

COMMENTARY

“Thinking through images: Turkishness and its discontents”: A Commentary

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The contemporary city necessarily changes our relationship to images. More and more, it seems, images of the city tell us less and less about the city. How much have we seen of Beijing from watching the 2008 Olympic Games, or of İstanbul from a travelogue? We learn more about the image through the city, than about the city through the image. The contemporary city cannot be adequately described through the available repertoire of images: it exhausts the repertoire, “sucking images out of you, without giving you anything definite in return.” Therefore, “thinking through images,” that is with their help, can only be done if we first think through or problematize them.

The problem is not how the speed of change in a globalizing world has outpaced images: this is a valid but banal observation. After all, historical change is not just a contemporary problem but a perennial one. The real issue is not just the *fact* of change, but the *nature* of change, the way *change itself has changed*. Globalization has not only introduced spaces that are new and unfamiliar; it has also introduced spaces that are *old and unfamiliar*. Take the example of the many preservation and heritage projects in new/old cities like İstanbul or Beijing. A preserved building is quite a strange thing: it may look old and familiar but the grids and coordinates that frame them have all shifted. The spatial logic it follows is less a logic of heritage than a logic of global tourism. The situation is no longer one of “the more things change, the more they remain the same,” but rather one of “the more things remain the same (like preserved buildings) the more they change.” When what we are faced with is not just “the shock of the new,” but the “shock of the old,” then

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new and old have lost their measure and appearances are against us. The implications of this for images are crucial: they have to deal not just with appearances but also with *disappearances*.

It should be noted immediately that disappearance (think of the term as hyphenated) is not vanishing without a trace. That would be too literal-minded a way of understanding the term. Rather what disappearance suggests is not simple absence but a kind of problematic presence, a *ghostly* presence. The city disappears not because we do not see it, but because we do not know what we are seeing. This is because, as we shall be discussing presently, 'space' and 'time' have gone through strange loops. Perhaps the first to stamp this motif of disappearance on the modern city was Baudelaire. Walter Benjamin made the point best when he said, thinking about the images of Paris in Baudelaire's poetry, that *what is about to disappear becomes an image*.¹ This can only mean that we are never able to provide any direct or immediate images of the disappearing city, only their *after-images*, like the light from distant stars. Orhan Pamuk makes a similar observation in his *Istanbul, Memories of a City*—a book that will be a constant reference point for the rest of this commentary.² The book is both an autobiography and a biography, an autobiography that takes the form of a biography of the quintessential Turkish city—Istanbul. In this text, the sense of an ever-present and ever-disappearing city is everywhere. For example, writing about the painter Melling's early nineteenth century portraits of the Bosphorus, Pamuk is very aware "that part of what makes Melling's paintings so beautiful is the sad knowledge that what they depict no longer exists," (p. 55) a "sad knowledge" that he associates with Levi-Strauss's *tristesse* in *Tristes Tropiques* when the anthropologist bemoans the fact that any description of the unknown societies he discovers in the Brazilian jungles is inevitably a betrayal.

The problematic relation of images to the city—important as this is to understand—is nevertheless no more than one part of a larger set of issues that affect all cities today, but especially the kinds of new/old cities that we find in Turkey or China; cities with a complex history which feel a need to re-invent and re-establish a place for themselves in the contemporary world. Trying to describe such cities with documentary precision can produce very paradoxical consequences: the more factual we try to be, the more distorted the results. Documentary and description are not what they used to be. The classic ambition of documen-

1 Walter Benjamin, *Reflections*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 181, 183.

2 Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories and the City*, trans. Maureen Freely (New York: Vintage International, 2006). All page references to Orhan Pamuk's book are in the text.

tary—from Italian neo-realism to the British and Canadian documentary movement—has been to expose what ideology hides, to confront the factitious with the factual. However, in a situation when factoids are taken for facts, when “reality” as in “reality television” has become a game show, and when fact is becoming as rare as “an orchid in the land of technology,”³ what becomes of documentary? The only sure answer is that it cannot simply retain its old form or employ its old strategies. If documentary, like translation, is always a kind of betrayal, we must start with the fact of betrayal, with the betrayal of fact. Documentary must turn duplicitous, not in the sense of the filmmaker passing off as true what in fact has been staged (a criticism often made about “Nanook of the North”), but in the etymological sense of “duplicity” as something made up of folds and doublings. And the necessity for such “duplicity” is that something has happened to “space” and “time.”

Let me now, with Pamuk’s İstanbul in mind for comparison, examine what is revealed about space and time when a talented Chinese filmmaker tries to describe a new/old city. The film is *Still Life* by Jia Zhangke; the city is Fengjie, a 2000-year old town on the banks of the Yangtze River, one of the towns submerged in water as a result of the building of the Three Gorges Dam. Jia Zhangke is often thought of as the 6th generation filmmaker whose films show us “the other China”: not the China of the capital or coastal cities, with their new architecture, prosperity, and cosmopolitan culture; but the other 95 percent of China that most of us do not know, a China in all its poverty and backwardness, with old architecture and whole towns reduced to rubble in the name of progress, or submerged in water like Fengjie. However, in the midst of what seems to be a predominantly documentary-like narrative style, anomalous details that are impossible not to notice begin to appear; they stick out from and disturb the documentary surface of the film. One detail occurs fairly early when the main character Sanming looking up at the sky sees what appears to be a UFO. As we follow the UFO racing across the screen, the camera reveals the second main character Shen Hong, just arrived in Fengjie, also looking at it. Lest we think this is just a clever way of cutting from one story to another (like the opening scene of Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey*), we are given an even more incredible image later on, when we follow Shen Hong trying to locate her husband with the help of his friend the archaeologist Wang Dongming. In the midst of a town under demolition, we see several shots of a strange new building, looking like some structure designed by aliens. And then sud-

3 Benjamin, *Reflections*, 181, 183.

denly, without warning or subsequent commentary, the building takes off like a rocket being launched, as if it really were a structure built by aliens. What to make of these and other strange details, these surreal elements in a film that for the most part adheres to a realist documentary style? What kind of documentary is this?

Perhaps the quickest way of answering this question is to place *Still Life* side by side with Holbein's famous sixteenth century painting *The Ambassadors*, also a kind of still life. In Holbein's work, most of the picture surface renders with meticulous care many objects that are symbols of the arts and sciences of the time—except for one object that seems to float in the foreground, a sixteenth century UFO perhaps, an object we certainly notice but do not immediately recognize. The harder we try to place it in the realistic/perspectival grid of the picture, the harder it is to construe. We begin to see it only when we realize that the object is painted on a different grid from the perspectival, and that it is in fact the distorted or anamorphic rendering of a skull. The skull as *memento mori*, as a reminder of death and the vanity of human wishes, is of course a standard motif in Renaissance painting. What is radical in Holbein's picture though is how the skull as *memento mori* is both right there in front of us, and yet not there because it is placed in an anamorphic, *twisted* space. We can compare the fantastic scenes and images in *Still Life* to the anamorphic image in Holbein's painting. They function as reminders and indicators of a twist in social space. What *Still Life* documents is a social condition that has undergone a spatial twist. Just as in anamorphosis, what has changed are the invisible grids and coordinates by means of which we make sense of the picture; it is these altered coordinates that again and again assert themselves and disturb the documentary surface of the film, turning appearances into disappearances, and making the everyday ghostly and uncanny.

In spite of obvious differences, Pamuk's description of İstanbul evokes, like *Still Life*, a social condition that has undergone a spatial twist; so much so that the everyday becomes impenetrable, while the impenetrable becomes everyday. Perhaps it is such an anamorphic space that lies behind the fascination of the city, and accounts for the fact that though Pamuk has lived in different parts of the world, in a sense he has "never left İstanbul—never left the houses, streets and neighborhoods of [his] childhood" (p. 5). The simplest example of anamorphosis is the image we see in the kind of distorting mirror we find in amusement parks. In an early chapter, entitled interestingly enough "My Mother, My Father and Other Disappearances," Pamuk makes the first clear allusion to an anamorphic space of disappearance. He describes a game he invented

as a boy to avert boredom, consisting of looking at himself through the triptych of mirrors of his mother's dressing table: "I would push the two wings of the mirror inwards or outwards until the two side mirrors were reflecting each other and I could see thousands of Orhans shimmering in the deep, cold, glass-colored infinity" (p. 69). He calls this "the disappearing game," which is more than a mere game because there is some correlation between the game and the social space of İstanbul and Turkey. This is a space where "old" and "new," "East" and "West," the end of empire and the advent of colonialism do not just co-exist in picturesque and exotic fashion; these contraries have disappeared into one another in some crazed global mirror, re-emerging as something unrecognizable and other; just as Pamuk can imagine (that is how the book begins) that "somewhere in the streets of İstanbul, in a house resembling ours, there lived another Orhan so much like me that he could pass for my twin, even my double" (p. 3).

Just like the space of İstanbul, Pamuk's own text is twisted and doubled. It is true that he speaks of İstanbul as "an aging and impoverished city buried under the ashes of a ruined empire," (p. 7) or of how "the cloud of gloom and loss that the fall of the Ottoman Empire had spread over İstanbul finally claimed my family too" (p. 17). But decline and gloom is not the whole story; the narrative does not simply trace an ineluctable downward spiral. Just as there are indications everywhere that space itself is uneven, there are indications too that *affective space* is uneven, and our affective response to disaster can take different forms. Hence even in the midst of an all-pervasive mood of melancholy that haunts the city, some other affective state might still emerge out of such negativity. This as we will see shortly is the crucial notion of *hüzün* that runs throughout the book, a notion that cannot simply be understood as melancholy or nostalgia in any straight-forward sense. Rather, it has something to do with the way our experience of time, like our experience of space, is twisted. In regard to these strange temporalities, *Still Life* offers another intriguing parallel.

There is a scene about midway in the film involving the archaeologist Wang Dongming. Wang is helping Shen Hong find her husband who has mysteriously disappeared for two years now. As an archaeologist, Wang races against time to save the Han dynasty relics that are being unearthed before the 2,000-year-old town is demolished. This sense of time running out, these cities at the end of time, produce their own paranoias. In Wang's apartment, Shen Hong notices a strange sight: on a long string, Wang has hung, like on a clothesline, a number of different watches and clocks as if to let them dry; as if time itself, like the

city, had already been partly submerged and damaged. This is an eerie image that calls to mind Salvador Dali's best-known painting "The Persistence of Memory," produced by what Dali called his "critical-paranoid method," which shows watches and clocks melting like cheese against a stable, normal-looking landscape. The physical landscape does not seem to have changed, but the markers of time in the form of watches and clocks have. This damaged sense of time is alluded to nowhere more clearly than in the changing meaning of nostalgia. We usually think of nostalgia as a strong desire to hold on to or return to the past in the face of a confusing present. But in Dali and Jia, as well as in Pamuk, nostalgia takes on a different tonality. The question all three implicitly ask is what becomes of nostalgia at a moment of disrupted, dissolving temporalities? What happens to nostalgia when the present instant becomes so readily the instant past? How is nostalgia not so much a sentimental longing but more a symptom of our complex modernity?

Consider the scene in the first half of the film where the middle-aged Sanming strikes up an unlikely friendship with Mark, a young local hoodlum who later dies in a gang fight. As they exchange phone numbers, we hear the different ring tones on their cell phones. Sanming uses the old song "Bless the Good-Hearted People," reminder of an old Communist era that has long gone. Mark uses the theme song from the popular TV series "The Bund" about an old Shanghai recreated by Hong Kong television, a Shanghai that never was. The line "present day society doesn't suit us because we are nostalgic" is a line that Mark likes to quote from the TV series. Through this juxtaposition of Sanming and Mark, nostalgia begins to take on novel characteristics. It is no longer a generational phenomenon: not only are the old nostalgic, so too are the young, as if the young were now old before their time. Secondly, nostalgia belongs not just to the individual; there can be large-scale mass nostalgias, like the curious nostalgias that China in its globalizing phase has been experiencing. One bizarre example is nostalgia for the Cultural Revolution, seen in a brief vogue for Cultural Revolution memorabilia and the appearance of restaurants serving atrocious Cultural Revolution food. When this vogue died down, another took its place: nostalgia for the 80's, the period that marked the end of the Cultural Revolution when universities, conservatories, and art academies were re-opened. But the fact that there can be nostalgia *both* for the Cultural Revolution and for its demise; the fact that nostalgia can be so arbitrary, the fact that *both* Sanming and Mark can be subject to it, suggest that what we are dealing with is more like a form of hysteria. When time itself is out of joint, history is experienced as hysteria, and chronologies give way to

anachronisms. Just as anamorphosis is the symptom of a twist in space, so anachronism is the symptom of a twist in time. Both notions are as relevant to an analysis of China today as they are to Pamuk's book, and by extension to the question of "Turkishness and its Discontents."

That Pamuk can turn the old-fashioned and familiar-all-too-familiar notion of *hüzün* into an instrument for diagnosing fractures in contemporary Turkish history is itself a striking instance of the critical use of anachronism and untimeliness. Chapter 10 is devoted to a discussion of *hüzün*, but then, so is the whole book. Pamuk distinguishes between two different usages of the word. The first and relatively more straightforward usage associates *hüzün* with melancholy over the loss of empire and its imperial culture, especially in İstanbul where "the melancholy of this dying culture was all around us" (p. 27). In İstanbul, "the remains of a glorious past and civilization are everywhere visible. No matter how ill-kept they are, no matter how neglected or hemmed in they are by concrete monstrosities, the great mosques and other monuments of the city, as well as lesser detritus of empire in every side street and corner—the little arches, fountains, and neighborhood mosques—inflict heartache on all who live amongst them" (p. 91). The crucial point made here is that the pain we suffer in our daily experience of the city is directly linked to its beauty. *Hüzün* is firstly this imbrication of beauty and pain: the more painful our experience of the city, the more beautiful; which also means: the more beautiful the experience, the more painful. To rid itself of the pain, the nation collectively turns to "Westernization." This puts Westernization in Turkey in a strange new light. It is not Westernization that has led to the forgetting of past traditions, as is often said; on the contrary, it is the attempt to forget that has led to Westernization. In other words, Westernization is the simple cure (the cure by simples) for the historical complexity of *hüzün*; but the cure could be worse than the disease: it gets rid of the pain—but also the beauty. So, far from being a form of sentimental nostalgia, *hüzün* as melancholic remembrance is what lies behind the convulsions of modern Turkish history, marking its major fault-lines, and defining the historical choices that could be made. *Hüzün* suggests "a communal feeling, an atmosphere, and a culture shared by millions" (p. 90). It is a collective social/cultural enterprise, just as Westernization is. "What I am trying to explain," Pamuk says, "is the *hüzün* of an entire city, of İstanbul" (p. 83).

The second usage of *hüzün*, which seems initially quite different from the first, can ultimately be seen to complement it. In chapter 10, Pamuk explains this second usage by linking it to Sufi mystic traditions: "To the Sufis, *hüzün* is the spiritual anguish we feel because we cannot be close

enough to Allah, because we cannot do enough for Allah in this world... He suffers from grief, emptiness and inadequacy because he can never be close enough to Allah..." This is not *hüzün* as the simple feeling of loss, but as the *inability* to feel loss. Pamuk continues: "Moreover, it is the absence, not the presence, of *hüzün* that causes him distress. It is the failure to experience *hüzün* that leads him to feel it; he suffers because he has not suffered enough..." (p. 81) Instead of stressing the right to the pursuit of happiness as a self-evident truth, *hüzün* stresses the right to the pursuit of unhappiness. It might be noted that in both the first and second usage, *hüzün* is neither positive nor negative in any conventional sense. In the first, beauty is linked to pain; in the second, the doxological praise of Allah takes the form of an aporia: the impossibility of coming close enough to Allah, as if all attempts to do so were proof of Zeno's paradox. In the end, it is the paradoxical and multi-layered meanings of *hüzün*, not its positive or negative valence, that allow it to negotiate the puzzling complexities of *contemporary* Turkish history and experience; including the anamorphic transformation of space and the anachronistic shuffling of time.

For example, one way of "thinking through images" that does not stop with our opening observation that a disconnection has taken place between image and world is to examine rigorously what might be called *the hüzün of the image*. Just as *hüzün* for the Sufi is the awareness of never being close enough to Allah, so for the writer, artist filmmaker or critic, it is an awareness of the impossibility of ever giving a close enough description of the city, of space and experience. However, the important point to note is that for the Sufi or the artist, disconnection does not mean the total absence of relation, only that the relation is necessarily an indirect and imperfect one. It is possible therefore to imagine the city—its space and affect—*seeping into the image* when it is not looking. In other words, the relation between city-space and image is no longer that of "representation" and its theoretical impossibility, but rather that of "the trace," which concerns the bits and pieces of the city that images (those we use and those that surround us) have unwittingly absorbed. This opens the possibility that through an analysis of the anomalous and contradictory details of the image—its *hüzün*—something of the nature of the city could be reconstructed, even if the city could not be directly observed or represented. There is a long passage in Pamuk's book from which the following is a selection where he shows that it is in the *hüzün* of the image, in its fragmented and anachronistic forms, that the *hüzün* of İstanbul could be evoked. These are both images produced by the city and images that produce the city: "I am speaking...of the patient

pimps striding up and down the city's greatest square on summer evenings in search of one last drunken tourist; ... of the wooden buildings whose every board creaked even when they were pashas' mansions, and all the more now that they have become municipal headquarters; ... of the tens of thousands of identical apartment—house entrances, their facades discolored by dirt, rust, soot and dust; ... of the city walls, ruins since the end of the Byzantine Empire; ... of the smell of exhaled breath in the cinemas, once glittering affairs with gilded ceilings, now porn cinemas frequented by shamefaced men; ... of the holy messages spelt out in lights between the minarets of mosques on holidays that are missing letters where the bulbs have burnt out; of the walls covered with frayed and blackened posters; of the tired old *dolmuşes*, 1950s Chevrolets that would be museum pieces in any Western city but serve here as shared taxis, huffing and puffing up the city's narrow alleys and dirty thoroughfares..." (pp. 84-87) Reading such a passage, we are reminded of what was perhaps surrealism's major contribution to modern art. Andre Breton in his novel *Nadja*, Benjamin tells us, "can boast an extraordinary discovery. He was the first to perceive the revolutionary energies that appear in the 'outmoded,' in the first iron constructions, the first factory buildings, the earliest photos, the dresses of five years ago, the fashionable restaurants when the vogue has begun to ebb from them..."; injecting the "banal obviousness" of the everyday with a "pristine intensity."⁴ This comparison with surrealism suggests not only the "modernity" of *hüzün*, but also hints at the unique possibilities of the Turkish contribution to culture today (Pamuk's work is obviously already an important example.) *Hüzün* with all its paradoxes is arguably one of the most complex ways of thinking about "Turkishness"; as such, it promises to open up interesting perspectives on "Turkishness and its Discontents."

We might begin by noting that "discontent" always stems from a sense of incommensurability between an idea of Turkishness and actual fact, because the latter is inevitably subject to historical transformations. Turkey is part of a world out of joint; a world of spatial disorientations where "the local" is dislocated and without locale; where even the margins are no longer safely located at the margins; a world marked by temporal twists, where past and present are easily fused and confused, where anachronisms are the order of the day. We see again and again how it is always in such moments of crisis that the question of "identity" is raised with special urgency. But just as often, this sense of urgency results only in clichés of identity, the most common and obnoxious being

4 Ibid., 181, 183.

the notion of “a mixture of East and West.” Hong Kong in the lead-up to the 1997 Handover, many parts of Asia, and Turkey are particularly susceptible to such clichéd notions. However, the defensive quest for cultural authenticity can turn into a form of cultural impoverishment, as Pamuk notes of the fortunes of İstanbul: “When the Empire fell, the new republic while certain of its purpose was unsure of its identity; the only way forward, its founders thought, was to foster a new concept of Turkishness, and this meant a certain *cordeon sanitaire* from the rest of the world. It was the end of the grand polyglot, multicultural İstanbul of the imperial age; the city stagnated, emptied itself out, and became a monotonous, monolingual town in black and white” (p. 215). It is clearly not enough therefore to bemoan the incommensurability between idea and fact, or to substitute a cliché for the elusiveness of authentic identity; rather *the task is to make the incommensurable itself generative of new identities and facts*. Freud too thinks about “discontent” in an equally nuanced way. When he speaks of “Civilization and Its Discontents,” he is not pessimistically saying that civilization is doomed to discontent; he is saying more persuasively that it is out of “discontent” or the incommensurable that civilization is produced. Similarly, it is out of discontent that “Turkishness” is produced.

Like “Chineseness,” “Turkishness” is not a finished idea or a completed identity; rather, it is a state of radical incompleteness, with many loose ends. We can see it as an idea in ruins, and describe it in terms of a figure of ruins, provided we think of ruins not as a decayed or wrecked condition that follows a state of completion, but as the *condition of wreckage*. Taking ruins as your subject means turning a melancholy eye on all the imperfections and contradictions that are there, and making culture out of discontent, compositions out of compost. The challenge is to do this not in the mode of traumatic repetition or nostalgic return—nothing comes from either of these reactions; the challenge is to pick up from the ruins what Benjamin calls the “fragments of messianic time.”⁵

For Pamuk, the four great creators of contemporary Turkish culture are the poet Yahya Kemal, the popular historian Reşat Ekrem Koçu, the novelist Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, and the memoirist Abdülhak Şinasi Hisar. All four, initially admirers of western literature, made their breakthrough and became “melancholic writers” after they found “an important and authentic subject: the decline and fall of the great empire into which they were born... The İstanbul in which they lived was a city littered with the ruins of the great fall, but it was *their city*” (p.

5 Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 144-145.

101). These writers were “picking their way through the ruins looking for signs of a new Turkish state, a new Turkish nationalism” (p. 225). And in the ruins, as in *hüzün*, they found their city: “But to ‘discover’ the city’s soul in its ruins, to see these ruins as expressing the city’s ‘essence,’ you must travel down a long labyrinthine path strewn with historical accidents” (p. 231).

Of these four writers, it is perhaps the fate of Koçu that is the most striking. His great life’s work was an encyclopedia of İstanbul, which he claimed to be the world’s first encyclopedia about a single city—a work in ruins, doomed to remain unfinished. Although Koçu was obsessed with western scientific classificatory systems, his encyclopedia was nevertheless filled with oddities and strange facts, and because he was homosexual, the volumes were strewn with descriptions of beautiful boys and handsome men. His readers did not regard the work as factual at all, but loved it for its curiosities. In the end, the encyclopedia failed because it could not explain İstanbul, but as Pamuk notes “we acknowledge that we love Koçu *because he failed*” (p. 153). This is failure in the same sense that Kafka’s work, also “unfinished,” was a failure. If there is one cultural critic who could understand melancholy in its *hüzün*-inflected sense, it would be Walter Benjamin, who wrote of Kafka: “To do justice to the figure of Kafka in its purity and its peculiar beauty one must never lose sight of one thing: it is the purity and beauty of a failure.”³

Let me conclude with a final comment. Once asked by an earnest friend whether there was hope, Kafka’s famous answer was “yes, plenty of hope, but not for us.” I would read this not as an instance of Kafka giving up on hope and agency or of his political apathy, but rather as the mark of a different kind of politics: what we might call an affective politics of disappointment. To illustrate, I will draw for comparison on the work of Wong Kar-wai, a Hong Kong filmmaker whose every image is suffused with *hüzün* to an amazing degree. Instead of change and innovation, each of his films uses characters that have been used before. Each film is an attempt to re-describe a spatial and affective situation that stubbornly refuses definition and resolution. The concern then is not with change and innovation but with memory and repetition, the ruins of time. A character in *2046* says that “love is a matter of timing. It is impossible either too early or too late.” But then we see that love is always either too early or too late, never on time. In Wong’s films, all appointments are dis-appointments, and unhappy endings seem inevitable. This is the affective mood found in all Wong’s films, a mood of deadlock that can be correlated to Hong Kong’s uncertain political mood of the 1990s as it awaits the Handover, or with Pamuk’s İstanbul.

Yet in both Wong and Pamuk, deadlock and disappointment are not the whole story. Take *In the Mood for Love* for example, which describes an impossible affective situation. In the film, the two main characters are drawn to each other because of something they have in common: they are both being deceived by their spouses. However, they refuse to be lovers, because as they tell each other “We do not want to be like them.” So what draws them together is also what keeps them apart. We find again, it seems, deadlock and disappointment; but we also find a crucial mutation in the meaning of disappointment. Wong’s film is not showing us that love ends in disappointment, which is as banal as to say that imperial glory ends in ruins. What his film shows is something more paradoxical: how love can *begin* with disappointment, how disappointment (like “ruins”) can be a source and resource of the erotic: *an erotics of disappointment*.

It is in something like this sense of disappointment as an awareness that things are not in their appointed places—neither images nor identities—that allows history to surprise us still.

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