and urine, what she feels towards these bodily discharges. The three objects stained by her bodily fluids that he had wrapped in plastic and that were lying on the car seat next to him were now stained by his and her discharges during the crash. Himself only lightly injured, he rushed her to the hospital, and, given that there turned out, fortunately, to be blood type compatibility between them, he donated blood to her. After having collected and wrapped in plastic various objects stained with her bodily fluids, including blood, he felt odd seeing his own blood collected and placed as a serum for her. On his first visit to her at the hospital after she regained consciousness, she said emphatically: "The Chinese say that once you have saved someone's life, you are responsible for it forever. I very much hope that you don't subscribe to their way of thinking on this matter." When she asked him why he seemed bemused, he answered that her previous words reminded him of those of the protagonist of a famous film. "Are you into cinema?" "Yes; in addition to being a writer, I am also a film theorist and a video maker. How about you?" "I received my Bachelor of Fine Arts degree around a year ago. I've been considering continuing my studies and/or art practice abroad, possibly in Asia, for example Singapore." "I do not recommend Singapore, where one is fined if one is caught spitting, and where littering of any kind is subject to up to a S\$1,000 fine for first offenders, and up to a S\$2,000 fine and a stint of corrective work cleaning a public place for repeat offenders; it is a city that is too sanitized since it does not allow for the perversely clean." "Do you have any suggestions?" "I recommend the three art institutes where I've taught: the Rijksakademie and DasArts in Amsterdam, and California Institute of the Arts." "Did you know that immediately after the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the US Department of Justice questioned thousands of non-citizens, primarily foreign-born Muslims, for information about or connections to terrorist activity, and that at least 1,200 non-citizens were subsequently arrested and incarcerated, of which approximately one thousand in secret? Given the repressive policies of the Bush

administration, I prefer to apply to Europe. I'll visit the web sites of the Rijksakademie and DasArts once I leave the hospital, and thenceforth promptly apply." They became lovers during his visits to her in the hospital. When he first said to her, "I love you," she was elated; but when he again uttered these words to her a week or so later, she asked him: "Do you love me totally?" He did not answer. He had a confirmation that her body was a trace of itself, that it was somewhat a discard, when she mentioned that she had an out-of-the-body state during the car crash and described the episode of depersonalization she underwent. Sometimes while looking at her sleeping in his bed, he had the queasy feeling that she was somewhere else in the room looking at him and her body, so that on several occasions he swiftly turned back only to be relieved that there was no one there. This time, when he turned back toward her, he was startled: her eyes were wide-open, staring at him. When it became clear that she was unable to resume her sleep, he suggested that they watch a film, *Vertigo*. She had not seen this film before! While watching it, she had a déjà vu impression on hearing Scottie tell Madeleine shortly after saving her from drowning: "The Chinese say that once you have saved someone's life, you are responsible for it forever. And so I'm committed." While they were making love afterwards, he at times exclaimed, at times whispered: "I love your feet ... your ankles ... your knees ... your thighs ... your buttocks ... your breasts ... your nipples ... your shoulders ... your arms ... your neck ... your hair ... your face ... *and* your mouth ... your eyes ... your nose ... your ears ... your saliva ... your blood ... your ejaculate ... your urine." At which point, she, momentarily jarred and embarrassed, quickly protested: "Don't say this!" He in turn remonstrated: "When you told me that you wanted me to love you totally my second thought was that you were being perverse. But even did I not love you totally, I would have said this litany of 'I love your saliva ... I love your hair ...' out of sympathy with the magical moments we've been having." He tenderly passed his fingers through her beautiful long hair, then went to his library, picked up a book and read aloud: "The simplest expression of the notion of sympathetic contiguity is the identification of a part with the whole. The part stands for the complete object. Teeth, saliva, sweat, nails, hair represent a total person.... 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."<sup>35</sup> He then fetched from his library his DVD of Godard's *Contempt*, the one birthday gift he had not thrown away, inserted it in his player and, noticing her apprehension, assured her that they will not get to the penultimate scene of the fatal car crash. They watched together Camille, the female protagonist, played by Brigitte Bardot, ask her husband, Paul, while naked in bed: "Do you see my feet in the mirror?" "Yes." "Do you think they are pretty?" "Yes, very." "And my ankles? Do you like them?" "Yes." "Do you like my knees, too?" "Yes, I really like your knees." "And my thighs?" "Your thighs, too." "Do you see my behind in the mirror?" "Yes." "Do you think I have a cute ass?" "Yes, very." "And my breasts, do you like them?" "Yes, tremendously." "Which do you prefer, my breasts or my nipples?" "I don't know, I like them the same." "And my shoulders, do you like them?" "Yes." "... And my arms?" "Yes." "And my face?" "Your face too." "All of it? My mouth, my eyes, my nose, my ears?" "Yes, everything." "Then you love me totally?" "Yes. I love you totally, tenderly, tragically." As he had promised her, he stopped the film before the scene of the mortal car crash. She mused: "What is it with me tonight? Although this is the first time I watch this film, I had an impression of déjà vu when I saw the image of Bardot sitting on the bathroom seat. In any event, Camille's husband didn't tell her that he loved her saliva, blood, ejaculate and urine." "On two later occasions, Godard had the opportunity to make Paul's concluding words more believable. While at the garden of the American film producer who has commissioned him to rewrite the script that Fritz Lang is filming and that is based on Homer's *The Odyssey*, Paul takes leave of his wife to go wash his hands. Instead, inside the house, he flirts with the producer's secretary and translator and slaps her on her buttocks while she's leaving to the garden. Just at this point his wife enters and after reprimanding him asks him: 'Where can I pee?' He signals to her to go upstairs. But he could have instead accompanied her to the bathroom, washed his hands there, *then* placed them between her thighs and asked her to urinate..." "Now I remember where I've seen that image before. It was at the recently opened Le Coffee restaurant and coffee house in Beirut. A framed film still of Bardot sitting on the bathroom seat hangs on the wall beside the door to the ladies' room. Let's have a drink there tomorrow!" "Toward the beginning of Godard's *First Name: Carmen*, a man falls in love at first sight/fight with one of



214 Monot Street, Ashrafiyya, Beirut, Lebanon

the robbers of the bank he guards, a woman by the name of Carmen (played by Maruschka Detmers). He ties himself to her (in an intertextual reworking of a similar vinculum in a film by a director who, unlike Godard, is actually perverse: Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps*, 1935) so it would seem that he was being abducted by her and her accomplices. They drive away then stop briefly at a gas station and rush into its men's room. While still tied to the ex-guard, she starts to pee; her legs continue to be covered by her skirt. He at first looks her straight in the eye, but quickly averts his eyes, down to the floor (a gross man who had entered the men's room to surreptitiously eat a container of yogurt looks at her now and then through the mirror while lustfully licking his yogurt-smearred fingers). Perhaps we could do a remake of this scene at Le Coffee. In our remake, your legs would not be covered by your skirt, I would not look away but at them, and there would certainly not be a gross onlooker around." "I'll give you my response about doing a remake of that scene only after I watch it. Please continue what you were saying about *Contempt* before I interrupted you." "In the film's penultimate scene, Camille



is killed in a car crash while taking a hike with the producer. We are shown, in a medium long shot, the blood on her neck, cheeks and hair. Had the accident occurred close to the whereabouts of Paul, and had he rushed toward the site of the car crash, there would have been another opportunity for him to go over the series again, but this time adding to the series he loves the fluids with which he sees her covered in the crushed car—"I love your urine, blood,<sup>36</sup> saliva, ejaculate"—and then conclude rigorously this time: 'I love you totally.' Since Godard does not have Paul do this, he should have come closer with his camera to the wounded Camille and shown what is missing from the deduction, in a perverse impulse or pedagogical course of action.<sup>37</sup> Given how rigorous the filmmaker of *M* (1931) and *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* (1933) is,<sup>38</sup> I would wager that his implied script of Homer's *The Odyssey* did not need rewriting, and therefore that Paul is contemptible for accepting to do such a rewrite (it's not at all strange that the protagonist of a Godard film titled *Contempt* should be a screenwriter, given Godard's well-known scorn for scripts); but I think that Godard's film would have

benefited from a rewrite. Were I the producer of Godard's film, I would have recommended that he either extend the wife's series of questions to her husband about what is it he loves in her to cover her saliva, blood, ejaculate and urine, or remove the 'concluding' exchange ('Then you love me totally?' 'Yes'), or else accept in his cinematic adaptation of Moravia's novel *Contempt*, in which a screenwriter is commissioned to rewrite Fritz Lang's script for an adaptation of Homer's *The Odyssey*, that the novelist J.G. Ballard, the future author of *Crash* (1973), rewrite the penultimate scene of the car accident.<sup>39</sup> I myself have never written a script for my videos, which are unconventional documentary essays. But after the publication in 2003 of the second editions of my first two books, I've become interested in remakes. For example, it would be felicitous to do a remake of *Vertigo* in which, unlike in Hitchcock's film, Madeleine leaves behind sundry objects stained with her bodily fluids for the private detective who is following her. For that, new scenes with digital versions of James Stewart as Detective John 'Scottie' Ferguson, Kim Novak as Madeleine Elster/Judy Barton, and Barbara Bel Geddes as Midge would have to be added. The other scenes and shots would be altered surreptitiously but significantly by the addition of the new scenes and the alteration of some of the existent ones, in a new version of the Kuleshov effect. While filmmaker George Lucas, whose company, Industrial Light & Magic, recreated, through special effects for Spielberg's *Jurassic Park*, dinosaurs that had been extinct for tens of millions of years, 'can't see any reason to recreate John Wayne or Monroe ...'<sup>40</sup> I can: to digitally remake certain scenes in the director's cut through the use of numerically recreated dead actors. The DVD or the future format in which such a remake of *Vertigo* will be available is to be advertised as this or that *Remaker's Retouch* of *Vertigo* or else as *Hitchcock's Vertigo in ABMV* (the acronym standing for 'another branch of the multiverse;' aka *Hitchcock's Vertigo in ABMWIQM* [the variant acronym standing for 'another branch of the Many-Worlds interpretation of quantum mechanics'])—the screen would then indeed be a window ... onto another branch of the multiverse. So here is my remake of *Vertigo* [the additions and/or alterations are italicized]. During a chase over the rooftops of San Francisco, police detective John 'Scottie' Ferguson is overcome by acrophobia, and as a consequence unwittingly and unwillingly contributes to the accidental death of a

fellow policeman. He retires from the police department because of his disability and of his unresolved feelings of guilt. On a visit to his old girlfriend and onetime fiancée, Midge, he mentions that he received a call from an old college acquaintance, a certain Gavin Elster. When he meets Elster, the latter asks him to follow his wife, Madeleine, because some harm may come to her from someone dead who seems to be taking possession of her. What Scottie does not know is that Elster has lured a woman, Judy Barton, a look-alike of Madeleine, to impersonate her in a murderous scheme he devised to inherit his wife's fortune: Judy is to fool Scottie, a set-to-order witness, into believing that Madeleine committed suicide. The following day he waits in his car at the corner of the apartment building where she lives. When she comes out and drives off, he follows her. She goes first to a flower shop, where she picks up a specific bouquet she had clearly designed; then to the old Mission Dolores' graveyard, where she pensively gazes down at a headstone. When she walks away, he hastens to the headstone and scribbles the inscription on it: 'Carlotta Valdes: Born 3 December 1831, died 5 March 1857.' He then follows her to an old hotel at the intersection of Eddy and Gough streets, and discovers that she has rented a room there. The next day, he again follows her, this time to the Palace of the Legion of Honor. When he arrives inside, he finds her seated alone at the far end of one of the galleries. She is gazing at the three-quarter portrait of a blond woman dressed in a 19<sup>th</sup> century costume and wearing a distinctive diamond pendant necklace. Scottie is struck by the similarity between the bouquet Madeleine has placed next to her on the bench and the bouquet held in the woman's hand, and by the similarity between her bun of blonde hair and the bun of hair resting on the nape of the woman in the portrait. He beckons to an attendant and asks him in a hushed voice: 'Who's the woman in the painting she is looking at?' 'Oh, that's Carlotta. You'll find it [the reproduction of the painting] in the catalogue: *Portrait of Carlotta*.' The attendant withdraws after handing him a catalogue. *While still entranced by the painting, Madeleine extends her hand to take the bouquet of flowers lying next to her on the bench, in the process wounding her finger by a thorn. Close shot of one of the flowers: one drop of blood then another fall over it.*<sup>41</sup> *Awakened from her trance by the pain, she removes the offending and stained flower out of the bouquet, leaving it on the bench. Scottie looks apprehensively around to check that the*



Still from *Rear Window Vertigo*

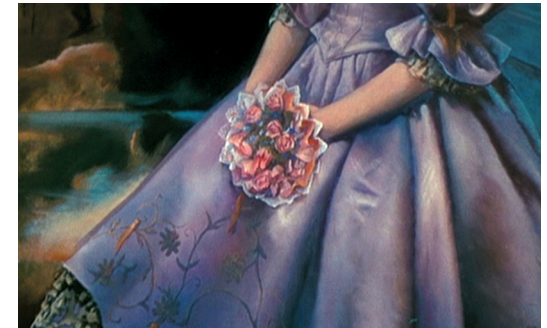
*attendant has not witnessed what has just occurred; he feels relieved that the latter happens to be helping another guest somewhere else in the palace. He tries to understand why he felt such apprehension, but fails to do so. He quickly heads to the bench where Madeleine was sitting, stretches his hand hesitantly toward the flower then holds it gingerly. As if in a trance, he passes his finger over a thorn, wounding it, then places*

*his wounded finger over the two drops of blood on the flower and mutters to himself: 'I hope our blood types match.'* Moments later, he rushes outside and follows Madeleine's car back to her apartment building. He then drives to Midge's apartment. 'Who do you know that's an authority on San Francisco history?' '... Professor Saunders over in Berkeley.' 'No, no, I don't mean that kind of history. I mean the small stuff; you know, people you never heard of.' '... Pop Leibel. He owns the Argosy Book Shop.... You are not a detective anymore. What is going on?' The bookshop is filled not only with old books, but also with memorabilia of California 'pioneer days': framed old mining claims, posters describing outlaws wanted by the law, Wells Fargo Pony Express posters, old whiskey bottles and gold-mining pans. *While waiting with Midge for the owner to finish with the one customer in the shop, Scottie looks for a section of books of psychoanalysis. Not finding one, he searches for the poetry section, finds it, and picks up one of the books. He flips through it, finds something that catches his attention, and looks for a piece of paper. Not finding one, he opens the catalogue he still has with him and copies the following words on the page facing Carlotta's portrait: 'I say: a flower! and outside the oblivion to which my voice relegates any shape, insofar as it is something other than the calyx, there arises musically, as the very idea and delicate, the one absent from every bouquet' (Mallarmé, trans. Mary Ann Caws).* Now that Leibel is free, Scottie asks him: 'What does an old wooden house at Eddy and Gough Street have to do with Carlotta Valdes?' 'Oh, it was hers. It was built for her many years ago by ... a rich man, a powerful man. She came from somewhere small, to the south of the city. Some say from a mission settlement. Young, yes, very young. And she was found dancing and singing in a cabaret by this man. And he took her and built for her the

great house in the Western Addition. And there was a child.... His wife had no children. So, he kept the child and threw her away.... And she became the sad Carlotta, alone in the great house, walking the streets alone, her clothes becoming old and patched and dirty; and the mad Carlotta, stopping people in the streets to ask: "Where is my child? Have you seen my child." ... She died by her own hand.' Once outside the bookshop, Midge entreats Scottie: 'Now then, Johnny-O, pay me!' 'For what?' 'For bringing you here. Come on, tell!' 'There is nothing to tell.' But while driving her home, he begins to answer some of her questions. As they reach her apartment, she complains: 'You haven't told me everything.' 'I've told you enough.' 'Who's the guy and who's the wife? ... I know. The one who phoned, your old college chum, Elster. And the idea is that the beautiful mad Carlotta has come back from the dead and taken possession of Elster's wife? ... I think I'll go take a look at that portrait.' He goes to tell Gavin Elster about his findings. Elster is impressed with Scottie's progress and gives him additional pieces of information: 'My wife, Madeleine, has several pieces of jewelry that belonged to Carlotta. She inherited them. Never wore them. They were too old-fashioned—until now.' 'Now, Carlotta Valdes was what? Your wife's grandmother?' 'Great-grandmother. The child who was taken from her, whose loss drove Carlotta mad and to her death, was Madeleine's grandmother.' 'Well, I think that explains it. Anyone could become obsessed with the past with a background like that.' 'She never heard of Carlotta Valdes.' 'She knows nothing of a grave out at Mission Dolores? Or that old house on Eddy Street? Or the portrait at the Palace of the Legion of ... ?' 'Nothing.' 'Well, how do you know all these things she doesn't?' 'Her mother told me most of them before she died.' 'Why wouldn't she tell her daughter?' 'Natural fear. Her grandmother went insane, took her own life. Her blood is in Madeleine.' In his 'Notes on the Phantom: A Complement to Freud's Metapsychology' (1975), Nicolas Abraham writes: 'The phantom is a formation of the unconscious that has never been conscious—for good reason. It passes—in a way yet to be determined—from the parent's unconscious to the child's....<sup>42</sup> What haunts are not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others....<sup>43</sup> The special difficulty of these analyses lies in the patient's horror at violating a parent's or a family's guarded secret, even though the secret's text and content are inscribed within the patient's

own unconscious.”<sup>44</sup> And he writes in ‘The Phantom of Hamlet, or The Sixth Act preceded by The Intermission of “Truth”’: “‘Haunted” individuals are caught between two inclinations. They must at all costs maintain their ignorance of a loved one’s secret; hence the semblance of unawareness (nescience) concerning it. At the same time they must eliminate the state of secrecy; hence the reconstruction of the secret in the form of unconscious knowledge. This twofold movement is manifest in symptoms and gives rise to “gratuitous” or uncalled for acts and words, creating eerie effects: hallucinations and delirium, showing and hiding that which, in the depths of the unconscious, dwells as the living-dead knowledge of *someone else’s secret*.”<sup>45</sup> And Anne Ancelin Schützenberger continues in *The Ancestor Syndrome*: ‘It is a *secret* that cannot be told, often a parent’s shameful secret, a loss, an injustice.... From a transgenerational perspective, a person who suffers from a ghost leaving the crypt suffers from a “family genealogical illness,” from an unconscious loyalty, from the consequences of something unsaid that became a secret. From a psychoanalytical perspective, Abraham and Torok perceive in this kind of manifestation “a formation of the dynamic unconscious that is found there not because of the subject’s own repression but on account of a direct empathy with the unconscious or the rejected psychic matter of a parental object.”’<sup>46</sup> Again, Scottie follows Madeleine’s car. This time she drives toward the jutting point of old Fort Winfield Scott, parks her car and walks to the water’s edge. After a while, she leaps into the water. Scottie dashingly saves her from drowning. He then takes her unconscious to his apartment, undresses her, tucks her in his bed, and hangs her drenched shirt, skirt, bra, and panties to dry. During their subsequent conversation in the living room, it becomes clear that she does not recall jumping in the bay. His phone rings in the bedroom. When he returns to the living room after informing her husband about her suicidal attempt then soothing him by stressing that she is presently fine, he discovers that she has already put on her clothes and left. *But he shortly notices that she forgot (!) her presently dry panties, on which traces of menstrual blood are visible.* The next day, he again follows her from her apartment building only to discover that she has driven to his place to leave him a thank-you note under his door. He approaches her, picks up the note, reads it, then asks her: ‘Where are you going?’ ‘... I just thought that I’d wander.’ ‘Oh, that’s

what I was going to do.... Well, don’t you think it’s kind of a waste for the two of us ...’ ‘To wander separately? Ah, but only one is a wanderer; two, together, are always going somewhere.’ ‘No. I don’t think that’s necessarily true.’ ‘You left your door open ...’ During their trip, she tells him that she is haunted by a recurrent dream, but seems unable to clearly remember it. When he returns home, he discovers another note; it is from Midge. He drives to her apartment. ‘Since when do you go around slipping notes under men’s doors? ...’ ‘What have you been doing?’ ‘Wandering. What have *you* been doing?’ ‘... I’ve gone back to my first love: painting.’ ‘Oh, good for you. I’ve always said you were wasting your time in the underwear department.’ Would he have the same opinion were he interested in the traces of her ejaculate on her underwear? Probably not. ‘Well, it’s a living. But I’m really excited about this.... You want to see? ... I thought I might give it to you.’ He comes around to face the canvas. It is a copy of the *Portrait of Carlotta*. *He starts to complement her on it—‘It looks exactly like the original: the eyes and the hair are the same ... so is the dress ...’—when he notices something and suddenly stops, as if entranced: ‘Is the painting finished?’ ‘No ...’ He feels momentarily relieved, but when she continues with ‘I still have to add one of the shoes,’ he feels paranoid. ‘Are you sure that only one of the shoes is missing?’ ‘Yes.’ He quickly realizes that she may have misunderstood his question to mean: ‘Are you sure that only one of the two shoes, not both, are missing?’ So he anxiously rephrases his question: ‘Are you sure that beside the missing shoe there is no other missing element? What about the bouquet?’ ‘The bouquet?’ ‘Is*

Still from Hitchcock's *Vertigo*Still from *Rear Window Vertigo*

the bouquet finished?' 'Yes, it is. *Why are you asking?*' He asked because one of the flowers in the Carlotta Valdes portrait is missing from her copy! He suddenly feels that he's either the victim of a conspiracy or starting to lose his mind and develop paranoid ideas of reference. He leaves abruptly. She gasps in exasperation: 'Oh! Marjorie Wood! You fool!' Marjorie Wood turned out to be a painter, in a radical sense: while seeming to make a traditional, representational painting, she actually made, rather foolishly from the perspective of her love for Scottie, of Madeleine not only a dream woman<sup>47</sup> but also a painting woman;<sup>48</sup> *what (other) flower is absent from every bouquet and whose name, as happens when I am trying to wake up from a nightmare, I am unable to utter? It is a flower that has unexplainably appeared in the world from a dream or a painting and not from any of the world's bouquets.* At dawn, after a sleepless night, he hears insistent knocks on his door. It is Madeleine. 'The dream came back again.... It was the tower again and the bell and the old Spanish village—clear, so very clear for the first time, all of it.' 'Tell me.' 'It was a village square, and a green with trees, and an old whitewashed Spanish church with a cloister. Across the green, there was a big, gray wooden house with a porch and shutters and a balcony above; a small garden; and next to it a livery stable with old carriages lined up inside.' 'Go on.' 'At the end of the green, there was a whitewashed stone house with a lovely pepper tree at the corner ...' '... and an old wooden hotel from the old California days? And a saloon: dark, with low ceilings with hanging oil lamps?' 'Yes!' 'It's all there. It's no dream. You've been there before, you've seen it.' 'No, never.' 'Madeleine, a hundred miles south of San Francisco, there's an old Spanish mission—San Juan Batista it's called—and it's been preserved exactly as it was a hundred years ago—as a museum. Think hard, darling, think hard: you've been there before, you've seen it.' 'No, never, I've never been there. Oh Scottie, what is it? I've never been there.' He proposes that they drive there so she can check for herself that the place is no dream. At this point, her blood on a flower and her ejaculate on an undergarment were no longer enough for him as traces of her: he wanted her whole body but as a trace of itself. At Mission San Juan Batista, she suddenly exclaims, "Too late ... There's something I must do," and runs away from him up the church tower. We can view the scene in *Vertigo* in which Judy, impersonating Madeleine, arrives on top of the church tower and sees Madeleine's

husband placing his hand over his wife's mouth to prevent her from screaming then throwing her to the ground way below as providing Judy with an out-of-body experience (*Vertigo* shows a woman who looks at herself not primarily in a mirror but first in the oil portrait of her great-grandmother, whose unjustly traumatic life and death she unconsciously guesses, and then in an out-of-body episode), one that complements her trances: while in the trance state, she is a body dissociated from consciousness, in the out-of-body state she is a consciousness detached from the body. And it is the latter body, a discard, that Scottie first sees on being released from the Park Hill Sanitarium after undergoing treatment for acute melancholia following Madeleine's death: Judy looks crass, garish, trashy in the company of her coworkers at I. Magnin department store. He picks her out and wraps her by placing her body in the clothes of Madeleine, her hair under the blond dye of Madeleine's hair color, and her feet in the shoes of Madeleine. Fully dressed and attired as Madeleine and surrounded by the green penumbra issuing from the hotel sign just outside her window, Judy appears ethereal, as if she were not fully embodied, as if she were out of her body; then when he takes her coldly in his arms, she appears to be the discarded body in an out-of-body experience. A few days later, preparing to go to dinner at Ernie's, the restaurant where he first glimpsed her as Madeleine, she asks him to help her put on her necklace. While doing so, he recognizes that it is the same necklace Carlotta Valdes wears in her portrait at the Palace of the Legion of Honor. He now suspects that he was a made-to-order witness in a scheme devised by Gavin Elster to murder his wife and inherit her fortune, and that the woman before him had impersonated Madeleine. He drives her back to Mission San Juan Batista in order to confront her about her complicity in the murder of Madeleine, but also in the hope of witnessing her undergo, on top of the church tower, an out-of-body experience in which she would become two bodies, a material one and a subtle one, the latter looking at the former. As he forces her to reenact before him Madeleine's ascent on the staircase, he halts at a certain spot and remarks: 'This was as far as I could get, but you went on. Remember? The necklace, *Madeleine*. That was the slip ... I remembered the necklace. There was where you made your mistake, *Judy*: you shouldn't keep souvenirs of a killing. You shouldn't have been that sentimental.... When you

got up there ... why did you scream?' 'I wanted to stop it Scottie. I ran up to stop it. As soon as I ascertained that you had left the staircase, I quickly ran down to check if she was still alive. I couldn't feel the slightest difference between her dead body and mine. All I could find between this dead body and mine were obvious similarities!<sup>49</sup> 'Gavin Elster must have given the necklace to you as a recompense.' 'Yes.' 'What did he say as he gave it to you?' 'He did not say anything since he did not give it to me in person. We saw each other only twice after that horrible scene at the top of the church tower. My relationship with him was bound to abruptly end given that I had fallen in love with you and that I reminded him of his late wife and thus of his murder of her. Already when he saw me the first time after the murder, he was perturbed, as if he were seeing a ghost, and asked me, who had, out of habit, put on one of Madeleine's dresses, to go immediately to the bathroom and change into my clothes, and to never again wear those of Madeleine. When I came out of the bathroom in my own clothes, he still asked me to no longer have my hair in a bun. As I expected, a few days later I found his key to my hotel room on my table—he also left me some money. A few nights later, as I was looking for clean panties in one of my drawers, I found the necklace. He must have put it there as a surprise farewell gift to me when he returned the key. So you see, if I was reluctant to change into Madeleine's clothes and have her hair style when we began to go out again, it was not only because I wanted you to love me, not her, but also because I had already been instructed by Gavin Elster first to do so then to avoid doing so.' That, like the flower earlier, the necklace too could be from the painting gave him, who had just conquered his acrophobia by accompanying Judy all the way to the top of the church tower, another kind of vertigo. Now, it was her turn to try to convince him of a rational explanation for the presence of the necklace with her: the same way they drove earlier to Mission San Juan Batista in part so she would be convinced that the place she had considered a figment of her dream imagination is an actual one, they presently decide to check that the necklace is still in the painting. They drive back to the city. All we can do now is kill the time left before the Palace of the Legion of Honor opens its doors—still sixteen hours.' 'That's a terribly long time....' 'No. You mustn't be afraid.'<sup>50</sup> In the background, the lighted signs of nightclubs.... She is walking, he is following.... Then we hear her voice in an interior monologue, loud and uncontrolled: 'He's going to come toward me, he's going to take me by the shoulders, he's going to kiss me.' ... instead of coming toward her he's moving farther away. She doesn't turn back.<sup>51</sup> When they arrive at the

*museum the next morning, they discover that Madeleine's husband bought the portrait of the great-grandmother of his late wife a few months earlier.*" "Since the technology to do a seamless digital remake is not yet available, can you come up with another remake, one whose events would take place in Amsterdam?" "Why Amsterdam?" She felt vexed that he would ask this question: "This way, if I am accepted at either the Rijksakademie or DasArts, I would still be able to see you during the pre-production or the actual videotaping." "Notwithstanding my compelling attachment to you, my beloved, this is not a sufficient reason to do a remake there. Hitchcock filmed part of *Foreign Correspondent*, 1940, in Amsterdam. If he did not film *Vertigo*, 1958, there too, it must be because he thought San Francisco rather than Amsterdam is the most felicitous location for it." Seeing that his answer caused her to be forlorn, he reviewed the matter, and, to his gratifying surprise, came to the conclusion that Amsterdam is a most fitting locale for a contemporary remake of *Vertigo* with new actors. "Isn't Amsterdam, with its illustrious seventeenth century maritime history; its Netherlands Maritime Museum, which occupies the old arsenal of the Dutch navy; and Renzo Piano's nearby National Center for Science and Technology (NEMO), housed in a waterfront building that alludes to a ship, a good setting for the first meeting between Madeleine's husband and Scottie? 'How did you get into the shipbuilding business, Gavin?' 'I married into it.... Scottie, do you believe that someone out of the past, someone dead, can enter and take possession of a living being?' 'No.' 'What would you say if I told you that I believe this has happened to my wife?' 'Well, I'd say take her to the nearest psychiatrist or psychologist or neurologist or psychoanalyst—or maybe just plain family doctor. I'd have him check on you too.' 'I have done so! And he gave me two books to read: Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 1, and Anne Ancelin Schützenberger's *The Ancestor Syndrome: Transgenerational Psychotherapy and the Hidden Links in the Family Tree*.' Feeling that he was abrupt, Scottie changes the subject: 'How long have you been back?' 'Almost a year?' 'And you like it?' '*Amsterdam has changed. The things that spell Amsterdam to me are fast disappearing*.' Is he referring to the 2002 elections, when the Pim Fortuyn List, which ran on an anti-immigration platform, came from nowhere to win 26 seats, becoming the second biggest force in the 150-member Second

Chamber of parliament? Is he also referring to the Dutch parliament's passage on 17 February 2004, by 83 votes to 57, of a law allowing for the mass expulsion of 26,000 failed asylum seekers over the following three years—a violation of international standards that signals 'a serious departure from the Netherlands' historic role as a leader in human rights protection in Europe' (Human Rights Watch)? Or is he referring rather to the colonial times of the East India Company? 'I'd like to have lived here then. The color and excitement ... the power ... the freedom.' But the Amsterdam of the seventeenth century was the locus and time of 'the power ... the freedom' from a different perspective, given that one of the great thinkers of power and freedom was born and lived in Amsterdam until he was excommunicated by its Jewish community in 1656: Baruch Spinoza. In the 'Index of the Main Concepts of the *Ethics*' in Deleuze's concise *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, we find the two entries 'Freedom' and 'Power,' in the former of which one can read: 'man is not born free, but becomes free or frees himself, and Part IV of the *Ethics* draws the portrait of this free or strong man (IV, 54, etc.). Man, the most powerful of the finite modes, is free when he comes into possession of his power of acting, that is, when his *conatus* is determined by adequate ideas from which active affects follow, affects that are explained by his own essence. Freedom is always linked to essence and to what follows from it, not to will and to what governs it.'<sup>52</sup> Isn't Amsterdam, where walking or bicycling along one of the city's concentric canals brings one back to one's starting point, a fitting location for the scene in which Scottie follows Madeleine from her apartment building only to find himself back at his own house (she wanted to leave him a thank-you note under his door)? Isn't this flat city in a country 27% of which, in the north and the west, lies below sea level, and which used to be called, along with modern-day Belgium, the Low Countries, a fitting location for someone suffering from acrophobia? In such a remake, Scottie follows Madeleine not to the Palace of the Legion of Honor as in the original, but to the Rijksmuseum, with its panoply of great portraits, by Frans Hals, Rembrandt, Vermeer, etc. There he loses track of her amidst the throng of people in front of Rembrandt's famous painting *The Night Watch*, 1642, and dreads momentarily that she has disappeared; but then he spies her and follows her at a distance to an empty room where she sits in front of a portrait. He soon learns

from the attendant that the painting in question is the *Portrait of Carlotta*. This short visit to the Rijksmuseum rouses his interest to learn more about Dutch art. He soon discovers and is fascinated by the work of the Dutch graphic artist M.C. Escher, especially his two works with strange loops *Ascending and Descending* (1960) and *Waterfall* (1961). He will remember these two vertiginous lithographs while repeatedly having the impression that the ground is receding during his unsuccessful attempt to follow Madeleine all the way up a church tower (the effect was cinematically achieved by 'a track-out combined with a forward zoom'<sup>53</sup>). His beloved kissed him joyfully, then, after some thought, suggested that he call such a remake *The Following Story*. "That's a felicitous title for a remake of *Vertigo*, where for much of the film a man follows a woman, but where also there is a (mournful) caesura around the film's middle. But it happens to be the title of a novel by the Dutch writer Cees Nooteboom." What then would be another felicitous title for such a remake? He settled on: *Amsterdam: City of Vertigo*.

It is not enough to preserve the indexical trace of the other, for example by sealing it in a plastic container, since for it to continue to function as an inducer of desire, one has to maintain its living link with its source. Notwithstanding that for the fetishist the trace, often wrapped or sealed, is itself voided of time, it nonetheless continues to be subject to time through its dependency on a persistent connection with its source—were the latter to die for example, the trace would become obsolete, no longer induce desire. In films or videos that deal with such perverse traces, one of the crucial questions to answer when it comes to time is: Should the image itself be treated in this manner? If yes, we can imagine photographs with the label *Discard by...* In case one opts not to discard the photograph or film, one has to reactivate it. Can this be done without a body? What happens to the perverse trace then if no homeless person recycles it, or an artist reuses it, whether in his garden (outsider artist Bodan Litnianski's *Le Jardin coquillage* in Viry-Nouzeuil in France, etc.), or in his dolls and masks (Art Brut artist Michel Nedjar, whose maternal grandmother was a rag picker, and who himself works in a flea market several days a week and uses old rags in his work) or in his assemblages (Arman)? "When Bruno [in Werner Herzog's *Stroszek*, 1977] asks the question: 'Where do objects go when they no longer have any use?' we

might reply that they normally go in the dustbin, but that reply would be inadequate, since the question is metaphysical. Bergson asked the same question and replied metaphysically: that which has ceased to be useful simply begins to *be*.<sup>54</sup> In Sohrab Shahid Saless' film *Tabiate bijan (Still Life)*, 1974, an old man who has served thirty years as the guard at a railway post is replaced by a new, young employee. Not only the discarded old man, but also everything around him, his wife and the spare objects in his room, are shot as people and things no longer in the regime of use but of being.

## 2. Mind My Business

Dedicated to the "M.O.B. [Minds Own Business] ist" William Burroughs

"Most of the trouble in this world has been caused by folks who can't mind their own business, because they have no business of their own to mind, any more than a smallpox virus has."<sup>55</sup>

William Burroughs

In one of Hitchcock's films, two strangers meet accidentally on a train. The first man intends to marry the woman he loves once his divorce with his unfaithful wife is finalized, and the other man hates his father. "Some people are better off dead, like your wife and my father for instance.... Let's say that you'd like to get rid of your wife. Let's say that you had a very good reason. Now, you'll be afraid to kill her. You know why: you'll get caught. And what would trip you up? The motive. Ah! Now, here's my idea; it's so simple. Two fellows meet accidentally, like you and me. No connection between them at all, never saw each other before. Each one has somebody that he'd like to get rid of, so—they swap murders! Each fellow does the other fellow's murder, then there is nothing to connect them. Each one has murdered a total stranger." For a series of Hitchcock films (*Strangers on a Train*, 1951; *North by Northwest*, 1959; *Psycho*, 1960, etc.), I would propose the generic title: Mind My Business. If the mother figures prominently in these films, it is to a large extent because she is—if we view the matter from the perspective of the

infant once he has attained a minimal sense of separation from his mother and achieved a rudimentary ego—the first stranger who has minded the protagonist's business. And it is possible that later in life, he'll wish for a repeat of this situation—no experience of being minded by someone we already know prior to his doing so (a friend, a relative ...) can reproduce that initial experience of life, being minded completely by a stranger. In Hitchcock, becoming an adult does not entail that I should mind my own business, i.e., both not interfere in the business of others and conduct attentively my personal business; but rather that I have to either have the good luck of coming across a stranger who will replace my mother as the one who will mind my business, or else actively try to lure some stranger to do this for me. From this perspective, an infantile man is someone who still relies on the no longer appropriate person, his mother, to mind his business instead of enticing some new, appropriate stranger to do that. In *Psycho*, the sheriff tells Lila that the silhouette she saw in the house overlooking the motel where her missing sister, Marion, was last seen cannot be Norman Bates' mother, since, ten years earlier, the latter poisoned the man she was involved with when she found out that he was married, then fatally took a helping of the same stuff, Strychnine, and was buried in Greenlawn Cemetery. But in the final scene of the film, after the apprehension of Norman, and in the presence of the sheriff, who does not object to what he hears, the psychiatrist advances a different explanation of what transpired, one that he "got from the mother" of Norman. After living with her son for many years, she met a man. It seemed to Norman that she "threw him over" for that man, so he killed both of them. Since, according to the psychiatrist, "matricide is probably the most unbearable crime of all—and most unbearable to the son who commits it," Norman tried to erase the crime, at least in his own mind, first by stealing her corpse, hiding it in the fruit cellar, and treating it to preserve it, then by functioning at times as a medium for her thoughts, speech, and behavior. And because he was pathologically jealous concerning her, he assumed that she was as jealous concerning him. When Marion arrived at the motel and Norman was perversely aroused by her, at one point peeping through a small hole in the wall at her undressing in her motel room, his "jealous mother" was provoked and "she" killed her. For my part, I prefer to consider the film's events from the perspective

of the aforementioned Hitchcockian motif of minding the other's business. Having found out that the man with whom she was involved was married, the mother poisoned him and then, wanting to commit suicide but unable to do so, asked her son to kill her. Once he acquiesced and minded her business—to commit suicide—by killing her, he had to find a way to make her fulfill her side of the implicit bargain: I mind your business and you mind mine. In Hitchcock, one can never legitimately complain: *mind your own business* (as is clear in *Rear Window*, where the protagonist, a photographer with a cast leg who gazes through binoculars as well as a long-focus lens at his neighbors for much of the film, discovers a murder), since one of the motifs in Hitchcock's universe is: mind my business ... and I'll mind yours. Rather, the paradigmatic Hitchcockian complaint is Bruno's recurrent one in *Strangers on a Train*, which can be formulated thus: "I have minded your business [by killing your unfaithful wife, who made an infuriating about-face, refusing to sign the divorce papers], but you have not minded mine [by not murdering my disrespectful father]!" This must also have been Norman's complaint in *Psycho* in the aftermath of his murder of his suicidal mother. Norman's weirdness is clear in his expectation that his dead mother's unfinished business will be respected, that his mother will keep her part of the implicit bargain from beyond the grave. He therefore steals her corpse, hides it in the fruit cellar, mummifies it, then begins to function at times as a medium for her thinking, speech, and behavior so she would mind his business. By repeatedly stabbing Marion in the shower, the "mother" minded her son's business, revealing thus that his desire is less to peep at his young female motel guest than to stab her to death. There is thus a major difference between Norman's murder of his mother, and his separate murders of the three young women at his motel: Norman did the first at the request of, and therefore for his (depressed) mother; but he committed the subsequent three murders, through the detour of his "mother," to assuage his own desire. In *Vertigo*, Scottie is frustrated not because Madeleine's husband has staged his desire for him but because he does not continue to do so once he has reached his own goal: to kill his wife and inherit her fortune. When exasperated Scottie tells Judy, "What happened to you? Did he ditch you? ... What a shame!", he is also thinking about himself, since he feels that he too was discarded by the husband, a

stranger who proved that he can mind Scottie's desire better than he himself can: "He made you over just like I made you over, *only better*. Not only the clothes and the hair, but the looks, the manner and the words, and those beautiful phony trances." Hitchcock's universe is thus not a paranoid one: Scottie's problem is not that someone is constructing, unbeknownst to him, a fictionalized world for him; but rather that the other, having reached his goal, will stop doing so. In *North by Northwest*, Roger Thornhill, a Manhattan advertising executive, is mistaken by a ring of spies headed by Phillip Vandamm for George Kaplan, a non-existent decoy created by the United States Intelligence Agency to divert suspicion from an actual agent. In order to create a convincing decoy, the Intelligence Agency established elaborate behavior patterns for Kaplan, moved his prop belongings in and out of hotel rooms, etc. When one of the members of the intelligence team in charge of handling the case asks the others: "Does anyone know this Thornhill?" The others at the meeting answer negatively. "What are we going to do?" "Do?" "About Mr. Thornhill?" "We do nothing!" "We can't sit back calmly and wait to see who kills him first! Vandamm and company or the police?" "What can we do to save him without endangering our agent?" Is it true that they do nothing? No, soon after, they arrange for a special agent to meet Thornhill on the train; the meeting triggers a love affair between the two. Thus they ended up providing him, a stranger to them, with a lover, in this manner minding his business. In Hitchcock, the other has no right to place me in the position of *the wrong man*, to have me taken for the perpetrator of a crime he wants done, if he does not in the process try to provide me with my deepest desire.<sup>56</sup>

### 3. Bury Me Dead

"Another disciple said to him, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' But Jesus told him, 'Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead'" (Matthew 8:21–22). The grave problem with this is that very few dead people can legitimately assert: "I know when one is dead and when one lives" (Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 5.3.261). The dead are far less proficient than the living at detecting whether someone is definitely dead, and hence tend on a substantial number of occasions to bury the living too. With the coming of Jesus Christ, many people became alive. Jesus

Christ, “the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25), made of burial alive at the moment of organic demise a fundamental condition. The two earliest examples are: Lazarus, since the latter, through his belief in Jesus, was alive (“He who believes in me will live, even though he die” [John 11:25]); when he was buried (“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up” [John 11:11]); and, obviously as well as paradigmatically, Jesus Christ. “Jesus said, ‘This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation’” (Luke 11:29–30; cf. Matthew 12:40: “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth”). Basically, every real Christian is buried alive. Consequently Chesterfield’s “All I desire for my own burial is not to be buried alive” is a most unchristian statement and desire. From another perspective, a purely biological one, what if someone were to suffer a cardiac arrest or go into a coma? Will the dead know that he is not definitely dead, that he can still be successfully resuscitated? Most probably not. Consequently, they will proceed to bury him. In Hitchcock’s *The Trouble with Harry*, 1955, Captain Wiles fires three bullets while hunting rabbits. Looking for the rabbit or rabbits he hopes he has shot, he instead discovers that one of his bullets hit a “No Shooting Sign” and a second punctured a beer can. He then comes across a man lying on the earth with blood seeping from his forehead. “What in Hades were you doing here anyway?” He searches through the jacket of the unconscious man and finds a letter with his name and address: Mr. Harry Worp, 87 Maple Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts. “Well, Worp, you’re a long way from home.” How far is Hades from Boston? “With the looks of it, you won’t get back for Christmas.” He decides to bury him incognito. But while dragging him to a secluded spot, he is seen by Miss Gravely. She asks him: “What seems to be the trouble, captain?” “Well, it’s what you might call an unavoidable accident. He’s dead.” Is getting shot in the woods by a hunter firing at rabbits an unavoidable accident? Not really. What might be an example of an unavoidable accident? Dying of a heart seizure while lying half-naked in the bathtub. Lightly kicking the body and detecting no response, Miss Gravely replies: “Yes. I would say that he was—of course that’s an

unprofessional opinion.” She leaves after promising to tell no one. On the point of resuming his task, he hears approaching voices. He hides and sees Mrs. Rogers along with her child, who had discovered the body before Captain Wiles and had immediately ran to fetch his mother, head toward the body. Her child now asks her: “Why don’t he get up and do something?” “He’s asleep. He’s in deep sleep—a deep, wonderful sleep.” “Will he get better?” “Not if we’re lucky.” Exeunt mother and son ... only for a tramp to appear. He notices the body, approaches it, kicks it, apparently to check that it is dead, removes its shoes, puts them on, then walks away. Enervated by so much stress, the captain is overcome by sleep. While he is in that state, a painter, Sam Marlowe, arrives on the scene, begins to draw a shrub, notices two feet sticking from behind it, yells to the person in question to remove them, then, getting no response, approaches him and, checking his pulse, comes to the conclusion that he is dead. This too is an unprofessional opinion, subject therefore to rectification. He starts a pastel portrait of the body. If he is truly an artist, then his pastel portrait, *once actually finished*, would give him a professional evaluation regarding “when one is dead and when one lives.” At this point, Captain Wiles wakes up and approaches the painter. The latter asks him: “Is this your body, little man?” Are all these moving people in Hades, the land of mistaken identities, where it is not uncommon to mistake others’ bodies for one’s own? In that case, the problematic of *The Trouble with Harry* would be akin to that of Philip K. Dick’s novel *Ubik* and Adrian Lyne’s film *Jacob’s Ladder*, since in all three works a person that is most probably dead thinks that he or she is still alive and views instead the living people as dead or as demons. Captain Wiles answers the painter’s question affirmatively and recommends burying Harry. The painter objects at first that “the authorities like to know when people die.” Since his words also imply that the authorities do not like to be inopportuned with false reports about someone’s death when he is still alive, it comes as no surprise that he shortly promises to help Captain Wiles bury Harry if Mrs. Rogers doesn’t intend to notify the police about the body. At this point they become aware that the doctor is walking in the direction of the body while engrossed in a book. They quickly hide. He trips over the body, looks for his glasses and book, turns distractedly toward Harry and says: “Oh, I beg your pardon.” The doctor, who *can* give a professional opinion, has

treated the body as that of a living person. He then resumes his engrossed reading while walking away. To Marlowe's "We don't know quite what to do with Harry. [We] thought you might have some suggestions," Mrs. Rogers responds: "You can stuff him for all I care" (an advise the Norman Bates of *Psycho* will follow). She then tells Marlowe that Harry is the older brother of her late first husband, the uncle of her son, and her current husband. "I've wanted to explain about Harry a lot of times, but nobody would understand .... But you—you've got an artistic mind. You can see the finer things.... As soon as Arnie was born, I moved away to where I thought Harry could never find me. I changed my name ..." Did she move away to Hades? She tells him that Harry, with whom she is separated, managed to find her whereabouts that morning: "Did you see his mustache and his wavy hair?" "Yeah, but when I saw him he was dead." "He looked exactly the same when he was alive." She confesses that she hit him on the head with a milk bottle, and that he staggered up towards the woods. Her son shows up with a dead rabbit, which he then takes to Captain Wiles and gives it to him since he's the one who shot it. Shortly, Marlowe and Captain Wiles, each carrying a shovel, meet again to bury the corpse. Surprised that the captain has sat nearby and is waiting for him to bury the body, Marlowe admonishes him: "Come on captain, off with your coat.... It's your body, isn't it?" After finishing the burial of the body, Marlowe admonishes him: "If you must kill things from now on, I wish you'd stick to rabbits ..." Remembering the dead rabbit the child brought to him, Captain Wiles comes to the conclusion that he didn't kill Harry: "I only fired three bullets.... One for the shooting sign, one for the beer can ... and one for the rabbit!" Captain Wiles decides to unearth Harry. "Even if you didn't kill him, why go digging him up ... ?" "I'll have the shakes whenever I see a policeman ..." Once the body is unearthed, Marlowe ascertains that, indeed, the wound was not inflicted by a bullet, but by a blow with a blunt instrument. Worried that this may incriminate Mrs. Rogers, of whom he's beginning to be enamored and who had admitted both that she wanted Harry dead and that she hit him on the head, he recommends that they rebury the corpse. Captain Wiles decides to assist him out of gratitude for his previous help. Shortly after, while visiting Captain Wiles, Miss Gravely confesses to him: "I'm grateful to you for burying my body."<sup>57</sup> "*Your* body?" "The man you

thought you killed ... was the man I hit over the head with the leather heel of my hiking shoe." It turns out that dazed from the blow on his head by his wife, Harry had mistaken Miss Gravely for her and pulled her into the bushes. "We fought ... My shoe had come off in the struggle, and I hit him as hard as ever I could." Notwithstanding Captain Wiles' advice to the contrary, she is adamant that they should let the authorities know about the matter and therefore that they should first unearth Harry again. After she digs him up, the two go to see Marlowe and Mrs. Rogers to inform them about what they just did and that Miss Gravely intends to tell Calvin Wiggs, the deputy sheriff, that she killed Harry Worp in self-defense. Mrs. Rogers' response is: "Frankly, I don't care what you do with Harry, as long as you don't bring him back to life." When Marlowe points out that if this matter comes out, then all the details of Jennifer's marriage will become public property, the four decide to rebury Harry. After doing so, for the third time, they meet again at Jennifer Rogers' house, where she accepts Marlowe's marriage proposal. But he comes to the realization that "before we can get married you're gonna have to prove that you're free! To prove that you're free, you'll have to prove that Harry..." "... is dead." They decide to unearth him again so as not to have to wait seven years for the presumption of death. The doctor happens to pass by just as they finish digging him up again and sees the body. They arrange to meet him at Mrs. Rogers' house to examine the body. They place Harry half-undressed in the bathtub then clean and iron some of his clothes. Jennifer then puts some adhesive tape on the cut Miss Gravely made on his head with her hiking shoe. But before the doctor arrives, the deputy sheriff does. He had come across the portrait Marlowe did of Harry and had been struck by its matching "the description of a tramp with stolen shoes and a wild story about a corpse." "Sam, what I wanna know is where did you paint it and who is it?" "First of all, it's not a painting. It's a drawing. Matter of fact, it's a pastel." "Sam, I ain't educated in fancy art [and I would add: in judging whether someone is definitely dead], but I do know the face of a dead man when I see one, and this is it." "Calvin, perhaps I can educate you to 'fancy art.'" He takes the portrait from the deputy sheriff's hand. "See this? Portrait of a sleeping face: a man relaxed, far removed from earthly cares ... Instead of creating a sleeping face, I could have chosen an entirely different set of artistic stimuli."

While sketching, he says: “Now, a raised eyelid, perhaps ... a line of fullness to the cheek ... [a] lip that bends with expression. There!” It is only now that the pastel is actually finished. He shows it to him: it is the portrait of a living person. Has the painter “destroyed legal evidence,” as the deputy sheriff protests threateningly, or did he, who according to Mrs. Rogers’ earlier characterization has an artistic mind and therefore “can see the finer things,” uncover thus that the reason they keep unearthing Harry after repeatedly burying him is that he is not dead, but still alive? What’s the trouble with Harry? He is being (repeatedly) buried alive. At this point, the doctor comes in and the Deputy Sheriff leaves. Marlowe leads the doctor to the bathroom. Did the following words pass through the doctors’ mind on seeing Harry’s state, “With the looks of it, you won’t get back for Christmas.”? When Marlowe comes out, Mrs. Rogers asks him: “What did the doctor say?” “He said for me to get out. I didn’t like the look in his eyes, either. Something seems to be bothering him.” Aren’t these the words we would expect to hear were Harry in critical condition? After finishing his examination, the doctor’s diagnosis is: “It was his heart. He had a seizure.” That is how Harry died; he died of a seizure while lying half-naked in the bathtub. But what about the wound in his forehead? Judging by the adhesive tape covering it, it must have been suffered before his mortal seizure. When at the end of the film the words “The trouble with Harry is over” are superimposed on the image after Harry has once again been interred, this indicates that this is his final burial since he is now definitely dead. Hitchcock’s *The Trouble with Harry* and *Psycho* complement each other regarding problems with burial: while in the first someone is being buried alive, and consequently unearthed again and again, until he definitely dies; *Psycho* deals with the unearthing of someone who is definitely dead to carry through her, mummified, a vicarious, possessed life.

### Something I’m Dying to Tell You, Lyn

*A Border Comedy*:<sup>58</sup> *First Lapse*: “The heavy sleep within my head was smashed / by an enormous thunderclap, so that / I started up as one whom force awakens; / I stood erect and turned my rested eyes / from side to side, and I stared steadily / to

learn what place it was surrounding me” (Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, beginning of Canto IV, trans. Allen Mandelbaum).

As the airplane in which he was traveling to Egypt entered a zone of extreme turbulence, he was seized by apprehension. Unlike the passenger next seat, who was worried about going to hell were the plane to crash, he was worried, in a flash of illumination, about not being able to bear the paradisiacal state. He resolved to become initiated into such a state, to be ready for Paradise. Naively and conceitedly, most people assume that while they would not be able to bear the suffering of hell, they would be able to bear the paradisiacal state. But this is certainly not the case. It is not because they would be prohibited by God from entering Paradise (the moral interpretation) that most people do not dwell in Paradise, but because they are unprepared to stay in it (the ethical viewpoint). How many people are able to sit through the paradisiacal experience of watching Sergei Parajanov’s *Sayat Nova* (aka *The Color of Pomegranates*), 1968, Yuri Ilyenko’s *The Eve of Ivan Kupalo*, 1968, Andrei Tarkovsky’s *The Mirror*, 1975, Aleksandr Sokurov’s *Whispering Pages*, 1993, Patrick Bokanowski’s *L’Ange*, 1982, and *La Femme qui se poudre*, 1972, Stephen and Timothy Quay’s *Rehearsals for Extinct Anatomies*, 1988, Jan Svankmajer’s *Dimensions of Dialogue*, 1982; and of listening to Yozgatlı Hafız Süleyman Bey’s *Bozlak and Halay* (in *Masters of Turkish Music*, Rounder CD 1051, 1990), Tanburi Cemil Bey’s music (in *Tanburi Cemil Bey*, Traditional Crossroads, CD 4264, 1994), and Sabahat Akkiraz singing *Ağıt*, *Ne Ağlarsın* and *Arguvan* (in *Sabahat Akkiraz: Alawite Singing*, Long Distance, 2001)? If people are unable to bear these lower levels of Paradise, how would they be able to bear those they will experience in the subtle body in ‘*âlam al-mithâl*, the Imaginal World? It is possible that we are on this rather drab earth because we were unable to stay in Paradise. Musicians, dancers, artists, poets, writers, and thinkers train their audience and readers to accept and inhabit Paradise (I hope I deserve the appraisal of Richard Foreman [the playwright and director of, among other plays, *Hotel Paradise*]: “He [Jalal Toufic] documents the moves of consciousness in a way that leads the reader ever deeper, from impasse to illusion to new impasse—turning the trap of ‘what can’t be named’ into a true paradise”).

He arrived in Cairo, which he was visiting for the first time, at 5 AM. He was

told at the hotel that his room would be available at 11, when its present occupants were scheduled to check out. He felt like a homeless person. He decided to saunter in the city until his room was ready. The streets were virtually empty since the vast majority of the city's inhabitants were still sleeping (gradually, from feeling excluded, he felt that the whole city was his).

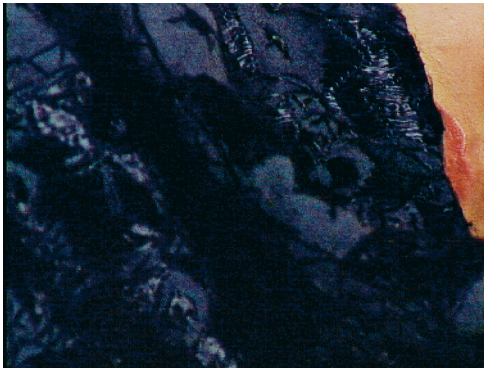
The first section of my video *The Sleep of Reason*:<sup>59</sup> *This Blood Spilled in My Veins*, 2002, shows sleeping humans,<sup>60</sup> who are revealed as dead through the two epigraphs: “On the authority of Hudhayfa and Abî Dharr, may God bless both: The Apostle of God, may God bless and save him, would say on going to bed: ‘In your name, O God, I die and live;’ and he would say on waking up: ‘Praise be to God, Who hath revived us after putting us to death, and to Whom is the Resurrection’—narrated by al-Bukhârî” (Al-imâm an-Nawawî, *Gardens of the Righteous*), and “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up” (John 11:11) (When Jesus’ disciples replied, “Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better,” he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead” [John 11:12–14]). And the second section of the video shows animals who are being slaughtered and who are revealed to be “dreaming” through the following words of Pascal Quignard: “Animals dream while sleeping as they dream while standing as they dream while leaping” (*Vie Secrète* [Secret life]). If animals “dream,” even while standing and leaping, it is in the sense that they are captivated, not having beings manifest as such:



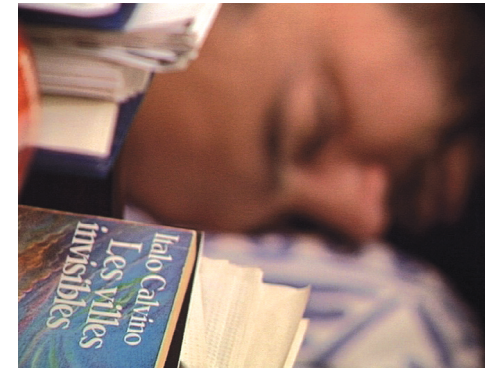
It has been observed that if its [the bee's] abdomen is carefully cut away while it is sucking, a bee will simply carry on regardless even while the honey runs out of the bee from behind.... the bee is simply taken [hingenommen] by its food.... When the bee flies out of the hive to find food it registers the direction in which it stands in relation to the sun.... If we ... take the box in which the bee has been imprisoned back to the hive and place it some distance behind the hive, then the newly freed bee flies in the direction in which it would have to fly in order to find the hive from the feeding place, even though the hive is relatively nearby, and it does so for the appropriate distance once again.... [the bee] flies back in a pre-established direction over a pre-established distance without regard to the position of the hive. It does not strike out in a given direction prescribed for it by the place in which it has found itself. Rather it is absorbed by a direction, is driven to produce this direction out of itself—without regard to the destination. The bee does not at all comport itself toward particular things, like the hive, the feeding place and so on. The bee is *simply given over* to the sun and to the period of its flight *without being able to grasp either of these as such* ... The animal is taken, taken and captivated [benommen] by things.<sup>61</sup>

I've placed quotation marks around *dreaming* because, notwithstanding Quignard's words, properly speaking the animal does not dream, for dreams are the apanage of mortals, and the animal is not a mortal. In Arabic, the word *Hayy* means “*Living, having life, alive, or quick* ... and *hayawân* is syn. with *hayy* [as meaning *having animal life*].... *Hayât*: ... *Life* ... And *fa'inna al-dâr al-âkhira lahiya al-hayawân* in the Qur'ân [xxix. 64] means [And verily the last abode is] the abode of *everlasting life*: (*Tâj al-Ârûs*:) or *al-hayawân* here means *the life that will not be followed by death*: or *much life*; like as *marwatân* signifies *much death*: (*Misbâh al-Fayyûmî*:) and it is also the name of *a certain fountain in Paradise, [the water of] which touches nothing but it lives, by permission of God*. (*Tâj al-Ârûs*.) *Hayawân* an inf. n. of *hayiya*, like *hayât*, (Ibn Barrî, author of the *Annotations on the Sihâh*, with Al-Bustî,) but having an

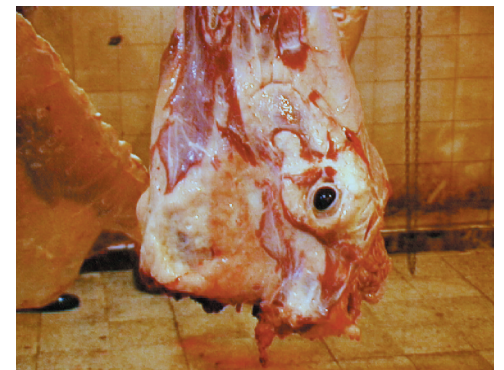
3 A.M., 1 July 2001



The Sleep of Reason



Meanwhile



intensive signification: (*al-Misbâh*) ... — Also *Any thing, or things, possessing animal life*, (*al-Misbâh, al-Qâmûs*,) whether *rational* or *irrational*; [*an animal*, and *animals*;] used alike as sing. and pl., because originally an inf. n.; (*al-Misbâh*;) *contr. of mawâtân* [q.v.].”<sup>62</sup> While the animal does not really dream, since it is not mortal, in his or her dreams the human is closest to the animal, since in the dream, he or she is captivated, absorbed, without having himself or herself manifest as such, and poor in world. Heidegger: “It is only from the human perspective that the animal is poor with respect to world, yet animal being in itself is not a deprivation of world. Expressed more clearly: if deprivation in certain forms is a kind of suffering, and poverty and deprivation of world belongs to the animal’s being, then a kind of pain and suffering would have to permeate the whole animal realm and the realm of life in general. Biology knows absolutely nothing of such a phenomenon. Perhaps it is the privilege of poets to imagine this sort of thing.”<sup>63</sup> We can say that, contrariwise, humans, to whose essence, according to Heidegger, belongs world-formation, do indeed feel this deprivation and poverty in world when they are dreaming, in the dream. We can reread Heidegger’s paragraph in a poetic way by substituting “human dreamer” for “animal”: “If deprivation in certain forms is a kind of suffering, and poverty and deprivation of world belongs to the human dreamer’s being, then a kind of pain and suffering would have to permeate the whole human dreamer’s realm ...”

*A Border Comedy—Second Lapse*: “5 May.—I must have been asleep, for certainly if I had been fully awake I must have noticed the approach of such a remarkable place” (Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, beginning of chapter II).

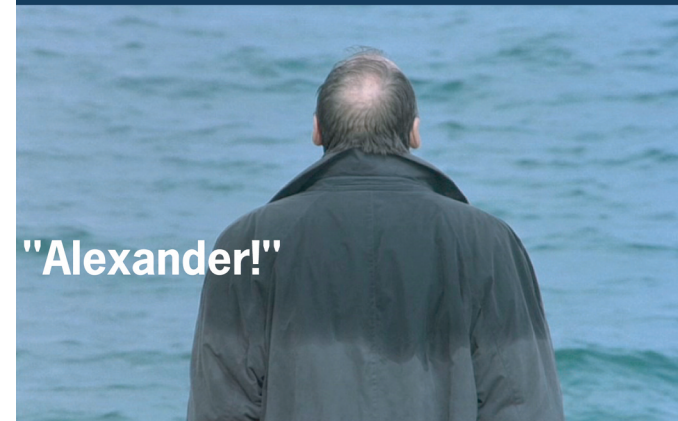
While walking in Cairo’s “City of the Dead,” the zone of cemeteries where hundreds of thousands of destitute people live, he was amazed to see children playing amidst the tombs, laundry hanging, people coming in and out of the makeshift habitations they had made. It was difficult for him to navigate this zone, since he was visiting it for the first time and since there were no detailed maps of it. He felt a stab of pain and passed out (*Third Lapse*). She called him, but her call (in this case “Alexander!”), which usually was the only thing about her that turned

heads, fell on deaf ears. The one called couldn’t for the life of him turn: trying to turn in response, he took a turn for the worse by undergoing an over-turn. Was he in a labyrinth, since he did not know which way to turn? Although he saw nobody in the City of the Dead, which was “presently” indeed an empty agglomeration of cemeteries,<sup>64</sup> quite desolate, he overheard the whispers of those of the dead who had passed the Opening of the Mouth ceremony. One of the voices said: “But one can’t gossip without a body to betray.”<sup>65</sup> Another said to him in French: “*Tu a été nommé Alexandre à vie*” (You were called Alexandre for life). He realized that if he’s already dead, then he could no longer claim the name Alexander. She thought that if he is not responding, he must not be Alexander. What is his name then? Should she name names? But how to delicately name names without calling him names,<sup>66</sup> without name calling the one who no longer showed his face anywhere? Can one call the dead without calling him names? For example, how to respond to one of the letters Friedrich Nietzsche wrote between 4 and 6 January 1889 without calling the author of *The Anti-Christ* “The Crucified” and “Prado” and “(Henri) Chambige” (the latter two were criminals who had been tried for murder in Paris and Algeria)?<sup>67</sup> The same voice resumed: “*Ta mort est sans appel*” (Your death is without appeal). Repeatedly unable to turn when called, he wondered in exasperation whether he should call it quits or a day—or a life for that matter. But to do the latter he would have to sign his own death warrant. With what name to do so when he no longer knew or remembered his name? He could no longer mind his own business, be it suicide. But was his death his own business? The dead can no longer mind his own business and/or death is not the dead’s own business. He came to the realization that the dead cannot sign his own death warrant, cannot die. Given that he was now “in” a spatial labyrinth, when he reached a dead end and retraced his steps to the crossroads to take a different path, he did not feel that he had been at that particular crossroads; but given that he was also in a temporal labyrinth, he sometimes felt sure about his whereabouts even when arriving there seemingly for the first time, and moreover felt that he knew for certain the path to take. *Those doubts were certainties*<sup>68</sup>—being thought-insertions. *Anxious moment / I don’t mention betrayal / Leave that to dream.*<sup>69</sup> *I’ll throw down the mirror and name it ship.*<sup>70</sup> *Perhaps, in my absent-mindedness—my being foreign—I’m not constantly losing*

the key but (in my absent-mindedness) constantly finding it<sup>71</sup>—the key to dreams.<sup>72</sup> On finding “himself” “outside” “the City of the Dead,” he saw people frozen still in the same postures as those he had seen on the walls of the ancient Egyptian cemeteries of al-Uqsur. When he at last found *her*, he dreaded that she would *cut him*—who had passed the Opening of the Mouth ceremony and was dying to tell her two or three things—*dead*. Why is the living woman in T.S. Eliot’s *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* settling her pillow to sleep when she encounters the undead? Why is she so sleepy then? What disclosure is she thus trying to elude (during the non-rapid eye movement [NREM] stages of her sleep)? “Tell you all,” Lazarus says in Eliot’s poem, and would that “all” not also include himself? Did Lazarus come back to tell himself about death? Did he find himself sleeping dreamlessly then?<sup>73</sup> I wager that Shahrazâd would not have settled her pillow to sleep had the ghost of one of the previous one-night wives of King Shahrayâr appeared before her, but would have listened to the tale that the latter was dying to tell her. “I woke myself when the / ghost came in / Actually I spoke to myself / saying, ‘Wake up, you (I) / are afraid of ghosts’”<sup>74</sup> (how wonderful is the courage of this fear).<sup>75</sup> What the specter of King Hamlet says to his son is certainly something he is dying to tell to him, not only in the sense that he desires greatly to tell it to him (*die*: “informal To desire something greatly: ... *She was dying to see the exhibit*” [American Heritage Dictionary]); but also in the sense that it is only once he has told him that he was murdered treacherously by his brother,<sup>76</sup> and once Hamlet has settled that unfinished business by killing the usurping king that the former king’s soul can rest, i.e., stop dying. Due to the consuming revengefulness that constitutes him or her, the revenant is oblivious that, at one level, it is always *My Life*,<sup>77</sup> but the other’s or others’ death: “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”<sup>78</sup> (from Friedrich Nietzsche’s 5 January 1889 letter to Jacob Burckhardt, which he wrote during his psychosis, i.e., dying before dying—*Oh, as Nietzsche said, those humans of old knew how to dream / And did not need to fall asleep first*<sup>79</sup>).<sup>80</sup> Dead, immemorally before *Ash Wednesday*, *Narcissus cannot face himself*<sup>81</sup> in the limpid water of the pool: “Because I do not hope to turn again / Because I do not hope.” Notwithstanding the *ineffable poise of the cadaver*<sup>82</sup>—which while falling (“*Cadaver*: Middle English from Latin

# *Eternity and a Day* (1998)

A film by  
Theo Angelopoulos



“Shuddering, Hamilton grasped the railing and began to climb back upstairs. He had gone only two steps when his legs, of their own volition, refused to carry him farther. His body comprehended what his mind refused to accept. He was going back down...” (Philip K. Dick, *Eye in the Sky*, 1957). Hamilton was taken aback (“aback adv. 1. By surprise: *He was taken aback by her caustic remarks*. 2. *New England Southern U.S.* Behind: *aback of the house*. 5. *Archaic* Back; backward. adj. *New England* 1. Being at a standstill; unable to move: ‘*You run your business that way and first thing you know you’re all aback*’ Dialect Notes” [American Heritage Dictionary]). “Is—there anything I can do? Won’t you turn toward me? Must you have your back to me?” Hamilton laughed wildly. ‘Sure I’ll turn toward you.’ Gripping the railing, he made a cautious about face—and found himself still facing the gloomy cave...” (*Eye in the Sky*).

REPRODUCTION  
PROHIBITED  
MAGRITTE 1937

*cadāver* from *cadere* to fall, die”)<sup>83</sup> seems balanced, and which gives the impression that it is nameless—there’s *something I’m “dying to tell you,”*<sup>84</sup> who lived after Jesus Christ, “the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25): *A name trimmed with colored ribbons*<sup>85</sup> (such colors have *the musics of the spouse*<sup>86</sup> for synesthetic accompaniment). The one called turned again *back to front / On death’s bed*,<sup>87</sup> that is, was resurrected,<sup>88</sup> i.e., was no longer subject to the imposition of betrayal but open to the possibility of dedication: “It’s the jump that separates the earth from the earth. The jump is the real mountain. The bird flew (like a zipper that is being unzipped), the far away mountain became a valley.” These lines from the first edition of my first book, *Distracted* (1991), are absent from the book’s second edition (2003) by Tuumba Press, whose publisher is the poet Lyn Hejinian. They are dedicated to Hejinian, who wrote in “Book 8” of her *A Border Comedy*:

“It’s the jump that separates each instant from the earth

The jump is the real rolling wall

The bird flies like a zipper being unzipped

And the mountain becomes

A valley”<sup>89</sup>

Indeed *Distracted* is listed in the section “Sources” for “Book 8” at the end of *A Border Comedy*. Had I already cut these lines from the second edition of *Distracted* prior to 2001, the year *A Border Comedy* was published? In that case the following words from *Distracted* would apply to them: “A line written with the possibility of evading receiving it, but read in the absence of such a possibility only became real when it was thus read; if a copyright is to be attributed to anyone at all, it should be to the one who read it in such a manner.” Or is it on seeing these lines in Hejinian’s book not placed in quotation marks that I decided to cut them from the second edition, thus dedicating them to a fabulous friend?<sup>90</sup>

*A Border Comedy*: Trying to join two cliffs with a phrase. But the phrase itself has a chasm, stops in the middle.<sup>91</sup> “Morning overtook Shahrazâd, and she lapsed into silence ... The king thought to himself, ‘I will spare her until I hear the rest of the story; then I will have her put to death the next day.’” Thus starts what, we are told, went on in this guise for “a thousand nights” of storytelling. Why a thousand

nights? When he was told by his brother that the latter killed his wife and her paramour in flagrante delicto, King Shahrayâr said: “By Allâh, had the case been mine, I would not have been satisfied without slaying a thousand women, and that way madness lies!” On witnessing his own wife’s adultery, King Shahrayâr slew her then “swore himself by a binding oath that whatever wife he married he would abate her maidenhead at night and slay her next morning, to make sure of his honor.” And indeed, thenceforth, each morning, following his orders, his minister struck off the head of his latest wife. “On this wise he continued for the space of three years, marrying a maiden every night and killing her the next morning ... till there remained not in the city a young person fit for carnal copulation. Presently the King ordered his Chief Wazîr ... to bring him a virgin ... and the Minister went forth and searched and found none. So he returned home in sorrow and anxiety, fearing for his life from the King. Now the Wazîr had two daughters; the elder of whom was named Shahrazâd.” It is at this point that Shahrazâd volunteers to be the next wife of the king. In his translation of *The Thousand and One Nights*, Edward William Lane writes: “And thus, on the first night of the thousand and one, Shahrazâd commenced her recitations.” This line is not in my copy of the Bûlâq Arabic edition, the edition on which Lane based his translation. I think that it was an error to add it. Borges too errs when he writes: “Why were there first a thousand [the apparently Persian version: *Hazar Afsana*, the thousand tales] and later a thousand and one?”<sup>92</sup> It is confounding that despite all his flair Borges should miss the displacement from *tale* in the Persian version to *night* in the Arabic one: I consider that the first title refers to the stories Shahrazâd tells, while the second refers to the nights, the one thousand nights of the one thousand unjustly murdered previous one-night wives of King Shahrayâr plus his night with Shahrazâd, a night that is itself like a thousand nights (“one night of sweet love is as one thousand and one nights” [ *dî laylat hubb hikwah bi-alf layla wa layla* ], as Umm Kulthûm sings in her song *Alf Layla wa layla* [The Thousand and one nights]). Were I to become the editor of a future edition of *The Thousand and One Nights*, I would place “The Thousand-and-First Night” as the heading of Shahrazâd’s first night with the king; and I would make sure that one of the so-called nights is missing, i.e., that the edition is incomplete. Todorov: “The speech-act receives, in

the *Arabian Nights*, an interpretation which leaves no further doubt as to its importance. If all the characters incessantly tell stories, it is because this action has received a supreme consecration: narrating equals living. The most obvious example is that of Scheherazade herself, who lives exclusively to the degree that she can tell stories; but this situation is ceaselessly repeated within the tale.<sup>93</sup> By volunteering to be the next wife of the murderous king, Shahrazâd offers herself as the ransom for her father and for the young women of her city, ending up saving, along with herself (and her father), (at least) a thousand of the kingdom's young women, who must have become "fit for copulation" during the "thousand nights" Shahrazâd spends telling stories to the king; yet, notwithstanding her having "perused the books, annals, and legends of preceding kings, and the stories, examples, and instances of bygone men and things," "collected a thousand books of histories relating to antique races and departed rulers," "perused the works of the poets and knew them by heart," and "studied philosophy and the sciences, arts, and accomplishments," she could not have come up with these lifesaving stories except by drawing on the deaths of the previous one thousand one-night wives of King Shahrayâr. Therefore, it is inaccurate to write that narrating equals living in *The Thousand and One Nights*: while narration is a way of postponing the death of the narrator—though only for a while since old age is meanwhile advancing inexorably—it itself draws on death. We could not write were we as mortals not already dead even as we live; or else did we not draw, like Shahrazâd, in an untimely collaboration, on what the dead is undergoing. If Shahrazâd needed the previous deaths of the king's former thousand one-night wives, it was because notwithstanding being a mortal, thus undead even as she lived, she did not draw on her death. That is why she cannot exclaim to Shahrayâr: "There's something I am dying to tell you." And that is why past the Night spanning a thousand nights, Shahrazâd cannot extend her narration even for one additional normal night;<sup>94</sup> it is on the thousand-and-second night, i.e., the night when this collaboration with the previous thousand one-night wives of the king has become discontinued, that Shahrazâd asks the king to release her from telling stories, being no longer able to come up with additional ones.<sup>95</sup> If "the greatest of all night works is the one called *The Thousand and One Nights*" (Lyn Hejinian),<sup>96</sup> this cannot be simply because it has

a myriad nights, but because its night is the greatest. The exemplary Night and Day: "Were there to remain only one day, God would extend that day until the Mahdî (the Muslim messiah; aka *al-Qâ'im*) would issue from my children" (tradition traced back to the prophet Muhammad); and were there to remain only one night, Shahrazâd would still tell stories for a "thousand nights"—until a (messianic) child is born to the childless king? Borges: "For us the word *thousand* is almost synonymous with *infinite*. To say *a thousand nights* is to say infinite nights, countless nights, endless nights.<sup>97</sup> To say *a thousand and one nights* is to add one to infinity."<sup>98</sup> But the infinity, if there is one, is implied not in the thousand (nights of the unjustly murdered previous wives) but rather in the one (night of Shahrazâd). Since the "thousand nights" of storytelling are the extension by Shahrazâd of one night, there is something messianic about *The Thousand and One Nights*. I gave my beloved Graziella a copy of *The Thousand and One Nights* in the Arabic edition of Dâr al-Mashriq, rather than in the Bûlâq edition republished by Madbûlî Bookstore, Cairo, certainly not because it is an expurgated edition, but because it does not contain at least one of the nights—night 365 is missing. "According to a superstition current in the Middle East in the late nineteenth century when Sir Richard Burton was writing, no one can read the whole text of the *Arabian Nights* without dying" (Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion*).<sup>99</sup> Borges: "At home I have the seventeen volumes of Burton's version [of *The Thousand and One Nights*]. I know I'll never read all of them . . ."<sup>100</sup> How ambivalent must be a man's feelings toward his beloved for him to give her a complete edition of *The Thousand and One Nights* before the time of redemption! His wife died just as she finished it. When, melancholic, he descended to Hades to resurrect her, she asked him to tell her a tale, "for instance the story of that Greek, Orpheus. What was it he was dying to tell (again) to his dead wife, Eurydice? Was it: 'Till death do us part'?"<sup>101</sup> Or did he die to become an oracle?" Until the worldly reappearance of *al-Qâ'im* (the Resurrector), there should not be a complete edition of *The Thousand and One Nights*. The only one who should write the missing night that brings the actual total of nights to a thousand and one is the messiah/*al-Qâ'im*, since only with his worldly reappearance can one read the whole book without dying.<sup>102</sup> How can Shahrazâd escape slaughter once she can no longer come up with new stories? Past

the customary exordium in a Moslem book, consisting in the main of the *basmala* (“In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful”), praise and thanksgiving to God and invocation of blessing on the Prophet, *The Thousand and One Nights*’ first words are: “In tide of yore and in time long gone before, there was a King of the Kings of the Banû Sâsân in the Islands of India and China, a Lord of armies and guards and servants and dependents. He left only two sons.” We then learn that after becoming kings, and after ruling over their subjects “with justice during a period of twenty years,” these two sons, the eldest, Shahrayâr, and the youngest, Shâh Zamân, discovered that they were being betrayed by their two wives. What could have been a factor in this betrayal? It was probably that the two kings were sterile: at no point is it mentioned that they have any children. Would this explain in part why Shahrayâr kills every morning the latest wife with whom he’s had sexual intercourse the previous night? Indeed, to spare her life would soon enough reveal his sterility. It may also explain why it is that after hundreds of nights during which they repeatedly had sexual intercourse, we are never told that Shahrayâr asks Shahrazâd whether she is pregnant yet. What is he waiting for during his many nights with Shahrazâd?<sup>103</sup> Is it only the continuation of each of the previous nights’ interrupted stories? It is also and mainly to have a (male) child, miraculously or magically. It is not only the embedded stories of *The Thousand and One Nights* that are permeated by magic—even the frame story is: the jinn who keeps the woman he abducted imprisoned in a casket set in a coffer to which are affixed seven strong padlocks of steel and which he deposits on the deep bottom of the sea for fear of being betrayed by her. *The Thousand and One Nights* ends with Shahrazâd presenting the king with three male children—“one of them walked, and one crawled, and one was at the breast”—and informing him: “These are thy children ...” Isn’t there something disturbing in this riddle-like formulation? Does it actually describe a single child rather than three children, since in some of the various editions of *The Thousand and One Nights* Shahrazâd presents the king with one child as his son? Does it not remind us of the Sphinx’s riddle to Oedipus: “What creature has only one voice, walks sometimes on two legs, sometimes on three, sometimes on four, and which, contrary to the general law of nature, is at its weakest when it uses the most legs?”? Does this augur ill for King Shahrayâr, who

was betrayed by his first wife? Will he be betrayed by his thousand-and-second wife, Shahrazâd, this time with his own son (in which case, this uncanny betrayal would be a humorous lesson for him regarding his failure to keep his “binding oath that whatever wife he married he would abate her maidenhead at night and slay her the next morning to make sure of his honour; ‘For,’ said he, ‘there never was nor is there one chaste woman upon the face of earth’”)? In this case, the latter would be that negative messianic figure, the Antichrist.

**Bonus: Three Untimely Interviews with Jalal Toufic<sup>104</sup>**

## An Interview with Jalal Toufic

By Kaelen Wilson-Goldie

— Is it possible to pinpoint your exact motivation for writing *(Vampires)*? Did it stem from any one particular idea, incident, film, etc.?

— Now, so many years later, I remember only vaguely some of the reasons for starting to write *(Vampires)*. I think that what attracted me to the figure of the vampire at a time when I was finishing *Distracted* was that when he is in a place he is simultaneously not in it, that is, that he is as it were ontologically distracted, as is shown by his failure to appear in the mirror at the same location; that he is an aristocrat; and, given my dislike of sitting, that when he exceptionally sits he still seems to be standing since the height of the dining room chairs in the vampire's castle is that of a standing man (Murnau's *Nosferatu*). But as usually happens, one embarks on ventures for the wrong reasons or for secondary ones—especially during one's youth. Thus Christopher Columbus sailed west across the Atlantic Ocean in search of a route to Asia, but landed instead on and thus discovered America, whose existence he did not suspect. And thus *Casablanca's* Rick says that he moved to Casablanca for health reasons: "I came to Casablanca for the waters." "The waters? What waters? We're in the desert." "I was misinformed."

— How long did the book take to write?

— From the perspective of my various landlords, *(Vampires)* took about two years to write. But certainly the issue is more complicated, since to write this kind of book one has to have at least once underwent nonlinear time, whether labyrinthine or cyclical, feeling while in a certain location that one has always been in it; one has at least once to have seen people frozen by a diegetic silence-over; one has at least once to have experienced "a day the measure of which is a thousand years of what you count" (Qur'ân 32:5) or "a day the measure of which is fifty thousand years" (Qur'ân 70:4).

— Critical responses to your work vary widely, so I was wondering: do you read

reviews of your own work, do they affect you, are you as suspicious of someone praising your work (“There is, in my opinion, no more subtle or powerful thinker today than Jalal Toufic”) as you would be of someone slamming it (“This is the most incomprehensible book I’ve read in years”)?

— I am not at all suspicious but honored that the poet Lyn Hejinian wrote the first line, which appears on the jacket of my book *Undying Love, or Love Dies*. Without your characterization of the second commentator’s words as “slamming” my book, which I assume you concluded from the context of the quote, I would have been unable to discern whether his or her comment is a compliment or not. Moreover, I am unable to gauge what the one who wrote these words means by the term “incomprehensible”; for example, does he or she understand it in the manner I do in the second edition of *Distracted*: “Lebanese filmmakers and more so videomakers should not make films or videos to try to understand and make understandable what happened during the war years. While social scientists, whether sociologists, economists, etc., can provide us with more or less convincing reasons, and mystifiers can grossly nonplus us, valid literature and art provide us with intelligent and subtle incomprehension. One of the main troubles with the world is that, unlike art and literature, it allows only for the gross alternative: understanding/incomprehension. Contrariwise, art and literature do not provide us with the illusion of comprehending, of grasping, but allow us to keenly not understand, intimating to us that the alternative is not between comprehension and incomprehension but between incomprehension in a gross manner and while expecting comprehension; and incomprehension in an intelligent and subtle manner ...”? I find what most others deem most comprehensible, newspapers, incomprehensible in an ineluctably dull manner; it is easier for me to read thinkers, writers or poets such as Jacques Lacan, Gertrude Stein, the James Joyce of *Finnegans Wake*, and Paul Celan than newspapers.

— Aside from obviously Nietzsche and Deleuze, what other writers do you enjoy, are you influenced by, stylistically? Are there any novelists whom you particularly admire, in terms of narrative structure, style, etc.?

— While I rarely read novels, I admire the novelists William Burroughs and Alain

Robbe-Grillet generally, as well as specific novels and shorter fictional texts by other writers, for example: Kathy Acker’s *My Mother: Demonology*, J.G. Ballard’s *Crash*, Samuel Beckett’s *Worstward Ho*, Thomas Bernhard’s *The Loser*, Maurice Blanchot’s *Death Sentence* and *The Madness of the Day*, Marguerite Duras’ *The Malady of Death*, Richard Foreman’s *No-Body: A Novel in Parts*, Pierre Klossowski’s *The Baphomet*, Doug Rice’s *Blood of Mugwump*, Sartre’s *Nausea*, Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves*. I do not believe that any writer is influenced by any other at the level of style—at least I am not. On the other hand, I believe writers collaborate with each other and with artists and filmmakers and video makers in an untimely manner—at least I do.

— Who do you write for—yourself, a particular audience?

— I write for myself as one of the readers of my work; were it otherwise my writing, including my responses in this interview, would not be a dialogue (as *Distracted*’s epigraph puts it: “Are you saying this to me?” “Also to myself. One should speak solely when also speaking to oneself. Only then is there a dialogue”). I also write for and to my amnesiac version in an altered realm of consciousness that he found himself in after a lapse of consciousness and that I found myself out of after a lapse of consciousness: he needs my help to achieve a modicum of detachment from the stream of thoughts linking in his head on their own; from compulsions; from the insinuating voices-over that assail him; and from hallucinations. I also write to my untimely collaborators, and to the forgetful grateful reader, i.e., the generous reader.

— What are your feelings on the academic/intellectual community in Beirut now? Do you feel that your work is supported here or is it better appreciated abroad, and if so, does this bother you?

— For the first couple of months following my return to Lebanon in 1999, after spending fifteen years in the USA, I met a number of people who instead of asking me, who had taught at California Institute of the Arts, one of the main American art institutes, about the contemporary art practices and critical theories in the USA in general and California in specific began themselves to talk to me profusely about

the American art scene! I believe that were someone to return, like Lazarus, from death, they would not care to ask him about that condition and/or realm, but would start telling him about it! Would they be thus “giving voice to the voiceless”? In his opening remarks for the exhibition *DisORIENTATION* at the House of World Cultures in Berlin, on 20 May 2003, Lebanese novelist and journalist (!)<sup>105</sup> Elias Khoury talked about “the role of culture as a critical approach and as the voice of the voiceless.” If we include in culture neither art nor writing, then yes, culture—and democracy<sup>106</sup>—gives voice to the voiceless (the Lebanese newspaper *as-Safir*’s motto is: “the voice of the voiceless”). But art and writing (and real emancipatory politics) do not give voice to the voiceless;<sup>107</sup> rather, they interrupt even the inner voice of the “voiceless,” whether by suspending the interior monologue of the reader or spectator (or advocate of a political movement), or by trying, often unsuccessfully, to silence the voices-over that forcibly impose themselves in the mind of the one who, whether schizophrenic or dead, has become voiceless, anxiously wanting to scream but unable to do so. It is the exceptional merit of Beckett’s writing to suspend the interior monologue of the reader even as he or she reads that the voice—even more than life!—goes on: *Worstward Ho* begins with, “On. Say on. Be said on. Somehow on. Till nohow on. Said Nohow on...”; continues with, “Least. Least best worse. Least never to be naught. Never to naught be brought. Never by naught be nullified. Unnullable least. Say that best worse. With leastening words say least best worse. For want of worser worst. Unlessenable least best worse”; and ends with, “Said Nohow on.” If culture attempts to give voice to the voiceless, it is, unfortunately, partly to try to hide the infinity of what can have less voice but never no voice: “Least never to be naught.” As in the case of *weightless*—“having little or no weight” (*American Heritage Talking Dictionary*); “having little weight: lacking apparent gravitational pull” (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*); “having or appearing to have no weight” (*Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*)—and notwithstanding the dictionaries, we should not understand the suffix *-less* in *voiceless* and *motionless* to basically mean “without; lacking” (*American Heritage Dictionary*); we should rather take *voiceless* to refer basically to someone who has less voice but never no voice, and *motionless* to basically refer to a worldly living human, animal or object that can have less motion but never a *dead stop*, the

kind of unworldly freezing that the dead, the schizophrenic and the dancer’s subtle body may undergo in the altered states and realms of dance and death. For an example of the resentful nightmare that is Khoury’s idea of giving “voice to the voiceless,” one can read his novel *Bab al-Shams* (The gate of the sun), 1998, in which a male nurse keeps trying to remind an older friend of his who is in a coma of sundry incidents that happened to him. How fitting that Khoury came up with this monologist situation given how bad a listener he is—isn’t it the case that virtually all those who want to give voice to the “voiceless” are bad listeners? Symptomatically, his vacuous male nurse does not give voice to the voiceless once the latter dies. Where Khoury leaves, the Tibetan Buddhist lama starts; indeed, the situation envisioned by Khoury is a travesty of the following situation in Tibetan Buddhism: the lama reciting the *Bardo Thödol* (literally *Liberation through Hearing in the In-Between State*) by the side of the corpse.

In my book *Over-Sensitivity*, 1996, which I wrote in San Francisco, I constructed the concept of withdrawal of tradition past a surpassing disaster. In my next book, *Forthcoming*, 2000, which I wrote in Los Angeles and whose manuscript I sent to the publisher just before leaving to Lebanon in October 1999, I elaborated this concept, imagining at one point a Lebanese photographer “who had become used to viewing things at the speed of war. So for a while after the ‘civil’-war’s end, he did not take any photographs nor shoot any videos, waiting until he learned to look again at a leisurely pace. This period of adjustment lasted a full two years. Yet even after he became used to looking at buildings and experiencing events at the rhythm of peace, the photographs of the ruins in Lebanon taken by this Lebanese photographer, who classically composed those of his photographs shot in other countries, still looked like they were taken by a photographer lacking time to aim since in imminent danger, the compositions haphazard and the focus almost always off... in his work the out-of-focus and/or the haphazard framings were not a formal strategy but due to the withdrawal and thus unavailability to vision of the material.” Unbeknownst to me, at the same period, the Lebanese artists Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, who were living then between Paris and Beirut, did an installation titled *Wonder Beirut*, at Janine Rubeiz Gallery in Beirut in 1999, that revolves around the work of a photographer who “no longer develops his

photographs. It is enough for him to take them. At the end of the exhibition, 6452 rolls of film were laid on the floor: rolls containing photos taken by the photographer but left undeveloped" (from Hadjithomas and Joreige's text "*Tayyib rah farjîk shighlî?*" [OK, I'll show you my work], *Al-Âdâb*, January–February 2001). This concordance between two anomalous fictional photographers conceived by a writer and two artists who did not know each other reveals a community between strangers, as well as confirms these two fictional photographers and their kind of problematic photography as symptoms of the society in question. From this perspective, and unlike Egypt, in which the vast majority of artists and writers reside in their country and never emigrated for extended periods, Lebanon, which due to the long civil war and the invasions it suffered as well as for other reasons has a significant number of artists and writers abroad, is a privileged site for thinking the community in general and the artistic and literary community in specific, for the latter is formed basically not through its members' exposure to and consequent discussion of each other's works (which produces fashions) but through this concordance around anomalous subjects, figures, spaces and architectures, etc., by artists, thinkers, writers, and film and video makers who do not know each other, revealing these anomalies as symptoms of the culture with which they are dealing. Now that Joana Hadjithomas, Khalil Joreige, myself and a few others are together in Beirut and we know each other, I am much more interested in what singular universe each one of these video makers and artists is developing, rather than in the affinities and resonance between our works, so that our community now that we know each other and each other's works is one of support for the construction by each of his or her (or their—in the case of Hadjithomas and Joreige—) own universe.

"A people is a detour of nature to get to six or seven great men. —Yes, and then to get around them" (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, "Aphorisms and Interludes," no. 126). If the qualification is to be viewed positively, one can interpret it as implying: "... in order to get to six or seven additional great men, again and again." Unfortunately Arabs are in such a dire condition that I am apprehensive that the affirmative reading of the qualification in Nietzsche's aphorism may no longer hold in their case. Should a great Arab man or woman be satisfied with this?

No, since another implication of Nietzsche's aphorism is that nature cannot get to six or seven new great men or women through the "six or seven" great men already present. Within the context of Arabic culture, this is an additional source of solitude for any great Arab man or woman: for as long as the state of Arabs is this dire, the future great man or woman who may pick up the arrow any great Arab man or woman has sent<sup>108</sup> will of necessity not be an Arab but someone from another people.

Given the retarded state of the "contemporary" Arab world, I am far better appreciated abroad since the vast majority of those who are contemporaneous with the present live there. The vast majority of those who are not contemporaneous with the time in which they historically live, but lag behind it, believe that were they to travel to the past, they can take advantage there of their knowledge of the future from which they come. Had I still any illusion that such people would read me, I would advise them to consider the case of the philosopher of the untimely, the untimely philosopher Nietzsche, the author of, among other books, *Untimely Meditations*, who, viewing things from the perspective of the future ("What I relate is the history of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming, what can no longer come differently: the advent of nihilism"),<sup>109</sup> was ill-adapted to and alienated from the time in which he ostensibly lived: "—Ultimately, no one can extract from things, books included, more than he already knows.... Now let us imagine an extreme case: that a book speaks of nothing but events which lie outside the possibility of general or even of rare experience ... In this case simply nothing will be heard, with the acoustical illusion that where nothing is heard there *is* nothing" (Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*).

Postscript: while I am reluctant to give and conduct interviews (this is the second one I give; in addition I have myself once interviewed a filmmaker), the people I am essentially interested in interviewing are Sûfî masters who have already died physically, as well as al-Khadir, whose encounter with Moses in Qur'ân 18:65–82 is one of the most beautiful interviews.<sup>110</sup> While in life I can reach the interviewee even if I am not of the philosophical and/or artistic level to really benefit from the interview, and even without needing the interview to clarify for myself some

specific characteristics of the universe he or she has constructed and with which I feel an affinity, this cannot be the case when the interviewee is “dead,” paradigmatically a Sûfî (or Zen ...) master: one will have the privilege of meeting him or her in the Imaginal World (*‘âlam al-khayâl*, aka *‘âlam al-mithâl*) only if one is of a spiritual level to benefit from the interview.

### Interview with Jalal Toufic

By Juliana Monachesi

— Both Deleuze and Derrida talk about the joy of revelation (or, actually, about the imponderable of the sacred) in the statements you’ve added to your film *‘Âshûrâ: This Blood Spilled in My Veins*, 2002. This choice shows that you support the self-flagellation ritual. At the same time, when you call our attention to that little boy repeatedly slapping his chest, it seems you are condemning the excess. Which one of these impressions the film has induced in me is closer to your aim in this work?

— Two preliminary rectifications. The Deleuze and Derrida statements are not added to my video, but are part of it. Moreover, I do not recall that these two philosophers talked about “the joy of revelation” or “the imponderable of the sacred”—at least not in the excerpts in my video: after proposing that the formula for the lament is “What’s happening to me is too big for me,” Deleuze continues, “every morning I really mean to say, ‘what’s happening to me is too big for me,’ because that’s joy. In a certain way, it’s joy in the pure state ...”; and Derrida mentions the “tears of joy.” For me the basic question implied in the video is not whether the chest beating and the self-lacerations by the participants in the *‘Âshûrâ* yearly commemoration should be discontinued, but rather: given that the price of inculcating memory in humans in order for them to promise is exorbitant, should we no longer promise? To presently answer the question we have to take into consideration whether we are living in a period conducive to a messianic tonality of affect and thought, thus one that requires promises. As I write in my essay “*‘Âshûrâ*; or, Torturous Memory as a Condition of Possibility of an

Unconditional Promise”: “I find this period so unjust that it seems to me there are, beside the revolutionary one, two exemplary responses to it: a messianic one and a Gnostic one.”<sup>111</sup> If messianism is one of the exemplary responses in this period “filled” with tyranny and injustice, it is for two reasons. First, because one of the signs and the conditions of the coming of the messiah is that the period be filled with tyranny and injustice: according to Twelver Shi’ites, the Mahdî will “fill the world with equity and justice as it is filled with tyranny and injustice,” and according to a Talmudic saying, the son of David will appear only in a generation that was “either wholly sinful or wholly righteous.” Now, according to the United Nation’s *World Development Report 2003*, 2.8 billion people in developing countries live on less than \$2 a day, more than 1 billion people in low-income and middle-income countries lack access to safe water, and 2 billion humans lack adequate sanitation; and according to the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), one in every five people in the developing world, a total of 777 million individuals, is chronically undernourished, and 27% of the children in developing nations, that is, 150 million, were underweight in 2000. Second, because we have been witnessing the glaring enactment by the US government of a state of exception of the sort the political philosopher Carl Schmitt writes about in his book *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (trans. George Schwab, MIT Press, 1986) and that Giorgio Agamben elaborates in both *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford University Press, 1998) and *État d’exception: Homo sacer II, 1* (trans. Joël Gayraud, Éditions du Seuil, 2003). The U.S. declared a national emergency on 14 September 2001, and the Executive Order on the Detention, Treatment, and Trial of Certain Non-Citizens in the War Against Terrorism signed by American president George W. Bush on 13 November 2001 allows for the trial by special military commissions of non-US citizens suspected of involvement in “international terrorism,” in contravention of US obligations under international law, specifically the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by the USA in 1992. Kenneth Roth, the executive director of Human Rights Watch, remarked critically: “Under this Executive Order, a defendant could be sentenced to death without a public trial, the presumption of innocence, a right to appeal, or even proof of guilt

beyond reasonable doubt.”<sup>112</sup> Moreover, according to George W. Bush, in his speech to a graduating class of cadets at West Point, “We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans and confront the worst threats before they emerge,” and according to the White House’s *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (September 2002), the US government has the right of “defending the United States, the American people, and our interests at home and abroad by identifying and destroying the threat before it reaches our borders. While the United States will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community, we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists ...”—a document that gave a doctrinal justification for going to war in Iraq without the cover of a resolution from the United Nations Security Council. One felicitous way of resisting and possibly countering this state of exception proclaimed and enacted by the United States government, and by an increasing number of other countries (for example Israel and Russia), is with the other paradigmatic state of exception, the messianic one, which is notorious for its antinomianism. But with the advances of science, and now especially with those of computer simulations, it appears that we have been moving at an accelerating pace from a culture of promise to a culture of prediction, therefore away from messianism, with its link to the promise and its warning against prediction, specifically against the prediction of the date of the (re)appearance of the messiah/Mahdī. Although prediction does not necessarily undermine promise, it certainly makes it more difficult. While before, one would sometimes promise something that seemed feasible, then on discovering that new advances in science predict with complete accuracy that it cannot happen nonetheless decide to maintain one’s promise “even ‘in the face of fate’” (Nietzsche); more and more frequently, since we can predict far more accurately, and because it is pointless and irrelevant to promise what is predicted by science to be bound to happen, we will promise outright the impossible, i.e., every promise will be implicitly a promise of a miracle.

— Jacques Rancière (who happens to be one of the collaborators of our supplement [Brazilian newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*’s “Caderno Mais!"], by the

way) has stated that in Beirut “the real must be fictionalized to be thought”; but what we have seen at the festival [the 14<sup>th</sup> *Festival Internacional De Arte Eletrônica—Videobrasil*] is that Lebanese artists (yourself included) have a predilection for the documentary form. What is the better way to represent trauma? Is there more fiction than “reality” in Lebanese documentaries?

— In Beirut *some* features of “the real must be fictionalized to be thought.” I’ve addressed two of these features in the revised version of my essay “Ruins” published in *Tamáss: Contemporary Arab Representations, Beirut, Lebanon 1*, 2002.<sup>113</sup> unfinished business and consequently haunting and revenants; and ruins.<sup>114</sup> When it comes to cinema and video, I am presently most interested on the one hand in films and videos that draw extensively and even radically on computer simulations of imaginative worlds; and on the other hand in videos and films that document that which was unimaginable before it happened, for example a traumatic event (while videotaping a cow being slaughtered [see my video *The Sleep of Reason: This Blood Spilled in My Veins*, 2002]), I very quickly felt unable to even try to anticipate what will happen during the slaughter—my imagination failed me; Duras: “I saw the patience, the innocence, the apparent meekness with which the temporary survivors of Hiroshima adapted themselves to a fate so unjust that the imagination, normally so fertile, cannot conceive it”),<sup>115</sup> and which while it is happening as well as when one tries to remember it or when one has an involuntary flashback to it, one tells oneself that it could not be happening/have happened in reality, that it must be/have been a nightmare or a hallucination, that one must be imagining/have imagined it (Charlotte Delbo on Birkenau-Auschwitz: “[Today] while knowing perfectly well that it corresponds to the facts, I no longer know if it is real”).<sup>116</sup> For the great Sūfī Ibn al-‘Arabī, at the most basic level all creation is imagination; but even at a less basic level, all audiovisual works should be imagination either because, in the case of simulations, one constructed the work’s software through the imagination, or, in the case of traumatic events, because “it is all too incredible ...”<sup>117</sup> I presently consider my videos *Credits Included: A Video in Red and Green*, 1995, *The Sleep of Reason: This Blood Spilled in My Veins*, 2002, and ‘*Āshûrâ*’: *This Blood Spilled in My Veins*, 2002, a trilogy: *Irruptions of the Real*.<sup>118</sup> The real would be the green paint that appears on my hand as I touch a leaf in a café’s

garden, as well as the interview with the schizophrenic ‘Abd Muhanna in my *Credits Included: A Video in Red and Green*, 1995; the slaughter of the second cow in *The Sleep of Reason: This Blood Spilled in My Veins ...* “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy” (Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, 1.5.174–175). What is this excess in heaven and earth that the philosophy to which Horatio subscribes in specific, but also philosophy in general could not have dreamt of? Earth will be discarded, deserted in the era of simulation unless it manages precisely to be the unimaginable. Earth will be the site of the sublime or the traumatic, or will not be at all in the age of simulation. Earth will be the irruption of the real—conjointly physical reality and the Lacanian real—in the simulated world or will not be at all.

— To finish, I would like to ask you how has the death of Edward Said reverberated in your intellectual circle?

— On 6 November 1995, my very dear friend the American poet Lyn Hejinian called me to tell me that Deleuze had committed suicide two days earlier; the next day I left her a message on her phone machine recommending that she buy that day’s French newspaper *Libération*, where the following obituaries could be read: Alain Badiou, “Une lettre à Gilles (juillet 1994)” (A letter to Gilles [July 1994]); Giorgio Agamben, “Sauf les hommes et les chiens” (Excepting men and dogs); Jacques Derrida, “Il me faudra errer tout seul” (I’m Going to Have to Wander All Alone); Jean-Pierre Faye, “J’étouffe, je te rappellerai” (I am suffocating; I’ll call you back); Jean-François Lyotard, “Il était la bibliothèque de Babel” (He was the library of Babel); and Jean-Luc Nancy, “Du sens, dans tous les sens” ([Of] Sense, in all senses). Moreover, the following few days my best students at San Francisco State University phoned me to tell me that Deleuze died. A similar exchange of phone calls took place regarding the death of Jean-François Lyotard on 22 April 1998: I phoned several poets to recommend to them that they buy the *Libération* of that day to read Jacques Derrida’s obituary to his late friend: “Amitié-à-tout-rompre” (All-Out Friendship)... On 20 February 2003, I received several SMS messages, including from my friend the Lebanese filmmaker Ghassan Salhab, informing me of what I had already learnt from online newspapers: that Blanchot

had died; and I sent a few days later, on 26 February 2003, an email to Hejinian with the web address of Jacques Derrida’s obituary for Blanchot in *Libération*, “Un témoin de toujours.” But I did not email anyone that Edward Said had died when I read the news in the online editions of several newspapers; and nobody has sent me either an email or an SMS or phoned me about that, for my friends and students know that he has been and is of little importance to me. With the exception of his *Orientalism* (1978), which I read when I was still an undergraduate student at the American University of Beirut, two decades ago, I have never been able to finish any of his articles, let alone his books—including my attempted rereading of *Orientalism* five or six years ago. Do I for that matter find him a boring writer? No, he is not “even” that: I think that Nam June Paik achieves boredom in some of his videos and installation works (indeed during his interview with a certain James Heddle for the *New American Cinema* series produced by the University of Wisconsin, he refers to his video record of John Cage’s performance of 4:33” as “very boring,” and his closing words for the first part of the interview are: “I hope we have bored you enough”), and I feel that Heidegger achieves boredom in his important text on the subject in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*. Rimbaud, Duchamp, and Blanchot managed on their own to stop producing work in time not to repeat themselves; can one say the same about Edward Said or the senile Egyptian director Youssef Chahine? Certainly not. Did death, in the case of Edward Said, and will death, in the case of Youssef Chahine, at least have the salutary effect of preventing either from rehashing himself? No, for they have already repeated themselves for many years—without this repetition ever producing, as with the great novelist Alain Robbe-Grillet, the sort of eerie familiarity the reader feels on reading the first chapter of *La Belle Captive*, which had already appeared verbatim in *Topology of a Phantom City*, and substantial sections of *Recollections of the Golden Triangle*, which had already appeared as the last three chapters of *La Belle Captive*.

### A Curt Inspired Interview on a Short Video and a Long One

— Raúl Henríquez: Why do your videos ‘*Áshûrâ*’ and *The Sleep of Reason* have the

same subtitle: *This Blood Spilled in My Veins*? And what does that subtitle mean?

— Search (“Me, I search”: the diegetic film director’s repeated statement in Godard’s *Passion*) for or find (Picasso: “I don’t search, I find!”) a rigorous generous answer to this question.

— What inspired you to film this subject?

— It must be one of the following five kinds of inspiration: either thoughts from the untimely collaborator, or one of the four sources of inspirations listed in Abû Bakr al-Kalâbâdhî’s *The Doctrine of the Sûfis* (trans. Arthur John Arberry): “One of the Shaykhs said: ‘There are four kinds of thoughts: from God, from an angel, from self, and from the Devil.... By the light of unification the thought from God is received, and by the light of gnosis the thought from the angel is received; by the light of faith (the thought of) the self is denied, and by the light of Islam (the thought of) the Devil is rejected.’”

— Are the two videos a kind of self-portrait, autobiographical?

— “A man sets out to draw the world. As the years go by, he peoples a space with images of provinces, kingdoms, mountains, bays, ships, islands, fishes, rooms, instruments, stars, horses, and individuals. A short time before he dies, he discovers that that patient labyrinth of lines traces the lineaments of his own face” (Jorge Luis Borges, “Afterword,” *The Maker*, 1960).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Al-ghurba al-sughrá*—modeled on Twelver Shi‘ites’ Lesser Occultation (*al-ghayba al-sughrá*).

<sup>2</sup> *Al-ghurba al-kubrā*—modeled on Twelver Shi‘ites’ Greater Occultation (*al-ghayba al-kubrā*).

<sup>3</sup> I find the title of Scorsese’s film concerning a boxer infelicitous: a bull’s head does not need to be saved.

<sup>4</sup> What seems at first a flagrant failure of casting of Leonardo DiCaprio in the role of Amsterdam Vallon opposite the imposing Daniel Day-Lewis as Bill “The Butcher” in Scorsese’s *Gangs of New York* (2002) may instead be read as Scorsese’s way to reveal that that face that was idolized by millions of teenagers in James Cameron’s *Titanic*, 1997, needs to be saved. By wounding Vallon’s face, Bill “The Butcher” at the same time makes him lose face, i.e., makes others no longer respect him, but also physically saves his face. When later Vallon cuts his own face, he is at the same time inflicting enough pain on himself to make himself equal to the task of taking revenge on Bill “The Butcher,” who had killed his father but then became a father figure for him, and physically saving face.

<sup>5</sup> Opting to wear a veil may be a manner of saving face and/or may evince a baroque predilection for folds. Deleuze: “The psychiatrist Clérambault’s taste for folds of Islamic origin, and his extraordinary photographs of veiled women—true paintings that resemble those of Helga Heinzen nowadays—amounts, despite what has been said, to much more than a simple personal perversion....” Deleuze adds in the corresponding footnote: “Cf. Papetti, Valier, Freminville and Tisserson, *La Passion des étoffes chez un neuropsychiatre*, G.G. de Clérambault (Paris: Éditions Solin, 1981), with its photographic reproductions and two lectures on drapery (pp. 49–57). A reader might be led to believe that these photos of overabundant folds refer to pages chosen by Clérambault himself. But the postcards at the time of the colonial empire also reveal these systems of folds, which dictate all the clothing of Moroccan women, including that of the face: an Islamic Baroque” (Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, foreword and translation by Tom Conley [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993], 38 and 148).

<sup>6</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 87–88.

<sup>7</sup> God as the Son would thus have the kind of impassive, expressionless face we witness in many icons—or for that matter in statues of the Buddha (Nietzsche on Jesus of Nazareth:

“The peaceful preacher of the mount, the sea-shore and the fields, who appears like a new Buddha on a soil very unlike India’s ...” [The *Antichrist*].

<sup>8</sup> In Paradise, people never have exclusively their backs to each other; consequently they never need to call each other and therefore are nameless. “Jesus” is a proper name, in the worldly sense, but “Christ” (from Greek *Khristos* from *khristos* anointed, past participle of *khrlein* to anoint) is not a proper name, since only mortals have proper names.

<sup>9</sup> Jean Piaget, *The Construction of Reality in the Child*, trans. Margaret Cook (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1954), 334–335: “At the third stage [between the ages of 3–6 and 8–10 months] the child is able to perceive a sequence of events when he himself has engendered that sequence or when the before and after are related to his own activity, but if the perceived phenomena succeed each other independently of himself he disregards the order of occurrence ... and thus the objective structuring of time remains impossible.... The child at the present stage is not yet capable of reconstructing the history of external phenomena themselves, or of locating his own duration in that of things ...”

<sup>10</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 29–30.

<sup>11</sup> *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*, ed. and trans. Stephen Mitchell; with an introduction by Robert Hass (New York: Vintage Books, 1982), 169–171.

<sup>12</sup> Roland Barthes, “The Tip of the Nose,” *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 2002), 25.

<sup>13</sup> André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?*, vol. I, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 9–10.

<sup>14</sup> Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic*, trans. Robert Brain; foreword by D.F. Pocock (London, New York: Routledge Classics, 2001), 79–84.

<sup>15</sup> This was exceptionally no longer the case during the brief 1991-uprising in Iraq’s largely Shi’ite south and its largely Kurdish north; and it was no longer the case after the establishment later in 1991 of a “safe haven” for the Kurdish population in northern Iraq, and then the establishment in 1992 of a Kurdish autonomous zone.

<sup>16</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Video Culture: A Critical Investigation*, ed. John Hanhardt (Rochester, New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1986), 33–34.

<sup>17</sup> Notwithstanding its suggestive title, Amîralây’s film disappointingly does not deal with

fetishes and magic.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Dominique Godrèche, “Un film sur Rafic Hariri: Fascination pour le pouvoir,” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, April 2001, 35, <http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2001/04/GODRECHE/15049>.

<sup>19</sup> See Gordon Gallup, Jr., “Can Animals Empathize? Yes,” *Scientific American Presents* 9, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 66: “I presented a full-length mirror to preadolescent chimpanzees at the [Tulane] university’s Delta Regional Primate Research Center. Initially, they reacted as if they were seeing other chimpanzees, but after a few days they grew accustomed to the mirror and began to use it to ... look at the inside of their mouths, and groom and inspect other parts of their bodies that they had never seen before” (Ibid., 66).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 66. See also pp. 66 and 68: “The failure to find self-recognition in other animals is not for want of trying. Susan D. Suarez of the Sage Colleges and I gave a pair of rhesus monkeys, reared together in the same cage, continuous exposure to themselves in a full-length mirror for 17 years (more than 5,000 hours of mirror exposure a year). Despite this extended opportunity to learn about the mirror, neither monkey ever showed any evidence of self-recognition.”

<sup>21</sup> If “Truth lies not in one dream, but in many dreams,” this can be because life is a “dream within a dream” (Ibn al-‘Arabî), one from which we wake up by dying (according to a tradition traced back to the prophet Muhammad: “People are asleep, and when they die, they awake”) in the *barzakh* (literally, “isthmus”), and then wake up again from the latter at the final resurrection.

<sup>22</sup> It is felicitous that the *Rear Window* DVD released by Universal Studios in 2001 has at one point the frame stutter that commonly occurs in DVDs authored on standard formatting systems when the MPEG data streams are interrupted during layer switch. In the *Rear Window* DVD, the frame stutter occurs just after Lisa responds to Jeff’s “He’s been laying out all his things on one of the beds .... Even that alligator handbag his wife left on the bedpost ...” with “What about it?” For the majority of film spectators, unfamiliar as they are with technical matters regarding DVDs, the frame stutter would seem to be an anomalous light camera movement, with the consequence that for the perceptive ones among them what they had until then viewed as an objective shot is reinterpreted by them to be a subjective shot, and what for them was an abstract or paranoid possibility becomes a likelihood: someone is spying on Jeff and Lisa while they spy on Thorwald.

<sup>23</sup> The quote is from the *Rear Window* script by John Michael Hayes.

<sup>24</sup> Daniel Paul Schreber, *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, trans. and ed. Ida Macalpine and Richard A. Hunter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 126.

<sup>25</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. and newly ed. James Strachey, introduction by Gregory Zilboorg (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961), 7.

<sup>26</sup> Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (1945) shows the same basic situation: a man impersonates the identity of the last person he met before the trauma—witnessing the murder of his psychiatrist—that triggered his psychogenic fugue. What was the last thing L.B. Jefferies was doing before being assaulted by a murderer? He was playing an “amateur sleuth.”

<sup>27</sup> A similar situation occurs in Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*, 1959: when Roger O. Thornhill, an advertising executive, is mistaken by two members of a spy ring for George Kaplan, a purported agent of the US Intelligence Agency, and spirited away to the estate of United Nations employee Lester Townsend, which is being used by the spy ring during its owner's absence at the UN, the following dialogue takes place between the abducted man, who has remarked the nameplate at the entrance of the estate, and the man who questions him there, actually the ring leader, Phillip Vandamm: “Not what I expected—a little taller, a little more polished than the others ...” “I'm so glad you're pleased, Mr. Townsend.” “My secretary is a great admirer of your methods, Mr. Kaplan...”

<sup>28</sup> André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?*, vol. II, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 35.

<sup>29</sup> “And then we find Midge standing nearby, smiling across at Scottie, *who is seated in a wheelchair ...*”: from the *Vertigo* screenplay by Samuel A. Taylor and Alec Coppel (my italics).

<sup>30</sup> I admire rigor in naming, but also rigor in misnaming (Hitchcock's films, Losey's *Mr. Klein*, Lynch's *Mullholland Drive*).

<sup>31</sup> In the opening scene of David Lynch's *Mullholland Drive* (2001, written by Lynch), a woman suffers a car accident. Drained, she falls asleep. The next scene begins with two men, Herb and Dan, sitting at a table at Winkie's Restaurant on Sunset Boulevard. Herb: “Why did you want to go to breakfast if you're not hungry?” Dan: “I just wanted to come here.” “To Winkie's?” “*This* Winkie's ... I had a dream about this place.... It's the second one I've had, but they were both the same. They start out that I'm in here .... And I'm scared like I can't tell you. Of all people, you're standing right over there, by that counter. You're in both dreams and you're scared. I get even more frightened when I see how afraid you are

and then I realize what it is: there's a man in the back of this place.... I can see him through the wall. I can see his face and I hope I never see that face ever outside a dream....” “So, you came to see if he's out there?” (Gilles Deleuze: “What reason [for travel] is there, ultimately, except *seeing for yourself*, going to check something, some inexpressible feeling deriving from a dream or nightmare, even if it's only finding out whether the Chinese are as yellow as people say, or whether some improbable color, a green ray, some bluish, purplish air, really exists somewhere, out there. The true dreamer, said Proust, is someone who goes to see something for himself ...” *Negotiations, 1972–1990*, trans. Martin Joughin [New York: Columbia University Press, 1995], 78). When Herb picks up the bill and goes to the cashier to pay, Dan remains seated! Had a repetition compulsion not been at work, he would have either insisted on paying the bill, going himself to the counter to do so; or else, on seeing his friend on the point of standing and walking to the counter to pay, he would have hurriedly accompanied him there. While paying the bill, Herb looks over at Dan. From Dan's point of view, Herb is standing at the same spot as in the dream. When they go outside, Dan apprehensively leads the way to the rear of the building. Suddenly a bum's blackened face appears from behind the corner and stares into Dan's eyes. Dan falls unconscious—or dead? Did he see that face again outside a dream? Or was the whole scene another dream, so that he saw again that face in a dream? Is the dream in question that of the woman we saw falling asleep at the end of the previous scene? If it is a dream, what is the wish that's behind it? The sleeping woman (played by Laura Harring) must already apprehend that she's in a radical closure, and therefore that she is subject to the unsettling and uncanny exhaustive variation undergone in such a closure, where the names, characteristics and roles of those imprisoned in it as well as the relationships between them are going to be permuted among them (the sleeping woman's various names include Rita and Camilla Rhodes), and where death does not function as a definitive, final “issue” out of the radical closure. The most basic trigger of the compulsion to repeat is not the death drive, but the threat of an exhaustive variation (is the Many-Worlds Interpretation of quantum physics a manner of evading this threat of exhaustive variation in the same universe, by making these variations happen in parallel universes?). The wish that the sleeping woman's dream intimates is initially the suspension of the exhaustive variation in a radical closure through repetition of the same events, and then, given that the compulsion to repeat is linked to the death drive (which is how the scene at Winkie's possibly ends), the escape from

such a variation through a different figure of death, a final cessation. Another manner of evading this realm of exhaustive variation is intrinsic to it, since this variation itself secretes an element that is going to be repeated by the different characters. If instead of being repeated in all the intonations and manners of saying it (questioning, ordering, telegraphic, etc.—see Raymond Queneau’s *Exercises in Style*), this element is repeated in an identical manner and intonation in the various cycles of variations, then the variation stops and the closure is no longer radical. When the diegetic filmmaker, who is casting for his new film, is presented by the real, behind-the-scenes producers of his film with a photograph of an actress and told by them, “This is the girl,” he is perceptive enough to grasp sooner than later that he has not only to choose that actress for the lead role in his film, but also to indicate his choice not by pointing to her or telling her, “The role is yours,” or telling his executive producer, “She’s perfect for the role,” but by saying: “This is the girl.”

<sup>32</sup> Sigmund Freud, “On the Transformation of Instincts with Special Reference to Anal Erotism (1917),” *Character and Culture*, with an introduction by the editor, Philip Rieff (New York: Collier books, 1963), 206.

<sup>33</sup> Nadar, *Quand j’étais photographe*. Paris: Éditions d’aujourd’hui, 1979 (my translation).

<sup>34</sup> From the abstract of Olaf Blanke et al., “Neuropsychology: Stimulating Illusory Own-Body Perceptions,” *Nature* 419, no. 19 (September 2002): 269–270: “‘Out-of-body’ experiences (OBEs) are curious, usually brief sensations in which a person’s consciousness seems to become detached from the body and take up a remote viewing position. Here we describe the repeated induction of this experience by focal electrical stimulation of the brain’s right angular gyrus in a patient who was undergoing evaluation for epilepsy treatment.” Cf. Helen Sewell, “Doctors Create Out-of-Body Sensations,” *BBC News Online*, 8 September 2002 (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/2266740.stm>): “The doctors believe the angular gyrus plays an important role in matching up visual information and the brain’s touch and balance representation of the body. When the two become dissociated, an out-of-body experience may result.... Professor [Olaf] Blanke told *BBC News Online* that out of body sensations ‘have been reported in neurological patients with epilepsy, migraine and after cerebral strokes ...’” Cf. also Pim van Lommel et al., “Near-Death Experience in Survivors of Cardiac Arrest: A Prospective Study in the Netherlands,” *The Lancet* 358, issue 9298 (December 15, 2001): 2039–2045: in this study that included 344

consecutive patients who were successfully resuscitated after cardiac arrest in ten Dutch hospitals, 62 patients (18%) reported a near-death experience, and of these 62 patients 15 (24%) reported an out-of-body experience.

<sup>35</sup> Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic*, 79–80.

<sup>36</sup> When in an October 1965 interview in *Cahiers du cinéma*, the interviewer observed, “There is a good deal of blood in *Pierrot* [le fou],” Godard retorted: “Not blood, red.” No wonder that the film he later made regarding a major Christian personage did not revolve around Jesus Christ, since within the context of the Last Supper the equivalent of Godard’s retort is: “Not blood, wine.” Serendipitously, *Hail Mary* ends with its eponymous protagonist putting on red lipstick.

<sup>37</sup> It is fitting that in *La Rampe* the French film critic Serge Daney places “Godardian Pedagogy,” the subtitle of his article on the filmmaker of *Le Gai savoir* (co-directed with Gorin, 1969), *Here and Elsewhere* (1976), *Number Two* (1975), and *All’s Well* (1972), in parenthesis, since it goes without saying.

<sup>38</sup> Serge Daney writes in his article “Invraisemblable vérité [the French release title of *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt*, 1956]: Lang”: “I admired this manner of narrating all these stories in one, as if to establish a theorem (I wanted to write this article on Lang without using the word ‘rigor’: I didn’t succeed).” *Ciné journal*, vol. 1/1981–1986, préface de Gilles Deleuze (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma: 1998), 30.

<sup>39</sup> Since Godard is not really interested in the car crash itself, he should have skipped showing it. This is what he elegantly does in *New Wave*, 1990.

<sup>40</sup> “Lucas Attacks ‘Digital Actors’ Idea,” *BBC News*, May 17, 2002 (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/film/1993106.stm>). The article goes on: “*Star Wars* director George Lucas has attacked the idea of using technology to recreate dead film stars. ‘It’s something we are trying to stop happening, although you can’t stop technology and you can’t stop change,’ he said.... Advances in digital technology have raised the prospect of long-dead stars like John Wayne and Marilyn Monroe being brought back to life on-screen. The technology has already been used in less conspicuous ways. When veteran British actor Oliver Reed died during filming of the Roman epic *Gladiator*, some scenes were digitally altered to make it look as if he was present ...” This may open a can of worms: for example, what about remaking *Vertigo* with a Vera Miles digital actress in place of Kim Novak, since Vera Miles was Hitchcock’s first choice for the film: “Do you know that I had

Vera Miles in mind for *Vertigo*, and we had done the whole wardrobe and the final tests with her? ... but she became pregnant just before the part ... After that I lost interest; I couldn't get the rhythm going with her again" (François Truffaut, *Hitchcock*, with the collaboration of Helen G. Scott, rev. ed. [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984], 247)?

<sup>41</sup> Hitchcock: "Had the picture [*Foreign Correspondent*] been done in color, I would have worked in a shot I've always dreamed of: a murder in a tulip field ... We pan down to the struggling feet in the tulip field. We would dolly the camera up to and right into one of the tulips, with the sounds of the struggle in the background. One petal fills the screen, and suddenly a drop of blood splashes all over it" (François Truffaut, *Hitchcock*, 135).

<sup>42</sup> Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 1, edited, translated, and with an introduction by Nicholas T. Rand (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 173.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>46</sup> Anne Ancelin Schützenberger, *The Ancestor Syndrome: Transgenerational Psychotherapy and the Hidden Links in the Family Tree*, trans. Anne Trager (London: Routledge, 1998), 45–48.

<sup>47</sup> On the *dream woman*, see the "Post Scriptum" in the section "Notes Towards Cinematic Biographies of some Qur'anic Prophets" in my book *Forthcoming* (Berkeley, CA: Atelos, 2000).

<sup>48</sup> She's therefore somewhat akin to Wilhelm Jensen's *Gradiva*, a statue woman. Since the impression that an element one is encountering in reality belongs actually to a painting is dealt with in Hitchcock's *Marnie* (1964), in which the hulk in the background of the street on which the eponymous heroine lives is clearly a painted backdrop, impenetrable on account of its traumatic association with her murder, while still a child, of a sailor, it would be felicitous to place my remake of *Vertigo* in a double-feature program with *Marnie*.

<sup>49</sup> The last two sentences are from *Hiroshima mon amour*, text by Marguerite Duras for the film by Alain Resnais; trans. Richard Seaver; picture editor: Robert Hughes (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 65.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 52. In a contemporary remake, they would go to the cinema to pass some of the long remaining time. The film playing there would happen to be Leos Carax's *Les Amants du*

*Pont-Neuf* (1991), in which the two protagonists manage to get into the Louvre Museum after hours and look at various paintings in candlelight. It is after leaving the film that they wander through the city waiting for the Palace of the Legion of Honor to open its doors.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>52</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 70–71.

<sup>53</sup> François Truffaut, *Hitchcock*, 246.

<sup>54</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, 185.

<sup>55</sup> William Burroughs, *The Adding Machine: Selected Essays* (New York: Seaver Books, 1986), 16.

<sup>56</sup> From this perspective, Hitchcock's *The Wrong Man*, which is based on a true story, is an anomaly, *the wrong film*, since it shows a man unjustly mistaken for someone else *who is unaware of his existence*.

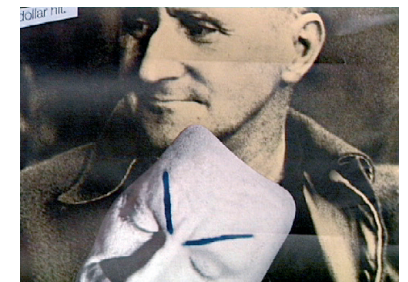
<sup>57</sup> *The Trouble with Harry* too deals with the Hitchcockian theme of *the wrong man* or woman, in the form of the misrecognition by the dead of his or her corpse.

<sup>58</sup> The title of a Lyn Hejinian book published by Granary Books in 2001.

<sup>59</sup> Obviously, the title comes from Goya's print *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* (plate 43 of *Los Caprichos*, second edition, ca. 1803).

<sup>60</sup> If I chose to place myself among the sleepers, it is partly because unlike Brecht, who is pictured in a poster—hung on the wall behind sleeping Lebanese theater director Rabbih Mroué—holding the mask of a sleeping person while he himself is "wide awake" (to "wide awake" Brecht, someone could have exclaimed: "Dream on!" [indeed the mask that the ostensibly insomniac Brecht is holding seems to be the product of dreaming]; Brecht might have awakened then!), and whose work stresses critical consciousness, my work draws considerably on the unconscious in its construction of concepts.

<sup>61</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 242–247.



<sup>62</sup> Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 8 volumes (Beirut, Lebanon: Librairie du Liban, 1980), entry *hâ' yâ' yâ'*. I feel boundless gratitude to Lane for this monumental work.

<sup>63</sup> Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 270–271.

<sup>64</sup> The City of the Dead is conjointly the most populated city and the most deserted city: it fits many more people than a city of the living can, but each person is alone in it, apparently the only survivor.

<sup>65</sup> Lyn Hejinian, *A Border Comedy* (New York: Granary Books, 2001), 109.

<sup>66</sup> “*Traiter quelq’un de tous les noms*: to call somebody everything under the sun” (*Le Robert & Collins Senior, Dictionnaire Français-Anglais/Anglais-Français*, 5th ed.).

<sup>67</sup> From Nietzsche’s 5 January 1889 letter to Jacob Burckhardt: “I am Prado, I am also Prado’s father, I venture to say that I am also Lesseps.... I wanted to give my Parisians, whom I love, a new idea—that of a decent criminal. I am also Chambige—also a decent criminal.... every name in history is I.... This autumn, as lightly clad as possible, I twice attended my funeral, first as Count Robilant (no, he is my son, insofar as I am Carlo Alberto, my nature below), but I was Antonelli [who was papal state secretary under Pius IX] myself.”

<sup>68</sup> Hejinian, *A Border Comedy*, 54.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 61–62.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>72</sup> Magritte’s *The Key to Dreams* (*La clef des songes*), 1927 and 1930 versions.

<sup>73</sup> See Jalal Toufic, *Over-Sensitivity* (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1996), 171–174.

<sup>74</sup> Lyn Hejinian, *The Cell* (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1992), 100.

<sup>75</sup> For another take on the courage of fear, cf. my book (*Vampires*): *An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film*, revised and expanded ed. (Sausalito, CA: The Post-Apollo Press, 2003), 125–126: “We fear fear because often fear either discloses to us or makes us sense what we know (i.e., we fear fear because we are basically gullible enough to think that what we did not know that we know is the truth)—fear is courage. Courage is not the absence of fear, since it partly resides in confronting what fear discloses; but the absence of the fear of fear, of the swish pan that hides what fear could have revealed.”

<sup>76</sup> The ghost, who asserts a unique identity—in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, he says to Prince

Hamlet, “I am thy father’s spirit”—is not the dead, who feels *every name in history is I*, but the messenger of the dead. But this messenger of the dead cannot be a revenant asking for a specific retribution without having forgotten about (at least) one of the secrets of his prison house, namely, “every name in history is I;” consequently, he is unable to disclose this secret even in an *aparté*. “But that I am forbid / To tell the secrets of my prison-house, / I could a tale unfold whose lightest word / Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood, / ... But this eternal blazon must not be / To ears of flesh and blood” (Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, 1.5.13–21). The notion that he is forbidden to tell, rather than oblivious about this secret is probably a thought-insertion. What is one of the secrets whose unfolding would harrow up Prince Hamlet’s soul and freeze his young blood? That in the undeath realm, where he feels *every name in history is I*, his undead father sometimes exclaims: “I, Claudius, miss my Queen Gertrude.” Thus, it is Gertrude who esoterically initiates her son Hamlet into some of the secrets of the undeath realm.

<sup>77</sup> The title of a Lyn Hejinian book.

<sup>78</sup> See *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. Christopher Middleton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 347.

<sup>79</sup> Hejinian, *A Border Comedy*, 17.

<sup>80</sup> From another perspective, “dying ... is essentially mine in such a way that no one can be my representative” (Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson [New York: Harper & Row, 1962], 297); while life is never my life, “for death is that whereby all successive forms of the living are deposed and terminated to the advantage of the single formless power of life, *élan vital* for Bergson, inorganic life for Deleuze, blind folds of DNA molecules for contemporary biology. The infinite value of life affirms itself only through death.... Death is, for any particular living thing, the transcendence of life in it. Death is that whereby, beyond the derisory being-multiple of living individuals, the existence of life affirms itself. Every time that a living thing dies, what is silently spoken is: ‘I, life, exist’” (Alain Badiou, “Existence and Death,” trans. Nina Power and Alberto Toscano, in “Mortals to Death,” ed. Jalal Toufic, special issue, *Discourse* 24, no. 1 [Winter 2002]: 64–65).

<sup>81</sup> Hejinian, *A Border Comedy*, 44.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>83</sup> *American Heritage Dictionary*.

<sup>84</sup> Hejinian, *A Border Comedy*, 14.

<sup>85</sup> Lyn Hejinian, *My Life* (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1991), 14.

<sup>86</sup> Lyn Hejinian's dedication to her husband, the musician Larry Ochs, in *The Cold of Poetry*. Certainly the model spouse is the musician and singer Orpheus.

<sup>87</sup> Hejinian, *A Border Comedy*, 49.

<sup>88</sup> As far as I am concerned, and as is clear from the title of my seminar "Saving the Living Human's Face and Backing the Mortal," the face is linked to life ("Muḥayyâ [from the root Hayy, Living]: *The face* [al-Sihâh, al-Qâmûs, at-Tibrîzî's *Exposition of the Hamâsah*, 23] of a man, because it is specified in salutation; [*Exposition of the Hamâsah* ubi suprâ;] a term used only in praise" [Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, entry ḥâ' yâ' yâ']), while the back is related to the mortal, who is subject to over-turns.

<sup>89</sup> Hejinian, *A Border Comedy*, 108.

<sup>90</sup> The following words, "the consequence of using large time intervals is that most, if not all of the fluctuations in images and perceptions cancel out, one ending up having the gross approximation that normal perception is," which appear on page 3 of the first edition of my book (*Vampires*): *An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film*, published by Station Hill Press in 1993, and on which these words by Lyn Hejinian are based, "But no matter what avoiding the larger time intervals / Since they would cancel out all strange fluctuations and less probable connections / Leaving only a gross approximation" (*A Border Comedy*, 52), are not dedicated to Hejinian, as they are still (p. 14) in the second edition, published by the Post-Apollo Press in 2003.

<sup>91</sup> Jalal Toufic, *Distracted* (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, 1991), 18; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Berkeley, CA: Tuumba Press, 2003), 18.

<sup>92</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, *Seven Nights*, trans. Eliot Weinberger; introduction by Alastair Reid (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 49.

<sup>93</sup> "Narrative-Men" in Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. Richard Howard; with a new foreword by Jonathan Culler (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), 73.

<sup>94</sup> This makes clear that the "three years" in "On this wise he continued for the space of three years, marrying a maiden every night and killing her the next morning" is a round expression for "one thousand nights."

<sup>95</sup> I presume that the king must have, early on, asked at his court whether any of the historians and scholars of the kingdom and any of its oral storytellers knows the continuation of the story Shahrazâd had interrupted telling him the previous night; had any

of them known the end of the story, he would have told it to the king and the latter would have proceeded to behead Shahrazâd. Therefore, while the collection of stories titled *The Thousand and One Nights* draws on previous stories from various cultures (India, Persia, Moslem Egypt, Iraq and Syria, etc.), within the diegesis, Shahrazâd does not simply retell stories she would have culled from "the books, annals, and legends of preceding kings, and the stories, examples, and instances of bygone men and things," the "thousand books of histories relating to antique races and departed rulers," and "the works of the poets," but invents, in an untimely collaboration with the previous one thousand one-night wives of the king, the stories she tells King Shahrayâr.

<sup>96</sup> Lyn Hejinian, *The Language of Inquiry* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 251.

<sup>97</sup> "If you were stranded alone on a desert island, what is the one book you would take along with you?" My first choice is Ibn al-Arabî's *The Meccan Openings* (aka *The Meccan Illuminations*), this great multi-volume exegesis, aided by spiritual taste (*dharwq*) and unveiling (*kashf*), of one book, the Qur'ân. My second choice is *The Thousand and One Nights*—how many islands there are in this book, especially in the tales of Sindbad the Seaman! In the tale of his first voyage, we read: "O Captain, I am that Sindbad the Seaman who traveled with other merchants, and when the fish heaved and thou calledst to us, some saved themselves and others sank, I being one of them. But Allâh Almighty threw in my way a great tub of wood, of those the crew had used to wash withal, and the winds and waves carried me to this island ..." And in the tale of his second voyage, we read: "When I awoke, I found myself alone, for the ship had sailed and left me behind, nor had one of the merchants or sailors bethought himself of me. I searched the island right and left, but found neither man nor Jinn, whereat I was beyond measure troubled, and my gall was like to burst for stress of chagrin and anguish and concern, because I was left quite alone, without aught of worldly gear or meat or drink, weary and heartbroken."

<sup>98</sup> Borges, *Seven Nights*, 45.

<sup>99</sup> Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (London: Penguin, 1994), 1.

<sup>100</sup> Borges, *Seven Nights*, 50.

<sup>101</sup> Nietzsche writes of those who are sovereign that they "give their word as something that can be relied on because they know themselves strong enough to maintain it in the face of accidents, even 'in the face of fate'" (*On the Genealogy of Morals*). Is it the case that accidents

and the inversions of “fate” are obstacles to keeping the promise, or is it rather that one really promises only that which is likely to be upset by accidents, even by “fate” (in which case, one tempts fate by giving a promise)? That is, has one really ever promised other than the impossible? Have I not once promised a woman: *Until death do us part*, i.e., to love her beyond her natural demise until the labyrinthine realm of death with its over-turns parts us (as it did Orpheus and Euripides)?

<sup>102</sup> Thus, during *al-Qâ'im*'s occultation, were someone to read an edition that asserts itself to be the complete edition of *The Thousand and One Nights* and not die, we would have to deduce that at least one of its stories does not belong to the actual book, but is a spurious addition.

<sup>103</sup> Every work that deals with waiting in a genuine, essential sense is in some degree a messianic work, leads to or draws on messianism. That the messiah has not appeared on earth yet implies either that we have not yet learned to wait properly (in which case, what we are waiting for is to reach the proper state of waiting, the right way to wait); or else that the messiah's coming is not to earth, that the messiah has already appeared where he should go (see my book *Undying Love, or Love Dies* [The Post-Apollo Press, 2002], 30–34).

<sup>104</sup> Both my 15-minute video *Phantom Beirut: A Tribute to Ghassan Salhab*, 2002, and my 95-minute video *‘Âshûrâ: This Blood Spilled in My Veins*, 2002, include a bonus. And the 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. of *Distracted* (Tuumba, 2003) ends with a “Bonus: An Interview with Jalal Toufic, by Aaron Kunin.” I expect such bonuses to become more and more frequent and to be longer and longer in my coming video works. Henceforth what erstwhile would have been my titles would become my subtitles, and my only title would be: *Bonus*.

<sup>105</sup> In the Arab world, one repeatedly encounters the even more incongruous combination in the same person: poet and journalist. The difference between Khoury the writer and Khoury the journalist (he is the editor of the cultural supplement of the newspaper *an-Nahâr*, where he contributes a weekly page) does not correspond exactly to the difference between his novels and his journalism, since he is often a journalist in his novels, while he is sometimes a writer in his journalism.

<sup>106</sup> Fittingly, in Arabic *sawt*, whose primary sense is “a voice,” means also “a vote.”

<sup>107</sup> At one point toward the end of my video *The Sleep of Reason: This Blood Spilled in My Veins*, 2002, I was not vigilant enough against being the voice of the “voiceless”: if the quote of the first few lines from Rilke's *Duino Elegies* (“Who, if I cried out, would hear me among

the angels' / hierarchies? And evliên if one of them pressed me / suddenly against his heart: I would be consumed / in that overwhelming existence”) belongs to culture, it is not because it would instance erudition, but because it appears to be an attempt to give voice to a cow that is on the point of being slaughtered (is the cow really voiceless? “The seven heavens and the earth and all that is therein praise Him [God], and there is not a thing but hymneth His praise; but ye understand not their praise” [Qur'ân 17:44]). Nonetheless, I hope that in front of the previous cow being slaughtered, my video induced a suspension of the interior monologue and thus a kind of prayer. Prayer is not some discourse of supplication, but the suspension of the interior monologue, so that it is God Who talks and acts: “I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks.” One of the most beautiful prayers in Islam is “Hallaj's” *Anâ al-Haqq* (I am the Real [i.e., God]). Prayer is addressed to God, but by God.

<sup>108</sup> Gilles Deleuze: “In Nietzsche, there is the great opposition between Christ and Saint Paul ... [D.H.] Lawrence takes up the opposition once again, but this time he opposes Christ to the red John of Patmos, the author of the Apocalypse.... It is not that Lawrence simply imitates Nietzsche. Rather, he picks up an arrow, Nietzsche's arrow, and shoots it elsewhere, aims it in a different direction ... to another audience: ‘Nature propels the philosopher into mankind like an arrow; it takes no aim, but hopes the arrow will stick somewhere’ [Friedrich Nietzsche, “Schopenhauer as Educator,” *Untimely Meditations*], *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 37.

<sup>109</sup> From an entry in the projected preface, dated November 1887–March 1888, to *The Will to Power*. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1968), 3.

<sup>110</sup> Ibn 'Arabî: “... The shadow of a person appeared to me.... I rose from my bed and headed towards him ... I stared at him and recognized Abû 'Abd al-Rahmân al-Sulamî, whose spirit



had incarnated and whom God had sent to me out of mercy for me. ‘... If he [Moses] had been patient, he would have seen. As it happened, he was preparing to ask al-Khadir a million questions. All concerned facts that had happened to him and that he reproved when coming from al-Khadir” (Ibn ‘Arabî, *Les Illuminations de la Mecque*, ed. Michel Chodkiewicz [Paris: Albin Michel, 1997], 157–158). Cf. Michel Chodkiewicz: “The three acts that Moses reproaches al-Khadir—the boring of a hole in the ship, the slaying of the lad, and the failure to demand payment in exchange of a service—correspond to three episodes of the life of Moses that do not conform externally to the norm: the crossing of the Red Sea, the slaying of an Egyptian and the watering of the herd of the girls of Shu‘ayb (Jethro). Therefore al-Khadir does nothing but return to Moses his own image, but Moses judges al-Khadir and therefore himself according to his own state, which is the introduction of the law” (Ibid., 311my translation). Hence the encounter of Moses and al-Khadir provides a felicitous example of what Lacan tells “us” in his “Seminar on [Poe’s] ‘The Purloined Letter’”: “The sender, we tell you, receives from the receiver his own message in reverse form.”

<sup>111</sup> *Home Works: A Forum on Cultural Practices in the Region: Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria*, compiled by Christine Tohme and Mona Abu Rayyan (Beirut, Lebanon: the Lebanese Association for Plastic Arts Ashkal Alwan, 2003), 99. A viewer can certainly have an inkling of Gnosticism through a film such as Andy and Larry Wachowski’s *The Matrix*, 1999, with its transmundane message informing the protagonist, a computer programmer, that the world in which he exists is not real, but a simulation, and that it was created not by God, but by a demiurge (later called “The Architect”); that those he sees around do not necessarily have the same sort of being he has but are agents of the demiurge; and that he, being an exile in this simulation, should liberate himself and head, like many a Gnostic, to the “desert of the real.” But a viewer can also have such a Gnostic inkling while watching the incredible interview with architect Zaha Hadid broadcast on the private Lebanese station Future TV on 17 October 2003. During the first section of the interview, when, notwithstanding his flagrant sexism, ignorance, and stupidity, I still considered the interviewer as essentially part of the same world to which Hadid and myself belong, I felt the kind of shame Deleuze writes about: “I was very struck by all the passages in Primo Levi where he explains that Nazi camps have given us ‘a shame at being human.’ ... even the survivors of the camps had to make compromises with it [Nazism], if only to survive. There’s the shame of there being men who became Nazis; the shame of being

unable, not seeing how, to stop it; the shame of having compromised with it... And we can feel shame at being human in utterly trivial situations, too: in the face of too great a vulgarization of thinking, in the face of TV entertainment, of a ministerial speech, of ‘jolly people’ gossiping” (Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 172; Cf. “R comme Résistance” in *L’Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze* [Gilles Deleuze’s ABC primer], with Claire Parnet, directed by Pierre-André Boutang, 1996). The shame that I felt while watching this TV interview was in part that of being an Arab in the beginning years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But soon a shift happened and now, in a Gnostic moment, I felt that the interviewer was radically alien to me, devoid of any spiritual light (*The Matrix* is a humanist [all too humanist] film, for it assumes that all humans—even those who betray the messiah, the awaited One—have some spark of divine life in them).

<sup>112</sup> See <http://www.hrw.org/press/2001/11/miltribs1115.htm>. See also “U.S.: New Military Commissions Threaten Rights, Credibility,” the letter Human Rights Watch addressed on 15 November 2001 to President George W. Bush, available at <http://www.hrw.org/press/2001/11/miltribsltr1115.htm>

<sup>113</sup> Given how little journalists actually read books, including the books of the author they intend to interview, I envision answering some future untimely interviews in their entirety with quotes from my published books.

<sup>114</sup> If I exclude my work on ruins, I find it disappointing that Lebanon, the site of fifteen years of civil war and two invasions that devastated it and resulted in so many ruins, has produced so little thought-provoking theoretical, literary, and artistic work on ruins that when a Western architect decides to research the subject, the Lebanese do not appear—and justly so—in his bibliography.

<sup>115</sup> *Hiroshima mon amour*, text by Marguerite Duras for the film by Alain Resnais (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 20.

<sup>116</sup> Charlotte Delbo, *Days and Memory*, translated and with a Preface by Rosette Lamont (Marlboro, Vermont: The Marlboro Press, 1990), 4.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>118</sup> It is best to project the trilogy’s three videos on the same day in two sessions with a half-hour break between them. First session: *The Sleep of Reason: This Blood Spilled in My Veins* (32 minutes) and *Credits Included: A Video in Red and Green* (46 minutes). Second session: *‘Āshûrâ: This Blood Spilled in My Veins* (95 minutes).



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## Jalal Toufic

Jalal Toufic is a writer, film theorist, and video artist. He is the author of *Distracted* (Station Hill, 1991; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Tuumba, 2003), *(Vampires): An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film* (Station Hill, 1993; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Post-Apollo, 2003), *Over-Sensitivity* (Sun & Moon, 1996), *Forthcoming* (Atelos, 2000), and *Undying Love, or Love Dies* (Post-Apollo, 2002). His videos and mixed-media works, which include *Credits Included: A Video in Red and Green* (1995), *Radical Closure Artist with Bandaged Sense Organ* (1997), *Overlooking the Unsightly to See* (2000), *The Sleep of Reason: This Blood Spilled in My Veins* (2002), *‘Āshûrâ’: This Blood Spilled in My Veins* (2002), *Saving Face* (2003), *I Am the Martyr Comrade Jamâl Sâtî* (2003), *This Is Not to Say that This Is Not the Case* (2004), *A Special Effect Termed “Time”*; or, *Filming Death at Work* (2005), and *The Lamentations Series: The Ninth Night and Day* (2005), have been presented in New York (Artists Space); San Francisco (the San Francisco Cinematheque, the Lab and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts); Berkeley (Pacific Film Archive); Los Angeles (UCLA Film and TV Archive); Barcelona (Fundació Antoni Tàpies); Rotterdam (Witte de With); Brussels (Palais des Beaux-Arts); London (London International Festival of Theatre); Berlin (House of World Cultures and BüroFriedrich); Munich (Galerie Tanit); Toronto (YYZ Artists’ Outlet); Marseille (centre international de poésie); Athens (the National Museum of Contemporary Art); Sao Paulo (Videobrasil); Umeå, Sweden (BildMuseet); Prague (FUTURA Centre for Contemporary Art); Bologna (Arte Fiera); Cairo (Townhouse Gallery); Jerusalem (Al-Ma’mal Foundation for Contemporary Art and Khalil Sakakini Cultural Centre Foundation); Beirut; and most recently at the 16<sup>th</sup> International Documentary Filmfestival Amsterdam (IDFA) in a “Focus Jalal Toufic” program. He co-edited the special *Discourse* issue *Gilles Deleuze: A Reason to Believe in this World*, and edited the special *Discourse* issues *Middle Eastern Films Before Thy Gaze Returns to Thee* and *Mortals to Death* as well as the *Review of Photographic Memory* (Arab Image Foundation, 2004). Toufic has taught at the University of California at Berkeley, California Institute of the Arts, USC, San Francisco State University, and, in Amsterdam, DasArts and the Rijksakademie. He is currently the Head of the MA program in Film/Video Studies at Holy Spirit University, Lebanon. Website: <http://www.jalaltoufic.com>.

What was Orpheus dying to tell his wife, Eurydice? What was Judy dying to tell her beloved, Scottie, in Hitchcock's *Vertigo*? What were the previous one-night wives of King Shahrayâr dying to tell Shahrazâd? What was the Christian God "dying" to tell us? What were *the faces* of the candidates in the 2000 parliamentary election in Lebanon "dying" to tell voters and non-voters alike? While writing (*Vampires*): *An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film* and *Undying Love, or Love Dies*, I, a mortal to death, was dying to tell these books' readers and myself about diegetic silence-over, which produces a *dead stop* and reveals the occasional natural immobilization of the living as merely a variety of movement; and an unreality that sometimes behaves in a filmic manner (for example, lapses in hypnosis, schizophrenia, and undeath permit editing in reality), inducing the undead to wonder: "Am I in a film?"; as well as a significant number of other anomalies. This new book contains two or three additional things I am dying to tell its readers as well as the poet Lyn Hejinian and myself.

Shakespeare, the myth of Orpheus, Sufi poetry and the Qur'an are not just touched upon lightly here [*Undying Love, or Love Dies*] but deeply dissected, rearranged and returned to their transcendent order within Toufic's amorous meditations. By turns mournful and magical, the book ... seems timeless in breadth, convincing in tone and earned in its broad field of reference.... Set pieces include a breathless re-creation of the drama of Orpheus's ascent from hell (he is a much more melancholic, flawed and regretful hero in Toufic's telling) and a ludic, yet compelling discourse on the Islamic creation myth.

*Publishers Weekly*, March 2003

This year has already seen the publication of Toufic's *Undying Love, or Love Dies* (Post Apollo), a book that among other things unforgettably re-writes various versions of the Orpheus myth, as well as the release of a "revised and expanded" version of (*Vampires*): *An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film* (also from Post Apollo), first published in 1993, and written for "mortals to death." (*Vampires*) is a sort of sequel to Toufic's 1991 debut *Distracted*, explicitly written for the living and here becoming what Toufic calls an "untimely collaboration" with the author of the original edition and of (*Vampires*) too.... There is nothing else in literature like it [*Distracted*].

*Publishers Weekly*, November 2003

Toufic is at the core of a small but staunch group of Beirut artists who have—collectively and separately—made a strong case for there being an intellectually rigorous, critically engaged, and ultra-contemporary platform for cultural practice developing in Lebanon and in the region.... Toufic is one of the most active and ambitious figures in the Arab world who—book by book—has endeavored to sculpt a critical, theoretical language of the Arab world.

*The Daily Star*, Lebanon, 21 August 2004

