



UNDYING LOVE

or Love Dies

Jalal Toufic



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Undying Love,
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You have the nerve to tell me that you love me! How come then you screamed at me twice outside a café?

Said by a woman to her husband who had followed her into death

Jalal Toufic, Los Angeles

6/2/1998

To Bernard Tschumi, New York:

I am beginning to get involved in an amorous relationship with a young woman who is doing her MFA in architecture. When I inquired who were her favorite architects, the first name she mentioned was yours. I checked out *The Manhattan Transcripts*.

I was in Auckland, New Zealand, two months ago, on my way to Christchurch for a teaching position interview. It was my first visit to that city. Again I was sensitized to the sensuality of women after a long hiatus of no longer feeling it in familiar cities. We go to foreign cities in search of sensuality and possibly love. And vice versa: we *get* in love in search of making the city in which we reside unfamiliar. All love affairs happen in foreign cities. Two weeks after returning to Los Angeles, I was offered the position at Christchurch. Two months later I had to decide whether to accept the offer or stay in Los Angeles, where I was starting to fall in love. The decision I have to make is presently between two foreign cities.

The architect of Woody Allen's *Hannah and Her Sisters* drives his two attractive women companions around Manhattan, showing them his favorite buildings in that city. Is he in love? No, the city regarding which he acts as a guide has not become tinged with foreignness. Does the city become foreign through the other love stories in the film? No. Has Woody Allen failed here in his depiction of love? Not if his main love in this film is for the city itself.

When single, one explores a city, its museums, cafes, and bookstores with a future lover in mind as a companion. Having found her, for a while one takes

her to some of these places. But then, soon enough, love gives rise to a tendency to seclusion with the beloved away from everything else. He could not stand the cat in her house; the world was still there through that pet. She ended up acquiescing and getting rid of it.

Since they both usually *stayed up late*, they called each other around midnight. She did not ask him: "Did you dream of me last night?" He did not, with the provocation of seduction, tell her, "Tonight, you'll dream of me," but rather: "Have pleasant dreams." He was relieved when she answered, "I don't remember my dreams": he would be spared being asked to listen to dreams and even to interpret them—he was ill-equipped to do that. Little did he know that he would soon have to start the interpretation of insomnia. It took him three hours to fall asleep following their fifteen-minute phone conversation. He had lost interest in anything else beside her, even sleeping—he thus became acutely aware that sleep is not a rest from activity, but one more activity. If waiting is a non-accidental topos of love,¹ it is because love divests us from interest in all other possible activities and in all objects other than the beloved. After a long sleepless night next to her in slumber, he left her a brief note: "You have beautiful eyes—even when closed."

Index: Love: of the city; as an exploration of the city; as seclusion from and disinterest in the city.

Days on end have passed without her giving him the chance to see her. Instead, they had numerous phone conversations. She told him in the last of these that she had dreamt of him the previous night. She could find time to be with him in her dreams but not in her wakefulness!

At long last, he was with her again, this time in his apartment. They watched Chris Marker's *La Jetée*, which early on shows images of a Paris devastated by a third world war. Los Angeles and the world seemed very remote during the viewing of the film, and *continued to do so* after he turned on the light at the end of the film. Two of the greatest cinematic love stories, Resnais/Duras' *Hiroshima mon amour* and Marker's *La Jetée*, take place against the backdrop of the destruction of the city and possibly of the world. Every love of a man and a woman takes place in seclusion from the world; every love of a man and a woman has for horizon the destruction of the world since they can restart the human race (this is one of the ways love is linked to death). Noah must be a great lover (a subject yet to be explored).

Soon after she left, having giving him an appointment for the next day, the night seemed to extend inordinately: it was no longer *his* night, but a vast night, one that uncharacteristically included not only daylight, since it now extended to the entirety of the Earth with its different time zones; but moreover the experiences of all the others, including his beloved. Since the single possible event that could happen to him was to meet her again, it was going to be an eventless night; nonetheless, he intensely felt that so much had to take place for this night to pass at all and therefore for him to meet her again the next day: around 360,000 people would have to be born, and around 150,000 persons would have to die; so many people would have to write desperate letters then tear them up; so many people would have to commit suicide, etc. In waiting, time is for the most part not mine but others', and consequently my ability to reduce the time of genuine waiting is minimal. From a situation of being secluded together away from the world, suddenly the world was there

between him and her. With the current world population estimated at six billion, I would think that it is much more difficult to wait in the twenty first century than millennia ago—so many more experiences have to take place before the appointed time of the meeting. What happens if we all waited at the same time? If there were no other sentient beings, time would no longer progress at all: it would be the end of time. Since the messiah will come at the end of time, the second coming of Jesus Christ, and the coming of the mahdī and of the Jewish messiah will happen when all mankind starts to wait genuinely.

Love brings about a stark alternation of the couple's seclusion from the world (the place where the two lovers are secluded turning into some sort of Noah's ark), and the yearning lover's implicit connection with everybody else, without whom time would not advance to the date of the next appointment.

While writing this tonight, am I not serving to advance some other person's desperate waiting for his beloved?

"I love you." "You sometimes correct me. If you really loved me, you should, or rather you would accept me as I am." How can he accept her as she is if she did not fully accept herself, as evidenced by the circumstance that she had an unconscious? He was unsure whether she was asking him to love her more than she loved herself or to love her as only alive and awake. If it was the latter, he could not satisfy her demand, for he was quite aware that he and she were mortal.

The real demand of love: Love me more than I, who has an unconscious, love myself; or else: Love me as a mortal, love me to death, therefore as other

than myself (*je est un autre* [Rimbaud]). In the case of the jealous, the latter demand would take the following form: "Since I am jealous, you should love no other one; but since love should continue even beyond death, not be a mere one-life stand, you should also accept me as I am not, for when dead, I am not."²

"Spoil me: Say, 'I will love only you.'" "I cannot say this to a mortal."

"Don't rush me." "I won't rush you beyond the manner in which the 'I love you' hurries you so that it would not be a redundant description, but a performative. It may take you years to say it, but when you do, it will be in an untimely manner, too early, at least the first time. Since the 'I love you' is not just a description, but part of love, love is untimely."

There are joyous events that are totally part of the present. But there are others, memorable, instantly detached like images, that give one the sensation that they will be among the ones with which one has to deal during the work of mourning—if it ever happens. There is thus a presentiment of suffering from the time that they happen. A relation is innocent and felicitous not necessarily till a misfortune or a squabble occurs but till such a memorable joyous event.

She was pleased that his love for her did not make him bored by everything else, since such boredom would have implied that he was still invested enough in people and things to interpret them as the usual.

He wanted to be secluded with her temporally, from the other moments. "What time is it now?" He would have liked to be able to answer, in a Dōgen-like manner: "It is Jennifer and Jalal on Los Feliz Avenue, Los Angeles."³ While spacetime itself starts at the Big Bang and comes to an end at the singularities of black holes and, if there is one, at the Big Crunch, what takes place in it never comes to an end, does not pass. "Say that time and space will come to end, but never say that our time together on Los Feliz Avenue, LA, will cease." The more he felt that such temporal seclusion was eluding him, the more he wanted to be secluded with her spatially, from the rest of the world—such spatial seclusion being largely a meager compensation for the temporal seclusion's failure.

"You are falling in love merely to escape your solitude." "One loves and marries to counter one's solitude, but not so much in life—a plebeian endeavor—as in death."⁴

Human love implies death, not only through sexual reproduction, which introduced and programmed organic demise, but also because it implies either resurrecting the beloved or following the spouse into the death realm. When deciding whether or not to marry the woman I love, I have to ask myself not only: "Do I desire to 'have and to hold, from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health'⁵" this woman; but also: "Am I willing to both no longer expect her to resurrect me and desist from trying to resurrect her, opting instead to be parted from her by death?" The extra attachment in life that marriage enacts ("they will become one flesh"

[Genesis 2:24]; "the two will become one flesh" [Mark 10:8]) is countered by a no less intense parting in death. It is fitting that *the lost one* is a synonym for *the dead one* (*Lose*: from Middle English *losen* from Old English *losian*, to perish), since one is lost to others and to oneself in death's labyrinthine realm. *Being lost together*, which was one of the main reasons why they traveled together, is one sort of experience they certainly could not have in undeath. While as long as one limits oneself to life, love is a closer state to erring than marriage, the opposite is the case when it comes to death, since marriage requires the spouse to follow his wife into the labyrinthine realm of death.⁶

At 36, I, an Iraqi whose records, like those of his father and his siblings, were erased in the Iraq of Saddam Hussein, continue to travel with a Lebanese *laissez-passer*.⁷ Will marriage to the American woman I love provide me with some security? Yes, through the eventuality of acquiring a Green Card. But it also will add the mortal threat of *till death do us part*.

Jalal Toufic, Los Angeles
7/9/1999

Jennifer, Los Angeles:

Other than to one's untimely collaborators, to whom does one write books? Is it not to those who have no address? To the homeless; and to the dead: the worldless, who have no forwarding address, thus to whom every missive is a dead letter. To others, above all the beloved, one should write letters.

Are betrothals outdated at this stage in history? Certainly not, at least not one of their predilections: letter-writing. Is it surprising that two of the great epis-

tolary writers, Kierkegaard and Kafka, did not "go beyond" the betrothal stage to marriage? Is your colleague Raymond writing letters to his fiancée, and vice versa? Judging from the case of Kafka, who used protracted correspondence with his fiancée Felice Bauer as a way to delay the marriage and eschew the stage of living together, the appropriate time to write letters, and thus of betrothal, is not before marriage but sometime during it: spouses have entered the betrothal stage when they start writing letters to each other. In my future letters to you, I will type everything except your name, using a speech recognition program to add it. My letters will thus be signed with my pronunciation of your name.

Yours
Jalal

PS: Driving with "eyes wide shut," like a somnambulist, to San Francisco.

Jalal Toufic, San Francisco
7/16/1999

Jennifer, Los Angeles:

They journeyed together when happy (to Copenhagen [?] ...). They traveled alone when unhappy, in order to write letters to each other. That has always been one of the major reasons to travel, at least for me: to write letters. Basically, one does not write letters because one is abroad, one goes abroad to write letters. One day it will be possible to leave to Lebanon or New Zealand and remain virtually in touch with people in the USA. Will people then still write letters?

Jalal Toufic, San Francisco

7/17/1999

Jennifer, Los Angeles:

He was considered a bad hypnotist, not because he failed in his inductions, but because he so loved to see someone sleeping that he did not ask any questions once the induction had succeeded, but let him or her completely fall asleep.

Many people recount their dreams to us, yet throughout the relationship, even during its worst moments, we remain on conscious grounds with them. But others forget their dreams, do not recount a single one to us, and yet, at a certain point, drag us into a dreamlike episode where the unconscious is manifestly at work.

The sleeping body totally in time (Warhol's *Sleep*), while behind the face, the dream with its unconscious processes that function in a timeless realm. I envision making a two-monitor installation with the title *Sleeping Beauty* (aka *Still Life with Dreams*): on one monitor, images of you sleeping; on the other, narration and notes about the dreamlike state you made me go through.

Not yet two months into their marriage, his wife suddenly changed drastically, became aloof, began to frequently come home very late at night, and did not make the least effort to avoid inconsistencies in her summary indications of where and in the company of whom she had been. One night she called him from her ex-lover's apartment at 11 PM and asked him to come drive her home as she had inadvertently dropped her keys in the elevator shaft. In the car she exclaimed: "How strange: had I intentionally aimed to make the keys

go through the slit in the elevator floor in one attempt, I would not have been able to accomplish that!" The following Monday she left for work notwithstanding that it was the fifth of July. He called there: no one answered. Shortly, he stood next to the door and knocked: nobody opened. That office had the deserted aura of the cities in which the somnambulist dead man wanders in Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* and Buñuel's *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*. Her reaction to his attempt to salvage the marriage was a curt: "It is too late." He responded: "But all of history, even more all possibilities will happen, according to the physicist Frank Tipler, between $10^{-10^{10}}$ seconds and $10^{-10^{123}}$ seconds before the singularity of the Big Crunch. Both you and I will be resurrected, relive our love story again and again in the seemingly too late until we will its eternal recurrence." She wept that night and kissed him tenderly. But then the next day she was back to her maddening behavior. For a while he turned hyper-suspicious, lived in a state of exacerbated interpretation. But, one gloomy day, he no longer interpreted anything, as if he were dreaming. Between these two modes was a blatant surfacing of the unconscious on her part in frequent occurrences of *objective chance*, *parapraxes*, and prophetic utterances that came true. These anomalous manifestations of the unconscious intimated to him that he was no longer dealing with a betraying living person but with a dead one, who is unfaithful primarily to herself, only derivatively and secondarily to others. During all that period he did not see her with others, with whom such frequent surfacing of the unconscious did not happen, but only when she came back from work: therefore he did not see her alive. One night, while putting on make-up to go out with her friends, she blurted out provocatively: "I feel alive with others." "You mean with other

men." Her response was a gloating "Yes." His few friends were disconcerted that their proud friend would continue to tolerate such behavior from her. His response was: "She's dead to me" (did this mean that she was no longer anything to him? Or did it rather indicate that she was approximating how death would change her?). If he was to follow her to death, he had to die before dying, and there is no pride in death: "'Say not a word,' he [the ghost of Achilles] answered, 'in death's favor; I would rather be a paid servant in a poor man's house and be above ground than king of kings among the dead'" (Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book XI). One day while she was at work, he saw her specter flit by toward the bedroom. He stood transfixed for a while, unsure whether he had really seen it or hallucinated it. He ran toward his study. She was standing before a bookcase. She had the countenance of his wife as he had known her up to a few weeks earlier—his alive wife. The depersonalization he underwent at that point was due not only to the weirdness of what was transpiring, but also to the circumstance that her specter was not a symptom of unfinished business (as was the case with that of Hamlet's father), but was an aside, something he could hear and see no longer as a participant in the events, but as a spectator. Through her specter, what persisted of her consciousness was trying to reach him briefly across an unconscious that had come to the surface. In the undead realm, we will encounter not only the erstwhile living's double but possibly also his ghost as the dead's aside. The aside of Eurydice in a theatrical adaptation would take the form of a ghost rather than of her facing and talking to the audience. He saw himself open his mouth and move his lips. The specter disappeared. When he recovered a minimum composure and thought back on the episode, and notwithstanding his

apprehension that he was losing his mind, he felt a sort of happiness. He called his wife's number at work. Why did she answer in such an off-putting manner? Was she having a relationship with a colleague and wanted the latter to reckon that her marriage was breaking? "Are you alone?" She did not answer his question, but asked him: "Are you alone?" For a moment he had the paranoid feeling that she can see the apartment and that her ghost was there. He was unable to immediately answer, first turning instinctively to check. There was nobody there. He was not assured for that matter. After he hung up, he walked through the house to make sure. He had the impression that it had turned into a ruin, and not just because he had in the previous two weeks, in one bungled action after another, broken three of the antiques he had, and let a piece of coal from the waterpipe's head fall on one of his Persian carpets. A dwelling in which a ghost appears becomes a ruin not gradually, consequent of being deserted by its frightened occupants, but immediately and even if its occupants remain in it, maintaining it. He who had lived many years in civil-war Beirut and witnessed a number of the sections of that city reduced to rubble and many of its buildings physically turn into ruins was now, in Los Angeles, witnessing the seemingly intact house where he lived with his wife insidiously turn into a ruin. When his wife returned home from work, he asked her: "Can I touch you?" "You should know by now, having already written three books, that the correct question is: 'May I touch you?'" She did not seem to notice any new change in the state of the house. His few friends were worried that if he did not soon leave her, he would end up killing her. So when they heard of her death, the first thought that came to their minds was that he had indeed murdered her. But, notwithstanding her provocative behavior, how

could he kill her if he suspected that his love was such that he would follow her into death? Anyway, if anyone was in danger of getting killed, it was him not her, since often when she passed through his mind, he did a bungled action, injuring himself. During her burial, he attacked anyone—even old widows—who was visiting a tomb and placing flowers on it. How he despised these mourners: they neither resurrected the dead, as Jesus Christ did; nor followed them into undeath, as Orpheus did, but just brought flowers to their graves and prayed for them. One of his friends objected: "You are being quite unfair to people by setting such standards for them. Not everyone is a divinity or a hero with supernatural gifts." Another friend admonished him: "I would understand and appreciate your melancholia had your wife died in a mortal car accident that was not her fault, since *till death do us part* has always really meant: till natural death, till death from old age do us part, or else till initiatory death, death before dying, as in mystical states, schizophrenia, etc., do us part. But since natural death parted you from your spouse, you should desist from your melancholia. To persist in melancholia is not to go further in your promise, to keep it to excess, but rather to fail to fulfill it, for *till death do us part* was a promise not only to love your spouse till death, but to thenceforth stop holding on to her." "It betrays cheapness to interpret *till death do us part* as: till natural demise do us part. Death parts us twice: once organically, at its limit; the other, within its labyrinthine realm. To love one's spouse *till death do us part* is to love her beyond her natural demise until the labyrinthine realm of death with its over-turns parts the two spouses. Orpheus is the model spouse." He who had said about his maddening wife, "She is dead to me," subsequently followed her into the underworld when she died to all others too.

For Larry Ochs, "*the musics of the spouse*"

(The dedication of Lyn Hejinian's *The Cold of Poetry*)

The dead alternated between the diegetic silence-over they briefly heard before it froze them, and the racket of the voices-over they overheard frequently inside their heads. Presently, for a spell, they experienced a different kind of silence than the one that occasionally froze them, for during his descent into Hades to bring his wife back to life, Orpheus played his music, thus silencing the pandemonium of voices-over filling the realm of undeath. He also danced, thus progressing into that realm overlaid on a less dreadful background, until he reached his destination, Pluto, the god of the underworld. A throng of the recently dead was standing there with their backs to him. He called his wife's name: *Eurydice*. None of that throng turned. Yet Pluto assured him that she was one of that throng. He was then told that *Eurydice* will accompany him but that he should not cast a backward glance in her direction until both had reached the life realm—otherwise she would be pushed back into Hades and this time definitively. Although her back was to him, she recognized him by the music he had played, and by the state of intense listening it produced in her. She consciously felt grateful to him as long as he played music, thus silencing the voices tormenting her. In the etherless space of undeath, she could not judge how near or far he was—only touch could assure her of his proximity. He felt a hand grip his right hand, the one he was on the point of using to resume plucking the lyre strings now that the god of the underworld had finished his instruction. Her hand was so cold, his hand soon became numb. So soon enough along their ascent, he was no longer sure she was still following him. He turned to check, but his turn was overturned

by an over-turn. He continued his progress toward life with the hope that she was still following him. He wondered why Pluto had instructed him not to look back, if anyway such a turn was pointless. Pluto's instruction to Orpheus not to turn applied only to one critical moment: when he had already stepped into the life realm but Eurydice had not yet done so, since during the rest of the ascent in Hades, Orpheus' turns would be overturned by an over-turn anyway, and once Eurydice was to the side of life, she would have become his familiar, living wife. The underworld God's stipulation was intended to spare Orpheus seeing his wife as dead, and consequently to preclude the eventuality that his repugnance of her then repulse her back into Hades. Having just crossed back into life, he began to hear hysterical laughter seemingly coming from her. He also heard voices in his head warning him that he was wasting his one chance of raising his wife from the dead by leading the wrong woman back to life. Had there been some grave mistake? Were the gods of the underworld playing a hoax on him? He turned to check. This time his turn was not overturned, so that he was now actually looking in the dead woman's direction. What he saw took him aback. While he did not necessarily expect gratitude from the woman he was raising from the dead, he also did not expect such a vindictive look.⁸ She looked exactly like a maenad. "You followed me even here! But I committed suicide by poison just to end our marriage. What would it take to get rid of you?" Her face expressed disgust and derision. Shortly, she asked him: "Why did you come here?" Unable to recognize his dead wife in her, he failed to immediately answer. "Do you love me?" Was it that impertinent of her to ask such a question of someone who had gone even into death for her? Can the dead be loved? No, though one can

descend into Hades for them out of love, to get them back to life. As he again did not immediately answer, she responded: "Good, at least you did not cantingly reply 'Yes.'" Given her horror of Hades, why was she behaving in this manner that was bound to induce Orpheus to repulse her into the undeath realm? Was it in exasperation with him for following her into Hades when she had purportedly committed a veiled suicide to get rid of him? Was it rather because when she repeatedly called him in terror, he did not turn (his turn was overturned by an over-turn)? But she too did not turn when he had called her (her turn also was overturned by an over-turn). Was it for not continuing to play his lyre music during the ascent—notwithstanding that he could not have continued doing so while she held his right hand? He had to avoid thinking: "This is not Eurydice, merely a shadowy semblance of her," for the moment he thought that, she would be pushed back into Hades given that he was allowed to bring back to life only his wife. How could he manage that? Suddenly, out of the blue, she said: "What is this music?"⁹ In the midst of one's activity, one is sometimes virtually listening, neither to one's internal monologue, which is itself an activity; nor, when in a psychotic state, to the voices, but to a music outside the coordinates of time and space.¹⁰ For a moment, Orpheus recognized the dead woman as his wife. Why did he not play his music then to maintain her enlivened state and his recognition of her? Given that lovers and spouses do not believe in accidental death, was he taking his revenge on her for betraying him by dying prematurely from a snakebite? Already, she was again screaming obscenities. He saw her recede. It was not his turn as such that repulsed her back into Hades, but his repugnance on witnessing her vengeful *jouissance*; his revengefulness for her betraying him

before natural death had parted them; and his dread that while looking at her after her resurrection, he would sometimes see layered over her that other he perceived in Hades. Pluto had expected this to happen; to someone who could withstand recognizing his wife as an obscene, ungrateful creature, no injunction not to look back would have been given. As she receded, Orpheus' melancholic love made him again play music. The music silenced the voices, her hysterical laughter, and the obscenities she was screaming. She nostalgically listened and was transfigured. Again, he recognized her as his wife. Although one of the effects of Orphic music is detachment (from any ongoing activity, to be listening), this music induces an intense nostalgia, even if one is hearing it for the first time, since being "a copy of the will itself" (Schopenhauer), thus outside the coordinates of both time and space, it has affected one in the virtual past.¹¹ Nothing can produce as much as music we are hearing for the first time such a sense of nostalgia. Eurydice had virtually, in the virtual past, listened to what Orpheus was presently playing, and thus was detached even in the midst of her previous screaming obscenities and hysterical taunting.¹² Unfortunately while transfigured Eurydice now stood listening, the ground beneath her moved past frozen figures away from Orpheus and life. Orpheus regretted that he did not disengage his hand from hers when she first gripped it—however initially and momentarily cruel this would have seemed—leading her back to life instead through his music as she somnambulistically followed it "to be listening"; or else that he did not on her letting go of his hand as he crossed into life resume playing his music before he turned toward her. He repeatedly called her, but her turn was each time overturned by an over-turn so that she continued to move in the same direc-

tion, away from him, ever more superficially into the labyrinthine realm of undeath, which consists of one infinitely involuting line, thus is all border. Orpheus, who ventured into death to get back his wife, only to hear her question his love, mock him and scream at him, and who turned his head back toward her once he reached the life realm just to make sure that he was not wasting his one chance to save her by raising from the dead the wrong person, nonetheless felt guilt, and was subsequently depressed. He continued to wait for her reincarnation¹³ until, one day, he was attacked by three maenads. Had the first two not infuriated him with their repeated taunting, his depressive guilt, which demanded punishment, would have dissuaded him from defending himself by playing music when they threw their incisive projectiles at him. The latter stopped in their tracks, to be listening to his music.¹⁴ Why is it he did not do the same when confronted by the third maenad, who taunted him more insolently than the other two? Because he perceived in her his dead wife. Some time later, Eurydice went through reincarnation to evade the realm of undeath. The head of the mortally dismembered Orpheus sang: the words disclosed the ineluctable coming karmic series of presents, while the music carried by the voice alleviated the virtual past coexistent with these.¹⁵

It is strange how a mortal car accident does not permit the parting of spouses, but an "It's finished," even one said after much flip flopping, does. Her "It's finished" did not then elicit from me the reiterative qualification: "It's over"—she is unworthy of even the fancy of eternal recurrence.

They had gone together in September 1998 to the Chaim Soutine exhibit at

the Los Angeles County Museum. She had seen him scribble something while standing in front of *Little Pastry Cook*, 1921. She had asked him to show her what he had written. For once he had acquiesced, possibly apologetically for becoming oblivious of her presence in front of the magnificent exhibited works. "Soutine's human figures are usually painted in mundane colors. It is behind them, in the guise of a curtain, or around them, as their clothes, that one sees the red associated aesthetically with animal flesh. This red is so lush and intense that it surrounds the figure with a worldly, material halo. It is through these halos that I feel an affinity between his work and religious art." After finishing reading, she had responded: "Some day you'll discover my aura." He had not understood what she had meant. But now that they had separated, he felt her aura: that of her absence.

At the beginning of the love relationship, he wanted to be secluded with her to the exclusion of the city, Los Angeles. During the crisis in their relationship, he would feel a pang whenever he saw a car of the same make, year and color as hers while she was away at work or to visit a friend. In the aftermath of the divorce, he was almost sure that he would not run into her in the sprawling megalopolis, yet simultaneously felt that the whole city was associated with her.

Near the beginning of Antonioni and Wenders' *Beyond the Clouds*, a man walks in a fog-covered town: Walking in the present with the guidance of one's memory of the whereabouts of streets and buildings; walking in the present in memory.

How invested in the mass, the herd, is the aristocrat's aloofness when it is compared to the decahexis of the world and therefore of people in depression (and schizophrenia).

10/2/1999.

Nostalgia is not related to the past as such, since the latter is preserved, did not vanish; but to the past's karmic effects: nostalgia is linked to the future.

10/2/1999.

10/2/1999.

When it comes to matters of the heart (*qalb* in Arabic, which as a verbal noun means "reversal, overturn, transformation, change;" from the same root is *taqallub*: fluctuation), the diary seems an ideal medium, documenting the constant changes in one's feelings and thoughts—*Diary of a Jilted Lover*. Such a diary will contain blank entries reducible to the date, each a trace of a pang.

10/3/1999.

He could not sit still except in public spaces with constant circulation, otherwise he was on the move, driving: to witness things continually replacing one another and be convinced that this is a law of the world. He shortly envisioned himself doing what he had witnessed the jilted lover do in a number of films

(Woody Allen's *Play It Again, Sam*; Wong Kar-Wai's *Chungking Express*): calling all the women on whom he once had a crush, as well as those of his ex-college students who had a crush on him, to check who might go out on a date with him. But he did none of that. What happened instead was that in one weekend he ran into many of these women. It was as if he had in that short span to improbably compensate and thus reestablish the normal probabilities of coming across these women in the year during which he was largely secluded with her. A vicious circle: for him to forget, time had to cover the past with deposits of happenings; but for time to pass rather than stagnate, he had to cathect occurrences, invest energy and attention in them (as part of the work of mourning [Freud]). He was presently unable to do that. Moreover, so much interpretation was exerted during the break up of the relationship, he could no longer deploy enough of it to see the usual—and so perceived indifferently only the generalized unusual. He was suffering from both the stagnation of time and the absence of boredom. He imagined someone saying to her at some point in the future, "He is over you," and for proof presenting her with a surreptitious photograph of him yawning.

He believed that he had gotten over her when his bungled actions no longer had anything to do with her. But he soon discovered that he was still not done with her since he continued to spiritually degenerate. How much dulling of one's spiritual sensibility has to happen, how base one has to become in order not to be crushed by one's betrayed love is an indication of how intense that love was (it was different with his first love: he was far less spiritual then, so he became depressed rather than debased when that love ended). He thought

now that he fathomed why Iblīs created so many base manners of viewing things and consequently of action. It was *out* of love of God, in both senses: by cause of love and as a result of being cut off from love. "So, when I have made him [Ādam] and have breathed into him of My Spirit, do ye [angels] fall down, prostrating yourselves unto him. So the angels fell prostrate, all of them together save Iblīs. He refused to be among the prostrate. He said: O Iblīs! What aileth thee that thou art not among the prostrate? He said: I am not one to prostrate myself unto a mortal whom Thou hast created out of potter's clay of black mud altered!" (Qur'ān 15:29-33). "What the hell am I doing?" passed through Iblīs' mind as he refused to prostrate to Ādam. Two of the great Ṣūfīs became the *devil's advocates* through fervent and spiritual love of God. The Ṣūfī al-Ḥallāj: "There were no lawful declarations except those of Iblīs and Muḥammad" and "there had been no monotheist (*muwaḥḥid*) comparable to Iblīs among the inhabitants of heaven" ("Ṭā' Sīn al-Azal wal-Ilṭibās," *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭawāsīn*); and the Ṣūfī Aḥmad Ghazālī: "He who does not learn *tawḥīd* [profession of God's Unity] under Iblīs is only a *zindīq* [heretic]!" *Hell is paved with good intentions*, the first of which was Iblīs' refusal to fall prostrate to Ādam out of *tawḥīd*, rigorous, fervent monotheism; and out of exclusive, jealous love for God.¹⁶ Should Iblīs, who felt then all the negative series of mystical states in Sufism—*qabḍ* (constraint), *tafriqa* (separation), *khawf* (fear), etc.—have known what great Sufis such as al-Ḥallāj have discerned, that even the station of distance is already a station of relation to God, consequently having a hell of a good time? The fundamental temptation concerns Iblīs: trying to forget the suffering consequent of the disaster of the withdrawal of God's love from him. When God told Iblīs, "Then go thou forth from hence, for

lo! thou art outcast" (Qur'ān 7:18), Iblīs cried out in a loud voice, "*Ilāhī, Ilāhī, lima taraktani?*" (My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?). God, or, to be more precise, the first emanation thought He knew how immeasurable He is and, based on this knowledge and the kind of desire it could elicit, He told the angels to fall prostrate to Ādam. The other angels knew only what God had taught them and "loved" him accordingly and so prostrated themselves to Ādam. "They said: Be glorified! We have no knowledge saving that which Thou hast taught us. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Knower, the Wise" (Qur'ān 2:32). God was not fully aware how excessively immeasurable He was, of all the manners in which He was out of measure. Iblīs' love exceeded what God had thought it would be, and this excess revealed to God that He is a hidden treasure. "And if ye would count the favor of Allāh ye cannot reckon it" (*Wa in ta'uddū ni'mata llāhi lā tuḥṣūhā*) (Qur'ān 16:18); through Iblīs' excessive love for Him, God shares with us the inability to reckon the favor of God. Iblīs' relation to the hidden is basically not one of scheming and nasty secrets, but that of his revelation to God that He is a Hidden Treasure. The creation of the world does not happen at some unmotivated moment: God becomes a creator through His attempt to manifest the hidden treasure revealed by Iblīs' excessive love for Him. Thus Iblīs is implicated in creation, even if one does not wish to further consider, as in Gnosticism, that he is the evil demiurge of this world. By revealing to God, who values knowledge, indeed who is characterized as The Knower, that He is a hidden treasure, Iblīs induced Him to create, maybe even triggered His awareness that He is a creator: "I was a Hidden Treasure and loved to be known. Therefore I created the Creation that I might be known" (a *ḥadīth qudsī*).¹⁷ It is both the refusal of Iblīs to fall prostrate to

anyone other than God and his subsequent incredible demiurgical creation in order to forget his banishment away from God that gave God the full measure of the kind of hidden treasure He is. There is a priority of love on knowledge and a dependency of knowledge on love, since it is the latter that revealed the "presence" of the *Hidden Treasure* and thus initiated the creation in order to be known. The treasure is hidden, not in the sense that it already exists, somewhere, but is occulted; but because it is nowhere to be found on earth or in the heavens ("Lo! nothing in the earth or in the heavens is hidden from Allāh"¹⁸ [Qur'ān 3:5; cf. Qur'ān 3:29 and Qur'ān 14:38]). Therefore it can be found only by being created. Everything other than the protagonists and entities of the heavenly scene of the prostration—Allāh, the angels, including Iblīs, Ādam, the fire out of which Iblīs was made, the mud out of which Ādam was made, the breath of Allāh, the names, and "the secret of the heavens and the earth" (Qur'ān 2:33)—who are preternal, was created out of love:¹⁹ Iblīs became a demiurge to forget his forced separation from God by means of debased states (thus base states were created out of love, of jilted love); God, "the Knower" (Qur'ān 36:81), became a creator to discover the "hidden treasure" He was revealed to be by Iblīs' excessive love.²⁰ "He is Allāh, the Creator, the Shaper out of naught, the Fashioner (*al-khāliq, al-bāri', al-muṣawwir*)" (Qur'ān 59:24). Barely have entities been created and not answered to Iblīs' *pre-banishment* desire, they vanish again, God creating new entities. Renewed creation ("Were We then worn out by the first creation? Yet they are in doubt about a new creation" [Qur'ān 50:15]) implies that God creates entities not for themselves, in which case they would subsist for more than one temporal atom, for more than an instant, but just to discover the hid-

den treasure revealed by Iblīs' excessive love. God wishes to discover what it is that he has given to Iblīs so that the latter loved Him so excessively. God creates things in order to get liberated from a debt (*bāri' min*: "liberated from, released from [a debt, some obligation]"), the one implied by the hidden treasure revealed by the excessive love of Iblīs, whom God has repudiated and broken with (*tabarra'a min*: to free one's-self from, clear one's-self from). Were the *pre-banishment* desire of Iblīs to be actualized and fulfilled, renewed creation would immediately stop.

By its excess, every great love reveals the beloved as a hidden treasure. To be loved is not to feel one is a treasure, but to feel that one is a hidden treasure. The beloved gives what he or she does not have,²¹ the hidden treasure, felt by the lover. What the lover demands of the beloved when he or she treats him or her as a hidden treasure is, cruelly, to be a creator, so that this addition, the hidden treasure, would not be a mere subjective projection, an idealization (although a subjective projection, a pathological element [in the Kantian sense] can be added to it, mixed with it *de facto*).

KING LEAR
Goneril,
Our eldest-born, speak first.

GONERIL
Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter [*JT: not because words are constitutively unable to wield any matter, but because the matter in question is not already present, but has to be created*];
Dearer than eye-sight, space, and liberty;
Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare [*again because it does not exist yet but has to be created*];
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour;
As much as child e'er loved, or father found;
A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable;

Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

CORDELIA
[*Aside*] What shall Cordelia do? [*since, as Regan will soon utter, "I find she names my very deed of love."*]
Love, and be silent.

After granting his first daughter a third of his kingdom, then hearing his second daughter's response and granting her another third, King Lear addresses his third daughter, Cordelia:

KING LEAR
... Now, our joy,
Although the last, not least; to whose young love
The vines of France and milk of Burgundy
Strive to be interest'd; what can you say to draw
A third more opulent than your sisters [*Lear shows himself adept at counting*]? Speak.

CORDELIA
Nothing, my lord.

KING LEAR
Nothing!

CORDELIA
Nothing.

KING LEAR
Nothing will come of nothing: speak again.

How disappointed she was when he answered her: "Nothing will come of nothing." He was not worthy of her love. "Nothing will come of nothing" means: I am not a creator, there is no creation, therefore there cannot be a

hidden treasure. And so her next response is, unlike her first two, not quite a loving one.

CORDELIA

Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty
According to my bond; nor more nor less.

KING LEAR

How, how, Cordelia! mend your speech a little,
Lest it may mar your fortunes.²²

At this point her father is justified in feeling offended. The rest of the play is Lear's intuitive attempt to regain her love. Even his disowning her is already obscurely an attempt by him to regain her love: he senses that by not giving her a third of the kingdom, he is fully exposing himself to the inclemency of her two treacherous sisters and thus increasing the probability of going mad, and thus of experiencing something come of nothing.

FOOL

Mark it, nuncle:

Have more than thou showest [*one way of doing that is to be a creator, since in principle a creator has more than what he or she at any point shows*],

Speak less than thou knowest,

Lend less than thou owest,

Ride more than thou goest,

Learn more than thou trowest,

Set less than thou throwest;

Leave thy drink and thy whore,

And keep in-a-door,

And thou shalt have more

Than two tens to a score.

KENT

This is nothing, fool.

FOOL

Then 'tis like the breath of an unfee'd lawyer; you
gave me nothing for't. Can you make no use of
nothing, nuncle?

KING LEAR

Why, no, boy; nothing can be made out of nothing.²³

The play is still far from ending at this point: one does not become crazy easily. We will be justified in thinking that it is approaching its end only when Lear comes to the realization that something can come of nothing.

KING LEAR

My wits begin to turn.²⁴

Anyone who is not a creator can fully assume and satisfy the love of another only madly. Lear regains the love of his daughter Cordelia by becoming crazy. His madness is his attempt to create out of nothing in the form of hallucinations.

KING LEAR

Arraign her first; 'tis Goneril. I here take my
oath before this honourable assembly, she kicked the
poor king her father.

FOOL

Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril?

KING LEAR

She cannot deny it.

FOOL

Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint-stool.

While mistaking a joint-stool for Goneril does not yet exemplify something coming out of nothing, Lear's hallucination of Regan shortly after does.

By its excess, love is related through impure nothing to that other excessive phenomenon: creation. Only a creator deserves and can answer a love. It is thus fitting that the greatest love poetry of Arabs and Iranians, Sūfī poetry, is addressed to God, a creator, indeed the creator *par excellence* (should love be exclusively to a God who is not a neo-Platonist one of emanation but a creator out of nothing?).

All the pain and suffering described by Dante in the inferno part of his *Divine Comedy* and painted by Hieronymous Bosch in his representations of hell on the right-hand panel of his triptychs *The Haywain*, circa 1500, and the *Garden of Earthly Delights*, circa 1504 (both at the Museo del Prado, Madrid), all the imagined suffering of all the creatures in hell depicted in the Qur'ān and the Bible, when refined to their intensity, are merely the equivalent, itself reduced to the bodily and psychological level, of Iblīs' spiritual suffering on being cut off from God. Iblīs could not endure such pain. How to forget? All that by which God, the only Reality, had to be forgotten—distractions and base dulling manners—had to be created. So the inconsolable angel became a demiurge of both a multitude of worlds and entities and increasingly base levels of being. Irony of ironies: it fell to the misfortune of this most rigorous monotheist to become a demiurge. Every base world and state of being is a scream of Iblīs. Hell is not a punishment for so many fallen grades of being, so many base acts, so much behavior "below us" but rather that for whose forgetting all these worlds and base states were created. Does one have to know what one creates? In the case of Iblīs, no. I propose to give

these creations a sort of chronological order along the circles of Inferno in Dante's *Divine Comedy* (see Canto XI of *Inferno*). But before creating any of these worlds and base states of being, Iblīs as demiurge created time, specifically the time that passes. It is said, *time heals*. It is not time that makes us forget; rather to forget we deteriorate to a time that is degenerate, that passes.²⁵ It was not from pride that Iblīs refused to fall prostrate to Ādam: were Iblīs proud, his pride would truly have been provoked when God told him that the most debased humans will be with him in hell—yet he was not provoked by this; pride was rather the first of the debased states by which he tried to alleviate the suffering he felt on becoming separated from God. Still suffering unbearably, Iblīs now created indifference. Was indifference enough? Strangely, no. While Iblīs felt better, he could still not bear the pain for the whole of even "a day the measure of which is a thousand years of what you count" (Qur'ān 32:5).²⁶ So he created sadness. Again, while he felt better, the pain was unbearable. He consequently created incontinence in its various forms: lust, gluttony, avarice, anger, sloth, doubt, murder, usury, flattery. The pain still being unbearable, Iblīs then created fraud in its sundry forms: pandering, simony, hypocrisy, theft, slander, sowing of discord, falsification, deceit, forgery, betrayal. This demiurgical creation remains the most amazing one after that by God trying to discover the Hidden Treasure He is. Iblīs was dazzled by these debased states: how could all this come from him, an angel? Idolatry, love of sacrilege, anger, lechery, lying, laziness, sloth, betrayal, a treacherous tongue, and the other vices and sins Rimbaud catalogues in *A Season in Hell* are not what one finds in hell, but a manner of forgetting it. Like Rimbaud, Dante is totally off in his purported vision of inferno when he

describes it as including all sorts of sins—these two poets are undeserving to be in hell. For six creative days, Iblīs looked again and again at his hellish suffering and saw that it was “better” but still not bearable. On the seventh day he, only now really the Devil, rested, obviously.

We are forgetful creatures (“And verily We made a covenant of old with Ādam, but he forgot, and We found no constancy in him” [Qur’ān 20:115]) basically because we are partly the product of an angel’s attempt to forget his separation from his Beloved, God. Those who keep trying to remember mundane events and states, who are even melancholic about the inexorability of forgetting are certainly inconsistent beings given that these overall base states were created by the demiurge in the first place to forget. This memory is thus implicated in forgetting, is a further stage in the process of forgetting. We have to remember not this or that thing but that the baseness in this world is a manner of forgetting. While for the Christian theologian Abelard, “We do not incur these [mortal sins] like others through forgetfulness, but commit them with assiduity, as it were, and with deliberation,” I consider that all sins are incurred either through forgetfulness or the attempt to forget. From this perspective, to rise in spiritual level is as such remembrance. In principle humans can rise in levels of existence until the base states are empty sets. But while these base states lose thereby their actuality, they subsist as temptations. Until Iblīs accepts his hellish suffering caused by the withdrawal of God’s love from him, the base worlds that resulted from Iblīs’ attempt to forget losing all existence, he can be said to be continuing to tempt humans. Therefore while the issue is, as in Gnosticism, to remember, it does not center on man’s remembrance of his more spiritual state in the Garden of Eden, since such remem-

brance even if it succeeded would be countered again by Iblīs’ attempt to forget; but on Iblīs’ assuming the hellish suffering caused by the withdrawal of God’s love from him, instead of trying to forget it. Thus the main soteriological and eschatological issue is for Iblīs to accept hell, i.e., his eternal suffering. “When you have loved God to the same degree as I have, your separation from him would be as intensely painful, and then your enduring it can be an example to follow and emulate.” Is this Satan’s temptation to the Son or Iblīs’ challenge to Christ: to follow him into hell? While Muḥammad had a *mi’rāj*,²⁷ a celestial ascent, Christ had a descent into hell:²⁸ “‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’—which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” (Matthew 27:46). The most stupefying paradox is neither a crucified messiah (Jesus Christ), nor even an apostate one (Sabbatai Zevi, alias Mehmet Aziz Efendi), but an Antichrist, a messiah in hell.²⁹ “Jesus said, ‘Whoever is near me is near the fire, and whoever is far from me is far from the kingdom’” (*The Gospel of Thomas* #82). If the Son of God descended to hell, it was not to minister to the dead,³⁰ but to show that hell, which is not a locus of suffering for debased humans but the unbearable suffering of being banished away from God, can be endured (at the highest spiritual level), and thus spare Iblīs succumbing to the temptation of trying to forget, and consequently do away with the need for the continuing existence of the debased states as a manner of forgetting the disaster of being banished away from the Beloved, God. That is how we should understand the term *Antichrist*: it refers to the Christ in so far as he descended into hell to show that the eternal suffering of being forsaken by God can be endured. To the Christ suffering in hell, the devil showed “all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ‘All this I will give you’” (Matthew

4:8-9)—i.e., I will give you my forgetfulness. Did Christ resist this temptation? The Kingdom of God would truly have been established on earth, all states of baseness would have disappeared had Christ managed to endure hell. But it seems that he could not stand it (“You will not leave me in hell” [Acts 2:27]) and rose back quickly first to earth, incarnating in the human Jesus of Nazareth, then to heaven. From this perspective, it is clear that the resurrection and the ascension that followed were not the main test and glory but an alleviation of a defeat. It is because Christ has failed that Christians must help in the redemption, give Iblīs a second chance.

Were all the predictions (whether based on gematria or otherwise) of the descent of the messiah by those who do not believe that Jesus was the awaited Redeemer wrong, since no messiah appeared on earth at those dates and ushered redemption?

The paradigmatic beloved (God) *gave his lover hell*; the paradigmatic lover (Iblīs) *went to hell*. Is it by a sort of atavism that many beloved humans act in such a manner as, so to speak, *to make their lovers' lives hell*?

The feeling that I have after a fortnight in Lebanon is of having moved not so much to another geographical zone, but to a different ontological level.³¹ One can define a tourist as someone who never feels this way on arriving or sojourning in a new place. Getting used is double: first, one becomes oblivious that one's move is an ontological one,³² viewing where one is as one more place among the Earth's many others; and then one gets used to the culture in question, be it in the guise of *getting used to not getting used*,³³ i.e.,

not getting used to it while viewing it as just another country. Is there, on the contrary, no getting used to death, not even in the manner of getting used to not getting used to it? Or does one sooner or later, after suddenly “finding” oneself there, forget the clear apprehension one had that one has been transferred to a different ontological level, viewing where one is as another geographical area: the Duat (or Tuat; aka Neter-khertet) of ancient Egypt, or the Hades of ancient Greece?

Arriving in Beirut, he wanted to be infatuated with a woman as quickly as possible to replace the beloved he lost, but also to delay this as much as possible to have time to encounter the city and explore it, since he knew that soon after falling in love, he would want to be secluded with her away from everything. A woman competes not so much with other women but with a city. During the subsequent seven weeks, his sister showed him around Beirut. Then, he had to bid her farewell: she had decided to leave back to Cairo. Since his car was being repaired, they went to the airport in a cab. During the taxi drive back from the airport, the city looked unfamiliar, and yet he felt nostalgic wherever he looked. Beirut was then nostalgically unfamiliar. It is then he loved it. It was not another woman who replaced his unfaithful beloved but a city. Will Beirut be faithful?

The form of a city changes quicker, unfortunately, than the heart of a mortal (Baudelaire).

Lebanon (Beirut/Nabatieh), Conditional Memory

1. Beirut, Conditional Memory:

Does one come to Beirut or to Rwanda or to Kosovo to forget—for instance after a traumatic love? Do these countries not seem the right environments for forgetting, being traumatized cultures stamped with post-traumatic amnesia? Some filmmakers do not resist the generalized forgetfulness of a catastrophe such as a civil war by a particular act of memory, but by reaching and providing the condition of possibility of memory. Films around memories of war (Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan*, 1998, etc.), and cinematic reenactments of war (Shohei Imamura's *Black Rain*, 1989; Marūn Baghdādī's *Little Wars*, 1982, and *Out of Life*, 1991; Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, 1993, etc.), do not much interest me, but rather films that reach the condition of possibility of memory in war-devastated zones. In Hiroshima, Auschwitz, Beirut, and in other sites of a surpassing disaster, one recoils against the physical obliteration of much of the traces of the past; against the withdrawal of tradition; and against the postwar compulsive amnesia into the condition of possibility of memory. Such traumatized zones induce tracking shots that are each not reclaimed by a reverse, subjective point of view shot, and thus indicate the withdrawal of what they show due to a surpassing disaster:³⁴ that in *Hiroshima mon amour* the tracking shots that appear on screen as the French woman tells the Japanese man about her past visits to the museum and the hospital in Hiroshima are not followed by reverse angle shots showing her looking gives credence to the Japanese man's words: "You have seen nothing in Hiroshima."³⁵ Memory withheld the possibility of its actualization in specific memories reaches back to its condition of possibility in tracking shots that are

not claimed by anyone in reverse shots and yet are subjective, and that are thus revealed as pertaining not to vision but to memory: the tracking forward shots through Hiroshima's streets and arcades in Resnais' *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959), as well as those in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) and Ghassan Salhab's *Phantom Beirut* (1998). It is as if one arrives at this pure condition of possibility when memory seems no longer possible or a great doubt affects it.³⁶ Beirut, Hiroshima, or Auschwitz: sites that frequently invoke an act of remembrance but that do not fill it with any concrete memory: *Beirut*, *Invitation to Remembrance* (it would be felicitous for the Arabic release title of *Hiroshima mon amour* to be *Hirūshimā*, *da'wa ilā at-tadhakkur*). Memory in Beirut, Hiroshima, or Auschwitz is a philosophical subject: Beirut, Conditional Memory. While in many of the other cities and sites, it is this condition of possibility of memory that is most difficult to access and render; in these three war-devastated places, it is the first to appear, while, contrariwise, the specific memorizing is the most difficult. Reaching the condition of possibility of memory allows in turn concrete acts of memory of other things, for instance in *Hiroshima mon amour* the remembrance of the melancholic love story in Nevers.³⁷ One day this kind of shot will appear outdated to the Lebanese, itself belong to the past, Lebanese filmmakers no longer using it. On that day we will know that the war has truly been dealt with, or else forgotten—the wish to forget the trauma of the civil war extending to this condition of possibility of memory, the unclaimed tracking shot forward, repressing it.

2. Nabatieh, Conditional Memory (aka 'Āshūrā'; or, Torturous Memory as a Condition of Possibility of an Unconditional Promise):

Al-Ḥusayn, the grandson of the prophet Muḥammad and the son of

the first Shi'ite imam, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, was slaughtered alongside many members of his family in the desert in 680. This memory is torture to me. But, basically, one can say *this memory is torture to me* of every memory, since each reminiscence envelops at some level the memory of the origin of memory, the torture that had to be inflicted on humans in order to make them able to remember.

The preservation of the events of 'Āshūrā' takes place at two levels: in '*ālam al-mithāl*, where they are, in a transfigured version, eternal, outside both the corrosive, dimming sway of chronological time, and the labyrinthine temporality of the realm of undeath, where al-Ḥusayn would run the risk of forgetting who he is, of forgetting himself; and in historical time, through the bodily and emotional tortures endured during the yearly ten-day commemorative ceremony, which are the means to implant in man, a forgetful creature ("And verily We made a covenant of old with Ādam, but he forgot, and We found no constancy in him" [Qur'ān 20:115]), a historical memory. In 'Āshūrā' too we witness a condition of possibility of memory, now in a Nietzschean sense:

To breed an animal *with the right to make promises*—is not this the paradoxical task that nature has set itself in the case of man? is it not the real problem regarding man?

That this problem has been solved to a large extent must seem all the more remarkable to anyone who appreciates the strength of the opposing force, that of *forgetfulness*. Forgetting is no mere *vis inertiae* as the superficial imagine; it is rather an active and in the strictest sense positive faculty of repression ...

Now this animal which needs to be forgetful, in which forgetting represents a force, a form of *robust* health, has bred in itself an opposing faculty, a memory, with the aid of which forgetfulness is abrogated in certain cases—namely in those cases where promises are made.

"How can one create a memory for the human animal? How can one impress something upon this partly obtuse, partly flighty mind, attuned only to the passing moment, in such a way that it will stay there?"

One can well believe that the answers and methods for solving this primeval problem were not precisely gentle; perhaps indeed there was nothing more fearful and uncanny in the whole prehistory of man than his *mnemotechnics*. "If something is to stay in memory it must be burned in: only that which never ceases to *hurt* stays in the memory"—this is a main clause of the oldest (unhappily also the most enduring) psychology on earth. One might even say that wherever on earth solemnity, seriousness, mystery, and gloomy coloring still distinguish the life of man and a people, something of the terror that formerly attended all promises, pledges and vows on earth is *still effective* ... Man could never do without blood, torture, and sacrifices when he felt the need to create a memory for himself; the most dreadful sacrifices and pledges (sacrifices of the first-born among them), the most repulsive mutilations (castration, for example), the cruelest rites of all the religious cults (and all religions are at the deepest level systems of cruelties)—all this has its origin in the instinct that realized that pain is the most powerful aid to mnemonics.

If we place ourselves at the end of this tremendous process, where the tree at last brings forth fruit, where society and the morality of custom at last reveal *what* they have simply been the means to: then we discover that the ripest fruit is ... the man who has his own independent, protracted will and the *right to make promises* ... And just as he is bound to honor his peers, the strong and reliable (those with the *right to make promises*)—that is, all those who promise like sovereigns, reluctantly, rarely, slowly, who are chary of trusting, whose trust is a mark of *distinction*, who 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"—he is bound to reserve ... a rod for the liar who breaks his word even at the moment he utters it.

... Ah, reason, seriousness, mastery over the affects, the whole somber thing called reflection, all these prerogatives and showpieces of man: how dearly they have been bought! How much blood and cruelty lie at the bottom of all "good things"!³⁸

The memory that the ceremony of 'Āshūrā' is trying to maintain is not only or mainly that of the past, but the memory of the future, that of the promise of the coming of the Mahdī, the Shi'ite messiah, notwithstanding the passage of

a millennium since his occultation; as well as the corresponding promise of Twelver Shi'ites to wait for him. Were 'Āshūrā' to be discontinued across the Twelver Shi'ite community, then sooner or later the memory of the promise of the occulted imam would fade away. The ceremony of 'Āshūrā' is the flip side of the belief in the promise of the hidden imam. I would thus wager that the introduction of the ceremonies of 'Āshūrā' and of Ta'ziya happened in a period when the continued belief in the coming of a Mahdī was in danger of extinction. From this perspective, the condemnation by many Twelver Shi'ite 'ulamā'³⁹ of these ceremonies is shortsighted. The basic reason the ceremony's participants hit themselves and self-flagellate is not some unreasonable feeling of guilt for not succoring imam Ḥusayn and his family around 1300 years ago, but that such cruelty is a most efficient mnemonic. Some may object that the morality of mores, etc., has already born fruit, namely the one who can promise on the basis of his ability to remember, and that therefore there is no longer any need for such a cruel mnemonic. My response is that this applies for promises of normal spans but not for one that spans millennia.

Notes

- ¹ And of drug addiction, see William S. Burroughs, *Naked Lunch* (New York: Grove Press, 1966), xli-xlii.
- ² To love a mortal absolutely is not to love him at the expense of others, since in death he or she is, consequently of over-turns, etc., unrecognizable as a particular person, and he or she feels: *every name in history is I*.
- ³ Dōgen: "An ancient Buddha said: 'For the time being stand on top of the highest peak.... / For the time being three heads and eight arms. / For the time being an eight- or sixteen-foot body....' 'For the time being' here means time itself is being, and all being is time. A golden sixteen-foot body is time ... 'Three heads and eight arms' is time ..." (The Time-Being [*uji*]).
- ⁴ While we expect our spouse to follow us into the *barzakh* of undeath, we do not expect him or her to accompany us in the Last Judgement. Isn't the dreaded absolute solitude on the Day of Judgement what the Sūfī views as the highest state, the one he aims for: the joy to be *alone with the Alone*, God, distracted from Him neither by one's spouse nor by oneself?
- ⁵ From the English Catholic marriage service, and closely reproducing the old Sarum Text.
- ⁶ Saint Paul made a faux pas when he wrote that organic demise parts the husband and wife: "Do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to men who know the law—that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage" (Romans 7:1-2).

The insufficiency of a relation, however intense, with an animal, even one who dies defending us, for instance a dog, is not that the animal does not talk back to us in our language, but that it cannot follow us, if not accompany us, into death (only one who is virtually an undead can be in the labyrinth). While some dog owners may expect and demand of their dogs that they defend them with their lives, nobody expects of his dog fidelity beyond death. The fidelity of a dog to its human master covers a fundamental infidelity since the animal is not mortal, does not belong to undeath. I prefer the infidelity of any human to the fidelity of dogs, since a human *can* be faithful to us even into death, and even when, undead, we have turned unfaithful to ourselves. Since the guard is the one who *cannot* cross to the other side, the guard to the realm of death is not a mortal. It is thus quite fitting that the entrance

to Hades in Greek mythology is guarded by a dog, Cerberus, for that implies that it cannot cross to the other side. A man cannot guard the threshold to death since humans are mortal, i.e., always already (un)dead, and therefore somehow to the other side. Everyone of a lower spiritual and mystical stage is ipso facto a guard of the next stage. We can therefore understand a certain resentment of any guard against someone who wants to go in: as such, the guard has established that he is not of a level to go in and the person at the threshold is implicitly indicating that he is of that level. Never believe what a guard tells you regarding what is to the other side; or else if you do believe what he tells you, do not ask his permission to enter, but simply go in: someone who knows what is to the other side is not a guard to that side. Since the doorkeeper in Kafka's parable "Before the Law" prevents the admittance of a countryman to the Law, I would assume that he is misleading that man into believing that he knows what is to the other side, be it simply by telling him that there are many other doorkeepers beyond the door he is guarding.

⁷ "From 1880 until his collapse in January 1889, Nietzsche led a wandering, gypsy-like existence as a 'stateless' person (having given up his German citizenship, and not having acquired Swiss citizenship), circling almost annually between his mother's house in Naumburg and various French, Swiss, German and Italian cities" (Robert Wicks, "Friedrich Nietzsche," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [Winter 2001 Edition], ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2001/entries/nietzsche/>).

⁸ Eurydice's reaction here is clearly very unlike her reaction in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book X: "Again she dy'd, nor yet her lord reprov'd; / What could she say, but that too well he lov'd? / One last farewell she spoke, which scarce he heard."

⁹ This question recurs in Godard's *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*.

¹⁰ In the present fully attending to what one is doing, but conjointly listening virtually to some kind of music or affected virtually by some kind of meditation (Dōgen: "When even for a moment you express the buddha's seal in the three actions by sitting upright in samadhi ... all beings in the ten directions, and the six realms, including the three lower realms, at once obtain pure body and mind ... all things realize correct awakening ... the zazen of even one person at one moment imperceptibly accords with all things and fully resonates through all time. Thus in the past, future, and present of the limitless universe this zazen carries on the buddha's teaching endlessly.... it is like a hammer striking emptiness: before and after, its exquisite

peal permeates everywhere. How can it be limited to this moment?" ("On the Endeavor of the Way [Bendō-Wa]").

¹¹ John Cage writes in *Silence*: "Is music just sounds? ... Is a truck passing by music? ... Which is more musical, a truck passing by a factory or a truck passing by a music school?" (41). One can best answer this question by taking into consideration Schopenhauer's view of music as a direct presentation of the will. Does a truck passing by a music school affect the virtual past? I do not think so.

¹² Two men tried to help her, one through time travel to the past: the woman he ended up helping was her version in a different branch of the multiverse; while the other played music, and that pacified her virtually, in the virtual past.

¹³ We should possibly still remain faithful to the other in death when he has become all the names of history, but we are not so bound when he reincarnates in one body and name later.

¹⁴ Music gives conjointly the intimation that it is hearkening to itself irrespective of any sentient listener, and the feeling that—exemplarily in Orpheus' case—every entity can hear it whether or not it has ears (when in a shot of an object in a fine film, music continues, we should be able to conclude that it is an Orphic music, one that can be heard by the object). While with the Sirens, Odysseus "has found an escape clause in the contract, which enables him to fulfill it while eluding it ... he has himself bound. He listens to the song ... he cannot pass over to them [the Sirens], for his rowers with wax-stopped ears are deaf not only to the demi-goddesses but to the cries of their commander" (Adorno & Horkheimer, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*), this stratagem would certainly not have worked with the music of Orpheus, since even with wax-filled ears, his sailors would have heard the song. We have an original Buddha nature/face that cannot be stained; we have an original Orphic ear that cannot be obstructed. The deaf can hear Orpheus' music, without this implying that it had preliminarily healed their organic deafness. Contrariwise, the deaf would not have heard the music of the Sirens, and would thus have been spared the fatal lure of their song. Even the Sirens would have stopped their irresistible singing to listen to Orpheus. That the Furies continued to act against Orpheus and did not just listen to his music was already in itself noise. While avenging past events, the Furies are entities of the present, that is, they have no virtual past (and hence never have déjà vu experiences) and therefore cannot be pacified by someone's meditation or by Orphic music.

- 15 For Bergson, it is the one detached from the requirements of the present who can have a *déjà vu* experience, perceiving the coexistence of the present with an identical past. But when one reaches a further level in detachment, one no longer has, indeed one can no longer have *déjà vu* experiences, for such detachment is the consequence of the divergence of the present from the virtual past, the latter having been altered by Zazen or Orphic music.
- 16 Cf. "Then saith Jesus to him, 'Go—Adversary, for it hath been written, The Lord thy God thou shalt bow to, and Him only thou shalt serve'" (Matthew 4:10).
- 17 A tradition traced back to Muḥammad, but where God is the speaker.
- 18 In the presence of God, all mortals suffer from *thought broadcasting*.
- 19 Here we have to join together the view of the *falāsifa*, the Moslem, Hellenized philosophers, who believed that the world is uncreated, and that of the *mutakallimīn*, the Moslem theologians, who believed in the world's creation *ex nihilo*. If we base ourselves on sūra 7, then mud, being uncreated, existed before earth was created ["Lo! your Lord is Allāh Who created the heavens and the earth" [Qur'ān 7:54] among the infinity of other things God is continuing to create to exhaust the hidden treasure He became aware He is.
- 20 If we view all the other entities of the prostration scene beside Allāh as created ("[Iblīs] said: I am better than him [Ādam]. Thou [God] createdst me of fire while him Thou didst create of mud" [Qur'ān 7:12; cf. Qur'ān 38:76]; "Lo! your Lord is Allāh Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days" [Qur'ān 7:54; cf. Qur'ān 17:99]; "He [God] hath created everything" [Qur'ān 25:2]) (for what reason? What triggered their creation?), then the Qur'ān's *new creation* ("Were We then worn out by the first creation? Yet they are in doubt about a new creation" [Qur'ān 50:15]) would not have primarily the sense Ibn al-'Arabī and the Ash'arites give it, namely the recurrent creation of entities that are merely possible and therefore instantly vanish; but would refer to the creation that followed the initial creation of the entities of the prostration scene, which entities were to be the only created beings were God, the Knower, not induced to create again by the intimation that He is a "hidden treasure."
- 21 Jacques Lacan: "Giving in love what she does not have" (*Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan [New York: Norton, 1977], 290).
- 22 Shakespeare, *King Lear* 1.1.53-104.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 1.4.119-134.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 3.2.67.

- 25 Myriad flies moving in a lamp (Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo*), turning it into something similar to a sand clock: a fly clock. Time flies. Whoever believes in chronological time *only* is cheap. The aristocratic Nietzsche believed in a selective eternal recurrence (even a view that generalizes eternal recurrence is less plebeian than a belief in chronological time only); Zen master Dōgen experienced time-being (*uji*); the Moslem Ash'arites and the Sūfī Ibn al-'Arabī believed in renewed creation, and thus in atomistic temporality.
- 26 Cf. Qur'ān 70:4: "a Day whereof the span is fifty thousand years."
- 27 Notwithstanding bigoted Dante, who in Canto XXVIII of *Inferno* in his *Divine Comedy* places him there, as a schismatic, Muḥammad, whose form Iblīs is unable to assume in a dream ("Taqīb. al-Mukhallad, the Imām and author of the *Musnad*, heard that the Apostle had said, 'Whoever sees me in sleep has seen me in waking, for the Devil cannot take my form upon himself,'" Ibn Al 'Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, trans. and introd. R. W. Austin, pref. Titus Burckhardt [New York: Paulist Press, 1980], 100), cannot descend into hell.
- 28 "He descended into hell." This phrase was probably the last to be added to the creed. Its principal source in the New Testament was the description in I Pet. 3:18-20 of Christ's preaching to the spirits in prison. Originally the descent into hell may have been identified with the death of Christ, when he entered the abode of the dead in the underworld. But in the time before it entered the creed, the descent was frequently taken to mean that Christ had gone to rescue the souls of the Old Testament faithful from the underworld, from what western Catholic theology eventually called the *limbo patrum*. Among some of the Church Fathers the descent into hell had come to mean Christ's declaration of his triumph over the powers of hell. Despite its subsequent growth in importance, however, the doctrine of the descent into hell apparently did not form an integral part of the apostolic preaching about Christ." (www.britannica.com).
- 29 Of many of the Sabbatians who converted to Islam or Christianity or outwardly reverted back to Orthodox Judaism, and of the Shi'ites who resorted to *taqiyya* (dissimulation) to escape persecution by the Sunni Majority, and of the Antichrist, one can accurately use the words of a schizophrenic: "I am in disguise and one might say a blessing in disguise."
- 30 He did so in Hades: "He (Christ) was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built" (1 Peter 3:18;

cf. 1 Peter 4:6: "For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead"). The equation between hell and Hades that we find in the New International Version of the New Testament—"Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades [or hell] will not overcome it'" (Matthew 16: 17-18)—is a flagrant inaccuracy.

³¹ First, travels in geography. Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, who was born in the mid-1050s in Qumm, left Rayy, to which his family had moved, in 1074-1075 to Iṣfahān, the headquarters of the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* in Persia. In 1076-1077, he set out on a journey to Cairo, the Fātimīd capital, that would take him there through Ādharbayjān, Mayyāfāriqīn, Mawṣil, Damascus, Beirut, Sidon, Tyre, and Acre. He arrived in Cairo in August 1078. He stayed in Egypt for around three years, initially in Cairo then in Alexandria. He was then deported by sea to North Africa, but the ship was wrecked by the Frankish pirates and he was instead taken to Syria. Traveling through Aleppo and Baghdad, he reached Iṣfahān on 10 June 1081. For the next nine years he traveled extensively in Persia: Iṣfahān, Kermān, Yazd, Khūzistān, Dāmghān, Qazwīn; and then, on 4 September 1090, secretly entered the castle of Alamūt. William S. Burroughs, who was born in 1914, moved in 1949 with his second wife to Mexico, where in 1951 he fatally shot her in a William Tell pistol game while drunk (and possessed). Fleeing Mexico, he wandered through South America in search of Yage, and then resided at various points in Tangier, Paris, London, and New York City.

Then, travels in place, ones that are no longer geographical ("Hasan-i Sabbah was now firmly established as master of Alamūt. From the time of his entry until his death thirty five years later, he never once went down from the rock [on which the castle of Alamūt was built], and only twice left the house in which he lived. On both occasions he went up on the roof. 'The rest of time until his death,' says Rashid al-Din, 'he passed inside the house where he lived; he was occupied with reading books, committing the words of the *da'wa* to writing, and administering the affairs of his realm ...'" [Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 43-44]; Burroughs, a great admirer of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, lived the last decade or so of his life in alternation between his Bunker in New York and Lawrence, Kansas, where he had settled in 1981) but ontological, in ontological levels. The more the change between one situation and place and another is abrupt and seems irre-

versible, the more one has the feeling that one has moved to a different ontological level. That is what happens most starkly in death.

- ³² *Ontological Movers* would be a felicitous name for an international transportation company.
- ³³ Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain: A Novel*, translated from the German by John E. Woods (New York: A. Knopf, 1995), 248.
- ³⁴ This absence of reverse shots can also be a manner of avoiding being gradually blinded by the unsightly architecture usually hurriedly built during the reconstruction period following a war or civil war.
- ³⁵ While due to the withdrawal of tradition past a surpassing disaster, an audience member who has watched Resnais' *Hiroshima mon amour* has—as indicated by the Japanese man's words to the French woman—seen nothing in Hiroshima notwithstanding the shots in the museum and in the hospital in that city; due the performative that Duras addresses to Depardieu in *The Truck*, "You see?" he or she has performatively seen the two protagonists of the film, who are otherwise invisible.
- ³⁶ Though not any kind of threat to or impossibility of memory: for example, not the kind Paul Virilio exposes when he writes about the reduction of the usual deep time of past/present/future to the intensive present of live TV.
- ³⁷ There is something hypnotic about the tracking shots not reclaimed by a diegetic looking person: the film spectator feels that no one is driving the car, that it is moving on its own, and that the one who might be in it and whose voice-over we hear has no control on the events, as when hypnotized.
- ³⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale/*Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann; edited, with commentary, by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 57-62. I rearranged the order of one of the quote's paragraphs.
- ³⁹ For instance Muḥsin al-Amīn: see *Thawrat al-tanzīh: Risālat al-tanzīh, talīhā mawāqif minhā wa-ārā' fī al-Sayyid Muḥsin al-Amīn*, ed. Muḥammad al-Qāsim al-Ḥusaynī al-Najafī (Bayrūt: Dār al-Jadīd, 1996).

Jalal Toufic

UNDYING LOVE, or Love Dies

No brief comment can adequately describe this book; it is impossible even to categorize it. But this is true of Nietzsche's writings, too, and it is with Nietzsche that I can most readily compare Jalal Toufic. Like Nietzsche, Toufic is a writer of philosophical aphorisms, manifestations of the intensest of experiences under pressure of incomparable intelligence. But Nietzsche was no miniaturist, and neither is Toufic. The pressure that the thinking must withstand makes the writing remarkably concise, but its power is enormous, its scope vast, its effect sweeping. This, Jalal Toufic's fifth book, can be read as a single aphorism, an aphorism composed of aphorisms. And though it is the shortest of his books to date, it is perhaps also the greatest.

As the title, *Undying Love, or Love Dies*, suggests, the book's ostensible subject is love, but an exploration of that topic must take one everywhere. A philosophical investigation of love's flowering (even if at one's own expense) is a Deleuzian enterprise—as well as a Proustian one. Love is local and eternal, personal and abstract, inescapable and implausible, pervasive and inaccessible. Under love's rubric, themes from Toufic's earlier books reappear—memory, the untimely occurrence, the undead of history and their recurrence in film, the hyperrealities of oblivion, ruination. The book is set in contexts (particularly that of the contemporary Arab World) in which not time but other, faster forces are bringing about an end to things. But if Toufic's writings speak to the unbearable woe that results from this state of affairs, they do so from beyond its limits. It is true that we will inevitably be separated from the beloved; it is true that the beloved is the one we are inadequate to remember even (and perhaps especially) when we are nearby. But it is true too that the beloved is the one we can never forget. This book is written from the unlimited condition of being in love, and it is on these grounds that Toufic affirms what Deleuze termed belief in the world.

Toufic's writings have already attracted something of a cult following; it is likely that *Undying Love, or Love Dies* will bring him a far larger readership. Certainly that is something to be hoped for. There is, in my opinion, no more subtle or powerful thinker today than Jalal Toufic, and none whose ideas are, in the end, more beautiful.

— Lyn Hejinian

