

## I DON'T KNOW, JUST WAIT

### Remembering Remarriage in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*

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"Meet me in Montauk." This line near the end of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* presents a problem for Charlie Kaufman's film and for his viewer. The problem for Kaufman's film (as distinct from the finished film as seen) is that he didn't write the line—in any event, it doesn't appear in his shooting script—and it undermines various of Kaufman's remarks about what he takes to be important and exciting about his screenplays. For the viewer, the problem is that Kate Winslet's whispery, echoey "Meet me in Montauk" is felt at the moment of its utterance to be a lover's command or promise of a rendezvous that is meant to remind us of, and in some sense explain, the apparently chance meeting of Joel (Jim Carrey) and Clementine (Winslet) out in Montauk that we witness at the beginning of *Eternal Sunshine*. On further reflection, however, we come to believe that this meeting out in Montauk couldn't be the result of a promise of a rendezvous, since (as Kaufman says) "Clementine's not there":<sup>1</sup> the Clementine who voices those words is "really Joel talking to himself."<sup>2</sup> Even if Joel could remember it (and doesn't the scene immediately after the "Meet me in Montauk" line, with the computer's virulent "beep" and Dr. Mierzwiak's "Okay," show us that Joel's memory of this whispered promise has been erased?), one can't expect Clementine to remember to keep a promise she didn't make.

To spend even a few moments considering this problem is necessarily to get caught up in the nature of film narrative. How does a movie work on us? Is the experience of its discontinuous presentation of a world—the effect of the technique, familiar since the early days of film, of cutting from one shot to another—at bottom the piecemeal experience of a narrative that is

to be (usually quite easily) puzzled out? If so, does our inability to solve this narrative discontinuity in *Eternal Sunshine* present us with terms for criticizing it? Surely if any screenwriter's work were about the audience's puzzling out the experience of its discontinuous presentation, it would be Charlie Kaufman's movies, and none more than *Eternal Sunshine*. The screenplays themselves seem to tell us this. So does Kaufman: "We'd done test screenings [of *Eternal Sunshine*] and people often got lost, but for the most part don't mind it, which is what I always thought. It's like having a moment of epiphany. You're lost, and then it's, like, Oh! to me is the greatest thing in a movie. Some audiences don't want that, but I don't care. I like it so I want to do it in the movies that I'm working on."<sup>3</sup> But faced with our problem, in which the promised epiphany is followed by frustration and bafflement as we consider the narrative placement of the words "Meet me in Montauk," should we, by Kaufman's own criterion, be left disappointed with this film?<sup>4</sup> (Kaufman himself may be disappointed, since the line may not be his. Would he erase the line from our memories if he could?)

At least two other writers, noting the narrative discrepancy of the Montauk line and Clementine's otherwise inexplicable appearance on the beach, settle on describing the connection between the line and her appearance as "magical."<sup>5</sup> ("Magical" is how Joel, on the beach, describes Clementine's very name.) This can sound like a cop-out, apologetics masquerading as criticism. But what is promising in this solution—in fact, more true to an experience of the film than the alternative—is the suggestion that we might learn to read a Kaufman movie without giving veto power to the determinations of and fascination with narrative puzzle-solving that Kaufman identifies as a prime motive in the writing of his screenplays. (We could call this the test of faithfulness to a Kaufman film, that we read it through our experience of it rather than allow Kaufman's challenge to himself in writing the screenplay to do the reading for us.) What still needs saying is how we should make sense of our experience of *Eternal Sunshine* once we have sorted out its narrative as best we can, found our efforts to comprehend it frustrated by one or more inconsistencies, and wondered whether such "magical" moments might be our best clues to making another sort of sense of it. I believe that we can make sense of it, and that the important narrative in a film like *Eternal Sunshine* is the one that, one might say, the film is remembering for us, or for which it stands as a meme brought to life in our viewing. In the specific case of *Eternal Sunshine*, the narrative being remembered bears more than a resemblance to the narrative genre identified by Stanley Cavell as the Hol-

lywood comedy of remarriage.<sup>6</sup> My aim in saying this is not to reduce our experience of *Eternal Sunshine* to a genre *formula* (which is not, in any event, how Cavell or I understand a film genre), but to guide a reading of the film that helps articulate the viewer's sense that the events in the great middle of the film—the events that, narratively, are Joel's thoughts of and projections onto his memories, all of which (those thoughts and projections as well as those memories) are then erased—nonetheless *do* something. And they do something not just to the principal pair, but to us; indeed, our experience of what those events do to the principal pair rests on what they do to us.

The sense of a connection between *Eternal Sunshine* and the Hollywood comedies of remarriage from the 1930s and '40s was among the first critical reactions to Michel Gondry and Charlie Kaufman's film registered in the popular press.<sup>7</sup> The connection has since been observed by philosopher Michael Meyer in what he calls his "ethical reading" of *Eternal Sunshine*.<sup>8</sup> But in each instance the mythos of the remarriage comedy has been no more than invoked, either in misunderstanding (as with Meyer's piece) or in recognition that more needs saying.

The characteristic story arc of remarriage comedies is the telling of a couple's journey from estrangement back together, a journey they accomplish through the uniquely human and uniquely philosophical form of intercourse we call conversation. What the remarriage conversation is about, amid the false starts and detours and occasional raised voices, is the nature of men and women: both the differences in their nature (which the couple may feel as the unspecified and unspecifiable but nonetheless palpable obstacle to their finding a way back together) and the nature of their desires, or the nature of human desire itself, which is the quintessentially philosophical wonder. (Philosophy, which begins in wonder, comes to wonder eventually about its own motivations, about what it seeks, what its desire is.) The forms of desire that these couples talk about and otherwise express—and here the dialogue in *Eternal Sunshine* can serve us as illustration—are not only sexual desire (Clementine: "This is a memory of me, the way you wanted to have sex on the couch after you looked down at my crotch"), but also include the beginning of desire in childhood (baby Joel: "I want her to pick me up. It's weird how strong that desire is") and, perhaps most keenly, the desire or wish to be *alert* to one's desire, which is to say, to change. Consider this exchange between Joel and Clementine at the bookstore, near the end of the film:

CLEMENTINE: Too many guys think I'm a concept, or I complete them, or I'm gonna make them alive. But I'm just a fucked-up girl who's looking for my own peace of mind. Don't assign me yours.

JOEL: I remember that speech really well.

CLEMENTINE: I had you pegged, didn't I?

JOEL: You had the whole human race pegged.

CLEMENTINE: Hmm. Probably.

JOEL: I still thought you were gonna save my life, even after that.

CLEMENTINE: Mmm. I know.

JOEL: It would be different . . . if we could just give it another go-around.

CLEMENTINE: Remember me. Try your best. Maybe we can.<sup>9</sup>

Note how Clementine, through her denial, pegs Joel's interest in her to his conviction in her ability to save his life, to make him alive, to wake him up. The desire given form in remarriage comedy films is just such a longing for a self transformed.<sup>10</sup> That longing often takes one or another of the principal pair down false paths—to an inappropriate partner, say (think of Clementine's fling with Patrick, her "baby boy"), or to places as desperate as Lacuna, Inc., the memory-erasure service; but it also leads the pair to the discovery that finding your changed self, the desired change that Emerson baptizes your "unattained but attainable self,"<sup>11</sup> requires a life of conversation with your other self—that is, with the one you find to be a fit partner in remarriage.

Where, then, is the remarriage conversation in *Eternal Sunshine*? If not on the Montauk train at the beginning of the movie (where Joel has next to nothing to say and Clementine, as George Toles has observed, is transparently flirtatious in an effort to distract herself from some felt mourning mood),<sup>12</sup> and if not in Joel's hallway at the end of the movie (where the few choice words they find to say to each other bear the scars and love marks of a remarriage conversation long since begun), then their conversation of desire is nowhere if not in the kaleidoscopic center of the film, in the scenes that take place in Joel's head.

That these scenes depict Joel and Clementine in conversation—even if it's not yet clear how this is to be explained or how we are to understand it—is, I simply assert, evident to us in the viewing of the movie. It may be that this impression is stronger at first viewing. But that the principal pair are talking and acting together, doing things together, are matters that we cannot, as we watch them, or on reflection, simply forget. If that claim required evidence,

one could point to how often those who discuss *Eternal Sunshine* fall into speaking of Joel and Clementine in these scenes as acting in tandem (or not), offering reassurance to each other, and so on. More to the point, one could note how those who wish to hew the narrative line find that they must remind themselves that it's all happening in Joel's head, as if their eyes are out to deceive them.<sup>13</sup> My point is that the viewers' natural inclination here shouldn't be read as a sign of failure or forgetfulness on their part; it seems a sign of failure in the storytelling only if we assume we know what kind of story is being told, independent of the evidence of our eyes.

Among the first facts of this particular film is that what we see in the middle of it, as we venture with the principal pair through Joel's memories, is not a Clementine-simulacrum that Joel has dreamed up. What we see, still and throughout, is Kate Winslet. As we measure Joel's and Clementine's responses to each other, what matters in eliciting our response, what matters in our registering of emotion, is that it is *her* repertory of responses, her startlingly expressive possibilities, that we are measuring. That fact is part and parcel of the internal relation between human actors on film and the characters they vivify. As Cavell puts it, "the screen performer is essentially not an actor at all: he *is* the subject of study, and a study not his own."<sup>14</sup> The import of this for cinema, one of a handful of facts about the projected image that we invariably overlook, can be brought out by considering counterfactual alternatives to *Eternal Sunshine*, versions of the film that were never made. In one imagined alternative, Michel Gondry casts two different actresses for the same role, like Luis Buñuel before him (in *That Obscure Object of Desire*, 1977), assigning Clementine to one and memory-Clementine to the other. In another, he infuses memory-Clementine's words with a characteristically distorted or possibly otherworldly sheen, something like the effect Bach achieves by adding strings under the singing voice of Jesus in the *St. Matthew Passion*. In another, Gondry simply continues or intensifies the blurry visual manipulations of Clementine that appear now and then early on in Joel's memory journey—for example, at the end of the scene at the flea market. It's clear that each of these alternatives would have resulted in an altogether different film, even a film more like the one Kaufman envisioned—that is, a film about Kaufman's stand-in, Joel.<sup>15</sup>

To the extent that we try to read *Eternal Sunshine* according to these imagined alternatives, allowing the narrative to "correct" our visual, visceral experience, we set ourselves against, or force ourselves to deny, being moved by the film in the way we are moved, and so miss what the film has to show

us. Before turning to how the film works on us through Joel and Clementine's remarriage conversation, I might summarize what *Eternal Sunshine* shows us or reminds us about cinema as follows. (1) In watching a film, what we see projected is a world (even if it is a world that is past),<sup>16</sup> but not, except under certain conditions, a *memory* of a world; and only (again) under certain conditions is what we see a view from inside the world of someone's mind. It seems accurate to an experience of Kaufman's films to say that *Being John Malkovich* satisfies—or better, constructs—these conditions, whereas *Eternal Sunshine* does not, or not unequivocally. (2) A corollary to this notion is that everything we see in a film *happens*, even when we agree that, narratively, it didn't happen (that it was his dream before waking, or her drunken perception through the alcohol, or his fantasy of a night out together with her, etc.). One could say that everything in a film is filmed.<sup>17</sup> (3) A corollary to this corollary is that everything that happens in the world of the film helps to inform our understanding of that world, and every action in the world of the film helps to inform our understanding of the actor (the person performing the action). Every action has its consequences, even when the actor in the narrative (because asleep, or drunk, or imagined by someone else) is oblivious to his or her actions and to their consequences.

Reading the middle of *Eternal Sunshine* as an extravagant remarriage conversation between Joel and Clementine—or again, as the emblem, or meme, of such a conversation brought to life in our viewing—helps us to begin to unravel the narrative puzzles that seem to multiply as we consider the logic of memory-erasure. (Why must Joel think each memory as it is being zapped?<sup>18</sup> How do we account for the continuity of Joel's memory throughout its erasure? Why is memory-erasure resisted or confounded by memories of childhood?) In the mythos of remarriage, the obstacle to the pair's getting back together is not some force outside of their relation (e.g., a domineering father) and not some clinical, legal, or otherwise defined condition that one of them suffers (e.g., depression, loss of consortium). The obstacle lies rather in some aspect of the human condition of separateness, coupled with what might be called the dynamics of human relationships. In simplest terms: I cannot become you, and neither can I remain what I am (and likewise for you). Working out the possibility of remarriage, finding a way back together, far from depending on some general ethical insight thus requires a conversation that is about, and so enacts, the particular fault lines and glories and misconstruals and transfigurative possibilities of this pair's

particular relationship. But in so doing, the conversation of the principal pair in the best of Hollywood remarriage comedies takes as its condition, and thereby reveals, further aspects of the human, and so shows its basis to be philosophical, a mutual meditation on our common lot.

Joel and Clementine are literally on the adventure of their lives as they search for places to hide (and always, importantly, to hide *together*) from “the eraser guys.” But they don’t begin their trip through Joel’s memories together as equal partners. We can distinguish three stages in the partnership of their odyssey through the middle of the film. At first, Joel is alone in the work of remembering. Clementine does little more than act her part in his memories and is, to that extent, no different from others who appear in them. But soon, somewhere under a blanket or on the frozen Charles, Joel resolves to remember his memories of Clementine beyond his present experience of them (his last, our first). His resolve is able somehow to awaken Clem from her mostly dogmatic reenactment of their past and to enlist her talent for adventure and what she herself calls her “genius” in the effort. In this mode of alertness they race through a hodgepodge of locales: memories (in the woods, on the couch), memory fragments (hallways, rows of bookshelves), and hybrid or improvised memories (Clem as Mrs. Hamlyn, as a childhood sweetheart) where they seem most free to work out their own ways of being together and (one wishes to say) construct new memories together. This is the stretch of the erasure procedure during which Stan (Mark Ruffalo) says ironically or unknowingly that Joel is “on autopilot,” and it ends shortly after Howard (Tom Wilkinson) arrives and brings the memories of his patient back under control (the memories of his patient Joel, if not of Mary [Kirsten Dunst]). In the last stage of their backward journey, Joel and Clementine are no longer trying to escape their forced march through their (now again) shared memories. But they have mastered how to break out of their roles from time to time to continue the remarriage conversation in a place or time warp that is all its own. Here they are cognizant somehow both of their (future) history together (their getting bored and feeling trapped with each other, their breaking up), which lends to these early memories their poignancy and weight, and of their (just past) adventures through Joel’s populated mind. As they find themselves back at their first meeting on the beach at Montauk, they know that their adventure of a night, as if of a lifetime, has reached its end. The moment prompts Clem to suggest that they “make up a good-bye” and to whisper to Joel the promise or invitation “Meet me in Montauk.”

Thus we have not simply the story arc of a travel adventure, where each new locale yields its measure of excitement, but a tale of the principal pair’s coming to learn how to travel together through memory—which is to say, to discover what it means to have memories, and to have them *together*. Learning this is nothing less than their learning how to be together again. It is *Eternal Sunshine’s* innovation of the remarriage conversation. Consider some of the highlights.

Joel’s first words to Clementine from inside his head but outside his memory (that is, reflecting or commenting on a memory) are not part of an effort at conversation with her. As he drives up alongside Clementine after she’s left him—adding to this scene of a memory the fantasy of a car falling from the sky and crashing behind her one-legged walking body—Joel speaks only to deny what he feels (“I’m erasing you, and I’m happy!”) or to acknowledge what he feels but without imagining that Clem has a reply (“You did it to me first! I can’t *believe* you did this to me”). Soon thereafter follows the earlier, precipitating episode at the flea market, where Joel turns away Clem’s wish to talk about having a baby, a paradigmatic conversation of marriage:

JOEL: Clem, do you really think you could take care of a kid?

CLEMENTINE (scoffing): What?

JOEL (muttering): I don’t wanna talk about it here.

CLEMENTINE: I can’t hear you. I can never the fuck understand what you’re saying. . . . You can’t just say something like that and say you don’t wanna talk about it!

Their next memory-scene enacts a parody or tragedy of crossed theories of communication. Clementine, on the bed and leaning over closed-eye Joel, says, “I’m an open book. I tell you everything. Every damn embarrassing thing.” After a beat, she draws the moral preemptively—“You don’t trust me”—as if only by turning the conversation explicitly to him can she lure Joel into speech. And he takes the bait, offering his contrasting theory: “Constantly talking isn’t necessarily communicating.” Clementine responds as one might expect: “I don’t constantly talk. Jesus! People have to share things, Joel. That’s what intimacy is.” Then she reminds us of the pitfalls of her theory, and of intimacy, by sharing, “I’m really pissed that you said that to me.” But Joel recognizes and expresses, albeit to his journal, the complementary pitfalls of *his* theory of communication in the following scene at

Kang's, when he asks in voice-over, "Are we like those poor couples you feel sorry for in restaurants? Are we the dining dead?" Here their conversation is rudimentary, no more than functional: "How's the chicken?" "Good." "Hey, would you do me a favor and clean the goddamn hair off the soap when you're done in the shower?"<sup>19</sup> We might summarize these opening scenes of Joel's memories and commentary by saying that the gulf we're shown between Joel and Clementine is not the result of their failure to adopt a particular theory or approach to communication—neither his nor hers—despite what some interpreters of the film have suggested.<sup>20</sup> If the trick to remarriage were merely an openness to communicating, then all members of happy couples would be interchangeable. Further, the gulf between Joel and Clementine in these scenes is, one wants to say, as palpable as reality, despite the occasional blurriness of the figures or distortion of their voices. We don't experience it as a *view* of a gulf, as if from Joel's standpoint alone. What would the view from inside Clementine's head—say, during *her* erasing of their relationship—add to our understanding of that gulf? (Would it offer a less sympathetic view of Joel than the unsympathetic view we have from him?) We know enough to understand how Clementine could come to find Joel's displeasure with her moralistic and entrapping, and how Joel could come to view Clementine's seductive "promise" to carry him "out of the mundane" as unsustainable (even as we understand that this promise is his projection onto her). Something else, something more than a mutual openness about their respective feelings, is needed to change the conversation.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the central stage of their adventure—when Joel and Clementine are actively searching for a place to hide from the forces of the outside world, here presented as the machinery of a kind of forgetfulness—is that it is framed by their revelations to each other about particular, formative moments from their childhoods.

Two singular features of the remarriage mythos find their expression in the middle scenes from *Eternal Sunshine*: the relocation to a place apart, and the suggestion of the principal pair having a childhood together. (1) The two need to find a place apart, a place that Cavell (following Northrop Frye in his discussion of Shakespearean romantic comedy) dubs "the green world," so that they can move beyond their ongoing discord to a place of repose where conversation of the most profound sort, a kind of philosophical dialogue of desire, can happen.<sup>21</sup> In classical Hollywood remarriage comedies featuring couples of sufficient wealth and Manhattan addresses, the green

world is given the name "Connecticut." In *Eternal Sunshine*, this mythical locale gets renamed "Joel's head." But especially here in the middle of the film, Joel's head contains scenes of woods and fallen leaves, frozen rivers, snowy beaches, and rainfall not only outdoors but also indoors—a midsummer night's dream's worth of natural mysteries and forest magic. It reminds me of no film world so much as the Connecticut forest night populated by leopards in Howard Hawks's *Bringing Up Baby* (1938), a world that like Joel's head includes whimsical games, chase scenes, wildlife, and sexual imaginings. (2) As in *Bringing Up Baby*, the middle adventures in *Eternal Sunshine* have a decidedly childish playfulness, but with the innovation that we see Joel and Clementine not only acting like children but *as* children, and we also see the adults in different combinations playing at childhood (Carrey's Joel as baby Joel) and at adulthood (Clementine as the neighbor-lady Mrs. Hamlyn). What they gain in these performances of their having grown up together as childhood sweethearts, or as phallic-stage boy and sexy babysitter, are ways for them to act out the fantasy of a life together as if from before history, before they are required to enter the social and sexual realms of adulthood proper with its endless complications, "this mess of sadness and phobias," as Mary finds herself describing it without knowing why exactly.<sup>22</sup> What must happen for them to (in Mary's words) "begin again" is not that they literally return to childhood, infantilizing themselves ("so pure and so free and so clean," the illusion peddled by Lacuna, Inc.), but that they recast their childhood and remember it as theirs *together*, by bringing it and its better ghosts to life in conversation—which is, after all, all that remains of it to *be* shared. As Cavell says of the playful couple in *Bringing Up Baby*, "it is as though their [Valentine's Eve] night were spent not in falling in love at first or second sight, but in becoming childhood sweethearts, inventing for themselves a shared, lost past, to which they can wish to remain faithful."<sup>23</sup>

It should not be a surprise, then, that the first retreating memory of Clementine that Joel wants to keep is one of hers, which is to say, a memory that is his *because* it was hers. He remembers the time under the blanket when she tells him the story of her ugly Clementine doll from childhood, the one whose imagined transformation would magically make her pretty. And Joel remembers his response: he kisses Clementine tenderly, over and over, and repeats "You're pretty," as if his words at that moment are the long-awaited executor of the wished-for transformation.<sup>24</sup> What about this memory reawakens in Joel the desire to remember Clementine? Is it that it is warm while the earlier ones—that is, the first to be erased—were

unpleasant? But then Joel is doubly shortsighted, first in ordering the procedure on account of the bad memories and now in wanting to call it off on account of the good. (Does Joel in his memories have the excuse that the bad memories of Clem are already gone, erased? Then is this midoperation buyer's remorse a necessary consequence of the Lacuna procedure?) Rather, the doll memory—not Clementine's of the doll, but Joel's of her retelling and of his heroic gesture: the memory we see—reminds Joel of the possibility, or at least of the early promise, of their “inventing for themselves a shared, lost past” through their remembering, recalling, together.

This is one place where Kaufman's understanding of *Eternal Sunshine* and of what it reveals about memory is surprisingly confused. In an interview, Kaufman, discussing the achievement of Lydia Davis's remarkable novel *The End of the Story*, about a woman's uncertain retelling of the details of a relationship long since ended, explains that she “was talking about the way that memories don't exist as tape recordings. You have a memory of your first date with this person, and you have a memory of your first date with this person after the relationship is over. The end is coloring the beginning, but you still assume it's the same memory if you don't think about it. You're a completely different person, it's a completely different memory.”<sup>25</sup> Kaufman's enthusiasm for the radical contingency of self and memory would seem made for his film's response to this contingency, which is to exhibit and explore the transformative effects (as in the doll memory scene) of giving voice to one's memory, recalling or retelling something to another. One might even expect Kaufman to embrace the thought that this is what screenwriters like Kaufman do.<sup>26</sup> But moments later, in discussing the doll memory scene and how “even that's just Joel's memory, too,” Kaufman retreats to a variant of the tape-recording model: “When you have a friend tell you a story, you visualize it. No way is it what they visualize, but then it becomes part of your memory of your friend, and it's completely manufactured, it's completely fictitious. Or, at least, a fictitious version of something that they're telling you.”<sup>27</sup> The assumption here is that, when you tell me you went to the shore and it was snowing there, my understanding you consists in my forming an image (a private affair). The error in this assumption is that, if understanding rested on something essentially private (private images), then it would make no sense to speak of my image or visualization as in conflict with yours.<sup>28</sup> The moral is that, even if your words suggest an image to me, I am not stuck with it: I may ask to hear more (“Was it beautiful?”), and you may give further voice to your memory (“It was almost a dry snow”). If Kaufman

sees (rightly) that memory is not a tape recorder, that this model gives us a confused picture, then why, in describing a memory of a friend's or lover's story, does he invoke the category of the fictitious, as if his memory stood in contrast to the friend's or lover's “recorded” memory? Perhaps because he continues to be seduced by the picture of a memory recorded faithfully somewhere inside. (And perhaps because one person's radical contingency is another's solipsism.)

If to be human is not so much to have fixed memories as to have, or to be, occasions for remembering, then what I remember is not so much “colored” or tainted by what I am now as it is occasioned by it, called for at times and in ways that I can come to understand, or try to. The occasionality of memory is one reason that humans talk and have things to say to one another. We might observe this fact rather than run from it. If I remember something that you do not, or not in the way that I do, or that doesn't include you, that may be a fact about us. But it is no more than a fact about us, which is to say it is not our fate. For I can still tell you, and then it will be your memory, too—yours because of mine, of course, but also mine because of yours, because this occasion for my remembering is bound to you, just as my memories of you bind me to you. One could say, in the spirit of Wittgenstein: there is no private memory—that is, no memory that I could not share with another (though I may be unwilling to share it with you, or with anyone living, or at this particular time and place, or because to share this really means to *confess* it, and so on).

I said earlier that *Eternal Sunshine* is a tale of the principal pair's coming to discover what it means to have memories and to have them together, that this becomes their way of learning how to be together again. That Clementine shows herself in need of this education, by going first in having her memories erased, imagining that her happiness lies in starting over rather than in going back—a trait she shares with the heroines of classical Hollywood remarriage comedies—is simply a further clue that the story unfolding before us in these middle scenes is not just Joel's. As we watch Clementine begin to awaken within Joel's memories and to join in the search for a hiding place in answer to his resolve to remember her, we can feel that she is stepping out of her entire Lacuna-induced amnesia as well. After a hodgepodge transition that includes the two of them darting on the ice in search of the way to Dr. Mierzwiak's office, with Clementine (in voice-over) commenting on various intercut memory scenes (“Oh, look at me. Hey, I look good there!”; “What

did we see that day? Oh, look! Hey! We're going to see my grandma"), they arrive in a wood, filmed in natural light and without special effects—both of them, finally, fully present and engaged in the task at hand.

The nature of their conversation that begins here is unlike any so far. To be sure, it has its moments of petty annoyance and of less than petty recrimination. But these merely lend authenticity to answering moments of patience and sympathy and apology, and to the overriding sense of a profound and easy familiarity. The feeling of having *space* (at least world enough, and time) to talk and to listen pervades this forested hillside. Thus, when old patterns of bickering arrive—

JOEL (after trying Clementine's suggestion to wake himself up): It *did* work, for a second, but I couldn't—

CLEMENTINE: See?

JOEL: I couldn't *move*.

CLEMENTINE: Oh, well, isn't that just another one of Joel's self-fulfilling prophesies? It's more important to prove me wrong than to actually—

JOEL: Look, I don't want to discuss this right now, okay?

—what happens next isn't the continuation of an old argument, an argument about the argument, as before ("You can't just say something like that and say you don't wanna talk about it!"). Instead, what we get is just more talk, a hint of friendly recrimination answered by an apology answered by its acceptance: a new excuse to be doing something together:

CLEMENTINE: Fine. Then what? [Pause] I'm listening.

JOEL: I don't know. You erased *me*. That's why I'm here. That's why I'm doing this in the first place.

CLEMENTINE: I'm *sorry*.

JOEL: You—You!

CLEMENTINE: You know me. I'm impulsive.

JOEL (after a sigh): That's what I love about you.<sup>29</sup>

We almost don't notice that the precipitating and (despite all) irreversible act that sets the whole drama in motion—Clementine's erasing Joel from her memory—has just been forgiven, perhaps even redeemed.

Joel and Clementine's sense of at-homeness with each other carries over

effortlessly from the wood scene to the scenes of Joel's childhood. As Mrs. Hamlyn, Clementine interacts with baby Joel and reveals the tender and tolerant, but not spoiling, childcare-giver that Clementine knew she could be when Joel voiced his doubts at the flea market.<sup>30</sup> But no less revealing of what they are working out in this scene is the awkward moment when Mrs. Hamlyn, now as Clementine, tries to comfort crying Joely by lifting her dress and whispering, "My crotch is still here, just as you remembered it." Joel looks and replies, "Yuck." This attempt to soothe a Joel longing for his mommy may in fact remind him and us of nothing so much as the impossibly treacherous and, it seems, never completed journey from childhood sexuality to adult playfulness. It is the moment that stops the erasing machine and forces Stan to call Dr. Mierzwiak. (Clementine's earlier words alluded to here—"This is a memory of me, the way you wanted to have sex on the couch after you looked down at my crotch"—elicited a curious reply from Joel's memory: "What?" That line, brilliantly improvised by Jim Carrey, seems to carry the suggestion that Joel's ownership of his desire is an ongoing problem, here no less than in the masturbation scene of his humiliation.)

The reimagining of Clementine and Joel's childhood together comes to an end with the scene of his deepest humiliation, when he was goaded by other kids to smash a dead bird with a hammer. Clementine's touching, almost too poignant, rescue of Joel, edited with alternating shots of their adult and childhood selves, is the bookend to Joel's chivalrous response to Clementine's retelling of her longing to transform her ugly doll. (Young Clementine wears the same dress and cowboy hat, and sits in the same cushioned chair, that we saw in the photo in the doll memory scene.) After Joel is rescued, in one of the film's most simple yet surreal moments, we watch the kid couple walking together as we hear the adult couple in voice-over, as if situating ourselves between these times, or outside of time altogether. Their conversation turns on adult Clementine's elemental words of comfort to a Joel whose age is left unclear. (Joel: "I'm so ashamed." Clementine: "It's okay. You were a little kid.") By the time the little kids arrive at Joel's childhood house, the adults' words have moved beyond any lingering awkwardness or indifference or enmity from earlier in the film and arrived at the sublimity of the mundane. Talk of life and death mixes easily with expressions of keen empathy and domestic happiness. (Joel: "That's where I live. Lived. I wish I knew you when I was a kid." Clementine: "Do you like my pink hat? Here, look, feel better. You can really kill me this time.")

In a scene a few moments later that appears to mark their transition

from resistance to resignation in the face of Dr. Mierzwiak's efforts, Joel and Clementine are out on snowy Montauk and spot the beach house where they met. (Clementine calls out simply, "Our house!") The somber music we hear in the background seems mismatched with the shots of them in the snow—running through it, throwing it, rolling in it, dragging one another across it. The music suits Joel's mood: he knows now that places tied to memories of Clementine are places where she will soon disappear, and he tugs and drags her in a direction roughly away from "their" house. But Clementine playfully resists, remaining faithful to the mood and the revelations of the previous, childhood scenes, and she throws snow in his face. ("It's fluff," she says: another improvised line. The entire unconstrained spectacle seems to undermine our ability to tell Joel from Jim and Clem from Kate.) On his back and covered in snow, Joel yells, "This is a really bad time for this!" Yet by the time they find themselves on the beach again a few scenes later, reliving the day they first met and knowing it to be the end, and Clementine asks, "What do we do?"—not from uncertainty, but because whatever they are to do takes two—Joel has mastered the mode of their existence and can answer, in the same mood as Clementine back on the snowy beach: "Enjoy it."<sup>31</sup>

What "it" is, the mode of their existence, about which Clementine had said, "This is it, Joel. It's gonna be gone soon"—whether it is the existence of things in the head, or of things on film, or an existence that we are enjoying as we hear these words spoken—is none too clear. Several commentators on *Eternal Sunshine* notice that Mary twice quotes Friedrich Nietzsche (quoted in her *Bartlett's*), and they take this as permission to read the film through Nietzsche's positing the eternal return of the same, what is sometimes referred to as his doctrine of eternal recurrence. The suggestion of a link might be revealing if it were not used to distort Nietzsche. So, for example, Nietzsche's idea can be introduced to advance the thought that we should affirm the good times irrespective of the bad to follow, since Nietzsche's claim is that we should live as if (or, as it is often misread, because) we will suffer each of these moments innumerable times more. And this thought is understood to lead to a kind of happy fatalism that eschews the human habit of, and our entwinement in, regret. Thus *Eternal Sunshine's* closing scene, with its answering pairs of "Okay"s following all that Joel and Clementine have discovered about their past from the Lacuna tapes, is read as their resolve to confront without despair the "disappointment, resentment, and even hostility" that, as their past reveals, inevitably lie ahead of them.<sup>32</sup>

If, however, we return to the closing scene of their last adventure in Joel's head, their first meeting out on Montauk, we find that Joel and Clementine's decision to "enjoy it" has led them back to their beach house, where they reenact Clementine's breaking in, Joel's nervousness as she looks for liquor and heads up the stairs to find the bedroom, and his scared, abrupt leave-taking. But before he leaves, he lingers, reflecting on the memory:

JOEL (in voice-over): I thought maybe you were a nut, but you were exciting.

CLEMENTINE (off camera): I wish you'd stayed.

JOEL (speaking on camera): I wish I'd stayed too. *Now* I wish I'd stayed. I wish I'd done a lot of things. Oh, God, I wish I had— [He pauses.] I wish I'd stayed. I do.<sup>33</sup>

"I wish I'd done a lot of things. Oh, God, I wish I had—" We imagine Joel continuing with a list, terminable or interminable, of all his regrets, the fixed price of memory. But instead, Joel stops himself to speak the simple and obvious one: "I wish I'd stayed. I do." If Joel is affirming something here, it most certainly is not the end of regret. (Is the Joel we've been following, then—the one whose adventures are all "gonna be gone soon"—fated to be supplanted by a wiser Joel who will say "Okay" to everything, including to his inevitable running out on Clementine again? One can choose to affirm this.) Rather, Joel is affirming something here *in* his regret, and affirming it to Clementine, or to someone who hears his "I do" as Clementine did in an earlier scene (it is in their future, after their second first night of courtship):

CLEMENTINE (in voice-over, answering the phone): What took you so long?

JOEL (talking to her on the phone): I just walked in.

CLEMENTINE: Mm-hmm. You miss me?

JOEL: Yeah. Oddly enough, I do.

CLEMENTINE: Ah! [Laughs.] You said "I do." I guess that means we're married.

JOEL (laughing): I guess so.<sup>34</sup>

For Joel to say that he misses Clementine, to regret that he's not there or that she's not here, is, again, to be bound to her in memory. (The truism

on which Lacuna is founded: you can't regret what you can't remember.) Similarly, Joel's saying in so many words—as he reexperiences his first failed night with Clementine—that he regrets walking out on her, and his saying this *to her*, is a new effort at binding himself to her, marrying her to his memory, for better for worse. It is his giving up, as if for both of them, the wish to forget. The payoff of Nietzsche's teaching of eternal recurrence is not that one thereby foregoes regret, but that one comes to see what it would mean to affirm it completely, to live without regretting regret. It is a vision of freedom, and one unequivocally opposed to Lacuna's head game of starting anew.<sup>35</sup>

But what does it mean to say that Joel marries Clementine to his memory again, that he remarries her, when he doesn't, after all, or after he wakes up, remember her? Is there anything beyond their "magical" rendezvous at Montauk to indicate that they remember something, anything, of their night adventures in Joel's head?<sup>36</sup>

The question is complicated, well beyond any typical film premise, by the intrusion of the Lacuna tapes into their lives. The tapes don't return Joel's and Clementine's memories to them, but they do, of course, return to Joel and Clem the fact of their having a past together, as well as a picture of that past. The picture may be askew, but it is also shared: they each hear snippets of the other's recording. And while each is devastated by those snippets, neither of them seems to misread or be under any illusion about what they hear. The words on these tapes are part of their remarriage conversation. One reason Clementine wants Joel's tape to keep running when she comes to his apartment (beyond its being, as she says, "only fair") is that she wants to hear what he thought and said about her, why he had her erased. They are the words of the man standing before her at a time when his mind was differently placed, or displaced; and they seem to express not only pre-erasure thoughts but private, clinical thoughts, as if Joel were speaking to his analyst, thoughts offered in the hope that some cathartic effect might be had in giving voice to them. The words on the tape offer a different kind of journey through Joel's head. It's hard to imagine how they could be redeemed. Clementine's decision to get up and leave Joel's apartment seems, however, nonjudgmental (she has a tape of her own, after all); she must leave because of her own state of mind, which she calls "confused." The contrast between their experience of the past forty-eight hours (on the train, on the Charles) and the words on the tapes is too stark.

But of course, something happens out in the apartment hallway:

JOEL: Wait.

CLEMENTINE: What?

JOEL: I don't know. Just wait.

CLEMENTINE: What do you want, Joel?

JOEL: Just wait. I don't know. I want you to wait for . . . just a while.<sup>37</sup>

They wait for about ten seconds. How one understands the words that follow, culminating in Joel's and Clementine's film-ending, reciprocating "Okay's," depends on how one makes sense of those ten seconds of waiting. What could they possibly be thinking, and what might they be remembering? At a comparable moment near the end of Max Ophüls's *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948), a man who is reading a letter addressed to him from the mother of his son—a woman whom he had long since forgotten—finishes reading it, puts the letter down, looks into the camera, and waits. What follows is a montage of short scenes from his past (and from earlier in the film) that show him with the woman in question and thereby show us what he is thinking, as though his gaze had called up these scenes for us to recollect along with him. And in Mervyn LeRoy's *Random Harvest* (1942), an amnesiac who longs to remember his former wife, though she is also his present wife, has his memory jogged when he returns on a business trip to the town where they first met and to the cottage where they once lived. Here we can follow his thoughts because he is shown actively pursuing the trail back to his former life, and we are reminded of its sights and sounds pretty much when he is and as he is; nothing of his progress is hidden. But in the narrative of *Eternal Sunshine* there are no traces of a road back to the remarriage conversation that they had in Joel's head (unless showing up in Montauk together is such a trace), and neither Joel nor Clementine is given the power by the camera to call up those scenes for us while we all wait the ten seconds. Do we imagine that their heads might hold those scenes anyway? Mostly I think not. Do we nevertheless call up those scenes on our own as we try to bridge the chasm of those ten seconds, as if we could—and as if it mattered that we could—ransom those earlier, forgotten memories for them? (How could it matter to us? And how are we able to so much as try?) Like Paulina in *The Winter's Tale*, who conjures the statue of her mistress Hermione to life, we who watch *Eternal Sunshine* (this needn't be true of all) seem compelled to enliven the forms up on the screen with memories—and, if the trick is to be perfect, not with our *own* memories, however much it appears that we alone (and not Joel or Clementine) hold the key.

If it is right to say that the viewer's experience of *Eternal Sunshine* as it comes to an end is one of projecting the principal pair's forgotten fantasy-past onto them, or (better) of remembering that past *for* them, returning it to them—if that is the magic that those ten seconds of just waiting can accomplish—then this experience of the film also makes clear how that fantasy-past matters, how it *does* something (to Joel and Clementine, because of what it does to us). As I have said, *Eternal Sunshine* stands as a meme, or bears the mark or pattern, of remarriage, and its contribution to the genre is the story of coming to discover what it means to have memories together as a way of learning how to be together. (Why the longing to bind ourselves to others in and through memory has such power over us, and why film is the natural medium to conjure up and expose this longing, are questions whose answers must await another occasion.) But just as there is a contrast between a freedom from memories (Lacuna's promise) and a freedom through memories, so there is a difference between how Joel and Clementine's past is returned to them in the film and how *we* return their past to them. Viewers of *Eternal Sunshine* cannot bring the story to an end, cannot unify the pre- and post-erasure memories, by introducing a recording the way Mary does. We cannot supply the missing memories by returning *in fact* to an earlier scene, since what is recorded on the DVD (say) is not a *memory* of what happens in the film any more than it is an interpretation of it. (Memory is not a tape recorder.) We can supply only what we have in memory, what *we* have seen and felt. And what we have seen and felt is not a given: we may forget things, forever miss other things, fail to appreciate the importance of still other things on a first or fortieth viewing. Not the least virtue of Charlie Kaufman's narratively puzzling screenplay is that it replicates for the viewer the felt contingency of memory that we attribute to Joel and Clementine's experiences. But it replicates as well the felt sense that what we remember is always paired with an *occasion* for being remembered. When we remember Joel and Clementine's past for them in the scene in the hallway, so that Clementine can sigh and sob a little and Joel can say "Okay" and they can, with eyes open, begin to imagine a life together again, we do it but once. It is no more, but no less, than an opportunity that awaits us with any given screening. It is what Joel and Clementine are waiting for.

## Notes

I want to thank David LaRocca for the invitation to write on *Eternal Sunshine* for this volume and also for his comments and guidance in shaping the paper.

1. Charlie Kaufman, quoted in Rob Feld, "Q & A with Charlie Kaufman," in Charlie Kaufman, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind: The Shooting Script* (New York: Newmarket Press, 2004), 135.

2. Kaufman, commentary to the DVD *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Spike Jonze, 2004), 00:59:57.

3. Kaufman, in Feld, "Q & A," 137.

4. C. D. C. Reeve spots another kink in the narrative chronology when Clementine, driving back from the Charles, is "outraged" at Patrick's calling her "nice," despite the fact that our ability to understand why she is outraged rests on the film's earlier scene of the later (i.e., second) meeting of Joel and Clementine out on Montauk. See Reeve, "Two Blue Ruins: Love and Memory in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*," in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, ed. Christopher Grau, Philosophers on Film series (London: Routledge, 2009), 29.

5. *Ibid.*, 29 ("Wishful thinking, notoriously, is magical thinking"); George Toles, "Trying to Remember Clementine," in Grau, *Eternal Sunshine*, 116 ("It is as though the Clementine memory composite lodged in Joel's head . . . has set off a magical echo in the *real* Clementine").

6. Stanley Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); see also Cavell, *Cities of Words: Pedagogical Letters on a Register of the Moral Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). Among the films Cavell identifies as members of this genre are *The Philadelphia Story* (George Cukor, 1940), *The Lady Eve* (Preston Sturges, 1941), *It Happened One Night* (Frank Capra, 1934), *Adam's Rib* (George Cukor, 1949), and *The Awful Truth* (Leo McCarey, 1937).

7. See David Edelstein, "Forget Me Not: The Genius of Charlie Kaufman's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*," *Slate*, March 18, 2004 (slate.com); A. O. Scott, "Charlie Kaufman's Critique of Pure Comedy," *New York Times*, April 4, 2004 (nytimes.com).

8. Michael J. Meyer, "Reflections on Comic Reconciliations: Ethics, Memory, and Anxious Happy Endings," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 66, no. 1 (2008): 77–87. Meyer, however, takes from Cavell's description of the narrative of remarriage little more than the pair's dedication to "remarriage reconciliation" (82) and "a discerning disposition to recommitment" (83)—in other words, an ethical gesture sympathetically and repeatedly offered. Nothing in Meyer's telling of the remarriage mythos explains *how* the principals arrive at this ethical gesture, or how they are able to make this gesture to each other (as if all that stood in their way was to recognize that they *ought* to make it), or what change allows them to keep making it. In sum, Meyer leaves out from his telling and thinking the central feature of the genre, the couple's ongoing remarriage conversation. This explains Meyer's mystifying identification of *Eternal Sunshine*'s "green world," the locale in a remarriage comedy where society is kept at bay so that remarriage talk can happen, with "the scene on the beach at Montauk in the coda" (87n37)—that is, a thirty-second scene with no dialogue.

9. *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, 01:22:11–01:23:00.

10. For an illustrative reading of another post-classical Hollywood remarriage comedy where sexual desire is emblematic of the principals' longing for transformation, see my "Moonstruck, or How to Ruin Everything," in *Ordinary Language Criticism: Literary Thinking after Cavell after Wittgenstein*, ed. Kenneth Dauber and Walter Jost (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2003), 315–28.

11. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "History," in *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Robert E. Spiller, Alfred R. Ferguson, et al. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971–), vol. 2, 5.

12. See Toles, "Trying to Remember Clementine," 136–39.

13. Compare, for example, Meyer, "Reflections on Comic Reconciliations," 79: "It is crucial to begin by noting that for the bulk of the film (the entire story of Joel's erasure process, which reveals most of what we know about their friendship) it is strictly speaking not Clementine, but Joel's memory of Clementine, that is on-screen." (Note the self-conscious cautiousness of "strictly speaking.") For director Michel Gondry's different take on these scenes, see the commentary to the DVD release of *Eternal Sunshine* at 01:00:15. Gondry's remarks here are mostly transcribed in Christopher Grau's Introduction to his *Eternal Sunshine*, 11–12.

14. Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 28.

15. See Kaufman, in Feld, "Q & A," 136 ("In a way Joel is maybe a stand-in for me, you know?"); also 139 ("Well, I guess that goes back to what I was saying about this really being Joel, not Joel and Clementine that we're watching"). Michel Gondry's contribution to the film evidently brings Kaufman pleasure even as it changes what he thought he wanted. This is too neat a parallel to the kind of pleasure that Clementine's responsiveness brings to Joel (to Joel's journey through his memories of Clementine that he thought he wanted erased) to go unnoticed, and it suggests the extent to which unrestrained Clementine, the one who has Joel and the whole human race pegged, can be read as a stand-in for Gondry.

16. Compare Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 23.

17. As I mean this claim, it isn't negated by the apparent counterinstances of post-production special effects, computer-generated imagery, etc. If one prefers, what the claim amounts to is that everything in a film is as if it were filmed.

18. This is related to the puzzle: why is it necessary to "map" Joel's brain back in the Lacuna offices, which requires that Joel think his memories of Clementine *then*, if he must also think them *now*, in his own bed?

19. *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, 00:38:29–00:38:35, 00:42:18–00:42:37, 00:44:50–00:45:37, 00:46:08–00:46:49.

20. Reeve thinks that Clementine is, from her first appearance in Joel's memory, the singular adult in the relationship: "She already has the sort of heart that Joel, through suffering, must acquire. Capable of intimate disclosure, eager to have children, able

to understand that lovers must learn to take the bad with the good, she is already an adult, already aware of what she's like" (Reeve, "Two Blue Ruins," 22). This reading of Clementine contrasts markedly with Kaufman's own wishes for his character and for our response to her: "What I wanted when I wrote this thing was for you to think that she was horrible. The challenge that I set myself was to think that she was horrible, and then think otherwise at the end, which is the beginning" (Kaufman, in Feld, "Q & A," 141).

21. Compare Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness*, 49.

22. Compare *ibid.*, 31.

23. *Ibid.*, 127.

24. The doll memory scene was a late substitute for a scene that Kaufman says "didn't play well, I don't know why," a memory of Clementine reading from *The Velveteen Rabbit* (Kaufman, in Feld, "Q & A," 140). What I offer in this and the following two paragraphs helps to explain why Clementine's retelling of her childhood memory of the ugly doll plays well at a point in the story where her reading from a children's book does not.

25. *Ibid.*, 139.

26. Compare *ibid.*, 136.

27. *Ibid.*, 140.

28. My thinking on what it means to understand another's words is indebted to the later Wittgenstein. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 2nd ed., ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and Rush Rhees, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1958), esp. §§138–84.

29. *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, 00:58:35–00:59:19.

30. Reeve argues convincingly, as Freud would have argued, that the ease with which Clementine takes on the role of Mrs. Hamlyn and others from Joel's childhood is the result of a prior, reverse association that was part of his initial attraction to Clementine: "Joel's childhood contains avatars of Clementine; his adult relationship with her [contains] infantile residues" (Reeve, "Two Blue Ruins," 24).

31. *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, 01:12:57–01:13:12, 01:14:47–01:15:13, 01:26:21–01:26:27.

32. Troy Jollimore, "Miserably Ever After: Forgetting, Repeating and Affirming Love in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*," in Grau, *Eternal Sunshine*, 56. Jollimore's essay is not without its virtues: he notes the Emersonian mood pervading much of the film (and even moments of the shooting script that don't appear in the film), and he recognizes that Nietzsche, in proposing the idea of eternal recurrence (citing *The Gay Science*, §341), is interested not in the thesis that our lives will repeat but in what our response to that proposal tells us about our attitude toward the lived present. But even if Jollimore did not twice make the bogus claim that Nietzsche affirms a "rigid determinism" (49) (apparently forgetting Nietzsche's explanation in *Beyond Good and Evil* §21 that such a view misuses "cause" and "effect" and that "the 'unfree will' is mythology"), he is consistent in misreading Nietzsche's "most profound" and "most troubling" view of affirmation (57) as requiring of Joel and Clementine that they "must frequently re-

mind each other of the importance of valuing the present moment, and of *refusing to allow past-directed regrets* or future-directed fears to undermine this valuing" (52; my emphasis). But we are about to see the importance for Joel of allowing regret, and the voicing of regret, into their remarriage conversation.

33. *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, 01:29:04–01:29:28.

34. *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, 00:13:36–00:13:51.

35. The logical and emotive link between freedom and affirming regret was observed over a century ago by William James. See James, "The Dilemma of Determinism," in *The Will to Believe, and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1897), 145–83.

36. At one point early in their conversation on the train back from Montauk, Clementine asks, "Do I *know* you? . . . I've *seen* you, man!" We might imagine that her recognizing Joel reveals a trace of a memory of their earlier relationship. But her surmise is correct: she did see him where she thought she had, at the Barnes and Noble where she works, after her erasure but before his. It was this encounter at the bookstore that drove Joel to Lacuna.

37. *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, 01:42:17–01:42:28.