Conclusion

Binding Desire

The music has stopped. During the performance of the sonata, the little phrase they cherished as the national anthem of their love has held him spellbound. With the violin rising to a series of high notes—"holding on to them in a prolonged expectancy, in the exaltation of already seeing the object of its expectation approaching, and with a desperate effort to try to endure until it arrived, to welcome it before expiring, to keep the way open for it another moment" (1:358/1:339)—it was as if she had entered the room. And not only she but also the very texture of the time when they first met and became lovers: "the stormy rains that fell so often that spring, the icy drive home in his victoria, by moonlight, all the meshes formed from habits of thinking, impressions of the seasons, reactions on the surface of his skin, which had laid over a succession of weeks a uniform net in which his body was now recaptured" (1:358–59/1:340). Because of this resuscitation, he can no longer take shelter behind the narrative of the past through which he has tried to domesticate the pain of loss. In and through the repetition of the music, "the abstract expressions *the time when I was happy, the time when I was loved*" (1:358/1:339) have been overtaken by the visceral memory of how it felt to be loved by her. His voluntary protection against the past is thus defeated by an involuntary resurrection. "Deceived by this sudden beam of light from the time of love" his memories of her awake, flying

"swiftly back up to sing to him, with no pity for his present misfortune, the forgotten refrains of happiness" (1:358/1:339).

This scene from the first volume of Proust's *Recherche*—when Charles Swann is visited by the memory of his beloved Odette during the performance of a sonata by the composer Vinteuil—belongs to one of Marcel's most intricate accounts of involuntary memory, which will continue to haunt the novel until the end. The repetition of a phenomenon (e.g., the musical phrase) allows a past self to emerge. As we have seen, such involuntary memory depends on the structure of the trace. When Swann first hears the sonata by Vinteuil (in an episode that I discussed in Chapter 1) his very apprehension of the phrase proceeds from the inscription of sound in memory. The inscription of the trace is a condition for the synthesis of the successive melody and even for the perception of the single notes, which depend on retention to be apprehended. This tracing of time marks a minimal *bond* at the heart of experience. Through the structure of the trace one is bound—as a condition of possibility for any experience at all—to a past that precedes one and to a future that exceeds one. This passive bondage, which precedes any act of will, is in turn the condition for any active libidinal binding. Thus, when Swann in the beginning of their relationship actively binds his love for Odette to the little phrase in Vinteuil's sonata (marking it as their "national anthem"), his libidinal investment not only depends on but also is animated by the tracing of time. The phrase is meant to serve "as a token, a memory of his love" (1:227/1:215), and the desire for such a token presupposes a sense of how his love is bound to a future that may take it away; otherwise he would not be seized by the desire to keep it in memory.

From the beginning, Swann can thus read suffering in the smile of the phrase: *il devinait de la souffrance dans son sourire* (1:361/1:342). While witnessing and recording his moments of happiness, the little phrase also "warned him how fragile they were" (1:361/1:342). On the one hand, this sense of suffering and fragility is caused by the capacity of the phrase to be repeated in the future. For Swann in love, this capacity is not only a positive ability to encode the memory of him and Odette but also a negative reminder that the phrase can be repeated without them and ultimately is indifferent to the particularity of their existence. Indeed, Swann in love is "pained by the thought *[souffrant de songer]* that the little phrase, at the

moment when it passed so close and yet infinitely far away, did not know them although it was addressed to them," and he even regrets "that the phrase had any meaning, any intrinsic and unalterable beauty, alien to them" rather than being "created exclusively from the essence of a passing love affair and a particular person" (1:227/1:215–16). On the other hand, it is precisely the capacity of the phrase to preserve "the specific, volatile essence of that lost happiness" (1:358/1:340) which will cause Swann "such harrowing pain *[une si déchirante souffrance]*" (1:358/1:339) upon hearing the sonata again when Odette no longer loves him.

The chance of survival through memory, then, is not only inhabited by the threat of forgetting but also by the threat of remembering after the loss of what one wanted to keep. In rendering this double bind, Marcel produces one of his most extraordinary accounts of the temporality of the self. The division between two successive selves is compressed into a scene in which Swann sees "motionless before that relived happiness, a miserable figure who filled him with pity because he did not recognize him right away, and he had to lower his eyes so that no one would see that they were filled with tears. It was himself" (1:360/1:341). The former self who has emerged from the past here sees the present self in mourning and the response is pity. But when he understands that the "miserable figure" is he himself—that this is who he has become—the perspective is reversed. "When he realized this, his pity vanished, but he was jealous of the other self she had loved" (1:360/1:341). As we move from the former self seeing the present self to the present self seeing the former self, pity is thus replaced by jealousy, which further deepens Marcel's account of what it means to be a temporal, chronolibidinal being. The violent passage of time gives rise not only to successive and incompatible selves but also to antagonistic feelings between these selves that are sedimented in the same body. The effect here manifests itself in a pain *(souffrance)* that becomes too vivid *(trop vive)* for Swann to bear it.

Now, it is precisely the susceptibility to such pain that Marcel places at the center of his aesthetic discourse on Vinteuil's sonata. "The field open to the musician," he writes, "is not a miserable scale of seven notes, but an immeasurable keyboard" with "millions of keys of tenderness, of passion, of courage, of serenity which compose it" (1:362/1:343–44). Music thereby has the capacity to open the emotional depths of our lives,

"showing us what richness, what variety, is hidden unbeknownst to us within that great unpenetrated and disheartening darkness of our soul which we take for emptiness and nothing" (1:363/1:344). Music can only achieve this effect, however, by resonating in a mortal being. Only a being that can lose something against its will—that is, only a mortal being—can experience the range of emotions that Marcel describes. The precious quality of tenderness, the intensity of passion, the demands of courage, and the relief of serenity would be inconceivable for a being that could not fear or imagine what their absence would mean. Accordingly, the pathos of Vinteuil's sonata stems from the fact that it has "wedded itself to our mortal condition *[épousé notre condition mortelle]*" (1:363/1:344).

By the same token, Swann is gripped by the little phrase because it treats his transient love and "the brief duration of the conditions of the soul" not as "something less serious than the events of everyday life but, on the contrary, something so superior that it alone was worth expressing":

> These charms of an intimate sadness—these were what it sought to imitate, to re-create, and their very essence, even though it is to be incommunicable and to seem frivolous to everyone but the one who is experiencing them, had been captured by the little phrase and made visible. So much so that it caused their value to be acknowledged, and their divine sweetness savored, by all those same people sitting in the audience—if they were at all musical—who would afterward fail to recognize these charms in real life, in every individual love that came into being before their eyes. (1:361–62/1:343)

This is one version of what I have analyzed as Proust's chronolibidinal aesthetics. The affective power of the little phrase resides in making palpable the drama of being invested in what one will lose. Precisely by intensifying the sense of temporal finitude, the little phrase intensifies the sense of the value of the beloved. This effect in turn generates what Marcel in the last volume describes as "the greatness of true art," which grasps hold of and makes us recognize "this reality which we run a real risk of dying without having known, and which is quite simply our life" (6:204/4:474).

The aesthetic and affective implications of the sonata thereby reverberate until the end of the *Recherche.* Throughout the novel, different artworks (mainly linked to the writer Bergotte, the painter Elstir, and the composer Vinteuil) provide occasions for Marcel to reflect on and present the aesthetics of the *Recherche* itself. The common denominator—the central value that is promoted in the sections on aesthetics—is the capacity of art to disclose "another universe" or "another world" that otherwise would be inaccessible. "The only real journey," Marcel emphasizes in a famous passage, "would be to travel not towards new landscapes, but with new eyes, to see the universe through the eyes of another, of a hundred others, to see the hundred universes that each of them can see, or can be; and we can do that with the help of an Elstir, a Vinteuil; with them and their like we can truly fly from star to star" (5:237/3:762). The task of art is thus to reveal "the qualitative difference between what each of us has felt," and this "inexpressible thing" can be expressed only "through art, the art of a Vinteuil or an Elstir, which makes manifest in the colors of the spectrum the intimate make-up of those worlds we call individuals, and which without art we should never know" (5:236/3:762). Following a beautiful chronolibidinal metaphor, the color spectrum through which the states of the soul are refracted is "like a rainbow, whose brilliance weakens, fades, then rises again, and before dying away altogether, flares up a moment more brilliant than ever," thereby generating in the performance of Vinteuil's sonata the sense of a "fragile, exquisite, and supernatural magic that was so close to vanishing" (1:365/1:346). This pathos of finitude cannot, however, be identified with a given affective response. It may inspire compassionate pity or violent jealousy, a sense of precious happiness or devastating loss, and even in the most blissful moments it makes itself felt as a pain in the smile of the phrase.

In making explicit and dramatizing the range of affective responses that follow from being bound to the temporal, the sonata episode illuminates how the expressiveness of art discloses the mortality of the soul. Yet there is a parallel and prominent strain in the *Recherche* that instead links aesthetic revelation to the disclosure of "another world" in a metaphysical sense, invoking a "lost homeland" from which we have been exiled on earth. This latter interpretation comes to the fore when Marcel—many years after Swann was seized by the sonata—hears a performance of Vinteuil's septet

and connects this later, more expansive composition to the sonata. As in the sonata, the joyful motif in the septet is co-implicated with "a phrase of sorrowful character *[d'un caractère douloureux]*" which Marcel describes as being "so deep, so formless, so internal, so almost organic and visceral that each time it reappeared one was not sure if what was recurring was a theme or a nerve-pain" (5:239/3:764). Nevertheless, in his analysis of the septet, Marcel maintains that the co-implication of pain and enjoyment is overcome through a teleological movement: "Finally the joyous motif triumphed, it was no longer an almost anxious call from behind an empty sky, it was an inexpressible joy which seemed to come from Paradise" (5:239/3:764–65). He goes on to connect "the ever-true, ever-fertile formula for that unknown joy, that mystic hope of the scarlet angel of morning" to "the promise that something else existed, something perhaps reachable through art, besides the nothingness that I had found in all pleasures, and even in love" (5:241/3:767). This reading adheres to and prefigures the teleological reading of the *Recherche* itself, where the "joy" of involuntary memory is supposed to offer redemption from the destructive effects of time. As in the case of Vinteuil's septet (which Marcel recalls in the last volume), the revelation of involuntary memory is said to consist in a "contemplation of eternity" (6:183/4:454), make "death a matter of indifference" (6:176/ 4:446), and inspire a commitment to art that is essentially distinct from the commitment to temporal, finite life.

We are thus faced with an apparent paradox, which has recurred in different versions throughout my chronolibidinal readings. On the one hand, the pathos of the writing is generated by how life is entangled with death and thus depends on the temporality of survival for its affective and aesthetic effects. On the other hand, moments of supreme affective and aesthetic value are repeatedly linked (by the writer or narrator) to a timeless state of immortality. The question is *why* there is a conflict or contradiction between these two levels. By emphasizing that the desire for immortality dissimulates a desire for survival, it may seem as though I have denied or sought to rationalize the *dream* of immortality and the deep attraction it holds. Psychoanalytic reading—particularly in its most sophisticated Lacanian version—seeks to do justice precisely to the deep and irrational attraction of this dream, while recognizing that it is a *fantasy* to be traversed, an *illusion* to be overcome. Following such a reading,

Marcel's supposed revelations of a pure joy without pain—or a timeless state of being exempt from loss—would be the expression of a fundamental fantasy, which represses the entanglement between enjoyment and pain, desire and loss, that nevertheless keeps coming back to haunt the novel. I do not deny the merits of such a reading and the therapeutic effects it may have. The Lacanian reading stops short, however, of questioning the *structure* of the traditional narrative of desire. The fullness of pure joy or immortality is deemed to be an illusion, but the *desire* for such fullness is itself taken to be self-evident. Even while debunking the promise of fulfillment, the Lacanian account thus conforms to the conception of desire that has been handed down to us from a metaphysical and religious tradition: we are temporal, restless beings but desire to repose in the fullness/emptiness of timeless being.

In contrast, the notion of chronolibido provides the resources to read the internal contradictions of the supposed desire for fullness. Far from rationalizing desire, chronolibidinal reading elucidates a double bind of pleasure and pain that precedes and exceeds any attempt to rationalize desire as a search for transcendent unity. The fundamental trauma of libidinal being is not that we seek a pure joy that is frustrated by pain or a pure repose that is compromised by loss. Rather, the fundamental trauma of libidinal being is that *pain and loss are part of what we desire,* pain and loss being integral to what makes anything desirable in the first place. By the same token, the desire for fullness is not the irrational truth of desire; it is a rationalized repression of the double bind.

To make the difference between these two types of reading concrete, let us return to the conclusion of Proust's novel. On one level, Marcel presents involuntary memory as an experience of transcendent fullness, as a pure joy that obliterates the fear of death and reveals a timeless being. Beyond the mere invocations of eternity, however, there is nothing in Marcel's descriptions of involuntary memory that supports such a reading. Involuntary memory does not transcend but rather—as I argued in Chapter 1—*intensifies* the experience of temporal finitude. Thus, in the final involuntary memory of the *Recherche,* Marcel suffers from the same delayed recognition of himself as Swann does in the sonata episode. Upon opening a copy of *François le Champi,* Marcel is seized by a "painful impression" and feels upset at "the stranger who had just hurt

me *[qui venait me faire mal]*" (6:192/4:462–63). He then realizes that the stranger is himself, or rather a self he once was: "This stranger was myself, it was the child I had been, whom the book had just brought back to life within me . . . wanting to be seen only by his eyes, to be loved only by his heart, to speak only to him" (6:192/4:463). As in the case of Swann's recognition that the stranger is himself—expressed through the same formula: *c'était lui-même/c'était moi-même*—Marcel's response is mournful tears. In a dramatic metaphor, he compares his emotional response to what he would feel at his father's funeral, dissolving into tears upon hearing "the band of a regiment which has come to share in his mourning and pay tribute to his father's corpse" (6:191–92/4:462), which is all the more striking since what is at stake is *the resurrection* (rather than the burial) of his former self. The pathos of such resurrection depends on a being who is not dying for timeless repose but *dying for time,* namely, who is animated by a desire to live on in time but also agonized by the loss it entails and who, insofar as he is dying for anything, insofar as he gives his life for anything, it is for someone else or something else to have the time to go on.

As always in Proust, involuntary memory thus turns out to be a painful synthesis of resurrection and death, survival and extinction. Even at the height of his final epiphanic experiences of involuntary memory—when his past days in Venice, Balbec, and Combray are resuscitated—Marcel recalls "the sudden pain *[la douleur subite]* that the little phrase of Vinteuil had caused in Swann by resurrecting those days themselves, such as he once had experienced them" (6:177/4:448).[1] We are thereby reminded—in the midst of ecstasy itself—of the irreconcilable division between past and present self that is at the heart of involuntary memory. Indeed, we are reminded that the temporality of involuntary memory is *traumatic.* On the one hand, involuntary memory happens *too soon.* One is seized by something one is not ready to comprehend, with the memory supervening "brusquely" and at such divergence from one's current state of being that the two selves (past and present) are mutual strangers, "incomprehensible to each other" (6:178/4:449). On the other hand, involuntary memory happens *too late.* When recognizing that the stranger is one's former self, one also recognizes that he or she is irretrievably lost. Precisely because of this traumatic structure, Marcel can experience his former self—returning

through involuntary memory—as someone who has come to hurt him, inflicting or recalling a wound that was already there.

Now, a Lacanian reading may grant the traumatic, temporal structure of involuntary memory while still maintaining that the truth of Marcel's desire is expressed by his appeals to an experience of pure joy or timeless being. The latter would then testify to a fundamental fantasy of fullness, which animates desire while being in conflict with the strictures of Marcel's actual experience. The problem with such a reading, however, is that pain and loss are not merely *unavoidable* in the experience of involuntary memory; they are *inextricable* from what makes involuntary memory desirable. Consider here the structural analysis of involuntary memory in the final volume of the *Recherche,* which culminates in an invocation of paradise:

> If the returning memory, thanks to forgetting, can throw no bridge, form no connecting link between itself and the present minute, if it remains in the context of its own place and date, if it keeps its distance, its isolation in the hollow of a valley or upon the highest peak of a mountain summit, it suddenly makes us breathe a new air, an air which is new precisely because we have breathed it in the past, this purer air which the poets have tried in vain to make reign in paradise and which could not provide this profound feeling of renewal if it had not been breathed before, since the true paradises are the paradises that one has lost *[les vrais paradis sont les paradis qu'on a perdus].* (6:178–79/4:449)

The final phrase is one of the most famous Proust ever wrote, but the temporal logic of trauma that informs it has, to my knowledge, never been recognized. The claim is *neither* that paradise once existed and is now lost *nor* that paradise is always inaccessible and unattainable. Rather, paradise is here and now—in the experience of involuntary memory—but it depends on temporal difference. The event that returns through involuntary memory was not experienced as paradise in the past: it happened *too soon* to be apprehended as such. By the same token, it can be enjoyed and appreciated only in retrospect, when it is *too late.* Yet Marcel does not portray such deferral and delay as something that prevents access to a proper paradise of immediate presence. Deferral and delay are rather the condition of possibility for the sense of rejuvenation and joy that follows from involuntary

memory. It is "thanks to forgetting *[grâce à l'oubli]*" that involuntary memory can give rise to a sense of renewal. Furthermore, it is the intensified sense of temporal disjunction that reinvigorates Marcel's commitment to life: "now that three times in succession there had been reborn within me a veritable moment of the past, my appetite for life was immense" (6:180/4:450).

The sense of paradisiacal happiness thus depends on the difference that time makes, but for the same reason it is necessarily traversed by the pain of loss. On Marcel's own account, involuntary memory is powerful because it makes one feel "the lost time *[le temps perdu]*" (6:180/4:450), and the joy it generates is therefore internally bound to suffering. Already in one of the first accounts of involuntary memory, Marcel emphasizes that its power resides in being able "to make us cry again" (2:222/2:4). He goes on to link the rejuvenating capacity of involuntary memory to a capacity for suffering, employing the same formulation by which he elsewhere links it to the capacity for joy: "It is thanks to that forgetting [*grâce à cet oubli:* the one intervening between the event and its involuntary recollection] that we can from time to time rediscover the being that we were, can place ourselves in relation to things as that being was placed, can suffer anew *[souffrir à nouveau]*" (2:222/2:4).

Beneath the traditional narrative of lost paradise—where one seeks a pure joy that is inaccessible due to temporal finitude—we can thus discern a more disconcerting story of desire and loss. Rather than being the victim of time as an external trauma, one must be traumatized by temporal finitude to experience anything as valuable and desirable. This is the story that the notion of chronolibido allows one to read. The deepest problem of desire is not that pure joy is unattainable (as the rationalized conception of the double bind would have it) but that enjoyment itself is bound to pain and loss to be what it is. The notion of chronolibido thereby seeks to capture both the terror and the beauty of being a *temporal* being, namely, a being who can suffer, can lose things, and can die, but for that very reason also has a sense of what it means for something to be precious, to be valuable, to be worth caring for.

Thus, in Chapter 2 we could see how Woolf's writing allows one to pursue further the traumatic conception of temporality we find in Proust. The deferral and delay that marks involuntary memory characterizes not only the resurgence of the past but also the present moment itself. The very

epiphany of presence in Woolf is a traumatic event, since it can come into being only by becoming past *(too soon)* and becoming future *(too late)*. Yet it is precisely due to this temporality that anything can be given as a precious "moment of being." The dimension of loss that appears through the temporality of the moment is a condition for the value and significance of experience. A moment of being can therefore be a "negative" just as well as a "positive" trauma, and the latter carries the former within itself. The ecstasy of being alive is inhabited by "the terror, the overwhelming incapacity" and "an awful fear," so that even on a beautifully vital June morning Clarissa Dalloway can suddenly feel herself standing "alone against the appalling night."

Woolf thus explores what it means to be *bound* to temporal life. This is also the question that preoccupies Freud in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* written only a few years before Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and while Proust was finishing his *Recherche.* Freud's treatise has a central place in my argument, since it provides the theoretical resources to think the problem of binding. In postulating the pleasure principle, Freud had assumed a version of the traditional narrative of desire. What we seek *in principle* is pure pleasure (defined by Freud as the complete release of tension), which *in fact* is unattainable since there is no life without the tension of excitation that is generated by internal and external stimuli. The same narrative is supported by Freud's notion of the death drive, which holds that we are inherently driven to seek an absolute repose (death) that we fail to attain because it would require the elimination of excitation (life). According to this narrative, the binding of excitation is *secondary:* an intermediary function that is motivated by a principle or drive that precedes it and seeks to discharge excitation in favor of repose. Yet what Freud ends up showing through his exploration of trauma is that binding is *primary:* one cannot have any relation to excitation without binding and being bound to it. Freud's real discovery, then, is not a death drive *beyond* but rather a binding *before* the pleasure principle. One is bound before having any kind of purpose—including any kind of principle or drive—since being bound is the condition for having a purpose.

The structural necessity of binding entails that the experience of pleasure is bound internally to unpleasure. The reason why pleasure is entangled with pain is not because it falls short of an ideal repose, but because

one is bound to an excitation that perforates pleasure in advance and opens the dimension of exhaustion or loss within the experience of fulfillment itself. The structural necessity of binding thus allows one to read a different narrative of desire. Rather than beginning with a drive or desire for fullness, one begins from a bond to temporal life. This bond—as I have argued in detail—entails a minimal investment, in the sense that one cannot be indifferent to what happens. Because one is bound to a temporal life (as a condition for experiencing anything at all), one is invested in what happens to it, even in denying or rejecting it. This investment in survival—namely, the impossibility of being indifferent to what happens—is a condition for every affective response. The investment itself, however, does not have any teleological direction: it can lead one to seek preservation or destruction, maintenance or termination. Furthermore, due to the death of life in the movement of survival, the apparent binaries are co-implicated even when one unilaterally affirms survival as a positive value. If I am invested in survival, I am invested not only in persistence but also in the destruction that is the condition of persistence. In maintaining my life I am also killing it off.

Nevertheless, as we have seen throughout this book, there is a powerful and deeply influential narrative that insists on a constitutive desire to transcend the temporality of survival in favor of the timeless state of immortality. Chronolibidinal reading does not dismiss this narrative but allows one to differentiate between its manifestations and engage its specific articulations. It is here helpful to distinguish between two different versions of the narrative, both of which we could read already in Plato's *Symposium.* The first version links the desire for immortality to the desire of a mortal being to *live on* in time. Diotima thus invokes the desire for reproduction (through children, books, memory) as paradigmatic of the desire for immortality. Yet reproduction does not make one immortal; it only gives one the chance to live on in time despite ceasing to be. Chronolibidinal reading elucidates how this temporal finitude animates the desire for reproduction itself and thereby generates an internal conflict in the supposed desire for immortality. The desire for reproduction presupposes a chronophilic investment in temporal life—otherwise one would not seek to ensure its persistence—but by the same token it is bound to a chronophobic fear of losing life. Indeed, it is because one is susceptible to the experience of loss—and seeks to preempt it—that one takes care to reproduce or retain anything at all. This

does not mean that the fear of and resistance to loss is a *sufficient* motivational factor for care, but it is a *necessary* one. Temporal finitude is not only a negative condition of care but also a positive condition for its inspiration.

The second version of immortality therefore seeks to eliminate the very condition of care, following a logic that receives its most consistent articulation in ascetic philosophies. Albeit in the form of denial, this logic also acknowledges the double bind of survival. Precisely because every bond to pleasure exposes one to pain—and every attachment to life exposes one to death—ascetic sages preach *detachment.* Detachment is the condition for one to achieve final peace, since *attachment* always can lead to negative affective responses—jealousy, resentment, violence—due to the threat of loss. For the same reason, detachment is the condition for one to embrace proper immortality. The latter is a state where one "neither comes into being nor passes away" (as Diotima puts it) and cannot be attained as long as one is attached to a temporal life that passes away.

The desire for the fullness of immortality is thus inseparable from a desire for death. Far from being compatible with a desire to live on, proper immortality would eliminate the condition of survival. Ascetic philosophers are certainly right that the investment in survival is the source of all destructive responses to life, but it is also the condition for all constructive responses, and one cannot eliminate this double bind except at the price of extinction. Again, chronolibidinal reading does not deny that one can come to embrace such a desire for death, but it seeks to show that it is an *effect of* and a *response to* the investment in survival, thereby enabling one to read how the ideal of detachment dissimulates a preceding attachment.

The ultimate cause of chronophobia—with its fear of death, fantasies of survival, and denials of loss—is therefore not a metaphysical ideal of immortality. While such an ideal may aggravate the symptoms, chronophobia precedes and exceeds the ideal of immortality, since it is an effect of the chronophilic investment in temporal life. For example, the emphatic chronophilia of Nabokov's protagonists in *Ada*—who celebrate "our marvelous mortality"—does not reconcile them with the finitude of their lives. On the contrary, they are all the more assaulted by the threat of time because they are so invested in persisting as temporal beings. As we saw in Chapter 3, even the story of fulfilled happiness thus turns out to be a story of chronolibidinal trauma. The threat of time is not only unavoidable but also part of

what animates the experience of fulfilled desire. By the same token, chronophobia cannot be cured by a therapeutic chronophilia, which would teach one to affirm finitude or embrace transience. Such a therapy may certainly be beneficial, but chronophobia will remain both before and after it has been accomplished, continuing to aggravate even the one who has renounced all ideals of an existence beyond time.

We can thus return to the question of the constitutive difference of desire with which I began this book. As Socrates argues in the *Symposium,* the existence of desire is incompatible with absolute fulfillment. The existence of desire rather depends on a constitutive difference, since one can only desire to have what one does *not* have and only desire to be what one is *not.* As I outlined in the Introduction, this constitutive difference of desire has traditionally supported the inference that desire testifies to an ontological lack. Because desire depends on the fact that it is not fulfilled, it is understood as the *lack* of fulfillment. This logic of lack persists, as we have seen, from Socrates to Freud and Lacan. While neither Freud nor Lacan thinks that desire can be fulfilled, they assume that the aim of desire is absolute fulfillment and that the lack of such fulfillment accounts for the relentless movement of desire, namely, the impossibility of desire coming to an end in the experience of fulfillment. As Freud puts it in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*—in an argument that anticipates the Lacanian notion of "That's not it" as the law of desire—it is the difference "between the pleasure of satisfaction that is *demanded* and that which is actually *achieved* that provides the driving factor which will permit of no halting at any position attained" (18:42/13:44–45). The reason we keep going, the reason we never come to rest, is thus because we never arrive at the desired destination.

In contrast, the notion of chronolibido allows us to give a different account of the constitutive difference of desire. The reason desire persists even in the most ideal fulfillment is *not* because it fails to arrive at the desired destination but because the arrival at the destination—the experience of fulfillment—is temporal in itself. Even at the moment one *is* fulfilled the moment is passing away. This immediate passing away opens the difference that sustains desire and accounts for why the double bind of chronolibido is irreducible. On the one hand, the experience of fulfillment is *chronophobic,* since it bears the threat of loss within itself. On the other hand, the experience of fulfillment is *chronophilic,* since it is because the fulfillment can

be lost—because it is in the process of being lost in the very moment of fulfillment—that one cares about and is affected by it in the first place.

The principle of desire is therefore a *postal principle:* one can only arrive at the destination of fulfillment by inscribing it as a trace of the past and sending it to the future. Indeed, all forms of enjoyment are "posted in their very instance" *(postées à l'instant même)*, as Derrida puts it.[2] In Chapter 4 I analyzed this postal principle in theoretical terms, but by considering the performativity of Derrida's literary writing in *The Post Card* we can press home its implications. In addition to the analysis of binding in Freud and the critical essay on Lacan, the book opens with almost three hundred pages that are written as postcards to the beloved. These postal sendings *(Envois)* enact the drama of survival and—through the notion of chronolibido—we can see how they perform an implicit deconstruction of the logic of lack that is more powerful than the explicit one formulated in the essay on Lacan.[3]

The drama of desire in the *Envois* is staged as a matter of destination, but the destination in question is not an absent fullness. Rather, the drama of desire is a matter of the temporal process of binding that has no given destination. Derrida plays considerably with gender and identity throughout the *Envois,* but it is instructive to first consider them as love letters written by Derrida to a feminine addressee. The letters are dated from June 3, 1977, to August 30, 1979, recording events in Derrida's life alongside philosophical arguments and notes for the book that will become *The Post Card.* There are indications that the lovers meet from time to time, but in the period traced by the *Envois* their relation mainly relies on letters, postcards, telegrams, and phone calls. The drama of the relation thus revolves around the act of addressing the other and waiting for a response, with all the anxious concern, excited anticipation, and neurotic speculation that follows from the postal principle. The gap in time—which entails that a given address cannot coincide with a given response, that the posted questions cannot coincide with the posted answers—opens the possibility for all sorts of misunderstandings, manipulations, and fatal accidents. Indeed, the postal principle of the *Envois* leads not only to attraction and intimate correspondence but also to jealousy, blackmail, and destruction.

The same condition is operative even when the lovers do not have to rely on an empirical postal system. Their neurotic speculations regarding

what has happened or what may happen to the letters they send to one another—along with their fascination with teletechnological possibilities of transmission—answer to how desire always operates in space and time, at different frequencies and according to different degrees of distance. Even face to face with the other, neither thoughts nor feelings, neither words nor gestures, can be synchronized. Rather, they depend on a diachronic process that exceeds any final control. The one cannot know whether it will be possible to go on living with the other, and the connection may always be broken. In being bound to one another, then, there is always "the discord, the drama between us: not to know whether we are to continue living together (think of the innumerable times of our separation, of each auto-da-fé), whether we can live *with* or *without* the other, which has always passed outside our decision, but at what distance, according to what mode of distancing" (47/53–54). Promises and assurances between lovers are made precisely because of this undecidability that may break any promise or shatter any assurance. The bond to the other is the condition for *any* affective response, which means that there is no given way to negotiate the bond: one may be led to burn the binding letters or seek to preserve them, to maintain the relation with a given other or seek to do without it.

The same problem of binding is operative even if we limit ourselves to auto-affection. As Derrida emphasizes, "every being-together" (whether with oneself or with another) "begins by *binding-itself,* by a binding-itself in a differential relation to itself. It thereby sends and posts itself" (402/429). While apparently being a collection of love letters, Derrida's *Envois* can thus also be read as a diary in which he writes to himself. The address to an other is not only a turn to the beloved but also stages the temporality of auto-affection, where the self is both the sender and the addressee of its own experience. Indeed, the very givenness of one's own experience—the way in which one is affected by oneself—is dependent on the material support of a trace that retains the past for the future. Before being given to oneself, then, one is bound and posted. The inherent temporal difference of this postal principle is the source of the most positive *and* the most negative affective responses. As Derrida puts it: "the time difference *[le décalage horaire]* is in me, it is me. It blocks, inhibits, dissociates, arrests—but it also releases, makes me fly" (108/119). And again: "this discrepancy is killing me, and it is also making me live, it is enjoyment itself" (111/122).

Accordingly, Derrida emphasizes that the postal principle opens the chance of everything that is desired *and* the threat of everything that is feared. His postal sendings pursue "the demonstration that a letter can always—and therefore must—never arrive at its destination. And that this is not negative, it's good, and is the condition (the tragic condition, certainly, and we know something about that) that something does arrive—and that I love you" (121/133). Rather than being marked by a lack of being, the letter of desire is destined to have no final destination: "it begins with a destination without address, the direction cannot be situated in the end" (29/34). The direction cannot be situated in the end because all fulfillments of desire are "deferred as soon as obtained, posted in their very instance" (397/424). Thus, even when the letter arrives it "takes itself away *from the arrival at arrival.* . . . The letter demands this, right here, and you too, you demand it" (123–24/135). The key word here is the French verb *arriver,* which means to come, to happen, and to arrive. Derrida plays on these multiple meanings in order to underline that the fulfillment of desire—the arrival at the destination—cannot be given in the form of presence but is divided by the trace of time. Every event is both superseded *(no longer)* and to come *(not yet)* in its very event. Wherever we arrive, the destination is therefore transgressed by the future and becomes past. Due to this postal principle, not only the potential movement but also the actual fulfillment of desire is subjected to what Derrida calls *destinerrance:* the possibility of errancy that is inscribed in every destiny and every destination.

The postal principle is thus neither something to be celebrated nor something to be lamented as such. It is rather the general principle of survival that enables both attraction and rejection, preservation and destruction, the most faithful correspondences and the most violent betrayals. In one of his letters from June 10, 1977, Derrida articulates this condition of survival in a remarkably disconcerting address:

> Murder is everywhere, my unique and immense one. We are the worst criminals in history. And right here I kill you, save, save, you, save yourself *[sauve-toi],* the unique, the living one over there whom I love. Understand me, when I write, right here, on these innumerable post cards, I annihilate not only what I am saying but also the unique addressee that I constitute, and therefore every possible addressee, and every destination. I kill you, I annul you at my fingertips, wrapped around my finger. To do so it suffices only that I be legible—and I become illegible to you, you are dead. If I say that I write for dead addressees, not dead in the future but already dead at the moment when I get to the end of a sentence, it is not in order to play. Genet said that his theater was addressed to the dead and I take it like that on the train in which I am going writing you without end. The addressees are dead, the destination is death: no, not in the sense of S. or p.'s predication, according to which we would be destined to die, no, not in the sense in which to arrive at our destination, for us mortals, is to end by dying. No, the very idea of destination includes analytically the idea of death, like a predicate (p) included in the subject (S) of destination, the addressee or the addressor. And you are, my love unique
>
> the proof, the living proof precisely, that a letter can always not arrive at its destination, and that therefore it never arrives. And this is really how it is, it is not a misfortune, it is life, living life, beaten down, tragedy, by the still surviving life. For this, for life I must lose you, for life, and make myself illegible for you. (33–34/38–39)

As always in the *Envois,* the question of who is addressed as "you" makes a decisive difference for the reading. At the same time we need to bear in mind that the claim made here concerns the general condition of addressing anyone at all: whoever "you" are will be subject to the law of survival that Derrida articulates in such striking and violent—strikingly violent—terms. The apparently hyperbolic claim is that the mere act of addressing someone amounts to "killing" or "murdering" the unique addressee. I can never address "you" as an absolute singularity, since the word "you" can operate only by detaching itself from any given life, by inscribing itself as a dead letter that in principle can be taken up at any number of destinations. "Even in arriving," Derrida writes, "it arrives elsewhere, always several times. You can no longer take hold of it" (123/135). To describe this necessity of mediation as a "murder" may seem to presuppose a metaphysics of immediacy, where existence is an absolute singularity that is "killed" by the generality of language, a wholly unique and ineffable other who is betrayed by the repeatability of lin-

guistic signs. The logic of Derrida's writing, however, undermines such a metaphysics of immediacy. There is no one and no thing that exists immediately in itself. Rather, because the singular is temporal in itself, it begins to pass away as soon as it comes to be and must rely on mediation to live on—to survive—in the first place.

The postal principle of mediation is thus "not a misfortune, it is life, living life, beaten down, tragedy, by the still surviving life." On the one hand, the postal principle enables one to counteract the violent passage of time that is already at work, to retain the past for the future, thereby enabling something to survive long enough to be sent from—or addressed to—"you." On the other hand, while the postal principle makes it possible for something to be transmitted, it also makes it impossible for anything to be shielded from interception and destruction. In the interval between sending and receiving—however minimal the interval may be—there is in principle the possibility of the letter going astray, being misunderstood, or co-opted for other purposes. Furthermore, even in the most faithful address, what is transmitted is "already dead at the moment when I get to the end of a sentence" since it can only come to be by ceasing to be. Even if we take the address to "you" as a matter of auto-affection, the violence of time is at work, since "the still surviving life" must reckon with the loss of time and the loss of life that is intrinsic to its own movement. In living on, the succeeding self must leave the preceding self behind, and the one is ultimately "illegible" for the other, since neither the past nor the future can be read in advance. "For this, for life, I must lose you, for life, and make myself illegible for you."

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to read the block quote above merely in terms of the structural condition of survival. The latter is a necessary but not sufficient condition for assessing the dramas of desire that are enacted in the *Envois*. As David Wills has suggested, the *Envois* can be read as organized around the deflection and avoidance of a message that already has been received from the addressee, namely, her announced "determination" to end their relationship, to never come back to him again.[4] The reference to this determination is a haunting refrain throughout the letters: "you won't come back again, neither on your decision (sorry, on your 'determination,' as you always say!), you won't want to come to rejoin me again, and it's my fault" (32/37); "Every day you give yourself one more

day, and I really have the impression that you no longer want to come back" (53/61); "You are coming back with your 'decision,' your 'determination,' and I prepare myself for it without knowing, like a condemned man in his cell" (101–02/112). The postal principle—the possibility that a letter may not arrive at its destination, that one may not receive the message sent by the other—is thus employed to buy him time, to question her decision, to postpone their parting. What he objects to and refuses to accept, he tells her, "is not the possibility of your 'determination' (I have been thinking it and preparing for it from the first day, I love you on the basis of this thought itself), it is the date. Yes, the 'moment' that you choose and which seems to have no relation to anything significant (the argument of the September letter has no value and I will never take it into account). Why not years ago or in years? Why this time? How are you counting it?" (125/137). Of course, for the one who is being abandoned and whose love is sentenced to death, the timing will always appear "untimely," so the plea for a stay of the execution is an understandable response. It becomes increasingly clear, however, that his refusal to get the message (e.g., of "the September letter") is based on an aggressive disavowal. Even in seemingly innocent statements one can begin to read the traces of a stalker: "it doesn't matter if you can't come for me, I'll call you from the airport" (32/37), "When are you coming back? I will call Sunday at the latest" (42/48), and occasionally we learn of her responses: "On the telephone, you screamed again, just now. But no, I did not 'drive you crazy,' not so crazy" (49/56).

If he did drive her crazy, we could certainly understand why. Rather than listening to her, he claims that her "determination" comes from another in her whom he refuses to acknowledge. "Without her," he writes, "not one of all your good 'reasons,' which, once more, I understand perfectly, would hold for a second. It would suffice that we look at each other, that you turn toward me, and pff . . . we would be alone together, no force in the world could unjoin us" (125/137). Thus, while allegedly "understanding, justifying, accepting all your 'reasons,'" he clings to "a feeling that another decides for you, destines you to this 'determination' without your really knowing yourself what is going on. There is an other in you, who from behind dictates this terrible thing to you, and she is not my ally. I have certainly never had anything to do with her, we (yes, we) do not know her" (125/137). The addresses to her can thus turn into downright

accusations—"you also showed me absolute horror, hatred, injustice, the worst concentration of evil" (43/49) —which in turn leads to a disavowal of her: "You expedite me in a way that I previously would have accepted from no one—but I no longer cry when you depart, I walk, I walk" (43/49).

Returning to the block quote above, we can thus read the emphasis on "murder" and "killing" in a more disconcerting light. By writing her ("you"), he transforms "the living one over there whom I love" into a dead letter that he can manipulate at will: "I kill you, I annul you at my fingertips, wrapped around my finger." He thus capitalizes on the discrepancy between address and destination to take command of her identity, to define who she is and who she is not, precisely to kill her resistance to him. This reading is further supported by the idea he introduces right before the passage I quoted, namely, "the idea that one is killing by burning a letter or a sign, a metro ticket that the other has held in her hand, a movie ticket, the wrapper of a sugar cube" (33/38). Yet the impotence of these acts of violence—of this aggressive game of *fort-da*—is more than evident. He may fantasize about rejecting her in the most violent ways—of burning, killing, murdering—but she has preceded him, she has already rejected him. The violence directed at "you" may thus be read not only as an externalized sadism directed against the other but also as an internalized masochism directed against the self. In mourning her, he must not only attack the bond that binds him to her but also the self who is defined by this bond and who cannot be allowed to survive as such if he shall be able to go on living. "For this, for life I must lose you, for life, and make myself illegible for you."

The logic of binding that emerges in Derrida's *Envois* thus allows us to think both the violence directed toward others and toward oneself as an effect of the investment in survival rather than a death drive.[5] The drama of libidinal being here proceeds from an investment that has always already taken place, but the investment has no given aim or destination and can motivate the destruction as well as the protection of a given legacy. Already on the first page we are told that the letters are "the remainders of a recently destroyed correspondence," which has been "destroyed by fire or by that which figuratively takes its place" (3/7). The destruction in question has not only eliminated some of the letters that are referred to; it has also eradicated a number of passages in the preserved letters, which

display blank spaces and incomplete sentences. However this destruction may have taken place, the possibility of burning the letters recurs throughout as a matter of passion and anxiety, blackmail and seduction, possibility and threat. On the one hand, there is an almost obsessive desire to record everything, to guard against death. On the other hand, it becomes clear that the inverse movement is also at work and that there is no intrinsic value in keeping memories or preventing erasure. Even in view of a given survival, one may want to burn the archive rather than preserve it. "Our only chance for *survival,* now," he writes toward the end, "would be to burn everything, in order to come back to our initial desire. Whatever 'survival' it might be a question of, this is our only chance, I mean common chance. I want to start over" (171/185). Furthermore, even the value of survival itself is thoroughly equivocal and may be the object of fear as well as desire. "Afraid of dying, yes, but that is nothing next to the other terror, I know no worse: to survive, to survive my love, to survive you *[survivre, à mon amour, à toi]*" (199/214).

Derrida, then, stages the double bind of survival in his own text and thereby pursues a version of the literary writing of chronolibido.[6] For all their internal differences, the texts examined in this book converge in the exploration of how the drama of libidinal being—its mourning, trauma, and bliss—derives from and depends on the double bind. Indeed, *the same bond* that binds one to pleasure binds one to pain and the same bond that binds one to life binds one to death. To be invested in living on is therefore not only to desire but also to fear survival, since survival entails that one may be left to mourn or to suffer an unbearable fate. This condition of chronolibido cannot be cured; it is rather the source of both hope and despair, compassion and aggression, protection and exposure. It follows that there is chronophobia at the heart of every chronophilia and chronophilia at the heart of every chronophobia. The notion of chronolibido provides the framework for thinking this double bind and thereby opens a new way of reading the dramas of desire as they are staged in philosophy and literature.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. To speak of "literature" with regard to the Platonic dialogues is of course anachronistic, since there is no equivalent term or category for literature in ancient Greece. I use the term as shorthand for what Plato criticizes in terms of poetry, tragedy, and *mimesis* more generally, to underline the relevance of the debate for modern understandings of the relation between philosophy and literature. For incisive analyses of the stakes of the Platonic critique of poetry and tragedy, see Martha Nussbaum's *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) and Henry Staten's *Eros in Mourning: Homer to Lacan* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).
2. Plato, *Republic,* 605d, trans. P. Shorey, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato,* ed. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961). Subsequent page references are given in the text.
3. Plato, *Symposium,* 211a, trans. M. Joyce, modified, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato.* Subsequent page references are given in the text.
4. Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis,* ed. J-A. Miller, trans. S. Tomaselli (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), 223, trans. mod.; *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre II: Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse, 1954–1955,* ed. J-A. Miller (Paris: Seuil, 1978), 261.
5. This locution is repeated twice in 200d.
6. Although my argument does not depend on it, one may here note that the "device" *(mêchanê)* through which the mortal perpetuates itself is a term that Plato employs for the Greek gods as well. As Stanley Rosen has observed, the term *mêchanê* (which he translates as "contrivance") "appears in various key passages throughout the dialogue; it is used to describe the cunning of Orpheus, Zeus, Eros, and now of the mortal generally. One may wonder whether Plato thereby links the Olympian gods to the daimonic

poetry of mortals. They may be alike because they are bound by genesis, in contrast to the truly divine." Rosen, *Plato's Symposium,* 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 255.

7. See Plato, *Phaedo,* 68b–c, trans. H. Tredennick, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato.*
8. Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus,* 124, in *The Epicurus Reader,* ed. and trans. B. Inwood, L. P. Gerson and D. S. Hutchinson (New York: Hackett, 1994).
9. Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus,* 126.
10. For an immanent critique of Epicurus and Lucretius, which establishes the intrinsic link between care and the fear of death with exemplary rigor, see Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), chap. 6.
11. Plato, *Apology,* 40d, trans. H. Tredennick, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato.* Subsequent page references are given in the text.
12. The most consistent version of this logic can be found in the tradition of negative theology. In negative theology, the absolute fullness of God is inseparable from absolute emptiness. God is Nothing since everything that is finite—which is to say, everything—must be eliminated in God. Thus, for the negative theologian Meister Eckhart, the way to unity with God (the *via negativa*) is achieved through an inner "destruction" of all bonds to finite beings. The logic of Eckhart's argument is epitomized in his definition of God as the negation of negation. Finite being is necessarily inhabited by negation, since its being entails that it may *not* be. God is the negation of negation, since finite being is negated in the infinite fullness/emptiness of God. The same logic applies to the question of desire. Man must negate the desire for finite beings in order to become one with God, which amounts to a consummating annihilation. See the analysis of Eckhart's logic of desire in Hägglund, *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 117–19.
13. This is a significant shift in terminology with regard to earlier versions of my argument. In both *Radical Atheism* and the essay "Chronolibidinal Reading" (in *CR: The New Centennial Review,* 9.1 (2009): 1–44), I invoked a constitutive "drive" for survival. While I made clear that this drive does not compel one to live on at all costs, but rather can always turn against itself, I now hold this qualification to be insufficient. Moreover, it begs the question of the legitimacy of postulating a given drive of any kind at the basis of libidinal being. What is at stake is not a constitutive *drive* but rather a constitutive *investment,* which does not need to be postulated but can be derived from the necessity of binding. In developing my thinking on this point, I have benefited from the incisive responses to my work by William Egginton, Adrian Johnston, Ernesto Laclau, and Michael Naas. See Laclau, "Is Radical Atheism a Good Name for Deconstruction," *Diacritics,* 38.1–2 (2008): 180–89, and Naas, "An Atheism that *(Dieu merci!)* Still Leaves Something to be Desired," *CR: The New Centennial Review,* 9.1 (2009): 45–68, as well as the two essays by Egginton and Johnston that I address in Chapter 4.
14. Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, 1964,* ed. J-A. Miller, trans. A. Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), 198, see also 204–05; *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse, 1964,* ed. J-A. Miller (Paris: Seuil, 1973), 180, see also 186–87. I discuss these passages in Chapter 4.

15. As Derrida points out, "this locution [*at the same time* or *hama* in Aristotle's articulation of the problem of time] is first neither spatial nor temporal" but rather articulates "the complicity, the common origin of time and space." Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy,* trans. A. Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 56/*Marges—de la philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), 64–65. For my elaboration of this argument, see Hägglund, "Radical Atheist Materialism: A Critique of Meillassoux," in *The Speculative Turn,* ed. L. Bryant, G. Harman, N. Srnicek (Melbourne: Re-press, 2011), 114–129.
16. For a detailed analysis of the trace structure of time, see also Hägglund, *Radical Atheism,* chaps. 1 and 2.
17. See, for example, Elisabeth Ladenson, *Proust's Lesbianism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999) and Sara Danius, *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002). Two recent studies that do revive basic metaphysical and philosophical questions in reading Proust are Joshua Landy's *Philosophy as Fiction: Self, Deception, and Knowledge in Proust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) and Miguel de Beistegui's *Jouissance de Proust: Pour une esthétique de la métaphore* (Fougères: Encre Marine, 2007). As we will see in Chapter 1, however, both Landy and de Beistegui hold on to different versions of the idea that the decisive aesthetic revelation of the *Recherche* is the revelation of a timeless essence.

1. MEMORY: PROUST

1. References to Proust refer to the volume number followed by the page number, with the reference to the English translation given first, followed by reference to the French Pléiade edition of *À la recherche du temps perdu,* ed. J-Y. Tadié (Paris: Gallimard, 1987–88). References to the English translation are to *In Search of Lost Time,* 6 volumes, ed. C. Prendergast: vol. 1 *Swann's Way,* trans. L. Davis (New York: Viking, 2003); vol. 2 *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower,* trans. J. Grieve (New York: Viking, 2004); vol. 3 *The Guermantes Way,* trans. M. Treharne (New York: Viking 2004); vol. 4 *Sodom and Gomorrah,* trans. J. Sturrock (New York: Viking, 2004); vol. 5 *The Captive and The Fugitive,* trans. C. Clark and P. Collier (London: Penguin, 2003); vol. 6 *Finding Time Again,* trans. I. Patterson (London: Penguin, 2003). In some cases, translations have been modified.
2. Following convention, I refer to Proust's narrator and protagonist as "Marcel," even though the name is employed only twice in the entire *Recherche* (see 5:64/3:583 and 5:140/3:663). Famously, the first passage does *not* identify the name of the narrator/protagonist, but rather presents it in a conditional mode, recounting how Albertine addressed him as "'My' or 'My darling,' followed by my Christian name, which, if we give the narrator the same name as the author of this book, would be: 'My Marcel,' 'My darling Marcel'" (5:64/3:583). Furthermore, given that the second, unqualified use of the name "Marcel" belongs to a section of the novel that Proust did not have time to revise before his death, having eliminated the name in other places, it is understandable that one may decide not to use the name Marcel and instead simply refer to "the Narrator" and "the Protagonist." This is, for example, the decision made by Richard Bales,

editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Proust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). I have, however, chosen to follow the more standard critical practice.

3. This is the central question even if one accepts Joshua Landy's argument that Marcel is speaking of *two* different books at the end of the *Recherche,* one being the memoir he has almost completed and the other a novel he has barely begun (see Landy, *Philosophy as Fiction,* 38–43). Indeed, Landy himself treats involuntary memory as the key to what enables Marcel "to begin writing his masterpiece" and "the future book" (111).
4. Beckett, *Proust* (London: John Calder, 1999 [1931]), 75.
5. Poulet, *Studies in Human Time,* trans. E. Coleman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956), 314–15. Subsequent page references are given in the text.
6. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative,* vol. 2, trans. K. McLaughlin and D. Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 147.
7. Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method,* trans. J. E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 253.
8. Girard, "Introduction," in *Proust: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977), 11. Subsequent page references are given in the text.
9. Deleuze, *Proust and Signs,* trans. R. Howard (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 19. Subsequent page references are given in the text.
10. See here also the reflections on the possibility of "resurrection" through literature, which occur in the narration of the death of the writer Bergotte. In a famous passage, Marcel writes: "They buried him, but all through the night of the funeral, in the lighted shop-windows, his books, arranged three by three, kept watch like angels with outspread wings and seemed, for him who has no more, the symbol of his resurrection" (5:170/3:693). Yet in an extraordinary passage that is (symptomatically) never quoted in the secondary literature, Marcel makes clear that the "resurrection" in question has nothing to do with immortality. Rather, the possibility of resurrection is the possibility of *survivance* through the generation of traces that remain exposed to destruction, vividly described by Marcel in terms of the destruction of life on Earth (the condition of possibility for generations) and the short-circuiting of the transmission of language (the condition of possibility for literature). A propos the death of Bergotte, one can thus read: "he grew colder and colder, a little planet offering a foretaste of what the last days of the big one will be, when first warmth and then life recede from the Earth. Then resurrection will have come to an end *[la résurrection aura pris fin],* for however far into the world of future generations the works of men may have cast their light, still they will need human beings to see them. Even if certain animal species stand up better than men to the encroaching cold, and even supposing Bergotte's glory to have survived for so long, at this moment it will suddenly be extinguished for ever *[brusquement elle s'éteindra à tout jamais].* The last surviving animals will not read him, for it is hardly likely that, like the apostles at Pentecost, they will be able to understand the language of the various human peoples without having learned it" (5:166–67/3:689).
11. Bowie, *Proust Among the Stars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 31. Subsequent page references are given in the text.
12. My argument here resonates with a memorable claim made by Michael Wood in his book on Nabokov: "paradise and its loss are integral to each other. Not only that the true paradises are lost paradises, as Proust suggests, but that there is no paradise without loss, it isn't paradise if you can't lose it" (Wood, *The Magician's Doubts,* London: Chatto & Windus, 1994, 219). The context of this claim is Wood's insightful reading of Nabokov's *Ada,* which I address in Chapter 3. Curiously, when Wood in another context discusses the notion of paradise in Proust, he does not unearth the same insight in the *Recherche.* Wood provides a rich and perspicacious reading of the motif of paradise in Proust, but he does not draw on the passage from the fourth volume of the *Recherche* that I have just quoted. See Wood, "The Death of Paradise," *Philosophy and Literature* vol. 21, no. 2 (1997): 245–261.
13. For a further reading of this scene, see also the Conclusion.
14. In a remarkable essay, Richard Moran has provided important resources for such a reading of the experience of the beautiful in the *Recherche* (see "Kant, Proust, and the Appeal of Beauty," *Critical Inquiry* vol. 39, no. 1, 2012). Moran proceeds from Kant's argument that what distinguishes the beautiful from the merely pleasant or agreeable is "a sense of *requirement* or obligation in connection with the experience of the beautiful" (2). To say that something is beautiful is to make the judgment that one *ought* to respond to it with pleasure and admiration, which for Kant entails an at least implicit appeal to universal agreement, namely, that everyone ought to agree that the object of judgment is beautiful. Moran argues, however, that "Kant's emphasis on the demand for universal agreement to distinguish the judgment of the beautiful from the judgment of the agreeable is not in fact primary, but is derived from a prior sense of necessity or demand that characterizes the experience of the beautiful itself. In short, universal agreement does not always matter (because aesthetics and ethics are *not* one), but the sense of the beautiful making a claim upon us does" (5). Proust allows one to explore the latter claim, since he eliminates the appeal to universal agreement but nevertheless insists on a sense of being obligated or bound by the experience of the beautiful. Thus, when the young Marcel experiences the beauty of the hawthorns, he places himself "under an obligation, something like the vow: 'May I never cease to be responsive to this beauty! May it continue to define me!'" (29). What I want to underline here is that the sense of bindingness—of being bound by the experience of the beautiful—is inextricable from the sense of temporal finitude. As Moran observes, Marcel attempts to bind himself to the value of the hawthorns "because he feels that the appeal of the hawthorns, however intense, is nonetheless something fragile and that were he to lose the responsiveness to this appeal it would count as a loss of the self he presently is and cares about. By contrast, the experience of the agreeable does not carry with it a similar threat. With respect to something agreeable, to lose the desire for it is simply to find something else more agreeable or equally so. There is no experience of the loss of some part of oneself, and hence nothing to mourn or regret in this change of tastes. Marcel does not measure himself against his responsiveness to the agreeable, and he does not make vows to their objects because the possibility of ceasing to find them a source of pleasure is not something he needs to *preserve* himself against, because that possibility is not experienced as any kind of failure on his part. . . . Binding oneself against loss or lapse is not called for, and therefore there is no sense to a vow of any kind" (29–30). Inversely, the sense of a vow, promise, or commitment to the beautiful only makes sense given the possibility of betrayal, just as the value of the beloved is measured by what it would mean to lose it. "It is regarding the beautiful, or an object of love, that there is

room for the idea of betrayal in the possibility of the abandonment or replacement of one's desire, the prospect of which is experienced as a threat to the self" (30). I hope to return to this argument in a different context.

15. See, for example, 6:188/4:458–59, 6:354/4:621, and 6:345/4:612.
16. For an elaboration of this argument with regard to the phenomenology of temporal experience, see Hägglund, "Arche-Writing: Derrida and Husserl," in *Radical Atheism,* 50–75.
17. Bergson, *L'évolution créatrice* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008), 2.
18. Bergson, "La perception du changement," in *La pensée et le mouvant* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1941), 170, 177.
19. See Bergson, "De la nature du temps," in *Durée et simultanéité* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2007), 41–42. Subsequent page references are given in the text.
20. De Beistegui, *Jouissance de Proust,* 110n.1. Subsequent page references are given in the text.
21. Bergson, *L'évolution créatrice,* 2.
22. Bergson, "La perception du changement," 169–170.
23. Poulet, *Proustian Space,* trans. E. Coleman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 4. Subsequent page references are given in the text.
24. Landy, *Philosophy as Fiction,* 101. Subsequent page references are given in the text.
25. Landy is thus committed to the view (which he ascribes to Proust) that there must be a coherent and unique "essence" of the self that is exempt from the radical alterability of the successive, temporal selves. Such a reading can helpfully be contrasted to Robert Pippin's analysis of the problem of selfhood in Proust (see "On 'Becoming Who One Is' (and Failing): Proust's Problematic Selves," in *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Pippin explicitly argues against the idea of an essence of the self that would be "revealed in a moment of epiphanic insight" (311, 334) and emphasizes that "the novel does nothing to establish that there is or even can be any point of view 'outside' the narrative flux and instability described, that Marcel's quasi-religious discovery of 'real time past' in the last novel is anything other than *yet another* moment in a temporal story" (317). While recognizing the need for a perspective that provides coherence and unity to the self ("we need to achieve some such coherent connections among deeds—to be able to understand why someone who did *that* would do *this*—or we will not be able to recover the deeds as *ours,* to recognize ourselves in them" (310)), Pippin cogently argues that the condition of possibility for such unity should not be located in an atemporal essence, in "something one just substantially 'is' over time" (308–09). Self-knowledge should not be understood in terms of "introspecting an inner essence, on the model of *being S* or *not being S,* but is more like the expression of a commitment, usually a provisional commitment, which one can sustain or fail to sustain, and so is something one can always *only* 'be becoming' (or failing to become)" (309). Moreover, the measure of such success or failure is "not fidelity to an inner essence but is ultimately a matter of action, what we actually do, a matter of engagement in the world, as well as, in a way, a kind of negotiation with others about what, exactly, it *was* that one did" (309). The coherence or unity of the self is thus not a given but a *claim,* and as such it is subject to contestation or repudiation both by others and by the self one will have become through the actions undertaken. The trace structure of time that I elucidate is compatible with Pippin's insightful argument, while operating at a different level, making explicit the temporal logic that is implicit in his account of the social constitution of subjectivity. As Pippin himself points out, the constitution of the self through a claim rather than an essence has the structure of a *promise* and this promise can always *not* be kept, since it must be kept across time and in relation to others. The necessary tracing of time accounts for why this structure of the promise is a general structure of experience. On the one hand, to promise is to commit oneself to the future, since one can only promise something that is to come. On the other hand, to promise is to commit oneself to the past, since it entails a promise to remember the promise. Whatever I promise, I implicitly promise to remember the promise. There is thus an interval of time that divides the promise within itself, which answers to the interval that divides every temporal present from the beginning. Even the most immediate experience must be inscribed as a memory for the future and thus promise to remember itself. Because of this necessary interval, there is always time for the promise to be broken. Indeed, even the most ideal fulfillment of the promise must be haunted by the possibility of nonfulfillment, since the temporal must remain open to its own alteration. For the same reason, it is misleading to say that the promise cannot be fulfilled. Rather, the promise *does not promise fulfillment* insofar as fulfillment is understood as the consummation of time. The promise does not promise a future that will be present in itself, but rather an experience that in its turn will have the structure of the promise. See also the analysis of the temporality of the promise in Hägglund, *Radical Atheism,* 136–38.
26. Beckett, *Proust,* 75.
27. See Proust, 6:239, 240/4:508–9, 510.
28. My argument here can be compared to the one suggested by Walter Benjamin in his essay "On the Image of Proust" (see Benjamin, *Selected Writings 1927–1930,* vol. 2, part 1, ed. M.W. Jennings, H. Eiland, G. Smith, trans. R. Livingstone, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996). While Benjamin does not explicitly address the relation between the revelation in the Guermantes's library and the revelation at the Guermantes's party, he highlights the structural similarity between the experience of involuntary memory and the experience of aging: "The eternity which Proust opens to view is intertwined time, not boundless time. His true interest is in the passage of time in its most real—that is, intertwined—form, and this passage nowhere holds sway more openly than in remembrance within and aging without. To follow the counterpoint of aging and remembering means to penetrate to the heart of Proust's world, to the universe of intertwining" (244). Benjamin also notes that while there are gestures toward an eternity à la Plato or Spinoza in Proust, "it is not these elements that determine the greatness of his work" (244). Rather, Benjamin links the "rejuvenation" of involuntary memory to "the monstrous feat of letting the whole world age a lifetime in an instant" (244). Benjamin does not develop these observations further through a reading of the textual articulations of involuntary memory in the *Recherche,* but his remarks are nevertheless suggestive of the argument that I am pursuing.
29. For the most powerful example of the latter type of reading, see Vincent Descombes's *Proust: Philosophy of the Novel,* trans. C. C. Macksey (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992). Descombes rightly argues that the explicit theories or "philosophical"

propositions of the *Recherche* are much weaker than, and in many cases refuted by, the insights of the novel in which they are situated. As Descombes puts it: "The Proustian novel is bolder than Proust the *theorist.* By this I mean that the novel is philosophically bolder; that it pursues further the task Proust identifies as the writer's work: the elucidation of life, the elucidation of what was experienced in obscurity and confusion" (6, see also Descombes's succinct formulation that "the thoughts reported in the narrative do not coincide with thoughts that may be communicated by the narrative" (30)). Yet when Descombes addresses the status of involuntary memory and its relation to the declarations of the last volume (see 284–85, 290–92), he does not pursue a reading of the narrative articulations of involuntary memory. Rather, Descombes limits himself to brief accounts of one episode of involuntary memory and links it to Marcel's invocations of eternity and immortality, which Descombes dismisses as having "no other sense than that of underlining the epiphanic *aura* of the whole episode" (285). Descombes thereby disregards how the claims to eternity or immortality are undermined by the very passages on involuntary memory in which they occur.

30. For an overview of the tendency to dismiss the philosophical claims made in the *Recherche,* see Landy's *Philosophy as Fiction,* 3–49. In contrast, Landy pursues the most ambitious attempt to defend the cogency of Proust's aesthetic-philosophical program.
31. Bersani, *The Culture of Redemption* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 1. Subsequent page references are given in the text.
32. See volume IV of the Pléiade edition, 1268–69.

2. TRAUMA: WOOLF

1. Ann Banfield, "Time Passes: Virginia Woolf, Post-Impressionism, and Cambridge Time," *Poetics Today* vol. 24, no. 3 (2003): 471–516, 486. See also Banfield's book *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry, Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and her essay "Tragic Time: The Problem of the Future in Cambridge Philosophy and *To the Lighthouse,*" *Modernism/modernity,* vol. 7, no. 1 (2000): 43–75.
2. See Banfield, "Time Passes," 492, 495.
3. Banfield, "Time Passes," 486.
4. For all their differences, the problem of living on is central to Mr. Ramsay as well as to Mrs. Ramsay. Mr. Ramsay dreams of achieving lasting fame through his work as a philosopher, but he is plagued by the thought that even those who are remembered for thousands of years are not immune from oblivion. "What are two thousand years? (asked Mr. Ramsay ironically, staring at the hedge). What, indeed, if you look from a mountain top down the long wastes of the ages? The very stone one kicks with one's boots will outlast Shakespeare" (35). While Mr. Ramsay's concern for philosophical fame is much more solipsistic and self-centered than Mrs. Ramsay's concern for the maintenance of intimate bonds, the structural care for survival is highlighted in both cases and vividly exemplified by their investment in their children. This investment can be read as an expression of the desire to live on, but by the same token it exemplifies the precarious nature of survival, since every offspring that serves as a resistance to death is itself mortal. Mr. Ramsay reflects on how he has managed to "stem the flood a bit" (69) through his eight children, but nothing can finally stave off the flood of time that sweeps everything away.
5. See Derrida, "Typewriter Ribbon," trans. P. Kamuf, in *Without Alibi* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 159–60; *Papier Machine* (Paris: Galilée, 2001), 146.
6. The temporal structure of such trauma can be read in the very affirmation that opens and closes *To the Lighthouse.* As Hermione Lee has observed in an insightful reading, "this dark book of loss and grief begins and ends with sentences starting 'Yes': yes, and a tentative conditional future ('if it's fine tomorrow'); yes, and an immediately vanished past ('I have had my vision'). The 'yes' of narrative—something shaped, but liable always to shapelessness—keeps having to be reaffirmed." Lee, "To the Lighthouse," in *Virginia Woolf: Introductions to the Major Works,* ed. J. Briggs (London: Virago Press, 1994), 183–84.
7. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative,* vol. 2, 9.
8. See Christine Froula, *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde: War, Civilization, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 96–101.
9. Froula, *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde,* 99, 100.
10. Miller, *Fiction and Repetition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 202. Subsequent page references are given in the text.
11. See Woolf, "An Introduction to *Mrs. Dalloway,*" in *The Mrs. Dalloway Reader,* ed. F. Prose (Orlando: Harcourt, 2003), 11.
12. See DeMeester, "Trauma and Recovery in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway,*" *Modern Fiction Studies,* vol. 44, no. 3 (1998): 649–673.
13. Clewell, "Consolation Refused: Virginia Woolf, The Great War, and Modernist Mourning," *Modern Fiction Studies,* vol. 50, no. 1 (2004), 198–99. Subsequent page references are given in the text. For contributions to the debate, see also Mark Spilka, *Virginia Woolf's Quarrel With Grieving* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), Thomas Caramagno, *The Flight of the Mind: Virginia Woolf's Art and Manic-Depressive Illness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), John Mepham, "Mourning and Modernism," in *Virginia Woolf: New Critical Essays,* ed. P. Clements and I. Grundy (London: Vision Press Limited, 1983), Susan Bennett Smith, "Reinventing Grief Work: Virginia Woolf's Feminist Representations of Mourning in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse,*" *Twentieth-Century Literature,* vol. 41, no. 4 (1995): 310–327, Karen L. Levenback, *Virginia Woolf and the Great War* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999), DeMeester, "Trauma and Recovery in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway,*" and Froula, *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde.*
14. Froula, *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde,* 87. Subsequent page references are given in the text.
15. See Froula, *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde,* 118.
16. See Froula, *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde,* 123.
17. My argument here can be related to the wider political implications of Woolf's style of writing, which have been analyzed insightfully by Rebecca L. Walkowitz. As Walkowitz observes, Woolf demonstrates that "to critique euphemism, which translates intense experiences into language that is habitual and therefore invisible, one must also critique literalism, which proposes that there is only one objective experience to present.

W. W. Norton, 1998), 111. The French original reads: "*Ce n'est pas ça*—voilà le cri par où se distingue la jouissance obtenue, de celle attendue." *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XX: Encore, 1972–1973,* ed. J-A. Miller (Paris: Seuil, 1975), 101.

28. Johnston, "Life Terminable and Interminable: The Undead and the Afterlife of the Afterlife—A Friendly Disagreement with Martin Hägglund," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 9.1 (2009): 147–189, 166.

CONCLUSION

1. For incisive accounts of how Swann in mourning haunts the final volume of the *Recherche,* see also Richard Terdiman's *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), chapter 6, and Wood, "The Death of Paradise."
2. Derrida, *The Post Card,* 397; *La Carte Postale,* 424. Subsequent page references are given in the text.
3. Derrida himself points out that his argument with Lacan is first of all inscribed in the *Envois,* but he does not elaborate a reading of the latter. See Derrida, *Resistance of Psychoanalysis,* trans. P-A. Brault and M. Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 63; *Résistances de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Galilée, 1996), 81–82.
4. See David Wills, *Matchbook: Essays in Deconstruction* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 65.
5. Nevertheless, as we saw in Chapter 4, Derrida himself sometimes invokes the notion of the death drive with apparent approval. To inherit his work in chronolibidinal terms one must therefore distinguish between those aspects that allow us to think the logic of survival and those aspects that do not follow through on this logic. For example, in *Archive Fever* Derrida provides compelling resources for a chronolibidinal reading of how the desire to archive presupposes the threat of a radical destruction that may eradicate what one is trying to preserve. As Derrida emphasizes, there would be "no archive desire without the radical finitude, without the possibility of a forgetfulness which does not limit itself to repression," namely, the possibility of a "radical destruction without which no archive desire or fever would happen." Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression,* trans. E. Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 19, 94/ *Mal d'archive: Une impression freudienne* (Paris: Galilée, 1995), 38, 146. The desire to archive is thus an effect of the chronolibidinal investment in living on. Without the chronophobic apprehension of the threat of destruction there would be chronophilic desire to preserve anything in the archive. Derrida's misleading move, however, is to align the threat of radical destruction with the death drive. For example, he writes that there is "a death drive without which there would not in effect be any desire or any possibility for the archive" (29/52). Contrary to Derrida's claim here, radical destructibility does not stem from a death drive, for at least two reasons. First, radical destructibility is inherent to finitude in general, so the archive would be threatened by destruction even if there were no drive to destroy it: any number of random events can destroy it. Second, insofar as there is a drive to destroy the archive it does not stem from a death drive but from the investment in survival, which accounts *both* for acts of preservation *and* acts of destruction. The investment in survival gives rise to the desire to institute or maintain archives, but it also gives rise to the desire to destroy archives. Indeed, as we have seen, the eradication of what does *not* survive is intrinsic to the movement of survival itself. To institute and maintain a certain archive is necessarily to violate other archives: whether the violence consists in ignoring, subordinating, or destroying those archives. And even if one comes to be driven to destroy the archive without in turn wanting to archive anything, wanting to leave no traces, this response to finitude still derives from an investment in survival. Archive fever—as the co-implication of being passionate for and being sick of the archive—should be understood in terms of the double bind of survival rather than in terms of the death drive.
6. Another striking example of such literary writing in Derrida's oeuvre is his *Circumfession,* which I have elsewhere analyzed in detail; see Hägglund, *Radical Atheism,* 146–61.