Specters of Translation: Jacques Derrida, Safaa Fathy, and *Nom à la mer*

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> Safah, the name of the 'lip' and of my mother.
> —Jacques Derrida, 'Telepathy'[1]

As synonyms for 'language' and synecdoches for the speaking subject, the English word 'tongue', the French word 'langue', and the Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) word 'lisān' each encompass both tangible and intangible dimensions of speech: from embodied communication to linguistic abstraction.[2] This essay interprets the translingual congress and contest of tongues that, through the spectral workings of translation, constitute the written and cinematic collaborations of Franco-Egyptian director, poet, and playwright, Safaa Fathy, and Franco-Maghrebian philosopher, Jacques Derrida. After briefly outlining the history of their relationship and the contexts of their collaborations, I'll proceed with a close reading of Fathy and Derrida's final collaborative effort—in the 2004 film, *Nom à la mer* (*Name To the Sea*)[3]—to understand the conditions of their situation at the nexus of translation, exile, gender, and the parting and return of the dead.

In 1958, almost three decades after Derrida's birth in El Biar (a suburb of Algiers), Fathy was born in the Egyptian city of Minya. She was educated chiefly in Cairo and, later, in Paris, where she has continued, for the most part, to live and work and where, from 2010 to 2016, she served as program director at the Collège International de Philosophie (CIPH), which had been co-founded by Derrida in 1983. Fathy and Derrida first met one another toward the end of 1995, in his seminar at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.[4] Their

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personal and professional relationship continued up to the time of Derrida's death on October 9, 2004, which followed hard upon the completion of the last of their three principal collaborations: 1) Fathy's documentary film, *D'ailleurs, Derrida* (*Derrida's Elsewhere*, 1999)[5], an hour-long exploration of its subject's life and ideas, shot in a variety of settings, from Paris to Toledo to Santa Monica; 2) their co-authored book, *Tourner les mots: Au bords d'un film* (*Shooting Words: At a Film's Edge*, 2000)[6], a series of dialogic meditations and essays on film and on the making of *D'ailleurs, Derrida*, specifically; and 3) Fathy's short film (the conventional term in French is 'court métrage', but Fathy tends to refer to it as a 'film-poème [film-poem]'), called *Nom à la mer*, in which verses written by Fathy in MSA are recited in French translation by Derrida, while the camera dwells, from various angles, on a single exterior scene: an irrigation basin in an Andalusian village (Figure 1). (Another film by Fathy, *De tout coeur* [*With All My Heart*, 1999], is a montage of three of Derrida's last public appearances.) *D'ailleurs, Derrida*, *Nom à la mer*, and *De tout coeur* are part of a substantial cinematic oeuvre that is still largely unknown to English-speaking audiences.[7] An implicit aim of this essay is to broaden its anglophone audience's familiarity with Fathy's work, in part by taking advantage of their more likely familiarity with Derrida's oeuvre, including his writings on translation.[8] Indeed, one pretext for both *D'ailleurs, Derrida* and *Nom à la mer* is Derrida's widely read 1996 book on 'monolingualism', in which he reaches before and beyond 'situations of linguistic oppression or colonial expropriation [to] a terror inside languages. . . a terror soft, discreet, or glaring.'[9] In the torques and tensions of their collaborations, Fathy and Derrida reach both separately and together toward this 'terror inside languages'. In other words, they explore this powerful affective relation to language(s) as it is experienced both intra- and intersubjectively and, moreover, spectrally: that is, at odds with any facile representations of the certainty of the living present.

There are five principal languages—French, MSA, Maṣrī (the Egyptian Arabic of Fathy's Minya and Cairo), Dārijah (the Maghrebi Arabic of Derrida's El Biar and Algiers), and English—implicated in what I've called their congress and contest of tongues: relations of intimacy, misunderstanding, displacement and silencing, translation and transliteration, and various forms of haunting. Unlike Fathy,

Figure 1. Three stills from *Nom à la mer*, showing the basin from various angles and at different times of day.

Derrida never learned Arabic, in any of its dialects or registers. But, just as Derrida was, Fathy is fluent in both English and French. Although she writes most of her poetry in Arabic, many of her prose works and—with some early exceptions—her films, including both *D'ailleurs, Derrida* and *Nom à la mer*, have been produced in French. And, to an even greater extent than the superb documentary, *Nom à la mer* participates in multiple and complex ways in the problematics of speech and voice that are among the most pervasive and familiar concerns of Derrida's oeuvre. The film is also a meditation on specifically cinematic relations between the diegetic and the extradiegetic, as well as between audible and inaudible, gendered voices.[10] In *D'ailleurs, Derrida* (his) voice seems to be more or less coextensive with self-narration: Derrida frequently reads, in voice-over, from his autobiographical

work, *Circonfession* (*Circumfession*, 1991), and he also appears as a speaking subject in many of the film's sequences, several of which include exchanges with Fathy, who speaks in voice-off. In *Nom à la mer*, however, Derrida is never seen, but only heard, in voice-over (one of cinema's hauntological techniques), reciting Fathy's poetry in translation, in a language she calls 'wet with the teeming foam of (other) words, this virtual Arabic latent in the French [*cette langue arabe virtuelle et latent dans la langue française*].'[11]

I'll return to the haunting question of this 'latent' Arabic and its 'virtual' presence in the French-language film-poem. But, first, there is more to say about its dynamics of voice as such. For, in addition to the audible—and, as Fathy describes it, 'posthumous'[12]—voice of Derrida-the-narrator, other voices, too, haunt the film in various ways. These include the entextualised voices of Fathy-the-poet and of her translator, Zeinab Zaza; the voice of the tenth-century (C.E.) Sufi mystic al-Niffari, who is repeatedly cited in the text; Fathy-the-filmmaker's figural voice, as the one who, as Derrida puts it in *D'ailleurs, Derrida*, 'writes' and 'signs' her films; and the absent, metaphorical, maternal voice alluded to in the film's polysemic, punning title (*nom* [name]/*non* [no], *mer* [sea]/*mère* [mother]), which is represented in various ways in the text of *Nom à la mer*. None of these voices are embodied by visible persons in the film; neither Fathy nor Derrida ever appears on-screen. Yet they both haunt the film's *mise-en-scène* as 'foreigners'—displaced from motherlands and mother-tongues alike—in the Moorish, Lorca-haunted town in the province of Almería, where the picturesque irrigation basin is located (Maribel Peñalver Vicea calls it a place 'real and paradisiac at the same time [*réel et paradisiaque à la fois*]'[13]).[14] *Nom à la mer* is also, very self-consciously, a valediction, shot and edited during Derrida's last illness and screened for him by the filmmaker shortly before his death, making it an example, as well, of the distinctive role that cinema—and what Derrida elsewhere calls its 'phantoms' or 'specters'—plays in the audition of voice at the limit, not just of intelligibility, but also of possibility, reproducing the 'foreign' voice in and as an audition of the dead.[15]

Indeed, long before his death, Derrida described his own filmic presence as that of a specter or 'ghost'. In Ken McMullen's *Ghost Dance* (1983), in which he plays the role of himself, Derrida is asked by another character if he believes in ghosts. He replies:

> You're asking a ghost whether he believes in ghosts. Here, the ghost is me. Since I've been asked to play myself, in a film which is more or less improvised, I feel as if I'm letting a ghost speak for me. Paradoxically, instead of playing myself, without knowing it, I let a ghost ventriloquize my words, or play my role, which is even more interesting. Cinema is the art of ghosts, a battle of phantoms. . . .It's the art of allowing ghosts to come back.. . . Therefore, if I'm a ghost, but believe I'm speaking with my own voice, it's precisely because I believe it's my own voice that I allow to be taken over by another's voice—not just any other voice, but that of my own ghosts. So ghosts do exist. And it's the ghosts who will answer you. Perhaps they already have.[16]

Derrida anticipates here the congress and contest of tongues in *Nom à la mer*, where, in one sense, Fathy's voice—her tongue and also her mother-tongue (Arabic)—is 'taken over' by the 'posthumous' voice of Derrida, the voice, as Mireille Calle-Gruber puts it, 'of a revenant [both] alive and posthumous'.[17] Yet, in another sense, Derrida's voice—his tongue and also his mother-tongue (French)—is 'taken over', or crossed, by the entextualised voice of Fathy, whose words, which have been translated specifically for this 'battle of phantoms', fill his mouth and, in doing so, often make him speak as if from the gendered position of the female author (an effect compounded by the fact that French is a heavily gendered tongue).[18] Still, the only audible voice in the film-poem is Derrida's, as he recites the verses composed by Fathy in MSA and subsequently rendered into French for the film by professional translator Zaza (with Derrida's own occasional, unspecified modifications of the French text). (The only other sounds one hears are those of the film's score, by Kinshi Tsuruta and Katsuya Yokoyama.)

Fathy's verses themselves are tremendously complex in form, syntax, and style. The original Arabic text, which Fathy describes as 'latent' in the French version, consists of passages selected and adapted from her 2010 volume, *Ism yasʿa fī zujājah* [*A Name Striving Inside a Bottle*], which is characterised by widely varying line lengths and a mixture of lineated and unlineated strophes. Whatever remains 'latent' in the French version has little or nothing to do with the spoken, vernacular qualities of the Maṣrī dialect of Fathy's Egypt.

Moreover, her poetic practice, in *Ism yasᶜa fī zujājah* and elsewhere, seems for the most part to be disengaged from the particular concerns of the Arabic Modernists—those mid-to-late-20th-century poets, such as Nāzik al-Malāʾikah (Nazik al-Malaika), who remained in dialogue with traditional Arabic metrics (primarily, the strict metrics of the classical *qaṣīdah*) even as they experimented with new metrical forms, while continuing to reject *non*-metrical verse (western-style 'free' verse and prose-poetry), which to this day remains controversial and often difficult to assimilate into the discourse of Arabic poetics.[19] Fathy's non-metrical and non-lineated strophes, like those of many other twenty-first-century Arabic poets, have more in common with the 'second generation' Arabic 'prose-poets' of the 1980s and 1990s than with the more traditional genealogies of Modernist Arabic poetry. Indeed, in the manifesto-like preface to her 2010 volume, Fathy writes: 'Poetry is a child that does not beget children [*al-Shiᶜr huwa ṭifl alladhī lā yunjibu al-aṭfāl*].'[20]

The passages translated into French and adapted for the film are formally similar to the original Arabic text in their alternating non-metrical and non-lineated strophes and, all told, run to almost 4000 words. The translation is paraphrastic rather than metaphrastic, and Fathy also adds various new words and phrases to the French version. In both languages, the verses' themes are large and profound, encompassing light, time, birth, death, language, the primordial, the transcendent, and the apocalyptic. They are densely, almost vertiginously allusive and culturally syncretic, and, for the most part (again, in both languages), they dispense with conventional syntax and punctuation. Yet, for all its irrealism and opacity, *Nom à la mer* is also quite reflexive—even (auto)biographical in some respects, for it alludes to key events in Fathy's life, including the source of her given name, the early death of her sister, and her relationship with Derrida. The film makes of both Fathy and Derrida wanderers and exiles in one another's company, as it were, against the film's Andalusian backdrop. And yet, without his having been physically present for the shoot, Derrida's voice haunts (rather than synchronously inhabiting) the scene that Fathy—also invisible, and moreover silent—nevertheless physically occupies, there, behind the camera, as she manages the shoot. If, as Fathy elsewhere suggests—adapting Derrida's comments in *Specters of Marx* on the face of the ghostly father—'the camera occupies precisely

the same topography as a specter that sees without being seen', then she and Derrida are here, too, spectralised and displaced, sounding each other out in an exilic chronotope.[21]

Indeed, as a meditation on exilic voices, *Nom à la mer* manifests certain aspects of what Hamid Naficy has called 'accented cinema'—in terms of both *setting* and *technique*—at 'the interstices of social formations and cinematic practices.'[22] The film is 'accented' with regard to *setting*, because its Andalusian location places both Fathy and Derrida, geographically, *between* France, which is home-but-not-homeland to both, and their respective North African homelands, Egypt and Algeria. Moorish southern Spain is a place they are both *not* from, yet from which they both derive sensations of belonging. The town of Níjar's chronotopography is what Fathy calls a 'village-mémoire', a memory-village, where she and Derrida share an uncanny but nonetheless welcome feeling of home. As Fathy reminds us: 'It may be that Derrida's family is originally from Spain.... The biographical narrative stops at "it may be." However, the non-belonging of the Marrano didn't forestall a certain identification. Shadow-memory of a tragic and romantic revenant that Spain has given us.'[23]

The film is 'accented' (still in Naficy's sense) with regard to cinematic *technique*, because Fathy's interval-filming forces open the temporal interstices, or gaps, endemic to the technology of the imaging device. Positioning her camera at various angles around the pool, Fathy films it at a rate of one or two seconds per hour, from morning to evening, over a period of four days.[24] Thus, whereas in more conventional cinema filmmakers often strive to make the frame-artifact disappear into the viewer's illusory experience of temporal continuity, in *Nom à la mer* Fathy deliberately reminds us of the capacities and limitations of the image-making device—accenting, as it were, the filmmaker's magician-like control over the frame-rate—and of what we both do and do not see, including the images that are, as Fathy puts it, rendered by the cuts 'invisible','missing', and 'disappeared'.[25]

In *Nom à la mer*, Derrida, like Fathy, is an eye that cannot be seen—insofar as 'the voice-over would also be an eye that sees.'[26] His voice implies (announces) a distinct subjectivity even as it conforms itself to the means of expression provided by Fathy's poetic script. He is the

medium of a production of meaning that is both under his control (with regard to accent, intonation, pace, pitch, timbre, etc.) and recalcitrant to what Fathy herself calls the 'virtual Arabic latent in the French'[27]—as what is retained by and projected from the Arabic text that Derrida can neither enunciate nor understand, but which haunt him as phonemes and graphemes that will not communicate with him directly. Fathy's text dictates to Derrida the written dimension of the other, of which he in turn, entrapped, becomes the intractable, disembodied voice that is encoded and embedded in the film-artifact, in which neither person is an object of the camera's gaze.

However, both the unseen filmmaker and the unseen narrator—these two nomadic bodies, these phantoms of presence—'appear' in the poem's recitation through numerous figurations and allusions, which, in their aggregation, place Fathy and Derrida in a highly overdetermined series of genealogical relations to one another: most strikingly, as one who sees but cannot see and one who both sees and is seen: '*le père aveugle de la légende et sa fille* [the blind father of the legend and his daughter].'[28] This particular image of the two of them is a central motif in their book, *Tourner les mots*, which includes a long chapter by Derrida called '*Lettres sur un aveugle:* Punctum caecum [*Letters on a Blind Man*: Blind Spots].' Derrida's remarks on blindness in relation to the making of *D'ailleurs, Derrida* resonate with his frequent tropings on blindness elsewhere in his oeuvre (for example, in *Writing and Difference* [1967], *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins* [1990], *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* [1993], and *Echographies of Television: Filmed Interviews* [1996]),[29] while also pinpointing one of the conditions of on-set conflict between the film's 'Auteur' (Fathy) and its 'Actor' (Derrida) as they shoot the film at various sites, from California to Île-de-France to Andalucía:

> One fine day, regarding our various disputes at Toledo and Almería, Safaa told me I was blind. That was the word she used. She called me a blind man and kept saying that I couldn't see the film and that all of my incomprehension, my impatience, my outbursts of anger, my tantrums were due to the fact that I saw nothing, that I couldn't see, from her point of view, the truth of the film in preparation.[30]

Derrida interprets Fathy's insistence on his blindness as the filmmaker's frustration at her subject's inability to comprehend, to envision, to 'see' the film as it is being made *about* him—that is, both *being made* to *comprehend* him as its proper subject and also *in the process of being made* all *around* him, as Fathy and her crew stage direct, light, and otherwise manipulate their equipment, the mise-en-scène, and their subject, and as he himself is forced to remain not so much an 'Actor' as someone who is acted upon. His own impatience with the process—especially his impatience at being made to wait, passively, while the activity of director and crew proceed about him—is attributed by Fathy (so Derrida tells us) to a kind of willful blindness or self-blinding to 'the truth of the film in preparation', a 'truth' that is presumably intended to be a pertinent, or proper, or faithful representation of himself. Derrida is not literally blind, so one could say, borrowing an English idiom, that he and Fathy are not seeing 'eye to eye'. In cinematic terms, one could say that their 'eye-line' (the perceived correspondence of their respective lines-of-sight, or what Akira Mizuta Lippit calls 'the trajectory of a look charted in space'[31]) has been disrupted, not in the film itself but on the film-set, where 'Author' and 'Actor' lose sight—at intervals, at least—of one another's vision or view of the shoot (*tournage*), 'the film in preparation'.

Earlier, in *Echographies of Television* (1996), Derrida had described the experience of working with another actor (Pascale Ogier) to help director Ken McMullen create the 'eye-line' effect in a scene from *Ghost Dance* as 'an experience of strange and unreal intensity … even if it is only fictional and "professional."'[32] Holding the gaze of another—to go on seeing them seeing you—is difficult to sustain (as anyone who has ever had a staring-contest knows); the experience of seeing oneself being seen as one sees another seeing themselves being seen by oneself is both too agonistic and too erotic an experience for anyone to withstand for very long. Indeed, to withstand it means giving oneself over to another, to be drawn, along with the other, into a network of substitutions that could lead almost anywhere—as with the network of substitutions that Fathy and Derrida draw one another into as 'the blind father of the legend and his daughter.' For this allegorical pairing is the stuff of no single legend, but rather a common topos in countless traditions, sacred and secular, classical and modern: in the stories of Oedipus and Antigone, for example; in Shakespeare's story

of Lear and Cordelia; in the *pansori* story of *Simcheongga*; in the life of John Milton; and in Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'Coliseum' fragment. Such examples generate further associations, to blind patriarchs more generally, including Homer, Dhritarashtra (in the *Baghavad Gita*), and Didymus of Alexandria, as well as the prophets Tiresias, the Deuterocanonical Tobit, Abraham's son Isaac in his old age, and Isaac's son Jacob. Indeed, as Paul Claudel points out, 'the Bible teems with blind patriarchs.'[33] And while, as Derrida himself reminds us in *Memoirs of the Blind*, virtually all of these filiations are father-son, nevertheless—from the two-sexed Tiresias to Melanie Klein's breast-penis—both positions are always at least potentially transgendered.[34] In *Nom à la mer*, they are promiscuously so.

These positions are transgendered as well, in certain remarks on the spectrality of voice that Fathy elicits from Derrida in a scene toward the end of *D'ailleurs, Derrida*—a scene shot at the Cortijo de Fraile: the farmhouse setting of the love triangle and murder upon which Lorca based his 1933 play *Bodas de Sangre* [*Blood Wedding*]:

> I think that repression—all forms of repression—and in particular sexual repression and the sexual repression of women begins when one tries to silence a voice or to reduce these skeins or tresses to a single voice, to some sort of monologism. Thus the multiplicity of voices is from the start the space open to phantoms or revenants, and the return of what has been repressed, excluded, shut out. So I try to think together the multiplicity of voices, the haunting, and the spectrality and also what we have just been speaking of [in relation to Lorca] regarding murder, the repression of sexual differences, of women, and so on.[35]

Like *D'ailleurs, Derrida*, *Nom à la mer* is a film about exile, made by a pair of wanderers. And, along with the paternal/patriarchal figures with, for, and against whom Derrida stands, there are many maternal figures associated with him as well. One of these is Hajar, mother of Ibrahim's son Isma^{c}il, whose name in Arabic comes from the same Semitic root as the Hajj, or pilgrimage, to Makkah (Mecca) and its Grand Mosque, in which millions of visitors every year drink from the sacred well, Zamzam, that is believed to have originally and miraculously sprung up to slake the thirst of Hajar and Isma^{c}il in

the arid desert. Fathy's Andalusian basin is, perhaps, a kind of visual allusion to Zamzam and thus to the figure of Hajar, the mother of Islam. Mireille Calle-Gruber rightly links the pool with Derrida's writings on *khôra*: 'a kind of maternal space where all forms may be born [*une sort d'espace matriciel où toute forme peut venir naître*]'.[36] Indeed, it evokes the maternal matrix of Abrahamic monotheism generally, given the close association between Hajar and Hagar in the Book of Genesis, who is denied and forced into exile by Abraham at the behest of Isaac's mother, Sarah. Indeed, Ibrahim/Abraham's 'no-to-the-mother' ('non à la mère') is one of the many names or titles of Fathy's film.

There are, moreover, other mothers with, for, and against whom Derrida stands. Most important among these, for Derrida, is his own mother, Georgette Sultana Esther Safar (1901–1991).[37] In a scene toward the end of *D'ailleurs, Derrida*, which was shot partly in the Spanish city of Toledo, whence his Sephardic forebears *might* have made their way to Algeria (recall Fathy's emphasis, in the quotation above from *Tourner les mots*, on 'it may be'), Derrida says that his work, *Circumfession*, is the 'vigil' that he wrote during the death of his mother. Poignantly, one effect of her illness and decline was that she often could not recognise, or even remember the name of, her son, 'Jackie'—his very name, the name she gave him, forgotten by the mother (*son nom oublié par la mère*). The special name (*nom*) once bestowed by the mother upon her son was taken away by her aphasia or amnesia—her no (*non*) to language. Derrida consequently finds himself exiled from, as well as in exile with, his mother; that is, he finds himself thus, when, at age 59, he says he first discovered the word 'dying [*mourant*]' and his proper 'being-unto-death [*être-pour-la-mort*].'[38]

Fathy herself further compounds the complexity of this network of maternal substitutions—for example, by standing not only as a kind of Hajar to Derrida's Isma^{c}il, but also for the 'name-of-the-mother' ('nom-de-mère') itself, through the play, or *destinerrance* (Derrida's coinage for the way words have of wandering away from a single, predetermined destination or received idea; for the roaming, errant, deviant quality of textuality as such) of transliteration—a form of play in which she and Derrida can engage together, intertextually.[39] In Derrida's epistolary essay, 'Télépathie' [Telepathy] (a kind of lost

child that somehow wandered away from the text of *La carte postale* [*The Post Card*, 1980]), there is a broaching of the mother's name that is at the same time a breach of maternal unicity: 'Safah, the name of the "lip" and of my mother.'[40] Here, as elsewhere, Derrida relies on transliteration from Semitic alphabets to create or compound polysemic *effects* (impressions of homophony and homology, and therefore of punning) in French and English: the root *sh/f/r* is shared by Arabic words meaning not only 'lip [of a mouth]' (*mishfar*), but also 'lip [of a vulva]' (*shufr*), 'cut' (*shafar*), 'edge' or 'border' (*shafīr*), and 'cipher' or 'code' (*shifrah*); and the root *sh/f/y* is shared by other Arabic words meaning 'lip' (*shafah*) and 'verge' or 'edge' (*shafā*).It is as if, in 'Télépathie', Derrida is seeing ahead to the time—something like Fathy's 'non-time [*non-temps*]', the chronotope with which *Nom à la mer* ends—when he would, with the filmmaker, yet again breach the repression of chance, randomness, and dissemination. Georgette Safar's patronymic, which is also for Derrida the 'nom-de-mère,' sets lips flapping—for example, from 'Safar' to 'saphah', one of modern Hebrew's words for 'speech', which Derrida, relying on the Latin script of transliteration to obscure or elide phonetics, attempts to pun on, in relation to the Arabic words for 'lip' ('shafā/shafah') and for the second, autumnal month in the Islamic calendar ('ṣafar'), which also carries the senses of 'void' and the 'whistling of the wind'. (One Arabic expression for 'word' is 'daughter of the lips' [*bint al-shafah*]). The filmmaker's Arabic name 'Safaa [Ṣafāʾ]' denotes 'purity' and is also the name of a hill in Mecca—one of the two hills (al-Ṣafā and al-Marwah) between which Hajar ran in search of water for herself and Ismaʿīl (*al-Qurʾān* 2:158). The various Arabic versions and transliterations of her name, all related to the term 'purity', include 'Safie', which happens to be the name of the Turkish merchant's daughter in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, from whose French lessons the eavesdropping, motherless monster learns French and who imbibes, along with the language, stories of exile that parallel his own.[41]

Such transliterative *destinerrance* inscribes the rough traversal, across multiple languages, of linguistic elements that together compose an experience of spectrality, of the heterogeneity, hybridity, and monstrosity of origins—including the origin called 'mother', a monstrosity (*monstruosité*) that shows itself (*se montre*[42])—and thus

begins, once again, to be familiarised or domesticated, in and through *Nom à la mer*—as what Elissa Marder calls 'a conceptual matrix that demands to be read'.[43] In one way of reading the film, Fathy is Derrida's *matrice arabe* or *Arabe matricielle*—his Arabic womb/mold/matrix: she stands for (in the place of) the versions of Arabic that he himself can neither read nor speak, as he explains in the following passage from an interview conducted in 1986:

> I was raised in a monolingual milieu—absolutely monolingual. Around me, although not in my family, I naturally heard Arabic spoken, but, except for a few words, I do not speak Arabic. I tried to learn it later but I didn't get very far. Moreover, one could say in a general way, without exaggerating, that learning Arabic was something that was virtually forbidden at school. Not prohibited by law, but practically impossible. So, French is my only language.[44]

The place where Fathy shoots her film—the place that is neither his motherland nor hers—is thus the coordinate of what Derrida elsewhere calls 'the inadequation of one tongue to another', an aspect of the spatio-temporal concept of *destinerrance*.[45] That place, in other words, is *translation*.

'Nothing', writes Derrida, 'is more serious than a translation.'[46] He means by this that, whenever and wherever translation occurs, there are always two attendant conditions: *responsibility* and *transference*. Yet for Derrida there is also nothing more *playful* than a translation, for he frequently evokes what Borges, in a riff on the seventeenth-century adage about translations as *les belles infidèles*, calls the translator's 'happy and creative infidelity'.[47] This is translation from the hermaphroditic perspective of what Derrida cryptically calls 'the satyr galatea that I am', representing himself through this hybrid figure as, at once, the ithyphallic (priapic) desiring subject and the milk-white (Gr. *galakteia*, 'milk-white') object of desire.[48] For Derrida, translation is to be understood as the impossible attempt to 'elude infidelity'.[49] Its rhetorical figure is paraphrasis, not metaphrasis (that is, dynamic equivalence, not formal equivalence).

Moreover, from Derrida's perspective, translation is also to be understood as the infidelity of any *one* language to itself: the alloerotic double-bind of the mono-language—signaled both by

Theodor Adorno's 'erotically charged', unassimilated *Fremdwörter* and by what Yasemin Yildiz calls 'internal multilingualism … lodged right in the mother tongue'.[50] For Derrida, in relation to Fathy's poetry specifically, it is also the Father's 'no'/'non' and the Father's 'name'/'nom,' in the *French* tongue, over and against the proscribed, interdicted, delegitimised, and therefore never-possible-to-have-been-learned *Arabic* tongue. It is his shared (mis)recognition (*méconnaissance*) with Fathy of the analogy between the specifically French universalism they have, as North Africans, adopted, and the sexual repression and the repression of women's voices so common, as they both frequently discuss, in Islamic cultures.[51] It is the never-successfully-disavowed patriarchalism of both *laïcité* (French secularism) and Islam—both say 'no' to the mother (*'non' à la mère*), as the film that bears this title, among its many titles, says 'no' to the Arabic *mère-langue* (mother-tongue) of the poet/filmmaker.[52]

Yet, as Yildiz reminds us, to say 'no' to the mother-tongue (the *Muttersprache* of Herder and Schleiermacher) is also, in effect, to say 'no' to the father; to say 'no' to the Lacanian *nom du père* that, in so much contemporary feminist thought, stamps all 'tongues', *despite* the perduring association of the mother's body and voice with conceptions of 'first', 'native', and 'proper' ethno-national languages; to say 'no' to the fount of language-based national character and monolinguistic inheritance; to say 'no' to the very phonemes of patriarchal linguistic pedagogy.[53] Here is how Derrida describes his affective predicament in relation to the Arabic(s) he never learned as a schoolchild:

> The elided language—Arabic or Berber, to begin with—certainly became the most alien. But this privilege did not come without a certain strange and confused proximity. Sometimes I wonder whether this unknown language is not my favorite language. The first of my favorite languages. And like each of my favorite languages … I especially like to hear it outside of all 'communication', in the poetic solemnity of the chant or prayer.[54]

The Arabic lyrics sung by the popular Algerian-Jewish *shaʿbī* (folk) singer, Lili Labassi, heard on a car radio in *D'ailleurs, Derrida*, give Derrida one kind of opportunity to do just this sort of hearing-outside-of-communication. A more complex, imagined or projected, scene

of listening to Arabic, 'outside of all "communication"', involves the reasonable inference that, at some point, Derrida would have listened to a recitation of the original Arabic version of Fathy's verses—in the translation of which, we are told, he had some sort of hand, despite his ignorance of Arabic. The spectator, thus, might imagine 'hearing' the Arabic poetry through Derrida's recitation of the French translation, while also being implicated in the resentment, the longing to destroy, that is part of the film's repression ('in particular sexual repression and the sexual repression of women') of the Arabic original.

For Paul de Man, in his tasking of Walter Benjamin, translation draws itself into a fundamentally linguistic pathos; it is a disarticulation that reveals the prior disarticulation of the original, in an impersonal, ahistorical phenomenology of the 'suffering' of language as such.[55] But, in Fathy and Derrida's extended colloquy on and performance of translation, the 'suffering' of language is every bit as much a *human* suffering: it is the pathos of history and of remembrance, and the concomitant pathos of origins. Indeed, a psychoanalytic perspective on translativity—one that builds on Freud's own *Übersetzungstheorie* (from his famous quip about 'the necessity that forces a translator into crimes against his original'[56] to his more extensive and thoughtful observations on processes of displacement, symptomatic conversion, and so forth as forms or modes of *Übersetzung*)—helps further clarify Derrida and Fathy's collaborative engagement with problematic crossings and displacements of Arabic, gender, and the Islamic world.[57]

In *Psychoanalysis and the Challenge of Islam*, Fethi Benslama asks:

> Doesn't translation contain murder within itself, to the extent that it necessarily involves the destruction of the literary body of the language of origin and the reappearance of what is translated in the literary body of the receiving language? The translation of the father as process of appropriation signifies that the father dies at his origin in the translation from one language to the other. Wouldn't this be one of the events characteristic of an origin: a translation that provides the dead father with a grave in a different body? Through the exogamy of language known as translation, origins are indefinitely produced from one another.[58]

This psychoanalytic interpretation—affirming the agonistic view of translation that, as we've seen, characterises to some extent the relation between French and Arabic in Fathy's film—finds a strikingly apt correlative in Gayatri Spivak's remarks on translation, rhetoricity, and love. In effect, Spivak asks: Does the translation communicate (in all senses) a desire for (an idealization of) the original, or a sense of culpable distance from (a resentment of, a longing to destroy) its rhetoricity? Or is there a kind of relation that can be facilitated that would at least partially escape both of these dead ends? In fact, Spivak argues that the translator may aspire to an earned intimacy of surrender, an act 'more erotic than ethical'.[59] Indeed, she posits translation's indexical relation to *jouissance*: 'a vital clue to where the self loses its boundaries'.[60]

Returning to the boundaries of 'self' in *Nom à la mer*, we find that the opening lines of Fathy's film-poem speak precisely to the relation between original and shadow (shade, trace, specter), in both maternal and linguistic terms:

> I will not hang my shadow [ẓillī] from a clothesline,
> but cast it where the road bends and
> I'll come across you
> as you're leaving me for her
> Inevitably, you'll outpace me
> As for me, I'll amuse myself:
> with the letters of my name [bi-ḥurūfi ismī], which slipped away from me one morning and scattered.[61]
>
> lan anshura ẓillī ᶜalā al-ḥibāli
> wa-lākin, sa-alqīhi ᶜinda munḥanā al-ṭarīqi wa-sa-altaqī bika wa-anta tughādirunī ilayhi
> sa-tatajāwazunī ḥatman
> ammā anā fa-sa-aᶜbathu lāhīyatan bi-ḥurūfi ismī allatī tabaᶜtharat minnī dhāt ṣabāḥ.[62]

Spivak writes that '[t]he task of the translator is to facilitate … love between the original and its shadow, a love that permits fraying, holds the agency of the translator and the demands of her imagined or actual audience at bay.'[63] Fathy's 'shadow' ('ẓillī'/'mon ombre'), in all three

languages, also suggests something akin to a shade, something that remains left behind, like a specter of the poet/speaker, even as the image of cast-off laundry transforms Walter Benjamin's 'royal robe' of translation both through de-exaltation/domestication and through the hint of disrobing.[64] Yet the subject's agency with regard to casting aside ('sa-alqīhi'/'la jetterai') her shadow (her identity as/in the shadow of her mother ['mère'] and the clinging folds of translation), and furthermore of playing ('je m'amuserai') with the letters of her name (the maternally bestowed, the untranslatable) acts as a continuation, or extension, of another pronouncement on the power of naming. This is the pronouncement on the name (*sur le nom/non*) with which the text of the film-poem truly begins: a quotation from al-Niffari: '"And he told me: where you placed my name, there shall I place yours."'[65] This injunction to place, or utter, one name with or on top of (*sur*) another suggests a homonymy, or interchangeability, of names—or perhaps, in the convergence of two interlocutors, the creation of a shared cognomen (*surnom*), or a re-naming (*renommant*), or a translation, or even the superimposition (*surnommant*) of one name by another.

Al-Niffari's name stands itself in the place of Fathy's as (co)author of her text—as a powerful co-adjutant or conspirator, one whose own writings are fundamentally concerned with the self's place, or standing (*mawqif*), in relation to a potentially overwhelming other. The film's inaugural quotation ('And he told me: where you placed my name, there shall I place yours') and seven others elsewhere in the film are taken from al-Niffari's *Book of Standings* (*Kitāb al-mawāqif*), a work of mysticism that builds on the complex semantic field conjured by its title-word, *mawāqif*. As Michael A. Sells explains,

> the basic radical, *w/q/f*, yields the primary verb form *waqafa* (to stand, stop, halt). However, [al-]Niffari uses the less common causative form of the verb, *awqafa*, meaning 'to make someone stand'. He then employs the standard verbal noun *waqfa*, not in its normal sense as the act of standing, but in a causative sense, from the point of view of the one standing, as the act of being stood somewhere. The prefix 'm' yields *mawqif* (plural *mawāqif*), as the place where the standing or being stood occurs. . . . *waqf* ('standing' or 'staying') is [al-]Niffari's term for the state of being riveted, as it

> were, in a particular place at the divine presence. The term *waqf* resonates with the Qur'anic 'standing' of each person before the revelation of his destiny during the apocalyptic moment of truth. It also echoes the poet-lover's standing before his fate of separation from the beloved at the *ghadāt al-bayn* (morning of her departure), and his standing before the abandoned ruins (*atlāl*) of the beloved's campsite.[66]

Given the interweaving of these motifs in Fathy's film, *Nom à la mer* might be thought of as being divided by the twelve quotations from al-Niffari's works into a series of 'standings' of Fathy's own—or, indeed, of her 'standings' in relation to Derrida. Like al-Niffari, whose words he intones along with Fathy's, Derrida occupies what film theorist Akira Lippit calls a 'space of inscription' that is both inside and outside the work.[67] The quotations from al-Niffari, like the displaced voice of Derrida, effectively sign and date 'an outside made visible from the work, but which also makes the work visible'; they each constitute 'an opening to another form or thought of the outside'.[68]

Al-Niffari is indeed another outsider, another traveler in the already errant company of Fathy and Derrida—a major figure in Islamic mysticism about whom very little is known. He died in the year 965 C.E. (A.H. 354) and was, according to one of his commentators, 'a wanderer in deserts, and dwelt in no land, neither made himself known to any man. It is mentioned that he died in one of the villages of Egypt: but God knows best the truth of his case.'[69] What we know best from the writings collected under his name is that he was intent on destabilizing the boundaries between the human and the divine, between self and other.[70] Fathy and Derrida may be said on some level to share with al-Niffari both a stance ('standing' or 'stationing') of openness and errancy (*destinerrance*) towards both God and text. Throughout her verses, Fathy interpolates quotations from al-Niffari's writings (adapted by her from his archaic style of Classical Arabic), thereby raising, among other questions, that of analogy—the truth, as al-Niffari puts it, 'that you cannot know except by analogy [*que tu ne connais qu'au moyen de l'analogie*].' And by ensuring, in *Nom à la mer*, that Derrida, in his recitation of the poems, would speak al-Niffari's words, Fathy in effect forces him to dis-encrypt Islamic mysticism from his own discourse, stationing Derrida at/as the crossroads of Islamic

mysticism (a tradition not without strong foundations in Moorish Spain) and the Western theo-philosophical tradition.

To be placed at such a crossroads is to be stationed as a petitioner for translation, and translation begins with the name, just as Fathy's film begins with the question of the name—with the name in question: What occurs when one gives a name, as in the polysemous title *Nom à la mer* ('name to the sea/mother')? What does it mean to give (a) name to the sea/mother? Does it suggest, for example, something lacking in a prior naming—an im-proper name, a name still awaiting its determination or legitimation? Does it suggest the unnamable—that is, the name of God (al-Niffari's 'he'?) as that which cannot or should not be named? What comes in the place of the name? Perhaps the poetic text itself (the text that bears her name and the title/name for which she is responsible) is the place where another name is kept safe or excluded (*sauf le nom*)—safe from the seductions of naming, or from the duty to name (*nom dû*), something that is before-the-name (*pré-nom*): the maternal thing.

Indeed, Fathy's verses extend the question of the name to the phantasmatic site or matrix of presignification and transformation—*khôra*—of the mother and the mother's tongue:

> There, there where I have no country [*pays*], in the no of the earth to the earth, in the no of the fatherland [*patrie*] to my fathers
> there where this name borders on the one my mother [ummī] planted
> and her tongue [lughah/*langue*] is a shoot in the muddy patch [ḥawḍin] of my childhood,
> The tongue she put in my mouth and which became a mother [umman]
> in place of the mother-tongue [dūna al-umm lughah].
> At the edge of the furrow, at its line I stop
> and you pull me with a rope toward the trace, toward the sheet of blue
> and just as you howl in my ear in some strange tongue,
> I will murmur into yours in ultimate tongues
> I will invade you with many things
> and I will turn to straw in my belly.[71]

ḥaythu al-lā-waṭan.
yujāwaru mā zaraᶜathu ummī
wa-lughatuhā nabtatun fī ḥawḍin min ṭīni ṭufūlatī
al-lughah allatī waḍaᶜtahā fī famī wa-ṣārat lī umman
dūna al-umm
lughah.
ᶜalā ḥāfati al-khaṭṭi aqifu
wa-anta tashiddunī bi-al-ḥabli ilā al-athar ilā
al-mulāᵓati al-zarqāᵓa wa-kamā dassasta
bi-lughatinmā
fī udhunī sa-ahmisu fī udhunayka
bi-lughātin akhīrah
sa-adussu fī jawfika al-kathīr
wa-sa-aṣīru fī jawfī ka-al-qashshi.[72]

This complex fantasia of coming to language evokes a sense of the *khôra* that Fathy elsewhere describes as 'a spacing where anything may appear [*un espacement où tout peut advenir*]'[73] and which is understood in this context to be a condition of the situation of what precedes signification: the preverbal semiotic space where, as Kristeva suggests, kinetic functioning in relation to a maternal body may come to involve connexion and orientation prior to any dependence on language.[74] Yet the language that is made to appear in this spacing is, of course, densely symbolic. For example, 'the muddy patch ('ḥawḍ') of my childhood' may be a metaphor for confused or clouded memories, but it also has an excremental tinge, evoking the libidinally charged muck of both childbirth and infancy: the fecal gift exchanged for the fecundity—and *destinerrance*—of language. The Arabic word *ḥawḍ* could mean any simple basin, cistern, or contained space—such as the basin on which Fathy's camera is trained in the making of *Nom à la mer*—and does not itself carry the association of muddy soil ('le carré de boue') introduced in the French version. However, *ḥawḍ* also has both 'pure' and 'impure' resonances within the Islamic prophetic tradition, particularly with regard to the Last Day or Judgement Day, when it is said there will be separate basins or pools for the saved and damned. Such possibilities for deferral and differentiation make the 'space' or 'room' for translation akin to Fathy's sense of *khôra*: *khôra* as a site of *différance*, neither 'inside' nor 'outside' a particular language, but

rather a spacing that gives rise to the possibility of representation, of language as such ('langue', 'lisān', 'tongue'). Initially, the mother's voice is incomprehensible and invasive ('you howl in my ear in some strange tongue'); nevertheless, it encounters a reciprocating murmur and a reciprocal invasion, experienced as somehow both enriching and depleting: 'I will murmur into yours in ultimate tongues / I will invade you with many things, / and I will turn to straw in my belly.'

As the verses proceed, they revisit, again and again, the scenes—real or imagined—of coming to language and of coming to being in the presence of, in relation to, the maternal and its (Western) philosophical connexion to *khôra*. They are verses about being born(e)—about a time before one was on the scene as a subject—and thus about the maternal 'one who touched me when I was not there'.'[75] And they are also about the times, or stations, or scenes of self-recollection: What, the adult asks, does infancy continue to do to me? How was I apprehended? Why was I banished? What can be recuperated? In relation to such questions, the film provides no linear history or resolution, but only a movement, or, rather, a series of captured movements, in and out of a loss that does not stop happening. The film works both for and against the logic of identity, of naming, that is conjured by its title, *Nom à la mer/mère* [Name to the Sea/Mother]. It also seeks to trace—both visually and verbally—fragmented landscapes of the encounter between self and other that are at once traumatic and desired:

> And she treads like sorrow the path of fire
> On a day with no evening
> At the crossroads, the labyrinth
> Of things like dislocated limbs, scattered
> I reunite them with him in an instant
> And the harvest, ears of S
> And the face carries me to the essence of the place, it was like an abstract figure
> And the hair overhangs the head and the rope draws me from the well just to the edge of the wild wood
> A sun whose fire carries the night in gestation
> And we are the elements of the day and two twins [taw'amāhu].[76]

wa-hiya tamshī ka-al-ḥuzni ᶜalā ṭarīqi al-māᵓi
fī nahārin fātahu al-masāᵓu
ᶜinda muftaraqi al-tarīqi, al-tīhu
ashyāᵓu ka-al-ashlāᵓi mushattatun
ajmaᶜuhā maᶜhu fī laḥẓatin
wa-al-ḥaṣādu sanābilu ṣādin
wa-al-wajhu yaḥmilunī anā fī dhāti al-makāni
wa-kāna ka-al-majāzi
wa-al-shaᶜru yaᶜtalī al-hāmata wa-al-ḥablu yashiddunī min
al-biᵓri ilā al-barrīyati
wa-naḥnu ᶜanāṣiru al-nahāri wa-tawᵓamāhu.[77]

In the complex ravels and tangles of such verses, one hears the 'handfuls of S' that are scattered and played with throughout the film-poem. In Arabic, the hard 'S' (*Ṣād*, ص) is the first letter both of Fathy's first name and of the word for 'prayer'. And of course 's' is the pluralizing letter in both French and English. In French, it also bears the punning sense of 'Est-ce. . . ? [Is it?]' and of 'esse' ['hook' or 'linchpin']. Each S is a version, an intonation, of an archaic scene of the psyche, and each is the trace of other repetitions, multiplicities, and possibilities, both past and present:

I'm captive to the bottle in which I seal the letter I will never stop writing, it will accompany me to the sea, I'll live there for thousands of years. And I will see my breath condense on the surface of the bottle and I will be the daughter of my night and I will cast my body onto my body on the seat on your shoulder on the light and you, you will be my companion in irons and I myself will always be between glass walls and perhaps I will summon breath [al-nafsa] into a verse [āyatin] and gather the Ss that spring up from all prayerS [al-ṣalāwāti].[78]

wa-lā ziltu sajīnatu al-zujājati allatī aḥbisu fīhā al-risālata allatī lan antahīya min kitābatihā wa-allatī sa-taṣḥabunī ilā al-baḥri ḥaythu sa-aqīmu li-alāfi al-sanawāti. wa-sa-arā anfāsī tatakāthafu ᶜalā saṭḥi al-zujāji, sa-akūnu binta laylatī ulqī jasadī ᶜalā jasadī, ᶜalā al-maqᶜadi ᶜalā kitfika, ᶜalā al-nūri, wa-sa-tukunīna anti qarīnatī fī al-aṣfādi wa-akūnū anā dāᵓiman bayna ḥawāᵓiṭi al-zujāji wa-rubbamā sa-ajmaᶜu

al-nafsa fī āyatin wa-aqṭifu ḥurūfa al-ṣādi allatī tahillu min jamīᶜ al-ṣalāwāti.[79]

Here, in one of the text's non-lineated strophes, the figure of the bottle (central to the title of the 2010 Arabic edition, but absent from Fathy's French title) makes its first of several appearances, resonating with images from Arab folkloric and Islamic traditions of *jinn* ('spirits' or 'demons') and the classic pot- or bottle-genies of world folklores, as well as with all the many stories of messages in bottles from Theophrastus to Poe to Celan's notion of poetry as *eine Flaschenpost* (literally, 'a bottle-letter')—messages of isolation, shipwreck, and desire, cast adrift to be found and read, or not, as dictated by chance: an archetype of publication, though here the text remains unfinished, forever accompanying its author 'to the sea [*à la mer*]'.

The receptacle of the message (*letter*/*lettre*/*risālah*) is also a maternal receptacle, an image of the womb, or intrauterine space, itself cast back, with the writer, into the maternal sea (*mer*/*mère*) of partial, uncompleted ('I will never stop writing') subjectivations. Fathy's verses are about an aesthetic as well as ethical encounter with the other—about strange, and estranging, encounters with the world, a world that is always understood, though never unified, in relation to the matrixial. In the film-poem, this tale of what Bracha Ettinger calls 'subjectivity-as-encounter'[80] folds into itself the relationship between Fathy and Derrida, who together become another version of what Fathy calls the 'twins [*jumeaux*]', sharing an quasi-uterine space (*khôra*) that is something other, something more than the infants' original container. It is a space in which there can be no simple repairing of the separations, cuts, splits, and cleavages of oedipalised loss (the filmmaker's time-lapse technique makes visible such cuts and cleavages), but that persists as a field of intersubjective encounters beyond the recuperative logic of castration that Derrida himself was always so intent upon deconstructing, for example in his own message-in-a-bottle, *The Post Card*:

> [C]astration-truth is the opposite of fragmentation, the very antidote for fragmentation: that which is missing from its place has in castration a fixed, central place, freed from all substitution. Some thing is missing from its place, but the lack is never missing from it.

> The phallus, thanks to castration, always remains in its place, in the transcendental topology.[81]

Fathy, like Derrida, disturbs the transcendental topology of phallogocentrism. The bottle in and of which she writes is both uterine and phallic:

> I played the Virgin Mary, yet the bottle was still sealed against my thirst, and my letter [risālatī] silenced in her womb [fī baṭnihā], its words flow in the mist of the breath that I breathed. The neck of the bottle was her neck, and my neck holds my head like a bottle stopped with a mirror.[82]
>
> wa-laʿabtu luʿbata Maryam al-ʿadhrāʾ raghma an al-zujājata lā zālat masdūdatan ʿalā ẓimʾi wa-risālatī maktūmatun fī baṭnihā wa-ʿunqu al-zujājati ʿunquhā wa-ʿunqī yaḥmilu raʾsī mithlahā, ammā al-saddādatu fa-taʿlūhā mirʾātun.[83]

Derrida, in his recitation of Fathy's words, 'breathes' her letter (*risālah*, a word that shares the same root in Arabic as the word for 'messenger' and, more specifically, with the term for 'the messenger of God') in(to) the bottle, in effect conspiring (*con* + *spirare*) with Fathy in a joint articulation of her poetry and of the meaning of breath as life, as speech, as wind, as rhythm, as humectant (a sort of sea-spray), as body and psyche, as intersubjectivity. What is achieved in their conspiracy is an ethical, though not uncompetitive, relation brought forth through translation, which is also transference (Freud's *Übertragung* denotes both)—a border-crossing to another speech, another language, that necessarily involves displacements and substitutions on the unconscious as well as conscious level.

Attending to such transferences, Derrida and Fathy each seek, together, a different way of looking at the paternal as well as the maternal—at the question of origins (which encompasses the question of their repudiation), including the repressive practices that underlie the symbolic and institutional structures of all three Abrahamic religions and the European and Islamic cultures that intersect (that

is, encounter *and* divide) one another in the lives of both Fathy and Derrida and at the site of *Nom à la mer*. Nowhere is this intersection more personal or more consequential than in relation to their respective experiences of genital excision: Derrida's circumcision, about which he speaks in detail in *Circumfession*, and Fathy's 'cutting', about which she speaks in a 2006 interview with Chantal Zabus. Fathy begins her interview with Zabus with the poignant admission that she 'would never be able to write on excision in my native tongue, Arabic'.[84] Her assertion of this linguistic impossibility is one dimension of what Fathy recognises and describes as her dissociated relation to the event, as is her reimagining of the event as a scene of theatricality, of filmmaking, acting, montage ('film-cutting'). One needs, she explains,

> years of silence to say something at long last of this inaugural event, which is intrinsically aporetic, since it takes place at the very site of the most intimate of intimacies and of phenomenal culture. In order to speak about it, one has to endure this aporia. Needless to say, speaking about it raises a suspicion of betrayal of one's culture, one's family, indeed one's native land. It is a betrayal to write about one's own excision. An air of embarrassment, of awkwardness, of inelegance goes along with it, as well as with the confession and the affect it entails. Or, more exactly, the affective complex that it brings along. Indignation (for those who are for and those against), shame, fear, disgust, compassion, hatred, shock, indifference, debate, suspicion.[85]

For Derrida as well, genital excision is an aporetic experience. Yet he can say, quoting in *Circumfession* from an unpublished notebook: '*Circumcision, that's all I've ever talked about*.'[86] For, while practices of both male and female genital excision are hidden, celebrated, vilified, and defended in a wide variety of ways from culture to culture, there are of course sweeping asymmetries across gender lines. Fathy highlights some of these asymmetries by comparing her own physically and psychically traumatic, clandestine, and uncelebrated excision with her brother's circumcision:

> I had a brother who was circumcised very young at a big party, to which we invited a lot of people . . . a huge celebration. For days on

> end. We invited the family; it is a large family. . . . And I remember my father holding the prepuce in his hand and looking at it . . . [l]ike a trophy.[87]

One is invited to imagine the crushing blows Fathy's ego would continue to sustain from such a paternal imago, and one is left to consider how a multiplicity of projective identifications might include Derrida, cast, in *Nom à la mer*, in the role of 'the blind father of the legend'.

Blinded—castrated—Derrida is also made to ventriloquise a voice that is not his own, a female voice whose 'tongue' (Fathy's 'mère langue', Arabic) has itself been sacrificed, excluded in favor of the language of the father, the *nom du père*. Across the full sonority of Derrida's authoritative and inimitable voice runs the otherwise silent, and always twofold, textual inscription of Fathy's verses and the visual inscription of the *mise-en-scène*. Each of these inscriptions seems at many turns determined to resist intelligibility, including the intelligibility of the father, his writing, his transmission, his translation. Yet the film-poem also bears the trace of Derrida's recognition, his recognition by Fathy and by the listener/reader/translator, as someone who speaks after and against the archaic forms of male domination and sexual repression that abide in the 'cut' of the film—what Fathy archly calls the 'editing of an individual'.[88]

Strikingly, in the visual text of the film-poem, the most dynamic elements are also the most marginal: these are the various human figures that frequently appear at the edge of the frame, walking around the perimeter of the irrigation basin (*ḥawḍ*)—figures whose features and movements are truncated, fragmented, and excised by the time-lapse technique (Figure 2). Who are these specters—these seemingly inconsequential revenants flitting about at the margins, stepping within and beyond the borders of an already densely textured audiovisual space? Once noticed, they lend the film's largely static framing and time-lapse camerawork the aura of the genre of the surveillance video, a filmic artifact of the state's sovereign authority to police and to inhibit, repress, and exclude those who nevertheless continue to pop in and out of the frame—to return (*revenir*). These people who

Figure 2. Still from *Nom à la mer*, showing some of the spectral figures (upper left and right corners) that appear at and vanish from the edge of the frame.

have passed on yet who keep returning, partially and randomly, at the edges of the frame—these tourists, locals … who can say?—for almost everything about their fleeting, fragmented, scattered presences, including their unwitting implication in the scene, their obtrusive body parts, their discontinuous movements, and their spectrality, suggests something at once defaced and defacing. Among the many figures they potentially evoke are the culturally and psychically distorted figures of contemporary Muslims, as captured by the global surveillance apparatuses of Islamophobic security-states. There is also the powerful suggestion of far more abstracted subjects, orphaned by languages and cultures both known and unknown to us, riven and multiple, congeries of parts, or self-states, only imperfectly aware of one another, or not at all, potentially hospitable, or possibly on the worst of terms.

Like the fixed surveillance camera—which both 'waits for' the passersby and refuses them sufficient time (the temporal gaps of Fathy's time-lapse technique) to project for video-capture a more complete image of themselves that would more plainly reveal or fulfill their narrative role[89]—the translated, as it were murdered Arabic language haunts the scattered parts of subjects that try and fail to speak to one another in their various languages, as if Arabic were an inaccessible refuge from the injuries and offenses of a shattered life in their mother-tongue. Such a Renanesque, orientalizing fantasy is but one of the offenses by means of which many of us help ensure that we remain at odds with ourselves—borrowing it, as all fantasies are borrowed, in order to abase ourselves before an image of unyielding arduousness and post-dated desire, even as some of us may appease our narcissism through identification with Derrida's own desiring relation to the Arabic he never learned to speak.

Fathy is less explicit than Derrida about the complexities of her own desirous relation to the French language, in which she does so much of her working and living. Their mutual friend, Jean-Luc Nancy, observes (echoing Fathy's own remark, cited earlier) in his 'Postface' to Fathy's book *Où ne pas naître* that Fathy's Arabic 'is retained, or held, in her French [*sa langue arabe est retenue dans sa française*].'[90] Yet Nancy makes no effort to explain what, from his perspective, is 'retained'—the resonance of particular phonemes? syntactical peculiarities? semantics? a set of figures or allusions? Although Fathy composes poetry only in Arabic, she nevertheless does not assume, in the manner of Abdelfattah Kilito, a defensive posture regarding Arabic's untranslatability—whether as a sacred or literary language.[91] She has participated in and facilitated much of her Arabic writing's translation into many other languages, including French, English, Spanish, Portuguese, Hebrew, and Japanese. For Fathy, the questions of language and voice are always *Whence?* and *Whither?*—that is, matters of translation and, thus, complex, even mystifying, matters of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural retention and transit, as expressed, for example, in the opening line of her poem, 'Négativités': 'Enigmatic are the poems one writes from one continent to another [*Énigmatiques les poèmes qu'on écrit d'un continent à l'autre*].'[92] This line is itself enigmatic, folding together the image of writing for readers on

another continent and the image of writing while in transit from one continent to another.

Shuttling across continents, writing for readers of their mother-tongues and for readers of many other tongues, Fathy and Derrida have both shared abundantly in the enigmas of interlinguistic and interpersonal translation: the partiality and finitude of individual languages, as well as their malleability and rivenness; the dislocations of linguistic pluralism; the exposure to strangeness; the perpetual incommensurateness of self and other; the fragility and tentativity of correspondences; the finding of oneself in the foreign, and of the foreign in oneself; the knowledge that anything can always be said otherwise; and, not least, the puzzle of loss, of being at a loss for words and, inevitably, losing hold of the other.

Indeed, the release of *Nom à la mer* in 2004 coincided very nearly with Derrida's death on October 9 of that year. Fathy had recorded Derrida's voice-over in June, and by early October the film was ready for him to see: 'I was able, to my great and profound gratitude, to finish the film and show it to Jacques Derrida while he was in the hospital, a few days before his *adieu* to the world. He told me that he'd like to live long enough to watch it on the big screen.'[93] Knowing that this film was no insignificant part of Derrida's apprehension of death and, moreover, no insignificant part of Fathy's work of mourning, lends the film the aura of being 'about' the untranslatable secret of death, about that secret's untranslatability, and about her, and our, posthumous relation to Derrida's work.'What happens', Derrida asked in his eulogy for Emmanuel Levinas,

> when a great thinker becomes silent, one whom we knew living, whom we read and reread, and also heard, one from whom we were still awaiting a response, as if such a response would help us not only to think otherwise but also to read what we thought we had already read under his signature, a response that held everything in reserve, and so much more than what we thought we had already recognised there?[94]

Nom à la mer ends up feeling like a response, or a set of responses, to this question, a series of meditations on liminal states and the possibility of a (shared) future, of what is yet to come.

Reflexively speaking, one of the liminal events to which it testifies is the end of the film-poem itself, as it fades frame by frame into night, with these concluding words—its *adieu*—where Fathy uncharacteristically but crucially invokes the classical Arabic poetic tradition:

> And then we will encounter the dead [naltaqī ʿindaʾidhin bi-al-amwāti]
> So as not to die
> Beyond the wall of time we'll drop once again into the heart of the city of stone and we will have a house ringed by a white garden and glasses of crystal and an orange tree
> And a fountain at the summit of the mountain
> And a beach looking out on the sea of places
> And a poem [qaṣīdatun] that we will write [naktubuhā] with the echo of footsteps
> With splinters of colored glass
> When all things will be one and the same thing
> Ultimate things
> In the end
> One abode, one only
> With a wide balcony looking out at the non-time [al-lā-zamān].

naltaqī ʿindaʾidhin bi-al-amwāti
kay lā namūta
warāʾ ḥāʾiṭi al-zamani sa-nasquṭu thānīyatan fī qalbi madīnat al-ḥajari
wa-sa-yakūnu lanā baytun taḥadduhu ḥadīqatun bayḍāʾun wa-akwābun min al-krīstāli
wa-shajaratu burtuqālin
wa-nāfūratun ʿalā saṭhi jabalin
wa-shāṭiʾun yuṭillu ʿalā baḥri al-amkinati
wa-qaṣīdatun naktubuhā maʿ ṣaḍā al-aqdāmi
wa-nāfidhatun min qaṭʿi al-zujājati al-mulawinati
ḥīna yakūnu kullu shayʾin huwa al-shayʾ al-waḥīd
huwa quṣwā al-ashyāʾi
huwa fī al-nihāyati
manzilun wāḥidun faqaṭṭ
lahu shurfatun wāsiʿatun tuṭillu ʿalā al-lā-zamān.[95]

Fathy approaches here, with Derrida, what he elsewhere calls 'a certain enigmatic relation among dying, testifying, and surviving.'[96] The turn ('And then') is elegiac: 'we will encounter the dead / So as not to die.' The concluding scene registers not only a conventional, Western elegiac relation (indeed, Fathy's 'splinters of colored glass' seem to allude to the trampled 'dome of many-coloured glass' of Shelley's great elegy, 'Adonais'[97]), but also a highly conventional, indeed originally pre-Islamic, motif in the classical Arabic form of the *qaṣīdah*, the beginning (*nasīb*) of which situates the poet in the aftermath of loss, mourning over the abandoned ruins (*atlāl*) of the beloved's encampment.[98] Remembrance, in the *qaṣīdah*, takes a variety of solemn and inspired forms as it seeks not only to recall the lost or the dead but also to anticipate and commemorate a reverie or transformed vision ('looking'/'tuṭillu') of what are at once vestigial and prospective *maisons/abodes/manāzil* for the poet and the beloved—and also, here, for an Arabic literary past itself returned (but at whose behest?), at the end rather than the beginning of a poem, a film-poem, turned (*tourné*) for the beloved in anticipation of his departure.

Yet there is a reluctance or refusal to discriminate, once and for all, between mourner and mourned, between present and absent, unfinished and finished. Unfinished—that is, still being written, translated, revised—is the 'poem that we will write with the echo of footsteps [*l'écho des pas*].' What might be said to happen, what might be hoped, is that further steps (*pas*) will be heard to echo: one step, and then another step, and so on, always in some sort of transverse or transgressive relation to the putative border between life and death, a trespass upon death, as in Derrida's expression of the defeated wish 'to live long enough to watch it on the big screen'.

We can share Derrida's wish, his fantasy, his irresistible interest in the beyond and thus imagine watching *Nom à la mer* 'on the big screen' with Derrida and with others: encountering both the living and the dead in a shared spectatorial experience; haggling over possible subtitles; wanting to contest the imperium of global French; remembering or wondering about the Arabic text; glancing over at Derrida to see how he likes the sound of his own voice; glancing over at Fathy to see if her lips move to the French; glancing over at strangers and wondering what, or how much, they understand; shrinking under our own certain surveillance; pondering the chronotopes of 'non-lieu

[non-place]' and 'non-temps [non-time]'; wondering what is beyond the screen, 'derrière le mur du temps [beyond the wall of time]'; anticipating what steps or negations ('pas') may be in store for us; what sort of communion, 'lorsque toutes les choses seront une et seule chose [when all things will be one and the same thing]' and what sort of loneliness; and, after all, what deaths might be revived in us—not in the service of nostalgia or melancholic entrapment or poetic mannerism, but rather as allies of the sort Derrida always strove to be to us—his collaborators, his co-conspirators, his readers—in our struggles against the present's particular insufficiencies, exclusions, and devastations.

Notes

I wish, first and foremost, to express my gratitude to Safaa Fathy for her encouragement of my work. Thanks, too, to Cornell University's Society for the Humanities, where she and I were both Visiting Faculty Fellows in 2007–2008. It was in Ithaca that I was first introduced to Fathy's oeuvre and began—in conversations with Jonathan Culler, Anne-Lise François, Tsitsi Jaji, Charlie Kronengold, Dominick LaCapra, Chris Nealon, and Denise Riley—to conceive of writing about her collaborations with Jacques Derrida. After a long period of germination, my work first took shape in a translation of the first chapter of the book Fathy wrote with Derrida, *Tourner les mots*, which, along with a brief introduction, was published in 2016. Warm thanks, as well, to Geoffrey Bennington, Michael Naas, and their colleagues at *The Oxford Literary Review* and to those who commented on various drafts of the present essay or shared valuable information and insights in response to my inquiries: Julien Brugeron, Nesrine Chahine, Tim Corrigan, Rodrigo Fernández de Gortari, Ruqayya Yasmine Khan, Suvir Kaul, Ania Loomba, Jean-Michel Rabaté, and Emily Wilson. Finally, I want to express my deep indebtedness to Michael Karam and, especially, to Rawad Wehbe, who provided essential help with Arabic texts, dialects, and transliterations.

[1] Jacques Derrida, 'Telepathy', *Oxford Literary Review* 10.1 (1988): 21.

[2] The French noun 'langue' is feminine and the Arabic noun 'lisān' is masculine. The more common term for 'language' in MSA is 'lughah' (a feminine noun). Throughout this essay, I've done my best to follow consistently the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES) transliteration system for MSA as well as for other dialects of Arabic. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations and transliterations are my own.

[3] Safaa Fathy, dir., *Nom à la mer* (Paris, Éditions Montparnasse, 2008).

[4] Safaa Fathy, personal communication, 15 January 2020.

[5] Safaa Fathy, dir., *D'ailleurs, Derrida* (Paris, Éditions Montparnasse, 2008). This film was released in an English-subtitled version as *Derrida's Elsewhere*, which is a satisfying translation of the title inasmuch as it speaks both to the importance of the term *ailleurs/elsewhere* to Derrida as well as to Derrida's own place 'elsewhere'—the elsewhere (or 'non-lieu/non-place' Fathy refers to in *Nom à la mer*) where he is (perhaps) to be found. However, in French, 'd'ailleurs' has additional meanings such as 'moreover', 'otherwise', 'besides', and 'furthermore'. which are also played or troped upon in *D'ailleurs, Derrida*.

[6] 'One meaning of the word *tourner* in the book's title is "to film". But the word also shares with the English verb *to turn* a wide range of meanings and associations, including "to turn", "to revolve", "to depend", "to shape or form", "to consider", and "to trope". Thus *Tourner les mots* refers to cinematic practice (*le tournage*: "filmmaking", "the shoot") and to the relation between cinema and language (*les mots*: "words").' Jacques Derrida and Safaa Fathy, 'Contre-jour,' trans. Max Cavitch, *PMLA* 131.2 (2016): 540.

[7] Recent examples of the minimal attention to Fathy's work in anglophone scholarship include: 1) the fact that, in a 2015 special issue of *Discourse* devoted entirely to 'Derrida and Cinema', there is *not a single mention* of the film *Nom à la mer*, and far more attention is given to the American film, Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering Kofman's *Derrida* (New York, Jane Doe Films, 2002), than to *D'ailleurs, Derrida*; and 2) in Sarah Dillon's monograph, *Deconstruction, Feminism, Film* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2018), there is only a very brief discussion of *D'ailleurs, Derrida* and no mention at all of *Nom à la mer*. Moreover, as this essay goes to publication, there is still, to my knowledge, no plan to publish an English translation of Derrida and Fathy's book, *Tourner les mots: Au bords d'un film* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2000), which contains Derrida's most extensive writing on cinema. (For a translation of the book's opening section, see Derrida and Fathy, 'Contre-jour.')

[8] Fathy's corpus of feature-length films and shorts includes *al-Wujūh al-khafīyah* (*Hidden Faces*, 1990); *Doisneau* (1993); *al-Ghāzīyah, rāqisāt Miṣr* (*Ghazeia, danseuses d'Égypt/Ghazeia, Dancers of Egypt*, 1993); *al-Ṣamt* (*Le silence*/*The Silence*, 1996); *Maksīm Rodinson, Mulhid al-ālihah* (*Maxime Rodinson, L'athée des dieux*/*Maxime Rodinson: God's Atheist*, 1996); *D'ailleurs, Derrida* (*Derrida's Elsewhere*, 1999); *De tout coeur* (*With All My Heart*, 1999); *Nom à la mer* (*Name to the Sea*, 2004); *Hidden Valley* (2004); *Dardasha, Socotra* (*Conversations on Socotra*, 2006); *Tahrir, lève, lève la voix* (*Tahrir, Lift, Lift Your Voice*, 2011); *Mohammad sauvé des eaux* (*Mohammad Saved from the Waters*, 2013); and *J'ai laissé mes yeux là-bas* (*I Left My Eyes Behind*, 2017).

[9] Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 23.

[10] The only other feature-length film about Derrida in which he participated, Dick and Kofman's *Derrida*, is far less attentive to these matters. On *Derrida*, see Nicholas Royle, 'Blind Cinema', *Discourse* 37.1–2 (2015): 117–37. On *D'ailleurs, Derrida*, see Peggy Kamuf, 'Stunned: Derrida on Film', in *To Follow: The Wake of Jacques Derrida* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 108–19; Marguerite La Caze, '"I've Never Met a Me": Identity and Philosophy in *D'ailleurs, Derrida*', in *Derrida Today* 12.2 (2019): 152–170; and David Wills, 'Derrida, Now and Then, Here and There', in *Theory and Event* 7.2 (2004), http://muse.jhu.edu/article/52905.

[11] Safaa Fathy, 'La mère du nom et nom à la mer', in *Écritures migrantes du genre (II): Langues, arts, inter-sectionnalités génériques*, ed. Mireille Calle-Gruber and Sarah-Anaïs Crevier Goulet (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2017), 87.

[12] Fathy, 'La mère', 86.

[13] Maribel Peñalver Vicea, 'La "distance généreuse" dans *Nom à la mer* : tremblements de mains et reflets sémiotico-visuels entre Safaa Fathy et Jacques Derrida', in *Écritures migrantes du genre (II): Langues, arts, inter-sectionnalités génériques*, ed. Mireille Calle-Gruber and Sarah-Anaïs Crevier Goulet (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2017), 101.

[14] The area is the setting for Lorca's play, *Bodas de Sangre* [*Blood Wedding*] (1933), which Fathy and Derrida discuss toward the end of *D'ailleurs, Derrida*. For an account of rural life under Franco, see also Juan Goytisolo, *Campos de Níjar* (Barcelona, Seix Barral, 1960).

[15] Many a French ear would also hear in the film's title the phrase 'un homme à la mer'—the French equivalent of the English expression 'man overboard'.

[16] Ken McMullen, dir., *Ghost Dance*, Channel Four, 1983.

[17] Mireille Calle-Gruber, 'Tourner le poème. *Nom à la mer*: où le cinéma fait attelage des genres', in *Écritures migrantes du genre (II)*, 91.

[18] As Anne-Emmanuelle Berger points out, all 'mother-tongues' are developed and disposed under historical circumstances of heterogeneity, conquest, and—in the modern era—nationalization and thus defy myths of purity and 'homogeneous origin' ('The Impossible Wedding: Nationalism, Languages, and the Mother Tongue in Postcolonial Algeria,' in *Algeria in Others' Languages*, ed. Anne-Emmanuelle Berger [Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2002], 64), while nevertheless retaining the erotogenic power (and concomitant shame) of the mother-child bond (where 'mother' is understood to be 'whoever plays her role' [77]: the first, primary caregiver and companionate presence—whether a

biological mother, father, or other relative, or a non-biologically-related person of any gender—in the child's life). The 'cultural polarization around the figure of the mother' (76) that Berger so persuasively charts for postcolonial Algeria is a phenomenon that, to greatly varying degrees of course, subjects of all modern nations experience: the association of 'national' and 'native' language-speaking with the status of women and with the 'intimate' and 'domestic' spaces, once much more commonly and rigidly policed as 'spheres', but still widely metonymised by the figure of the mother, specifically—to be celebrated and self-empowered or segregated and silenced, by turns, in accord or in discord with each nation's specific, historically contingent, sociopolitical matrices of linguistic belonging and participation.

[19] On the contentious history and criticism of non-metrical Arabic poetry, see Robyn Creswell, *City of Beginnings: Poetic Modernism in Beirut* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); and Huda Fakhreddine, 'The Prose Poem and the Arabic Literary Tradition', in *Middle Eastern Literature* 19.3 (2016): 243–59.

[20] Safaa Fathy, *Ism yasᶜa fī zujājah: shiʿr* (Cairo: Dār al-nahḍah al-ᶜArabīyah lil-ṭibāᶜah wa-al-nashr, 2010), 5.

[21] '[L]a caméra est exactement dans la même topographie qu'un spectre qui voit sans être vu' (Safaa Fathy, 'Momie de la mort vaincue: Sur un film de Chadi Abdel Salam', in *Europe revue littéraire mensuelle*, 82 [2004]: 287).

[22] Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 4. For a broad critique of the implicit binarism and hierarchism of 'accented' and 'unaccented' cinema, see Shekhar Deshpande and Meta Mazaj, *World Cinema: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 375–77.

[23] 'Il se peut que la famille de Derrida soit originaire de l'Espagne.... Le récit biographique s'arrête à "il se peut que". Cependant, la non-appartenance du marrane n'excluait pas une certaine identification. Mémoire fantôme de revenant dramatique et romanesque dont l'Espagne nous a fait don' (Derrida and Fathy, *Tourner les mots*, 133).

[24] Fathy, 'La mère', 86.

[25] Fathy, 'La mère', 86.

[26] 'La voix *off* serait aussi un œil qui regarde' (Fathy, 'Momie', 287).

[27] Fathy, 'La mère', 87.

[28] Fathy, 'Nom à la mer', 113.

[29] On the figure of the blind man in Derrida's oeuvre, see also Kamuf, 'Stunned'.

[30] Derrida and Fathy, 'Contre-jour', 541.

[31] Akira Mizuta Lippit, 'Plus Surplus Love: Jacques Derrida's Echopoiesis and Narcissism Adrift', *Discourse* 37.1–2 (2015): 89.

[32] Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television: Filmed Interviews*, trans. Jennifer Bajorek (New York: Polity, 2002), 119.

[33] Paul Claudel, *I Believe in God: A Meditation on the Apostles' Creed*, trans. Helen Weaver (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 21.

[34] Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 5–6.

[35] '[J]e crois que la répression—toutes les répressions—en particulier la répression sexuelle et la répression sexuelle de la femme, commence là où on essaie de faire taire une voix ou de réduire ces écheveaux ou cette tresse à une seule voix, à une sorte de monologique. Donc, la multiplicité des voix est aussi, d'entrée de jeu, l'espace ouvert aux fantômes ou revenants, aussi le retour de ce qui est refoulé, exclu, forclos. Donc, moi j'essaie de penser ensemble la multiplicité des voix, la hantise, et la spectralité et aussi tout ce dont nous parlons depuis un moment, du côté du meurtre, de la répression, des différences sexuelles, de la femme, etc.'

[36] Calle-Gruber, 'Tourner le poème', 95.

[37] 'I have a pain in my mother' (Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993], 23); also, 'Mummy if you prefer' (73). Bennington takes some liberty in his translation of the word 'Maman' (Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* [Paris, Seuil, 1991], 73). Unlike English, French has no homonym for 'la momie' (that is, a preserved corpse) that means 'mother'. Yet the cross-linguistic pun underscores both the ambivalence of the filial relationship and also the broad range of Derridean necromantic and spectral associations that Fathy and Derrida develop in their later collaborations. See also, Fathy, 'Momie', 282–94.

[38] Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* (1993), 208.

[39] Derrida's promiscuous dissemination throughout his oeuvre of the term/figure/concept *destinerrance* is eloquently and interpretively charted in J. Hillis Miller, *For Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 28–54.

[40] Derrida, 'Telepathy', 21.

[41] Mary Shelly, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, ed. J. Paul Hunter (New York: Norton, 2012), 80–95.

[42] '[T]hat is what the word monster means—it shows itself [*se montre*] in something that is not yet shown . . . [a] figure of the future' (Jacques Derrida, 'Passages—from Traumatism to Promise', in *Points. . . Interviews, 1974–1994*, trans. Peggy Kamuf [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995], 386).

[43] Elissa Marder, *The Mother in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Psychoanalysis, Photography, Deconstruction* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 1.

[44] Jacques Derrida, '"There Is No *One* Narcissism" (Autobiophotographies)', in *Points … : Interviews, 1974–1994*, ed. Elisabeth Weber (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 204.

[45] Jacques Derrida, 'Des Tours de Babel', in *Difference in Translation*, ed. Joseph F. Graham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 165.

[46] Derrida, 'Des Tours de Babel', 184.

[47] Jorge Luis Borges, 'The Translators of *The Thousand and One Nights*', trans. Esther Allen, in *Selected Non-Fictions*, ed. Eliot Weinberger (New York: Viking, 1999), 106.

[48] Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* (1993), 169.

[49] Philip E. Lewis, 'The Measure of Translation Effects', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Lawrence Venuti (New York: Routledge, 2004), 261.

[50] Theodor W. Adorno, 'Words from Abroad', in *Notes to Literature*, vol. 1, trans. Sherry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 187; Yasemin Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 67.

[51] See, for example, Safaa Fathy, 'Cutting and Film Cutting/Ashes: An Interview with Chantal Zabus', in *Fearful Symmetries: Essays and Testimonies around Excision and Circumcision*, ed. Chantal Zabus (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), 219–33.

[52] Yet, by way of implicitly acknowledging the culturally inflected distinctions between *langue* and *parole*, Fathy—writing about her efforts to secure permission to do some location filming at the Casbah in Algiers—observes: 'Algerians don't like to say "no". Their "no" always takes the form of a short phrase, as if it were a kind of name or diminutive: "we'll see", and sometimes even a cheerful "no problem" [Les Algériens n'aiment pas dire non. Le non prend toujours la forme d'une petite phrase, qui sonne comme un prénom ou un diminutif : "on verra", et parfois même un joyeux "pas de problème"]' ('Tourner sous surveillance', in Derrida and Fathy, *Tourner*, 46).

[53] Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, 11–12.

[54] Derrida, *Monolingualism*, 40–41.

[55] Paul de Man, 'Conclusions: Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator"', in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 84–87.

[56] Sigmund Freud, 'Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious,' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, vol. 8 (London: Hogarth Press, 1960), 34.

[57] See Robert J. C. Young, 'Frantz Fanon and the Enigma of Cultural Translation', *Translation* 1 (2012): 91–100.

[58] Fethi Benslama, *Psychoanalysis and the Challenge of Islam*, trans. Robert Bononno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 77.

[59] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'The Politics of Translation', in *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 183.

[60] Spivak, 'The Politics of Translation', 180.

[61] (Here and throughout, when quoting from 'Nom à la mer' in the text, I will pair my English translation with the corresponding passage transliterated from the Arabic original, and the French version will appear in the notes.) 'Je ne suspendrai pas mon ombre sur une corde à linge / mais la jetterai au détour du chemin et / Je te rencontrerai / alors que tu me quittes pour elle / Tu me dépasseras fatalement / Quant à moi, je m'amuserai : / avec les lettres de mon nom qui m'ont échappé un matin et se sont éparpillées' (Safaa Fathy, 'Nom à la mer,' trans. Zeinab Zaza and Jacques Derrida, in *Écritures migrantes du genre (II)*, 111).

[62] Fathy, *Ism yasᶜa fī zujājah: shiÊżr*, 56.

[63] Spivak, 'The Politics of Translation', 181.

[64] Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), 75.

[65] '"Et il m'a dit : où tu mis mon nom, là je mettrai le tien"' (Fathy, 'Nom à la mer', 111). Maati Kâbbal's French translation differs slightly from Fathy's text: '"Il me dit: Là où je place mon nom, place aussi le tien"' (Al-Niffari, *Le livre des stations*, trans. Maati Kâbbal [Paris: Éditions de L'Éclat, 1989], 94).

[66] Michael A. Sells, ed., *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1996), 282.

[67] Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Ex-Cinema: From a Theory of Experimental Film and Video* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 2.

[68] Lippit, *Ex-Cinema*, 3, 5.

[69] Arthur John Arberry, trans., *The Mawáqif and Mukhátabát of Muhammad Ibn 'Abdi 'L-Jabbár Al-Niffarí* (London: Luzac and Company, 1935), 1.

[70] See Adonis, 'The Writings of Al-Niffari; or, the Poetic of Thought', in *Sufism and Surrealism*, trans. Judith Cumberbatch (London: Saqi Books, 2016), 155–62; Maati Kâbbal, 'Présentation', in Al-Niffari, *Le livre des stations*, v–xi; and Sami-Ali, 'Al-Niffari: Une poésie de la pensée', in *Les Haltes d'Al-Niffari*, trans. Sami-Ali (Fata Morgana, 1995), 9–24.

[71] 'Là, là où je n'ai pas de pays, dans le non de la terre à la terre, dans le non de la patrie à mes pères / là où ce nom avoisine ce que ma mère a planté / et sa langue est une pousse dans le carré de boue de mon enfance, / La langue qu'elle a mise dans

ma bouche et qui est devenu une mère / à la place de la Mère langue. / Au bord du sillon, sur sa ligne je m'arrête / et tu me tires par une corde vers la trace, vers le drap bleu / et de même que tu hurles dans la mienne une langue quelconque, / Je murmurerai à ton oreille en des langues ultimes / Je t'envahirai de bien des choses / et je deviendrai de la paille dans mon ventre' (Fathy, 'Nom à la mer', 111–12).

[72] Fathy, *Ism yasᶜa fī zujājah: shiÊżr*, 56–57.

[73] Fathy, 'La mère', 85.

[74] Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 27.

[75] Jean-François Lyotard, 'Prescription', trans. Christopher Fynsk, in *Toward the Postmodern*, ed. Robert Harvey and Mark S. Roberts (London: Humanities Press, 1993), 179.

[76] 'Et elle marche comme le chagrin sur le chemin du feu / Dans une journée à laquelle il a manqué un soir / A la croisée des chemins, le labyrinthe / Des choses comme des membres disloqués, éparses / Je les réunis avec lui en un instant / Et la moisson ce sont des épis de S / Et le visage m'emporte, moi à l'essence du lieu, il était comme une figure abstraite / Et la chevelure surplombe la tête et la corde me tire du puits vers le bois sauvage / Un soleil dont le feu porte la nuit en gestation / Et nous sommes les éléments du jour et deux jumeaux' (Fathy, 'Nom à la mer', 115).

[77] Fathy, *Ism yasᶜa fī zujājah: shiÊżr*, 40.

[78] 'Je suis captive de la bouteille où j'enferme la lettre que je ne finirai pas d'écrire, elle m'accompagnera à la mer, j'y réside pour des milliers d'années. Et je verrai mon souffle se condenser sur la surface de la bouteille et je serai fille de ma nuit et je jetterai mon corps sur mon corps sur le siège sur ton épaule sur la lumière et tu seras toi ma compagne dans les fers et je serai moi toujours entre les murs de verre et peut-être rassemblerai-je le souffle en un verset et cueillerai-je les lettres S qui surgissent de toutes les oraiSons' (Fathy, 'Nom à la mer', 113).

[79] Fathy, *Ism yasᶜa fī zujājah: shiÊżr*, 35.

[80] Bracha L. Ettinger, *The Matrixial Borderspace* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 63.

[81] Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 441.

[82] '[J]'ai joué à la vierge Marie pourtant la bouteille était toujours scellée sur ma soif, et ma lettre tue dans son ventre, ses mots coulent dans la vapeur du souffle que j'ai soufflé, le cou de la bouteille était son cou et mon cou porte ma tête comme une bouteille le bouchon surmonté d'un miroir' (Fathy, 'Nom à la mer', 113–14).

[83] Fathy, *Ism yasᶜa fī zujājah: shiÊżr*, 36.

[84] Fathy, 'Cutting and Film Cutting/Ashes', 219.

[85] Fathy, 'Cutting and Film Cutting/Ashes', 220–21.
[86] Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* (1993), 70.
[87] Fathy, 'Cutting and Film Cutting/Ashes', 226–27.
[88] Fathy, 'Cutting and Film Cutting/Ashes', 221.
[89] Catherine Zimmer, 'Surveillance Cinema: Narrative between Technology and Politics', *Surveillance & Society* 8.4 (2011): 429.
[90] Jean-Luc Nancy, 'La retenue: postface', in *Où ne pas naître*, by Safaa Fathy, trans. Zeinab Zaza (Montpellier: Méditerranée, 2002), 85.
[91] See Abdelfattah Kilito, *Thou Shalt Not Speak My Language*, trans. Waïl S. Hassan (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008).
[92] Safaa Fathy, 'Négativités', trans. Safaa Fathy and Bernard Noël, in *Ma langue est mon territoire* (Paris: Eden, 2001), 75.
[93] 'J'ai pu, à ma grande et profonde gratitude, monter le film et le montrer à Jacques Derrida alors qu'il était à l'hôpital, quelques jours avant son adieu au monde. Il m'a dit qu'il aimerait pouvoir vivre pour le voir sur grand écran.' http://safaafathy.org/fr/films/25-nom-a-la-mer
[94] Jacques Derrida, 'Adieu', in *The Work of Mourning*, ed. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 206.
[95] Fathy, *Ism yasᶜa fī zujājah: shiÊżr*, 49–50.
[96] Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, trans. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 30.
[97] Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Adonais', in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat (New York: Norton, 2002), 426.
[98] See Fakhreddine, 'The Prose Poem and the Arabic Literary Tradition', and Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).