

(area 01)

# Something I'm Dying to Tell You, Lyn

(area 02)

(area 03)

Jalal Toufic

*A Border Comedy*<sup>1</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).

As the airplane in which he was traveling to Egypt entered a zone of extreme turbulence, he was seized by apprehension. Unlike the passenger in the 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 will 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 *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 Yozgath 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 *‘alam al-khayâl*, 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>2</sup> This Blood Spilled in My Veins* (2002) shows sleeping humans,<sup>3</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>4</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: (*Tāj al-‘Arūs*:) or *al-hayawân* here means *the life that will not be followed by death*: or *much life*; like as *mawatân* 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. (*Tāj al-‘Arūs*.) *hayawân* an inf. n. of *hayiya*, like *hayât*, (Ibn Barrî, author of the *Annotations on the Sihâh*, with Al-Bustî,) but having an 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 mawatân* [q.v.]”<sup>5</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>6</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>7</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>8</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>9</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>10</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>11</sup> – being thought-insertions. *Anxious moment / I don’t mention betrayal / Leave that to dream.*<sup>12</sup> *I’ll throw down the mirror and name it ship.*<sup>13</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>14</sup> – *the key to dreams.*<sup>15</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 him-

self sleeping dreamlessly then?<sup>16</sup> I wager that Shahrazād would not have settled her pillow to sleep had the ghost of one of the previous one-night wives of King Shahrayār 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>17</sup> (how wonderful is the courage of this fear).<sup>18</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>19</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>20</sup> but the other 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>21</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>22</sup>).<sup>23</sup> Dead, immemorally before *Ash Wednesday*, *Narcissus cannot face himself*<sup>24</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>25</sup>—which while falling (“*Cadaver*: Middle English from Latin *cadāver* from *cadere* to fall, die”)<sup>26</sup> seems balanced, and which gives the impression that it is nameless—there’s *something I’m “dying to tell you,”*<sup>27</sup> who lived after Jesus Christ, “the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25): *A name trimmed with colored ribbons*<sup>28</sup> (such colors have *the musics of the spouse*<sup>29</sup> for synesthetic accompaniment). The one called turned *again back to front / On death’s bed*,<sup>30</sup> that is, was resurrected,<sup>31</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>32</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>55</sup>

*A Border Comedy*: Trying to join two cliffs with a phrase. But the phrase itself has a chasm, stops in the middle.<sup>54</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 story telling. 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 Allah, 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 “sware 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: *Hasar Afsana*, the thousand tales] and later a thousand and one?”<sup>55</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 [*dī laylat hubb hilwah bi alf layla wa layla*],” as Umm Kulthūm 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 Shahrazād’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>36</sup> By volunteering to be the next wife of the murderous king, Shahrazād 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” Shahrazād 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 life-saving stories except by drawing on the deaths of the previous one thousand one-night wives of King Shahrayār. 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 Shahrazād, in an untimely collaboration, on what the dead is undergoing. If Shahrazād 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 Shahrayār: “There’s something I am dying to tell you.” And that is why past the Night spanning a thousand nights, Shahrazād cannot extend her narration even for one additional normal night;<sup>37</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 Shahrazād asks the king to release her from telling stories, being no longer able to come up with additional ones.<sup>38</sup> If “the greatest of all night works is the one called *The Thousand and One Nights*” (Lyn Hejinian),<sup>39</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>40</sup> To say *a thousand and one nights* is to add one to infinity."<sup>41</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 story-telling 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>42</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>43</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>44</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>45</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>46</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' 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.

Jalal Toufic, *Two or Three Things I'm Dying to Tell You*  
(Sausalito, CA: The Post-Apollo Press, 2005), pp. 88-105.

## NOTES

1. The title of a Lyn Hejinian book published by Granary Books in 2001.
2. Obviously, the title comes from Goya's print *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* (plate 43 of *Los Caprichos*, second edition, ca. 1803).
3. 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 Rabih 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.
4. Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 242–247.
5. 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.
6. Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, pp. 270–271.
7. 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.
8. Lyn Hejinian, *A Border Comedy* (New York: Granary Books, 2001), p. 109.
9. “*Traiter quelqu'un de tous les noms*: to call somebody everything under the sun.” *Le Robert & Collins Senior, Dictionnaire Français-Anglais/Anglais-Français*, 5th edition.
10. From Nietzsche's 6 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 concept—that of a decent criminal. I am also Chambige—another decent criminal. ... every name in history is I. This fall, dressed as little as possible, I twice attended my funeral, the first time as Count Robilant (no, he's my son, insofar as I'm Carlo Alberto, my nature here below), but I was myself Antonelli [Papal Secretary of State under Pius IX].”
11. Hejinian, *A Border Comedy*, p. 54.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 61–62.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
15. Magritte's *The Key to Dreams (La clef des songes)*, 1927 and 1930 versions.
16. See Jalal Toufic, *Over-Sensitivity* (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1996), pp. 171–174.
17. Lyn Hejinian, *The Cell* (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1992), p. 100.
18. For another take on the courage of fear, cf. my book (*Vampires): An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film*, 2nd ed. (Sausalito, CA: The Post-Apollo Press, 2003), pp. 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."
19. 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.
20. The title of a Lyn Hejinian book.
21. See *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. Christopher Middleton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 347.
22. Hejinian, *A Border Comedy*, p. 17.
23. 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], p. 297); while life is never my life, "for death is that whereby all successive forms of the living are deposited 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, *Discourse* special issue *Mortals to Death*, ed. Jalal Toufic, winter 2002, pp. 64–65).
24. Hejinian, *A Border Comedy*, p. 44.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
26. *American Heritage Dictionary*.
27. Hejinian, *A Border Comedy*, p. 14.
28. Lyn Hejinian, *My Life* (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1991), p. 14.
29. 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.
30. Hejinian, *A Border Comedy*, p. 49.
31. 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 ("*Muhayyâ* [from the root *Hayy*, Living]: *The face [al-Sihâh, al-Qâmûs, at-Tibrizî's Exposition of the Hamâsah, p. 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 *hâ' yâ' yâ'*]), while the back is related to the mortal, who is subject to over-turns.
32. Hejinian, *A Border Comedy*, p. 108.
33. 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*, p. 52), are not dedicated to Hejinian, as they are still (p. 14) in the second edition published by the Post-Apollo Press in 2003.
34. Jalal Toufic, *Distracted* (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, 1991), p. 18; 2nd ed. (Berkeley, CA: Tuumba Press, 2003), p. 18.
  35. Jorge Luis Borges, *Seven Nights*, trans. Eliot Weinberger; introduction by Alastair Reid (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), p. 49.
  36. "Narrative-Men" in Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. Richard Howard, with a new foreword by Jonathan Culler (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), p. 73.
  37. 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."
  38. 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 Shahrazād 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 Shahrazād. 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, Shahrazād 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 Shahrயā̄r.
  39. Lyn Hejinian, *The Language of Inquiry* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), p. 251.
  40. "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-'Arabi's *The Meccan Openings* (aka *The Meccan Illuminations*), this great multi-volume exegesis, aided by spiritual taste (*dhawq*) and unveiling (*kashf*), of one book, the Qur'ān. 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 Allah 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."
  41. Borges, *Seven Nights*, p. 45.
  42. Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 1.
  43. Borges, *Seven Nights*, p. 50.
  44. 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)?
  45. Thus, during al-Qā'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.
  46. 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], pp. 30–34).